



MEDIA RELEASE

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Independent Review Backs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLCL) has welcomed the release of the Final Report of a recent review of the funding programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

The Review of the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme (ILAP) completed in late 2018 was publicly released by the Attorney-General Christian Porter yesterday and contains 12 recommendations relating to the funding and administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS).

“We welcome the release of the Report which recognises the role and value of ATSILS in providing culturally safe services as well as the ongoing need to preserve their independence” said Nassim Arrage, CEO of NACLCL.

“We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services make a difference to the lives of people and communities across Australia- supporting people engaging with the justice system; preventing deaths in custody; challenging racism and discrimination; and keeping families together”.

“The Report also recognises the broader context within which ATSILS operate, including the significant legal needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and importance of self-determination and co-design of funding, administration and services” he added.

“One of the things the Report is also clear about is the important work done by peak body National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) in supporting ATSILS and undertaking national advocacy”.

“While the Report recommends preserving the independence of ATSILS through a direct funding programme and recognises the impact of funding uncertainty on the sector, it doesn’t go far enough in recommending reversal of looming funding cuts to ATSILS or the need for increased funding to meet rising demand for services” he said.

“ATSILS are facing looming Commonwealth funding cuts of \$10 million from next year which would have a devastating impact on people and communities”.

“Alongside NATSILS we urge the Government to consider the Report and publicly commit to retaining the independence of ATSILS through a separate stand-alone funding program, reversing the scheduled funding cuts and ensuring funding certainty for ATSILS and the people and communities they work with across Australia moving forward” Mr Arrage concluded.

Further Information and Key Contacts

The Final ILAP Review Report is available here:

<https://www.ag.gov.au/LegalSystem/Legalaidprogrammes/Pages/Legal-assistance-review.aspx>

The media release from National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) in response to the release of the Report is available here:

<http://www.natsils.org.au/portals/natsils/Media%20Releases/Media%20release%20ILAP%20280319.pdf?ver=2019-03-28-142546-847>

The main national submission made by NACLCL to the ILAP Review is available here:

<http://www.nacli.org.au/resources/181004%20NACLCLILAPReviewMainSubmissionFINAL.pdf>

The main national submission made by NATSILS to the ILAP Review is available here:

<http://www.natsils.org.au/portals/natsils/submission/NATSILS%20ILAP%20Submission%20For%20Website.pdf?ver=2018-10-29-161426-540>

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