

Media Release

Date: 26/04/2019

Australian Labor announce critical funding measures to address the disadvantage experienced by First Nations people in the justice system.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) Ltd (ATSILS) has welcomed the funding commitments announced today by The Australian Labor Party (ALP) in relation to addressing family violence and the disadvantage experienced by First Nations peoples in the justice system.

ATSILS CEO Shane Duffy said, "The \$107 million justice package announced today by the ALP is a comprehensive strategy that balances common sense with innovation and will go a long way to improving access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should they win Government at the upcoming federal election."

"ATSILS have been operating under a cloud of funding uncertainty for far too long so we commend the common-sense approach announced by the ALP to maintain direct funding through the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program. This decision demonstrates a clear belief in the importance of self-determination and community control in the delivery of culturally safe services."

"The announced funding boost of \$40 million to ATSILS around the nation is a welcomed measure in this climate of over-incarceration where the demand for our services regularly sees our organisation operating with exceeded capacity. Although this funding increase is not of the scale recommended by the Productivity Commission's – Access to Justice Arrangements Inquiry Report 2014, it is a positive step in the right direction and will help to increase the reach of our culturally safe services to many vulnerable people in regional and remote regions where ATSILS are often the only service providers.

ATSILS also welcomes funding commitments for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and Community Legal Services to provide domestic violence front line support and the increased funding committed to our national peak body NATSILS.

A serious commitment to innovative justice reinvestment solutions and justice targets are key elements needed to effectively address the over- incarceration and family violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We have been advocating for increased support for these measures for many years, and on the back of the undeniable success of the justice reinvestment pilot project in Bourke, it is extremely encouraging to see the ALP commit funding for a National Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Body and for further trial sites throughout Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The key First Nations Justice policy announcements 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 \$42.5 million to Community Legal Centres for family violence work
- \$21 million to double the number of Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice partnerships.

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