



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 22 August 2014 – for immediate release

Funding certainty call for Indigenous family violence legal help

The Community Law Australia national access to justice campaign calls on the Prime Minister and Attorney-General to guarantee a direct and sustainable funding allocation to the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) program.

Funding uncertainty for the program and its high-need Indigenous family violence clients has entered a critical phase under new tender arrangements, with the government failing to confirm if legal services are even eligible under guidelines for the Indigenous Advancement Strategy released on 8 August.

“We know the high need of Indigenous women and children for legal help with family violence. Yet this funding uncertainty compounds the deep cuts to the program in December 2013 and the significant cuts to the broader community legal sector advised both in December and as part of the May Federal Budget,” said Carolyn Bond AO, national spokesperson for the Community Law Australia national access to justice campaign.

In December 2013, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet assumed responsibility for the program from the Attorney-General’s Department. Since then the FVPLS program has lost status as a stand-alone program, the basis on which it has operated for the last 16 years.

“We would expect a move to the department of a Prime Minister who claims to champion women and Indigenous people would see special recognition and priority for Indigenous legal help, not moves to downgrade FVPLS from a stand-alone program,” Ms Bond said.

“Indigenous women and children facing family violence require urgent action from the Federal Government, not an attack on the services that provide them with free legal help. They are the real victims of funding cuts to legal help; they are the real victims when vital programs are placed on an increasingly precarious footing,” Ms Bond said.

“We call on the Federal Government to fund the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services program to match its stated commitment to Indigenous people.

“The government should also heed the findings of the recently published Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services, which included Indigenous people within the disadvantaged groups that should be targeted as a priority for legal assistance,” Ms Bond concluded.

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 from homelessness services to escape family violence, according to the National FVPLS Forum.

Background

[New threat for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services](#) (National FVPLS Forum media release, PDF)

[NACLC strongly supports calls by National FVPLS Forum for reinstatement of direct funding](#) (NACLC media release)

[Review of National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services](#)

To arrange an interview

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