



Aboriginal Family  
Violence Prevention  
& Legal Service Victoria  
Standing Firm Against  
Family Violence

# Media Release

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## *Major review further strengthens the case for increasing access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face significant barriers to accessing justice and serious funding is needed to relived pressure on the sector. The final report of the Victorian Government's Access to Justice Review adds to an already strong case for action to remove barriers to accessing justice for Aboriginal women, with specific references made to the role that the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria) plays.

At the frontline of Victoria's family violence epidemic, FVPLS Victoria works with Aboriginal women, who represent 93% of FVPLS Victoria's clients and experience disproportionate levels of disadvantage and inequality in justice outcomes.

"For Aboriginal women, there are significant barriers preventing access to the Victorian justice system. These barriers are entrenched and long-standing," says Ms Braybrook. "Aboriginal organisations like FVPLS Victoria exist because our clients have specific needs that can only be met by a trusted Aboriginal service".

While the Review recommends a centralised primary entry point to legal information, it recognises this will not work for certain groups of clients and there must be "no wrong door" into legal assistance. Aboriginal community controlled organisations, like FVPLS Victoria, are essential to facilitating access to justice for Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence – most especially Aboriginal women.

As a holistic service which has built the trust of Aboriginal communities through a culturally safe, empowered approach, FVPLS Victoria is best placed to ensure that Aboriginal women and their children receive the support they need when engaging with the law and the justice system. Ongoing, sustainable funding is urgently required for programs which assist Aboriginal women in identifying alternative pathways and interrupt trajectories that further entrench disadvantage.

"It was heartening to see the Review recognise the under-resourcing of the legal assistance system and acknowledge the system is under stress, consistent with the findings of the Productivity Commission's 2014 Access to Justice Arrangement report. This is an important review that further strengthens the case for increased funding to be provided to legal assistance services" says FVPLS Victoria CEO Antoinette Braybrook. "FVPLS Victoria has been operating for over 14 years and every year, despite under-resourcing and funding

uncertainty, we refuse to give up because without our service, Aboriginal women who experience extreme levels of violence, would have nowhere else to go".

Investment that is proportionate to need and will ensure the longevity of Aboriginal community controlled services for Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence is a crucial step in ending the horrific rates of family violence against Aboriginal women and enabling equal access to Victoria's justice system. "Aboriginal women are the fastest growing prison population in Australia. We need Government to support Aboriginal community controlled organisations as the consequences of Aboriginal women not being able to fully access our legal system are dire." says Ms Braybrook. **Media**

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