

## **Coalition's \$25m for family violence prevention legal services represents positive progress**

The Law Council of Australia has today commended the federal Coalition for committing, if elected, \$25 million in funding over four years to address family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

The commitment is drawn from the Coalition's additional \$100m investment to implement the Third Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence to Reduce Violence Against Women and their children, announced in the Budget 2016.

Law Council of Australia President Stuart Clark AM said the funding announcement was positive.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely than other Australian women to be hospitalised as a result of domestic violence, and ten times more likely to be killed as a result of a domestic assault," Mr Clark noted.

"Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs) are an essential frontline provider of legal services to Indigenous victims of family violence and these services are in desperate need of adequate funding. This additional money will go to extremely good use."

Mr Clark noted that today's announcement follows other positive funding commitments in the area made during the course of the federal campaign. The Labor Party has committed to investing \$4.5 million over four years in FVPLSs as part of its announcement last week responding to the Redfern Statement. The Greens, meanwhile, published a plan to boost funding for FVPLS by \$144 million over four years.

However, Mr Clark noted that despite the additional money, legal assistance services remained in a funding crisis.

"We have welcomed the additional commitments made by all parties during this election campaign, but the fact is the Australian legal assistance sector remains critically underfunded," Mr Clark said.

"Whoever wins office on July 2 will bear a responsibility to end the legal assistance funding crisis. It is the responsibility of government to ensure all Australians have access to justice, yet currently just eight per cent are eligible for legal aid.

"The Productivity Commission has already recommended a \$200 million injection into the sector, and overall we calculate an additional \$350 million is needed annually to meet unmet legal need in the community.

"Failure to adequately fund legal aid is literally destroying lives. The Law Council of Australia will continue to campaign hard for this vital reform as part of the national [Legal Aid Matters campaign](#)."

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