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MEDIA RELEASE

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inTouch Applauds Access to Justice Funding Announcement, Calls for Swift Government Action on Implementation

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence welcomes yesterday's release of the Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) 2020-2025 Final Report by Dr. Warren Mundy. The report features 39 recommendations and is crucial for shaping the State and Federal funding arrangements necessary to support vulnerable communities in accessing essential legal services.

inTouch Women's Legal Centre supports the 1 in 3 migrant and refugee women who experience family violence in Australia and relies on funding like the NLAP to deliver culturally tailored, specialised services.

"Unsurprisingly, when reading the 39 recommendations made in this report, it confirms what the sector has been saying for a long time- Australia's community legal centres are in crisis, especially when it comes to services for some of our most vulnerable populations," Ajsela Siskovic, inTouch's Principal Lawyer and Executive Manager of Legal Services said.

The NLAP (now renamed the Access to Justice Partnership), typically funds Legal Aid Commissions (LACs), Community Legal Centres (CLCs), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS). Crucially, the report recommends that Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) be brought within the next agreement.

"The inTouch Women's Legal Centre is integrated within inTouch's case management and migration services structure and functions as both a women's Community Legal Centre (CLC) and a Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (FVPLS), so this is a welcome announcement," Ms Siskovic said.

inTouch also welcomed the report's recommendations for increased investment in the legal assistance sector, higher rates for private legal aid practitioners, greater access to interpreters and support for workforce development.

"We strongly endorse the recommendation for a separate funding stream for women's legal services and a broader definition of priority cohorts," Ms Siskovic continued. "The recognition of baseline and holistic funding, which we have long advocated for, addresses the unique challenges faced by organisations supporting intersectional clients. This will enhance the capacity to deliver specialised, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services."

However, inTouch also raised concerns about the timing to finalise the new agreement, noting the government has not yet responded to the report or committed forward funding to implement the critical recommendations.



“The current funding agreement expires in June 2025,” Ms Siskovic said. “This means Governments have limited time to form an agreement, and it’s difficult to plan ahead when you are working within 12 months of guaranteed funding for staffing and services.”

“We urge government to work with legal centres to progress these recommendations as soon as possible, so that we can continue to provide the services our communities so desperately need.”

###ENDS###

About inTouch Women’s Legal Centre

The inTouch Women’s Legal Centre was established in 2012, in recognition of the multiple barriers that many migrant and refugee women experience when trying to access the justice system. We provide legal advice and assistance to clients who are already receiving support through inTouch’s case managers and are the first multidisciplinary practice in Australia to provide this type of inclusive service response. This end-to-end support model also allows inTouch to provide a comprehensive continuum of service – the client’s file and personal circumstances (including instances of violence) are managed privately and concurrently by practitioners, avoiding recurrences of trauma.

Our services include:

- Protection from family violence – intervention orders
- Family law – dispute resolution including parenting matters
- Small property settlements and financial matters
- Immigration and Visa assistance
- Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) applications
- Divorce Clinics

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