**Media Release**

Embargoed until 6am, 10 December 2020

**New research shows need for action on widespread financial elder abuse
in remote Kimberley communities**

Kimberley Community Legal Services (KCLS), in partnership with local Aboriginal research consultancy Kimberley Jiyigas, today released “No More Humbug”, the first-ever detailed study of financial elder abuse specifically in remote towns and Aboriginal communities.

The report is the culmination of months of detailed surveys and interviews with Aboriginal families, stakeholders and service providers across the Kimberley.

It finds that Aboriginal elders are under immense financial pressure, and often find themselves providing for extended family on an individual pension or other income.

Natasha Short, project manager for the research, said: “We knew this was a problem, but our study surprised me in just how widespread financial abuse of our elders is. Unfortunately, “humbugging”, or demanding money from elders in a threatening way, has become normalised. As a community we need to help restore the traditional “give and take” culture of Aboriginal societies, and find new ways of helping and honoring the older generation.”

The research also highlights the responsibility that banks, retailers, and Centrelink need to take regarding humbugging. The research revealed instances of elders having a large portion of their income drawn off by “Centrepay” deductions organised through Centrelink with local businesses – when in fact other family members are using the funds without the elder’s permission.

Chuck Berger, KCLS Manager, said, “We regularly see clients who have their whole fortnightly income disappear as soon as it hits their account, and often Centrepay deductions are to blame. The oversight of Centrepay needs to be tightened up, and all staff of businesses and agencies in the Kimberley need better training on how to spot financial abuse, and how to help in culturally appropriate ways.”

The report and associated resources are available on request, and from 10 December at [www.kcls.org.au](http://www.kcls.org.au)

Media contacts:

Natasha Short, Managing Director, Kimberley Jiyigas

admin@kimberleybirds.com / 0409 156 756

Chuck Berger, Manager, Kimberley Community Legal Services.
manager@kcls.org.au / 0417 447 599