

Media Release

Date: 24th March 2020

ATSILS suspends the delivery of face to face legal services in response to the heightening risk that COVID-19 poses to staff and communities.

With the number of COVID-19 cases continuing to rise in Queensland, The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) LTD (ATSILS) will enact further service delivery adjustments to help protect our workforce and communities. As of the 26/03/2020, ATSILS advises that it will cease all face to face lawyer/client contact and workshops with community groups. Wherever possible, information and communication technology resources will be utilised to facilitate the continued delivery of essential legal assistance services to our clients.

ATSILS CEO Shane Duffy said, “we have a duty to protect our workforce and the communities we serve from the heightening risk of COVID-19 infection. This unprecedented measure has been made primarily in accordance with our duties under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, which requires our organisation to provide a safe workplace and a safe system of work to ensure the health and safety of our staff.”

“ATSILS has also advised the Chief Magistrate of the decision to cease face-to-face services.”

“ATSILS is well into enacting our contingency actions from our COVID-19 Response Plan. We are working daily with our Board of Directors, State and Federal Government, Queensland Courts and the organisations health advisors. Most organisations around the world are undertaking these steps to limit the threat to staff and their communities”, Mr Duffy said.

Earlier today Mr Duffy advised ATSILS staff of the additional precautionary measures that would be put into place. Staff have been transitioned to work from home arrangements where possible and will utilise telephone, internet, intranet and video-link options to facilitate the ongoing delivery of legal services to clients during this time of rapid change and uncertainty.

ATSILS wishes all staff and communities the best of health and encourages all to remain vigilant with self-care, social distancing, self-isolation where relevant, and to follow increased hygiene practices both personally and in the environments in which you live and work. As the impact of the virus in Queensland changes, advice will also change quickly, so it is important to get up-to-date health and safety advice from credible sources. We recommend following updates from: [Queensland Health](#), [Australian Department of Health](#), and the [World Health Organisation](#).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service will continue to monitor the situation related to COVID-19 and update staff, clients, community and stakeholders of any further service delivery adjustments accordingly.

For further information regarding access to legal services during this time please contact an ATSILS office in your region: <http://www.atsils.org.au/contact/>

Email: info@atsils.org.au

Call: 1800 012 255 – Free call 24/7 for urgent criminal law matters.

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