



MEDIA RELEASE

16 December 2015

MYEFO fails frontline family violence services

The Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) announced yesterday by the Federal Treasurer, Scott Morrison, missed a real opportunity to guarantee funding for vital legal assistance services, said community lawyers from across Australia.

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC), the national peak body for all Community Legal Centres in Australia joined with all state and territory Community Legal Centre associations in expressing disappointment at the MYEFO.

“We understand that there are significant Budget pressures, but this MYEFO is characterised by savings measures which hit vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community hardest. Access to legal assistance services for these people is vital and should be a priority. Instead, Community Legal Centres, that help hundreds of thousands of people across Australia each year, are facing a 30% funding cut nationally from 1 July 2017” said Rosslyn Monro, Chair of NACLC.

“Senator Cash indicated in recent Senate Estimates that funding for CLCs would be considered as part of the MYEFO and Budget processes. We are disappointed to see no mention of CLCs in the MYEFO” added James Farrell, Executive Director of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services.

“The impact of the funding cuts from 2017 will be devastating for communities across Australia. Importantly, funding for Community Legal Centres not only ensures people get access to the legal help they need, but ultimately saves the Government money in terms of downstream costs to the justice system” said Mr Farrell.

The Government has a stated commitment to addressing family violence, and it was front and centre of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda last week. This MYEFO was in part a test of the Federal Government’s commitment to addressing family violence and it has failed. Victims of family violence deserve assurances from the Federal Government that vital services will be properly funded, and unfortunately we haven’t been given that assurance as part of the MYEFO process” said Liana Buchanan, Executive Officer of the Federation of Community Legal Centres in Victoria.

“Community Legal Centres are at the frontline of responses to family violence. The small amount of funding for a few CLCs announced recently under the Women’s Safety Package means nothing if CLCs are facing broader funding cuts during the 3-year pilot project period”

NACLC acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Australia and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional owners of the land on which the NACLC office is situated. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present.

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added Helen Creed, Executive Director, Community Legal Centres Association (WA).

The Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, are also an important part of the legal assistance sector. “As a result, we are also concerned about the decision to pause indexation on the Indigenous Advancement Strategy in 2018-2019, given the importance of funding for services such as the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services” said Alastair McEwin, Executive Director of Community Legal Centres NSW.

“The Government has missed the opportunity to address the funding cliff as part of MYEFO, so we call on the Turnbull Government to reconsider the funding cuts due to take effect on 1 July 2017 as part of its first Budget in May next year” concluded Catherine McMorrine, Co-Chair South Australian Council of Community Legal Centres.

For further information or to arrange an interview contact

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