

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

TUESDAY 7 JUNE 2016

### **COMMUNITY LAWYERS WELCOME ALP FUNDING COMMITMENT BUT MORE TO DO**

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) today welcomed the Australian Labor Party's reiteration of its commitment to funding and support for community legal centres.

Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus QC MP today announced further details of the ALP's policy on funding for community legal centres. Last year the ALP announced that they would provide CLCs with \$42.9 over 3 years to assist CLCs undertaking family violence-related work. Today and over the coming weeks, the ALP will be announcing allocation of that funding to specific CLCs across Australia.

'Community legal centres across Australia are being forced to turn away hundreds of thousands of people each year. This funding commitment from the ALP is welcome, and will make a real difference to the ability of centres across Australia to help people experiencing family violence' said Amanda Alford, Director Policy and Advocacy at NACLC.

'We also welcome the ALP's acknowledgement that people experiencing family violence face a range of legal problems and need a range of legal assistance including for example in relation to credit and debt, housing and employment, which is reflected in the fact that all Commonwealth funded CLCs will receive some of the \$42.9 million funding' said Ms Alford.

'While we welcome the additional funding, we are disappointed that the ALP has chosen to allocate funding amounts to individual centres without undertaking a transparent and evidence-based process for determining legal need and funding to meet that need' added Ms Alford.

'To date over 3 years the Coalition has provided or pledged \$15 million and some part of \$30 million for CLCs to undertake family violence-related work, but the overall amount is unlikely to match the ALP commitment. We think the ALP's commitment sets a minimum funding benchmark in this area and call on the Coalition to match or exceed it' she said.

'Importantly however, neither the ALP or Coalition funding commitments are sufficient to address the broader funding cuts facing the sector, or to solve the crisis facing the legal assistance sector. We need an additional investment in the sector consistent with the Productivity Commission's recommendations, as well as a long-term commitment to adequately funding the sector' said Ms Alford.

'The ALP has also highlighted its commitment to consultation with the sector around further funding and to ensuring that funding can be used for frontline services as well as the vital policy, advocacy and law reform work that CLCs undertake, which is currently restricted' concluded Ms Alford.

NACLC continues to call on all parties to commit to:

1. Reversing the \$12.1 million funding cut to Community Legal Centres nationally in 2017-2018, the \$11.6 million cut in 2018-2019 and the \$11.13 million cut in 2019-2020 (amounting to a \$34.83 million cut over the period 2017-18 to 2019-2020) under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services.

2. Implementing the Productivity Commission's recommendation from its Access to Justice Arrangements Inquiry and provide an immediate injection of \$200 million per year into the legal assistance service sector, which should be shared between the Commonwealth (60%) and the States and Territories (40%). This should equate to at least an additional \$24 million per year allocated to CLCs (\$14.4 million p.a. Commonwealth and \$9.6 million p.a. from States and Territories)
3. Committing to implementing an appropriate process for determining adequate and sustainable longer-term funding contributions to the legal assistance sector by both Federal and State and Territory Governments, in consultation with the sector.

**For further information or to arrange an interview contact:**

Amanda Alford, Director Policy and Advocacy, 0421 028 645

Jackie Hanafie, Media Adviser, 0412 652 439

For comment on the specific announcements and particular funding challenges facing community legal centres in specific jurisdictions please contact:

- NSW: Polly Porteous, Community Legal Centres NSW, 0415 156 020  
*(Note, funding was announced for a number of CLCs in NSW today)*
- Queensland: James Farrell, Community Legal Centres Queensland, 0411 206 835
- Victoria: Katie Fraser, Federation of Community Legal Centres, 03 9652 1505
- South Australia: Catherine McMorrine, SA Council of CLCs, 08 8384 5222
- WA: Helen Creed, Community Legal Centres Association (WA), 08 9221 9322
- Tasmania: Jane Hutchison, Community Legal Centres Tasmania, 03 6223 2500
- NT: Caitlin Perry, Northern Territory Association of Community Legal Centres, 08 8982 1111
- ACT: Genevieve Bolton, ACT Association of Community Legal Centres, 02 6218 7900