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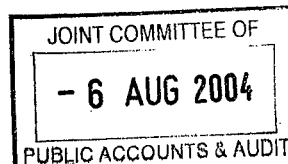
## Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

In your reply please quote

Our Ref# August 2004

Your Ref:

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit,  
Commonwealth Parliament,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT, 2600



Dear Sir/Madam,

### Supplementary Submission No 31

#### Re: Indigenous Law and Justice Inquiry

I refer to our original submission dated 31 May 2004. I also refer to the evidence which I gave to the inquiry in Darwin on 18 July 2004. On that occasion, I was asked to provide a supplementary submission providing details of statistics relating to domestic violence and indigenous women. I would also like to take the opportunity to correct an error in the written submission provided by the North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service relating to funding provided to and activities undertaken by the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission.

#### Re: Domestic Violence statistics relating to indigenous women

In 2000/2001 there were a total of 8921 incidents of domestic violence reported to agencies in the NT. 91% of victims were women and 62% of victims were indigenous. In 2001/2002, there were a total of 9823 incidents of domestic violence reported - 91% of victims were women and 72% of victims were indigenous. Research has consistently shown that domestic violence is underreported and that victims are hesitant about disclosing information.<sup>1</sup>

The rate of assault and sexual assault in the NT is the highest among all Australian States and Territories. In 2001, the Northern Territory recorded a rate of 1486 assaults per 100,000 people and 133 sexual assaults per 100,000 people.<sup>2</sup> The homicide rate of women in the NT is 6.5% per 100,000 people while the national average for women is 1.4% per 100,000 people.<sup>3</sup> Research conducted by Audrey Bolger throughout the NT indicates that for many Indigenous women, violence is an everyday experience.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data Collection Report 2000-2002, Occasional Paper No 41, NT Government Domestic Violence Strategy, Office of Women's Policy, Department of the Chief Minister

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Recorded Crime, 2001, 4510.0

<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Criminology, National Homicide Monitoring Project

<sup>4</sup> Audrey Bolger, "Aboriginal Women & Violence", Australian national University, North Australian Research Unit, 1991

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**Re: Funding and activities of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission**

The North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service in its written submission to the inquiry, stated that "NAALAS received \$2.25m and dealt with over 3,000 matters in the 2002-2003 financial year, while the NT Legal Aid Commission received over \$4m for around 1,100 matters. This did not include the funding from the Commonwealth for family law matters".

The above figures provided for the NT Legal Aid Commission are incorrect and apparently were based on a misunderstanding on the part of NAALAS of information outlined in the Commission's last annual report. The correct figures are that for the 2002/2003 financial year, the NT Legal Aid Commission received \$2.14m from the NT Government and \$2.43m from the Commonwealth government. The NT Legal Aid Commission provided the following services during that period:

3523 people were represented in criminal law matters, including duty lawyer services  
507 people were represented in family law matters  
314 people were represented in civil law matters  
4580 people were provided with legal advice across all law types  
4113 people were provided with legal information across all law types

As I outlined to the inquiry, activities are not recorded consistently by Legal Aid Commissions and ATSILS. Nor are Commissions and ATSILS funded on the same basis, ie., Commissions are only permitted to use Commonwealth funds for Commonwealth legal matters, eg., family law matters. It is therefore not possible to compare funding and activity levels of Commissions and ATSILS on current data available.

Please let me know if you require any further information. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide evidence to the inquiry,

Yours sincerely,

  
Jenny Hardy,  
Deputy Director