



ATSILS

Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Legal Service (QLD) Ltd

MEDIA RELEASE

23/06/2023

The Queensland State Budget delivers a welcome funding boost for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) Ltd - (ATSILS).

An additional \$9.165 million in funding will be provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) Ltd (ATSILS) by the Queensland State Government for the 2023/24 financial year. The additional funds will be used to increase service delivery capacity and to implement a more competitive salary structure across every position within the business.

ATSILS CEO Shane Duffy said, “we welcome this response from the State Government who have been acutely aware of the funding crisis causing temporary service suspensions and negatively impacting access to justice in a number of locations across Queensland.”

“The additional one off non recurrent funds will help address the many service delivery challenges we have been facing in relation to workforce health and safety, capacity, salary parity and unsustainable workloads born out of the spiralling demand for our services which may be directly contributed to government policy and legislation over many years, and not just in the legal assistance area.

“Whilst this State funding increase is only for one year at this stage - we would certainly be hopeful of a similar recurrent funding injection for 2024/25 to ensure the sustainability of our services longer term,” Mr Duffy said.

This good news follows on from a small one off non recurrent funding boost announced in May 2023 arising from our lobbying at a federal level. The Commonwealth Attorney General announced a one-off, \$21 million funding allocation to be shared between all ATSILS/ALSs across the country. Approximately \$2.9 million per year has been received in Queensland to bolster the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement (NLAP).

ATSILS around Australia have been calling on the federal government for many years to deliver a \$250 million emergency support package to prevent imminent service freezes and to continue to provide culturally safe frontline services to including advocacy to address the alarming incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The \$21 million provides short term relief but will not address the NLAP funding crisis crippling our services around the nation long term. The Commonwealth has indicated that there will be no further funding increases until a review of the NLAP Agreement has been undertaken.

The review of NLAP Agreement will be undertaken shortly by the Commonwealth and will be finalised in the first quarter of 2024. The findings from this review will inform future funding agreements from July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2030.

It should be noted that nationally, the demand for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) has increased by up to 100% since 2018 but core funding from the Commonwealth has declined in real terms.

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