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MEDIA RELEASE: NATSILS welcomes commitments as over 100 organisations call for next Federal Government to retain the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program

The National Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (**NATSILS**) has released an open letter from over 100 organisations calling for the next Federal Government to commit to retaining the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program (**ILAP**).

In April, in the Federal Budget 2019-20, the Government announced that from 2020 funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services would be mainstreamed into a national mechanism, abolishing the ILAP.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) are overwhelmed by the strong support shown from the community, including Aboriginal peak bodies and much of the legal assistance sector,” said Cheryl Axleby, co-chair of NATSILS.

“We encourage the Government to acknowledge the extensive community support shown by committing to self-determined ATSILS and a standalone ILAP. We welcome the commitments from the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Greens, in the lead up to the publication of this letter, to retain the ILAP.”

The open letter calls on the Attorney-General Christian Porter and Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus to retain ILAP in light of the primary recommendation of a [recent independent review](#), for Commonwealth funding to be delivered through a standalone and specific program, that directly funds ATSILS and NATSILS. Over 100 legal, health, disability, social justice and human rights organisations signed onto the letter.

Earlier this week, Change the Record [launched a petition](#) calling on the next Government to retain the ILAP.

“At a time when we are the most incarcerated people in the world, there is clear, demonstrated support for the Government to maintain its commitment to self-determined ATSILS by retaining the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program.”

END OF RELEASE

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Background:

The Review into the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program can be found [here](#).

NATSILS response to the Budget decision is found [here](#).

A petition to call for the retention of ILAP is found [here](#).

NATSILS submission to the Review of the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program can be found [here](#).