

MEDIA RELEASE
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ATSILS meet to discuss critical issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Today leaders from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) around Australia met to discuss crucial issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Priscilla Collins, Deputy Chairperson of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) said the meeting was a vital opportunity to discuss the legal issues that matter to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“We want to thank the Larrakia Nation for hosting us on their country to discuss the issues facing our people. It’s clear that there are key common issues in our communities such as the issue of drug abuse, including ICE and the high rates of domestic violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. We need a co-ordinated approach and this forum provided an important opportunity for us all to come together to discuss the work that each of our organisations are doing.”

Priscilla Collins also noted that unmet legal need arose as a major issue during the meeting – an issue that has also been discussed by key government bodies, including the Productivity Commission.

Ms Collins said, “All of our organisations are doing critical work on the frontlines for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, we are all concerned that we are underfunded to meet the massive and growing legal needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in criminal, family and civil law. In particular, we are worried about funding cuts that will occur within our organisations from 2017 onwards. We continue to call upon the government to implement the Productivity Commission’s recommendation that \$200 million in additional funding is needed to the legal assistance sector to address urgent unaddressed civil legal need.”

The meeting was also a chance to celebrate the presentation of the Trevor Christian award to two outstanding ATSILS employees as well as the recent award of ‘National Indigenous Legal Professional of the Year’ to Eddie Cubillo, the NATSILS Chief Executive Officer.

“It is clear that the ATSILS deliver outstanding legal services to some of societies most disadvantaged members so we were delighted to celebrate the recognition of our staff members and the difference they make for our people” Ms Collins said.



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