



10 tips for new minister for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence

We are the North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Services (NAAFLS), an independent Family Violence Prevention Legal Service. We work within the bush court system to provide legal representation and advice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who've experienced domestic, family and sexual violence. We work in 46 Top End communities, and we know too well the hideous damage that violence has on families.

The announcement of NT's first minister for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence was welcome news at NAAFLS and is a good step in the right direction. The NT has the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence in the country, so the need for a dedicated minister is undisputable. Aboriginal women and children carry the biggest burden and are 40 times more likely to experience serious violence.

We work with victim-survivors every day and as a peak body would like to share our top 10 tips of what the new minister could spend the \$10 million dollars allocated to her portfolio on. These are realistic and tangible programs that if done properly will have a better chance at achieving the minister's goal of driving down our shameful statistics.

1. Ongoing and meaningful consultation with remote community elders and women leaders to identify the strengths that exist within communities and possible solutions.
2. More immediate and ongoing safe housing in remote communities.
3. Training for first responders and case workers in harm minimisation for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence particularly in a remote setting.
4. Improving access to support services in remote communities that focus preventing family and sexual violence.
5. Introducing community based mental health and personal healing services.
6. Expanding the telephone Aboriginal Interpreter Service.
7. Funding gazetted domestic and family violence rehabilitation programs in the Top End.
8. Funding legal representation of defendants of Domestic Violence Order applications so the perpetrators are more involved and aware of the legal process.
9. Addressing police racism towards Indigenous victims through expecting and accepting domestic violence in communities
10. Acknowledging and addressing the current housing crisis in the NT, in particular in remote communities and the impact that this has as a key driver to home based family and domestic violence.

“Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each individual remote Indigenous community will make for real change. With open, honest and ongoing communication with our elders, Men's Leadership groups and Strong Women's groups funding can then be directed to the most appropriate area so that Closing the Gap targets are met. The lack of both suitable housing and Women's Safe Houses in all remote communities are recognised drivers of Domestic & Family Violence. Women and their children need to have ready access to safe accommodation in their community so they can seek safety close to home when they identify they are at risk. Suitable housing may be the most important target to be achieved and we look forward to the Minister

acknowledging this key factor in her mission to address the horrendous rates of family violence in the Territory.” Cassandra Carolin, Deputy CEO, NAAFLS.

“We need to trust that Aboriginal communities know what is best for their communities and that they have the capacity to draw on these strengths to come up with solutions. There are community organisations in the Top End that are already doing this like the Galiwin’ku Women’s Space. They are taking the strengths in their culture – strict rules of respect and recognition of each person’s responsibility in community – and using that to protect victim-survivors and to counsel people perpetrating family violence” Sophie Hantz, Solicitor, NAAFLS.

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