

National Association of Community Legal Centres
ACN 163 101 737 ABN 67 757 001 303

Tel: 61 2 9264 9595

Fax: 61 2 9264 9594

Email: naclc@clc.net.au

Twitter: [Twitter.com/NACLCComms](https://twitter.com/NACLCComms)

Web: www.naclc.org.au

Mail: PO Box A2245 Sydney South NSW 1235 Australia



Media Release

9 August 2016

Over 160,000 people turned away from Community Legal Centres every year

Today the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) launched its third National Census Report. The Census is conducted by NACLC annually as a survey of Community Legal Centres (CLCs) across Australia. 134 CLCs completed the Census which uses data from the 2014-15 financial year.

“We know that CLCs provide free legal help to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community. For example, the Census tells us that the average proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients was 15.3% and clients with a disability was 26.6%” said Dan Stubbs, NACLC National Spokesperson.

“CLCs also provide assistance in a range of areas of law, and while family violence and family law have been in the top two areas for a few years (46.0% and 40.3% respectively) we now see that homelessness is in the top 3 specialist areas or client groups (41.1%)” added Mr Stubbs.

“What is concerning looking at these results is that 92 CLCs reported turning away 159,220 people and on average in only 64.4% of people could be given an appropriate, accessible and affordable referrals. This means hundreds of thousands of people are missing out on the legal help they need and this number is growing” said Mr Stubbs.

“At the same time however, CLCs are facing a 30% cut to Commonwealth funding from 1 July next year. CLCs report that the impact of funding cuts will include a reduction in services and outreach, closure of branch offices and telephone advice lines, and loss of staff” he added.

“Unfortunately, CLCs are also being forced to spend more and more time on searching for funding to maintain crucial services. The Census revealed that 111 CLCs spent 1,500.4 hours per week in 2014/15 financial year on funding-related activities. This means less time is available to provide legal assistance to clients” concluded Mr Stubbs.

NACLC renews calls on all levels of Government to adequately fund legal assistance services, including reversal of the funding cuts facing CLCs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and an immediate additional investment in all legal assistance services.

In summary, the Census revealed that in 2014-15:

- the top 3 specialist areas or client groups for CLCs were domestic/family violence (46.0%), homelessness (41.1%) and family law (40.3%)
- the average proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients was 15.3% and of clients with disability was 26.6%.
- 92 CLCs across Australia turned away over 159,220 people
- volunteers contributed 575,000 hours to 111 CLCs across Australia, and
- pro bono partners contributed 51,896 hours of assistance to 69 CLCs.

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.

The full Census Report is available on NACLC's website [here](#)

For further information or to arrange an interview contact:

Dan Stubbs, National Spokesperson, 0437 253 543

Amanda Alford, NACLC Director Policy and Advocacy, 0421 028 645