

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

6 December 2019

NATSILS MEDIA RELEASE: Minister Wyatt must reverse decision to defund the National Family Violence Protection Legal Services Forum

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS) calls for Minister Wyatt and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to reverse its decision to defund the national secretariat of the Family Violence Protection Legal Services (NFVPLS Forum).

The NFVPLS Forum have years of experience working on the ground and at the frontlines within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault.

“We are shocked that Minister Wyatt would defund the national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women facing violence, when our women are dying at horrific rates. Defunding our Aboriginal peak bodies is a threat to our self determination and the ability to ensure culturally safe services are available for the community,” said Nerita Waight, co-chair of NATSILS.

“The role NFVPLS Forum plays is vital to disrupt intergenerational cycles of violence, dysfunction and disadvantage and funding must be reinstated.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and 10 times more likely to die from a violent assault than other women in Australia.

“It’s concerning that NIAA has not provided the NFVPLS Forum with any evidence to justify defunding the national body. All the recommendations from a recent review conducted point to the need for more resources for NFVPLS Forum to undertake their national work. In addition, NIAA has not engaged in any consultation with the sector about this decision.”

“The impact of defunding the NFVPLS Forum on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly for women and children, will be devastating and set us even further behind on closing the gap,” said Cheryl Axleby, co-chair of NATSILS.

“This decision is inconsistent with the government's commitment to taking action to prevent family violence and abuse. If the Government is truly committed to ending violence against women as a national priority it should be providing funding to support the voices of those most impacted.”

END OF RELEASE

Media contact: Sonia Sofat, 0407 780 643, ssofat@vals.org.au