



MEDIA RELEASE

26 April 2019

Community Legal Sector Welcomes ALP and Greens Plans to Address Critical First Nations Justice Issues

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) welcomes strong commitments by the ALP and Greens to address critical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues.

Senator Pat Dodson Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus today released the \$107 million ALP First Nations Justice Policy which includes a range of measures including funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) and a commitment to justice targets and justice reinvestment initiatives.

“We welcome the commitment to funding for community-controlled organisations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (\$40 million) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (\$21.5 million) which provide absolutely crucial services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia”.

“We know that these services make a difference to the lives of people and communities across Australia—supporting people engaging with the justice system; keeping women and children safe; preventing deaths in custody; challenging racism and discrimination; and keeping families together”.

“We are also pleased that the ALP has listened to the sector, community and recent independent review and committed to retaining ATSILS as a stand-alone funding program under the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme”.

“As a peak body that works closely with National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, the commitment to \$4 million funding over four years to support their national work and voice is particularly welcome” he added.

“More broadly, we also welcome the commitment to include justice targets under the Closing the Gap Framework and to funding for justice reinvestment trials and a national body”.

The Greens have also announced their First Nations Youth Justice Policy which includes welcome commitments to raising the age of criminal responsibility, avoiding detention of children on remand, ending the use of restraints, force and isolation in prison and investing in diversion programs.

“The measures contained in the ALP and Greens policies are important and build on advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community controlled organisations, as well as partners like community legal centres, over many years. Importantly, they are also evidence-based and reflect a welcome implementation of reports such as the recent Australian Law Reform Commission Pathways to Justice Report”.

“These commitments demonstrate understanding of what will make a difference in addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system and the need for new approaches by governments”.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Nassim Arrage, CEO on 0408 092 256 or Nassim.arrage@naclc.org.au

Amanda Alford, Director Policy and Advocacy on 0421 028 645 or amanda.alford@naclc.org.au