

# Election priorities 2025

Many individuals and families in our community are facing complex health, social and justice issues that can have lifelong, intergenerational impact on health and wellbeing.

The challenges are significant: cost of living pressures, housing insecurity, increasing poverty, persistent gender inequality and gender-based violence, and increased risk from natural disaster and pandemics.

Efforts and investment towards Closing the Gap are failing to improve outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Services are struggling to meet increasing demand for support, and individual service approaches do not alone have the capacity to respond to the complex challenges people are facing.

As we head into a new term of parliament, we need:

- bold political leadership to transform the systems that hold people in disadvantage. This must be underpinned by a resolute commitment to First Nations self-determination
- strong, equitable and responsive support for individuals and families in times of need
- decisive and long-term government commitment to, and investment in, prevention and early intervention systems that can effectively respond to complexity.

## Recommendations

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Health Justice Australia calls on our next government to:

### 1. Ensure strong, equitable and person-centred services that respond to multiple government priorities

- Commit long-term funding for preventative, integrated, multi-disciplinary services that address the social determinants affecting the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families.
- Deliver more substantial investment into the legal assistance sector to support an increase in integrated service delivery, and to address continued funding shortfalls in the face of increasing need.
- Invest in workforce training and capability building to support collaborative multi-disciplinary practice.

### 2. Deliver resourcing to achieve First Nations self-determination

- Recognise and resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership
- Invest in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and continue community-led transition of policy and service leadership.

### 3. Invest in prevention and early intervention and the wider determinants of health

- Harness the commitment in the National Preventive Health Strategy with a clear roadmap to deliver the promised 5% of total health expenditure on preventive health measures by 2030.
- Raise the rate of JobSeeker and related payments.

## The value of integrated service responses at the right time, in the right place

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Since the World Health Organization's ground-breaking Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2008), evidence has continued to grow about how social and environmental factors make or keep people unwell. These social determinants include wide ranging legal issues related to areas such as housing, unemployment, discrimination, credit and debt, and violence. When left unaddressed, these issues can intensify or escalate to crisis, exacerbate disadvantage and leading to poorer health and wellbeing outcomes, both physical and mental.

Issues in people's lives do not occur in isolation. They can compound and, without the right help at the right time, can escalate to crisis.

A single service approach can only go so far in responding effectively to this kind of complex need. In fact, the way in which current service systems respond can exacerbate and escalate other issues that impact on health and wellbeing, undermining people's recovery from crisis and trauma.

Integrated service responses, which are multidisciplinary and person-centred, respond to the complexity of interconnected health, social and legal issues that drive poor health and wellbeing, and entrench disadvantage. They are designed to recognise the complexity of challenges that people face; provide timely and accessible support; and build the resilience of individuals, families and local communities.

## Health justice partnership as a collaborative solution to complexity

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Health justice partnership is one example of a collaborative integrated approach that improves service responses to complexity. It is a response to the research that one in five of the most disadvantaged in our community take no action in response to legal problems; and when people do seek advice, they are more likely to ask a non-legal advisor, such as a health professional, than a lawyer.

In health justice partnership, legal help is brought into healthcare and other social support settings, enabling lawyers to work more closely with the patient/client and treating team to address legal issues that are interacting with a client's health, wellbeing and treatment.

There are more than 130 health justice partnerships nationally, and across every jurisdiction across Australia. Settings include community health services, ante-natal care settings, child and family services, mental health and wellbeing centres, domestic, family and sexual violence response services, alcohol or other drug services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and hospitals.

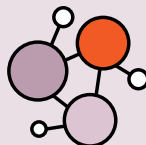
### Health justice partnerships work by:



**Building on existing local infrastructure and relationships to improve service responsiveness**



**Reshaping services around the needs of the people they assist and providing support in the places people need it**



**Breaking down service siloes and making it easier for people to navigate complex systems as they search for help**



**Helping to prevent legal issues from escalating to crisis, at which point they can compound ill health and disadvantage, for individuals and within families**

Health justice partnerships already demonstrate capability as an integrated service response that provides early support and prevention through addressing the multiple, intersecting legal problems that affect people who are at risk of family and sexual violence and acute or enduring mental health conditions, families experiencing adversity, as well as older people at risk of or experiencing elder abuse and people faced with homelessness.

Despite recent funding commitments through the new National Access to Justice Partnership, the legal assistance sector will need substantially more investment to meet increasing community need, and to enable services to pursue integrated, collaborative service approaches, such as health justice partnership. Investment must be prioritised to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Aboriginal Family Prevention Legal Services, consistent with government policy directions in other portfolios to deliver against Closing the Gap priority reforms.

## System transformation is needed

Current service design and funding systems across the legal, health and social sectors are not well set up to address the complexity that individuals and families experience in everyday life. The next term of parliament is an opportunity for stronger cross-government collaboration to transform the way systems are designed and funded, so that services are better enabled to respond to intersecting and complex challenges, that span multiple priority reform areas.

Integrated service approaches build the capacity of the service systems to respond to complex need. However, working in integrated practice takes specific skills and competencies that may not be supported in professional training pathways. The government needs to invest in workforce development to build capability across sectors for collaborative multi-disciplinary practice.

*Health Justice Australia is a national charity and centre of excellence that supports the effectiveness and expansion of health justice partnership.*