

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**FRIDAY 29 APRIL 2016**

### **GOVERNMENT URGED TO REVERSE CUTS TO COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AHEAD OF FEDERAL BUDGET**

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) has today urged the Federal Government to reverse the impending funding cuts to community legal centres ahead of Tuesday's Federal Budget.

Community Legal Centres are facing a 30 per cent cut to funding next year, and similar cuts over the following two years, under the National Partnership Agreement for Legal Assistance Services (NPA).

NACLC Chair Rosslyn Monro said the Federal Budget presents an important opportunity for the Government to reverse these potentially devastating cuts.

"Community Legal Centres assist more than 215,000 people with free legal advice every year nationally but sadly, we are turning away more than 160,000 people on top of that due to a lack of resources" Ms Monro said.

"Further cuts will have a devastating impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged people who so desperately need legal help".

The Productivity Commission's 2014 Access to Justice Arrangement Inquiry Report made clear that an investment in legal assistance services, including CLCs, reduces costs to Government as well as community and other systems and services in the long term, including in areas such as health, housing and social security.

"Investment in CLCs not only makes sense in terms of ensuring access to justice, but also makes economic sense. Given what the Productivity Commission has said, investment in CLCs is compatible with being fiscally responsible" Ms Monro added.

"This Budget could make a real difference to the lives of hundreds of thousands of people across Australia who get help from CLCs each year".

"If the Government doesn't at least reverse the cuts on Tuesday, from 1 July next year there will be 30 per cent cut to CLCs nationally which will have a significant impact on the ability of people to access the legal help they need".

"We urge the Government to recognise the importance of Community Legal Centres in our communities and make funding for these vital services a priority," concluded Ms Monro.

**ENDS**

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