

MEDIA RELEASE

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SA STATE BUDGET LEAVES OUT LEGAL HELP FOR MOST VULNERABLE

The most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in South Australia who require vital access to legal assistance services have been let down by the State Government in this year's Budget, says the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) and the South Australian Council of Community Legal Services (SACCLS).

The 2016-17 South Australian State Budget released yesterday does not provide additional investment in legal assistance services, including Community Legal Centres, despite the Commonwealth Government cutting SA CLC funding by 29% in July 2015 and the looming 29% cut to CLCs from July 2017.

"This year's Budget is a missed opportunity to adequately fund centres and ensure the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in South Australia have access to legal assistance," said Dan Stubbs, NACLC National Spokesperson.

"Community Legal Centres in South Australia helped over 14,000 people with free legal advice in 2015 and centres had to turn away thousands of people, in part due to lack of funding. These are the people that will suffer as a result of this Budget" said Marja Elizabeth, Director of SACCLS.

"The Budget Papers make clear that the State Government wants to develop a new service model for legal assistance in South Australia following the recent review, but that hasn't been backed up by additional funding" she said.

"We had hoped that the South Australian Government would recognise that the Commonwealth Government is failing to prioritise legal assistance and look at increasing its funding, particularly because the State Government only provides 19.5% of CLC funding compared to between 40-60% in most other States and Territories" added Ms Elizabeth.

"The bottom line is that these cuts will have a significant impact on the ability of people in South Australia to access the legal help they need. They deserve better and time is running out as the Commonwealth funding cliff approaches" Mr Stubbs concluded.

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