



NATSILS

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

MEDIA RELEASE

15 May 2013

\$12m Funding Injection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services in Federal Budget

Today the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) welcome the injection of \$12m funding over two years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) around Australia.

NATSILS Chairperson, Shane Duffy, said that the new injection of funding recognises the critical role played by ATSILS and the value they add to the legal assistance sector.

“ATSILS are the first port of call for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in contact with the justice system and deliver a culturally competent service that mainstream services struggle to provide,” Mr Duffy said.

“given the rate at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are over-represented with the justice system, access to culturally competent legal assistance services is critical as well as a basic human right.”

Mr Duffy said that the injection of funding can also be seen as recognition of the central role ATSILS, and NATSILS, play in informing best practice, public policy and law reform specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“Through our experience on the ground we have expert knowledge of the access to justice issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” Mr Duffy said.

“our law reform and policy arm plays a central role in informing Australian governments as to how effectively the justice system is operating and where it needs to be improved”.

Mr Duffy said that without continued support for ATSILS the justice system in many areas would come to a stand still.

“we service locations that no other legal assistance services or private practitioners go to and the justice system in these places would simply grind to a halt if ATSILS weren't there. This injection of additional resources will help ATSILS continue this work,” Mr Duffy said.

“however, while this one off injection of additional funding is welcomed what is really needed is recurrent funding to enable effective long term planning and service delivery.”

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