

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ONE YEAR UNTIL CRIPPLING CUTS TO LEGAL ASSISTANCE SECTOR

Today marks exactly one year until crippling 30% cuts to Commonwealth funding for Community Legal Centres of \$34.83 million (over 3 years) take effect.

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) has called on both major parties to make reversal of the funding cuts and urgent additional funding for CLCs and other legal assistance services a priority.

'There is one day until the election and one year until the sector faces significant cuts that will have a real impact on people in every electorate across Australia. We already turn away over 160,000 people each year and that number is growing' said Dan Stubbs, NACLC National Spokesperson.

'We are disappointed that neither Prime Minister Turnbull or Mr Shorten have made access to justice or to vital legal help for vulnerable Australians a key election issue or priority despite the crisis facing legal assistance services, the courts and the justice system broadly' he said.

'While technically the cuts take effect in one year, we know that services will need to wind down ahead of that date, so we are facing a critical situation. It is absolutely vital that whichever party forms Government makes funding and support for CLCs as well as for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services and Legal Aid Commissions a priority' he added.

'We will continue to work hard after the election and over the coming year to make it clear that our clients, who are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the community, will suffer unless the funding crisis is addressed' he concluded.

NACLC reiterates its calls for:

1. Reversal of the Commonwealth funding cuts to CLCs under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance amounting to \$34.83 million from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020
2. An immediate injection of \$200 million per year to legal assistance services, as recommended by the Productivity Commission, 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/Territories)
3. A commitment by all levels of Government to implementing an appropriate process for determining adequate and sustainable longer-term funding contributions for legal assistance in consultation with the sector.

**To arrange an interview or for more information please contact:**

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