



MEDIA RELEASE

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NACLC strongly supports calls by National FVPLS Forum for reinstatement of direct funding

The National Association of Community Legal Centres Inc. (NACLC) strongly supports calls by the National Family Violence and Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum) to have the FVPLS' direct program funding reinstated.

These most recent calls come after the Commonwealth released new funding guidelines for the *Indigenous Advancement Strategy*, which would see FVPLS' no longer recognised as a stand-alone program or a core service model that provides frontline legal assistance and would force FVPLS to apply for funding alongside many other services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"FVPLS provide vital frontline services and are specialist and culturally appropriate legal service providers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors of family violence. FVPLS are a crucial element of the legal assistance system and are central to ensuring access to legal assistance for all members of our community," said Michael Smith, NACLC National Convenor.

The recently released independent review into the *National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services* emphasises that the four legal assistance services (Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and Legal Aid Commissions), are "intended to provide an integrated range of legal assistance services which cover an assortment of needs."¹

The Review also confirmed that a priority group of "disadvantaged Australians (that) should be targeted for assistance" is "Indigenous people, particularly those who are victims/survivors of family violence, those who are financially disadvantaged and those living in remote communities."²

"The proposed new funding arrangements do not recognise the importance of these distinct programs and are very likely to increase 'red tape' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children affected by family violence in particular," said Mr Smith.

"As the National FVPLS Forum noted, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 31 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of violence and 15 times more likely to seek support for homelessness services to escape family violence. The FVPLS play a vital role in assisting women experiencing family violence. NACLC reiterates that it strongly supports the work of FVPLS and calls for the reinstatement of their direct funding," concluded Mr Smith.

Ends

For further information or an interview, contact NACLC National Convenor, Michael Smith 0421 437 883

¹Allen Consulting Group Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services, p2

² *ibid*, p26

NACLC acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Australia and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional owners of the land on which the NACLC office is situated. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present.