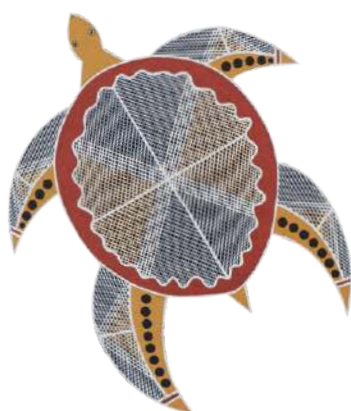
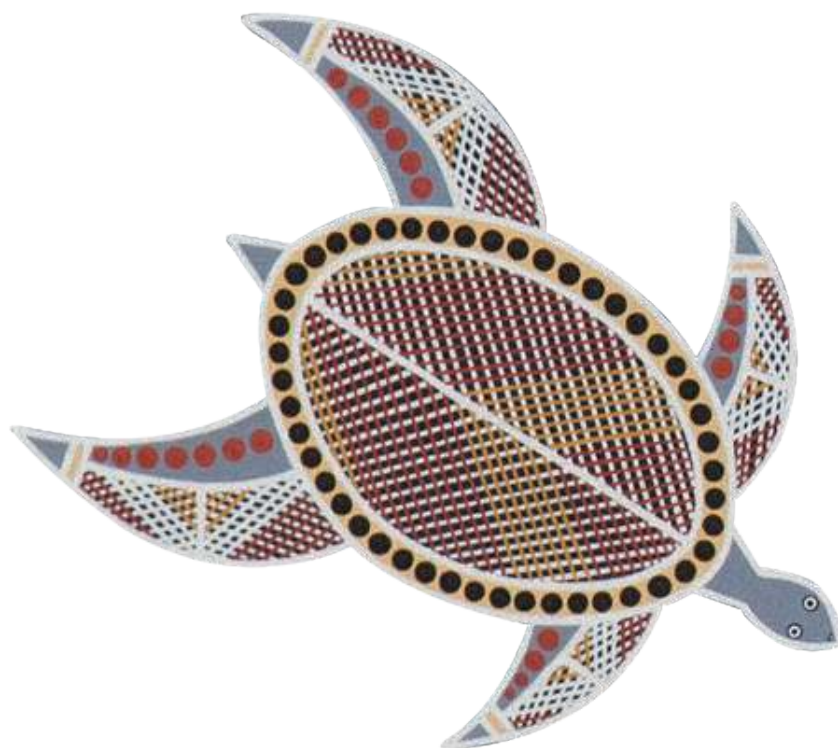


National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Strategic Plan

2019 - 2023





ACKNOWLEDGING OUR PEOPLE - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

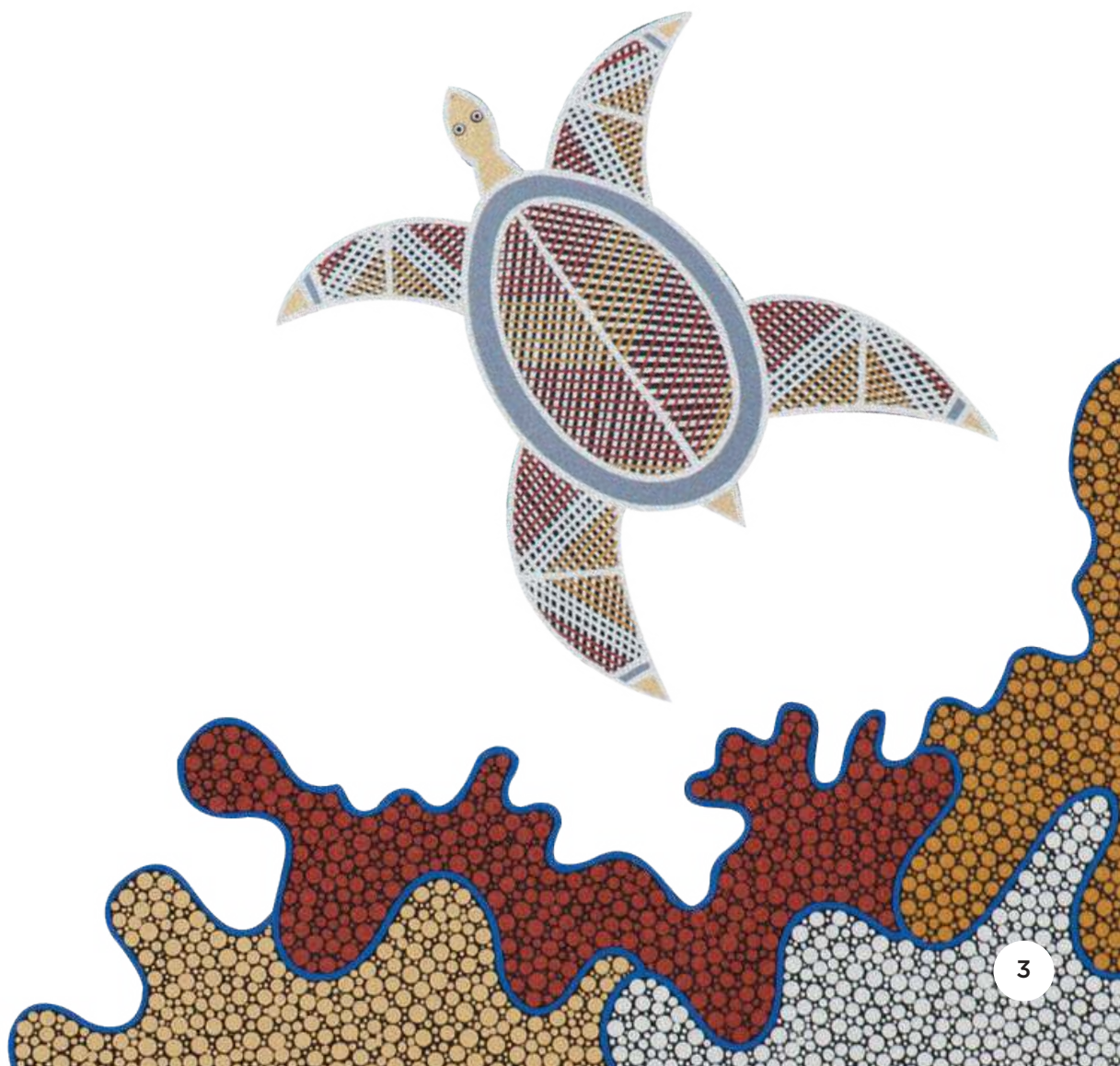
The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Lands on which our offices stand.

CULTURAL WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this Strategic Plan contains names of people who have passed away.

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Strategic Plan

2019 - 2023



Co-Chair Forward

Our plan to reimagine the justice system through community, culture and empowerment, and achieve true justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Prevention, diversion, community, culture and family healing supports, help our communities - prison does not work. It's obvious prisons are continuing to oppress and harm our mob. We've seen the spit hooding, hog tying, solitary confinement, food deprivation, restraining that is happening today to Aboriginal kids in Don Dale, Cleveland, Banksia Hill, Parkville - right around Australia right now. We've seen the numbers of Aboriginal deaths in custody continue to rise and ATSILS around the country are dealing with record numbers of coronial inquests.

We need legal services that see Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people as community members, not statistics or criminals, but people with complex and systemic issues in their life that they need help solving/getting support for, as a result of colonisation. But we also need lawyers who see the different ways in which the system is stacked against them unfairly and work out ways to challenge that. This is part of cultural safety - not having to explain the systemic injustices that impact you.

This is where strategic litigation, policy and advocacy come in. Whether it's the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service challenging the Victorian government to stop holding Aboriginal kids in adult prison - which they won in a historic ruling including a finding that the transfer of these kids was unlawful - or Aboriginal Legal Service New South Wales challenging the role of Aboriginality in sentencing to the High Court with Bugmy. Or Aboriginal Legal Service Western Australia continually fighting for the legacy of the unjust death of Ms Dhu to get a Custody Notification Service and end the imprisonment for unpaid fines.

This strategic plan explains how we will tackle systemic issues that are holding back our communities, and how we will facilitate and progress a new conversation about a better justice system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We strive for a world where there is true justice for our people.

We have already made real progress in a range of areas including:

- Advocating for justice targets to be embedded into the Closing the Gap process;
- Advocating for the national rollout of the Custody Notification Service;
- Working with the Change the Record Coalition to reduce incarceration rates of our children and increasing investment in community led solutions;
- Gaining support for culturally safe legal services and prevention programs for young people, and Throughcare for mob in prison;
- Advocating and facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disabilities to take part in the Disability Royal Commission; and
- Facilitating consultation and collaboration between the ATSILS and bringing them together to share best practice.

We will continue our work to advance the progress of all these issues and more. We will be a strong national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and will advocate at a national and international level to ensure that our people have equitable access to justice.

Cheryl Axleby & Nerita Waight



About NATSILS

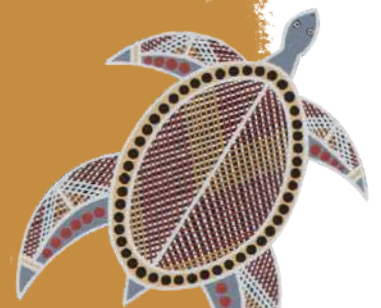
We are the national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and are experts on law and justice reform in Australia.

We are the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS).

Our members have over 40 years' experience in providing legal advice, assistance, representation, community legal education, advocacy, law reform activities and prisoner through-care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in contact with the justice system. We are the experts on justice issues affecting and concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

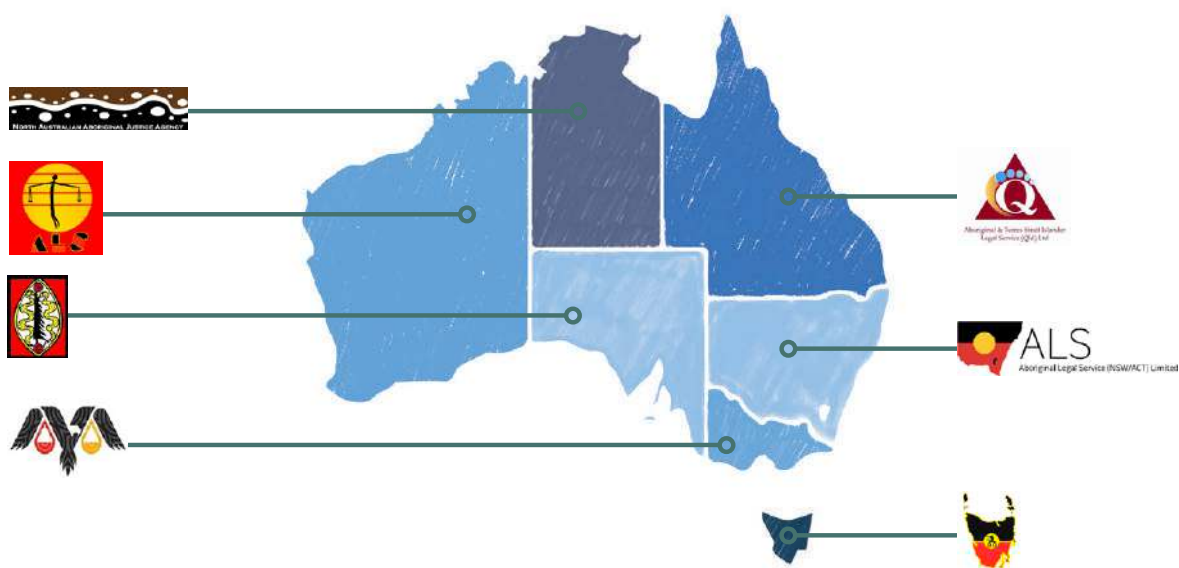
What we do:

1. NATSILS coordinates and supports ATSILS to improve the delivery of culturally safe legal services to our communities.
2. We are tireless in advocating for the full implementation of all the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are treated safely, with humanity and with dignity by custodial officers.
3. We advocate at the national and international level for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the justice system, and work to ensure that our people have equitable access to justice.
4. We share best practice and facilitate a coordinated approach across ATSILS.



NATSILS is the national alliance of ATSILS who operate across Australia. NATSILS members include:

- North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
- Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia
- Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, South Australia
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd
- Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited
- Tasmanian Aboriginal Community Legal Service



Working Together

NATSILS aspires to play a more active role in improving the justice system

Our Vision



As the united voice of ATSILS, we strive towards true justice built on community, culture and empowerment.

Our Purpose



Support ATSILS to reimagine the justice system and to collectively deliver improved justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Values

We commit to sharing our cultural knowledge and expertise, upholding the traditional values of Care, Share and Respect



Care

We Care for the human and legal rights, safety and psychological well-being of the people we support, their families and communities.



Share

We Share a common understanding of the needs and challenges that people we support face and diligently strive to achieve high quality law and justice outcomes.



Respect

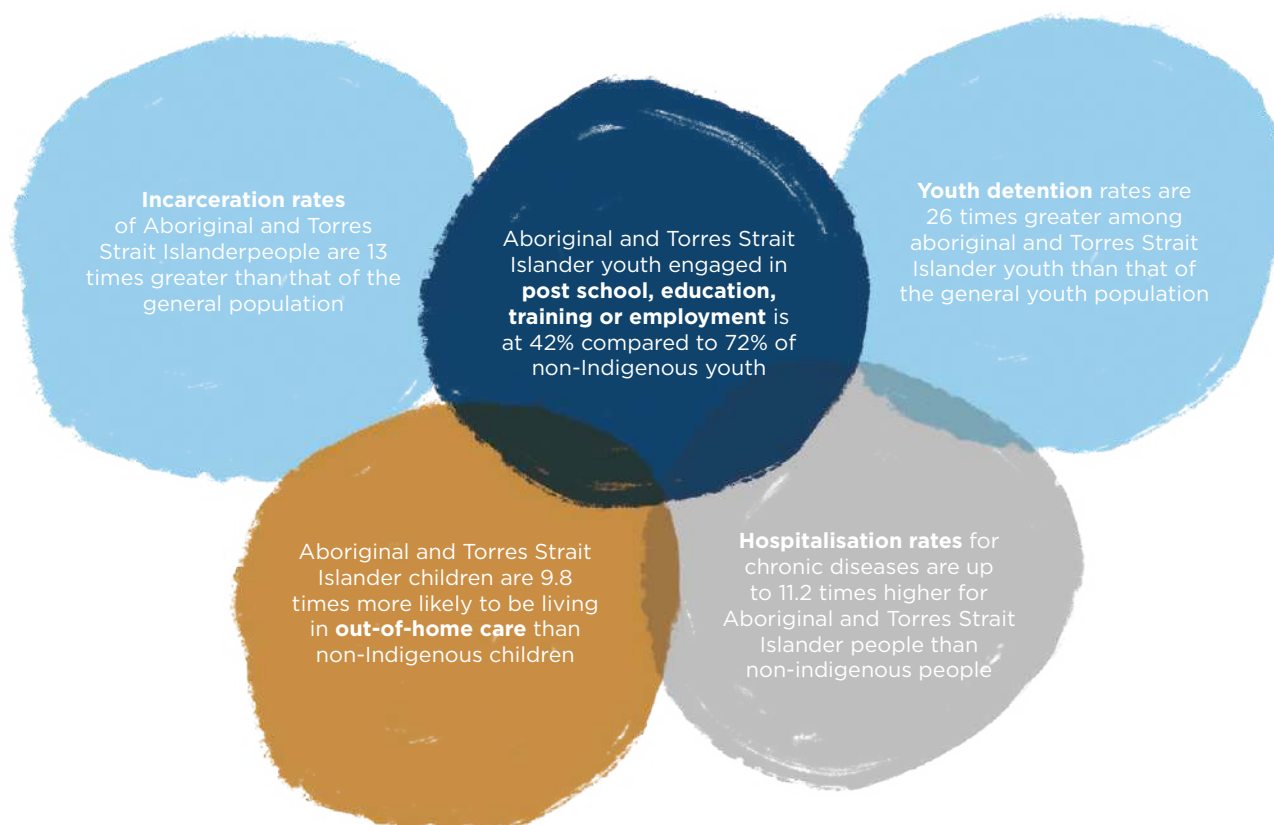
We Respect the cultural diversity, values and beliefs of the people we support, their families and communities and deliver confidential, innovative, professional and culturally competent legal assistance service.

Our Challenges

NATSILS is aware of the complex legal, historical, cultural, geographical and socio economic challenges that adversely impact upon the community and service delivery of each of the ATSILS.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently experience poor justice outcomes compared to the non-indigenous population in Australia

The poor justice outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people materialise in many ways. Issues include:



Source:

- ABS, 4517.0 Prisoners in Australia, 2016
- SNAICC, Family Matters Report, 2017
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Youth detention population in Australia', 2015, pg. 10.
- Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016

Strategic Goals

NATSILS has identified **six strategic goals**, consistent with its vision and purpose, to guide its work over the next five years

NATSILS aspires to play a more active role in improving the justice system



External focus

Goal area 1.

Reimagining the justice system

We will catalyse and facilitate rigorous conversation and collaboration amongst the ATSILS, the Legal Assistance Sector and relevant stakeholders from across portfolios to design justice system reforms and initiatives that work for our people.



Member focus

Goal area 2.

Improving members' operating conditions

We will work to improve the current legislative and policy environment as well as members' funding positions and resources.

Goal area 3.

Enhancing member services

We will support members to continue to deliver efficient and effective services.



NATSILS focus

Goal area 4.

Building a strong funding base

We will increase total funding and decrease our reliance on government.

Goal area 5.

Expanding our size and skills

We will increase the size and skill base of the organization.

Goal area 6.

Understanding our impact

We will monitor and report on the impact of NATSILS' work.

NATSILS will adopt **four strategic roles** in order to achieve those goals



1. Supporting

Supporting the efficient and effective functioning of ATSILS' services, through member collaboration and relevant external stakeholder engagement.



2. Responding

Developing and promoting perspectives on key issues across the existing policy and legislative environment impacting on members and their communities.



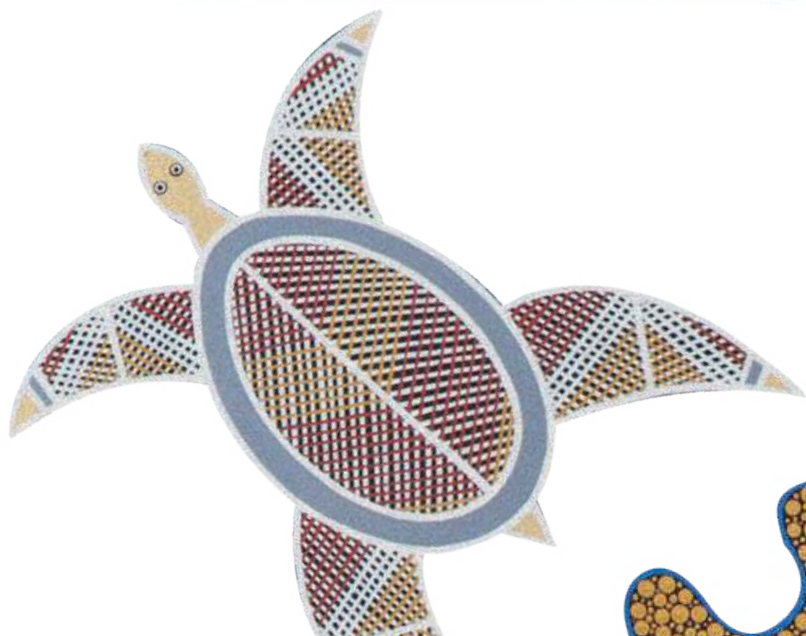
3. Reimagining

Facilitating and progressing a new conversation about a better justice system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



4. Operating

Building a sustainable future, expanding the funding base, size and skill base of the organisation and monitoring the impact of our work.



In order to contribute to justice system reform, NATSILS' role must extend beyond service coordination and improvement



Constraints

Despite the critical role that ATSILS play for clients and their communities, they are constrained in their capacity to meet all community needs and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Activities

NATSILS targets its efforts to coordinate members' common interests and activities; drive improved delivery of culturally appropriate legal services; and advocate for justice system reform.



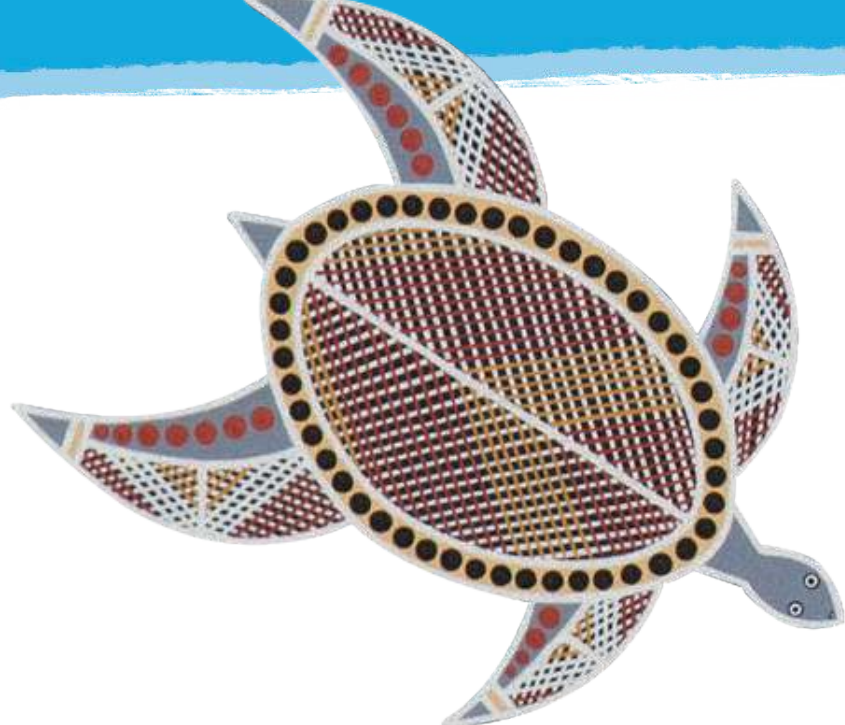
Outcomes

ATSILS better meet community needs. At the same time, there is a changing conversation about the justice system and its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Impact

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lead justice system reform, with ATSILS fulfilling a critical role to support improved justice outcomes.



NATSILS has identified 11 initiatives which fall within these four roles and which can be categorised as either business as usual, enabling or flagship initiatives

■ 'Business as usual' initiatives ■ Enabling initiatives ■ Flagship initiatives

Supporting

1. Provide secretariat support
2. Facilitate NATSILS membership forums
3. Develop ATSILS' funding strategy
4. Co-design performance enhancement projects with ATSILS
5. Build shared M&E* framework to evidence impact of ATSILS' work

Responding

6. Respond and advocate across the existing policy and legislative environment

Reimagining

7. Facilitate discussion and collaboration with relevant community and legal sector expert stakeholders
8. Evidence the critical value of our cultural and community expertise within the legal assistance sector
9. Develop and define a better justice system in collaboration with community and sector experts

Operating

10. Build NATSILS' funding base, size and skill base
11. Build M&E* framework to understand impact of NATSILS' work

* M&E: Monitoring and evaluation

About our artwork



Graham Gilbert

(Wiradjuri)



'Adults Protecting their Young'

2012, acrylic on canvas.

Artwork story:

A group of adult sea turtles protecting their young.

This artwork was created through The Torch, a not for profit organisation that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria.

