



NATSILS

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER LEGAL SERVICES**

MEDIA RELEASE

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NATSILS welcomes Greens commitment to increase investment in front line services by \$2.2 billion over 4 years

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal Services (NATSILS) welcomes the Greens' election commitment to boosting funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS).

Earlier today, Larissa Waters, Greens Senator for Queensland, announced as part of the Greens' policy on confronting Domestic Violence an injection of \$200 million per year for Legal Aid Commissions, community legal centres, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and the ATSILS.

'It is extremely encouraging to see announcements like this from the Greens and we look forward to hearing more details about how their policy will support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services' said Wayne Muir, Chairperson of NATSILS.

'The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services are on the frontline of the family violence crisis affecting our communities. The legal services ensure that vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly women and children escaping violence, are able to receive culturally competent legal assistance.'

'We are best placed to confront the challenges in our communities and funding allows us to focus on developing solutions. We want to put an end to the cycles of violence and imprisonment that disproportionately affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this country. We need support from all political parties to invest in solutions like culturally competent wrap-around services for families experiencing dysfunction to move them away from the child protection and criminal justice systems.'

Without the provision of new funding the ATSILS will face significant cuts of 8 per cent beginning in 2017. Cuts to the ATSILS comes at a time when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence, and their children are 10 times more likely to be in out of home care. Additionally, Australia has seen a 95 per cent increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody since 2004.

'Our members have been a state of funding crisis since the 2014 budget. We have been fighting hard to secure funding stability. Adequate funding will help us better serve our clients and communities. It will help us turn around the state of access to justice in this country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.' Said Mr Muir.

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