

## **Legal assistance services look to the National Legal Assistance Partnership Review as an opportunity for vital investment**

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National Legal Aid (NLA), representing the eight legal aid commissions across Australia, welcomes the significant Budget commitment to ending violence against women and children and its focus on ending violence against First Nations women and children.

NLA is pleased to see \$13.4 million allocated to the continuation of its lawyer-assisted family law property mediation program that provides legal assistance primarily for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. NLA also welcomes the much-needed investment in Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and looks forward to continuing to work alongside these services in supporting First Nations women and children to be free from violence.

Responding to the Budget announcements, NLA Chair Louise Glanville says “While this funding is welcome, we look forward to the upcoming Federal Government review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership, to be undertaken in the lead up to the 2024 Budget.”

The Review will provide the opportunity to identify additional investment needed in the legal assistance sector and in the systems in which we work. Increasing demand and service delivery gaps illustrate the need for legal assistance and the role it plays in supporting victim-survivors within family law, child support and other systems.

Legal Aid Commissions are part of the broader legal assistance sector, and together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, play a unique role in providing legal assistance services to the community.

“Any investment over the past nine years has been short-term funding for specific programs rather than an investment in core legal assistance services. Legal assistance is a critical aspect of supporting people experiencing disadvantage, not only in providing access to justice, but also in helping victim-survivors remain safe. It also supports people to navigate complex systems such as disability, migration, income support and during disasters.

A recent PwC analysis commissioned by NLA identifies that legal aid services are value for money – providing savings to the community of approximately \$600 million per annum, with more than half of this in response to domestic and family violence.” said Louise Glanville, Chair NLA.

“We are hopeful that the upcoming review identifies the vital work of the legal assistance sector and provides a roadmap for significant investment to help ensure that people experiencing disadvantage are provided with access to justice.”

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