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MEDIA RELEASE

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NACLC celebrates National Reconciliation Week and calls on governments to “change it up”

Today the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) jointly hosted a morning tea with Community Legal Centres NSW and Tenants' Union of NSW, to celebrate National Reconciliation Week.

Legal assistance services, including Community Legal Centres, provide free advice and assistance to thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people every year but face ongoing funding uncertainty and cuts despite growing demand and significant unmet legal need.

“In keeping with the theme of this year’s National Reconciliation Week, ‘It’s time to change it up’ this week provides a key opportunity to discuss the need to change existing approaches to addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, over-representation in the criminal justice system and access to justice” said Mr Michael Smith, NACLC Chair.

“NACLC calls on governments to provide long-term commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and organisations to address the major challenges these communities face, as highlighted in reports such as the *Close the Gap Progress and Priorities Report*” continued Mr Smith.

For example, committing to additional funding for legal assistance providers—including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Legal Aid Commissions—consistent with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission, the value of justice reinvestment approaches and importance of justice targets are all part of changing it up” concluded Mr Smith.

For further information or to arrange an interview contact NACLC Chairperson Michael Smith 0421 437 883

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.