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MEDIA RELEASE

NATSILS welcomes First Nations Justice and Family Violence policy commitments from the Australian Labor Party and First Nations Youth Justice commitments from the Australian Greens

The National Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (**NATSILS**) has today welcomed announcements from the Australian Labor Party (**ALP**) as part of their Indigenous Justice and Family Violence policies.

“NATSILS has been calling for national justice targets and greater support for community led justice reinvestment projects and it’s good to see Federal Labor listening to our community voices”, said NATSILS Co-Chair, Cheryl Axleby.

NATSILS co-chair Cheryl Axleby attended a roundtable with Senator Patrick Dodson and Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus in Melbourne today to discuss the First Nations Justice policy announcements which include:

- \$21.75 million to continue Justice Reinvestment in Bourke as well as three new trial sites and to establish a National Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Body
- \$40 million for ATSILS
- \$4 million for the peak body NATSILS
- \$21.5 million for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services
- Developing justice targets as part of the Closing the Gap framework
- Retaining the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program as a standalone program which supports ATSILS and NATSILS
- \$42.5 million for Community Legal Centres for family violence work
- \$21 million to double the number of Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice partnerships.

“At a time when Aboriginal people are more likely to go to jail than to university, the policy support for community led justice reinvestment and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services is a great start”, said Cheryl.

“The ATSILS are committed to their communities and service many remote and regional areas that others do not, which involves considerable cost and challenges. The ALP commitment to increase the core funding of the ATSILS is welcomed and would allow greater access to culturally safe services at a time when ATSILS are facing increasing demand”

“As the peak body for the ATSILS, the NATSILS plays a critical role in providing national coordination, strategic leadership, and capacity building. On behalf of our members, we welcome the commitment made today”

NATSILS also welcomed commitments to the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and to the Community Legal Centres to provide family violence front line support.

Further, we welcome commitments to additional specialist domestic violence units and health justice partnerships for which ATSILS should be considered.

The Australian Greens also announced their First Nations Youth Justice Policy which contains several commitments including raising the age of criminal responsibility, avoiding detention of children on remand, making bail meaningful, ending the use of restraints, force and isolation in prison, and investing in diversion programs.

“We welcome the Greens commitment to raise the age of criminal responsibility - a critical step to stopping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids being ripped away from their families and sent to prison”, concluded Cheryl.

NATSILS continues to call on the Commonwealth Government to work with ATSILS, NATSILS and the legal assistance sector to comprehensively map unmet legal needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

END OF RELEASE

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Background:

NATSILS 2019-20 Pre-Budget Submission can be found [here](#).