



NATSILS

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

MEDIA RELEASE

16 August 2013

Greens Launch Access to Justice Election Policy

Today the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) welcome the launch of the Greens Access to Justice Policy which calls for a funding increase of 50 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services (ATSILS).

NATSILS Chairperson, Shane Duffy, said that such an injection of funding is long overdue and is critically needed to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples receive equal access to justice.

“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 Greens policy recognises the central role ATSILS, and NATSILS, play in not only delivering culturally competent legal assistance services, but also 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. The chronic under-funding of ATSILS needs to be rectified so that we can continue this vital work,” Mr Duffy said.

“We hope that Labor and the Coalition will also step up to the plate and show similar leadership in committing to increasing ATSILS funding by at least 50 per cent.”

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