



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Peak Body condemns SA Government closure of Community Legal Centres

People in South Australia will miss out on essential legal services as a result of the decision of the South Australian Government to close three of the eight Commonwealth funded Community Legal Centres (CLCs) across South Australia.

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) has today expressed serious concern about the impact of this eleventh hour decision that was revealed following announcement of the results of a competitive tender for CLC funding and appears to be based on a review of CLCs in South Australia that received widespread criticism. It is due to take effect from 1 July 2017.

“Community Legal Centres across South Australia help thousands of people every year who wouldn’t otherwise be able to afford legal assistance” said Nassim Arrage, Chief Executive Officer of NACLC.

“We are extremely concerned about the decision to close three of these centres - the Welfare Rights Legal Centre, that provides expert social security law assistance; South East Community Legal Centre based in Mt Gambier and Riverland Community Legal Service in Berri” he added.

“We are concerned about the impact these closures will have on the people these centres help every day, their local communities and the staff of the centres.”

“The closure of these centres and the move to the centralisation of access to legal services will act as a barrier for people getting the help they need from local community-based services. People in places like Berri already face barriers to accessing services and now their nearest CLC will be hundreds of kilometres away”.

Mr Arrage added, “We are very disappointed that the South Australian Government has made this decision despite the Commonwealth Government reversing the funding cuts facing CLCs in the recent Federal Budget”.

“We have seen other State Governments increase funding to CLCs in recent months, but the SA Government has not done so. It is already one of the lowest contributing Governments to CLC funding and has failed to act for the people of South Australia” concluded Mr Arrage.

*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.*

NACLC calls on the South Australian Government to do its part in ensuring people in South Australia can access the legal help they need, including by:

- increasing its contribution to CLC funding
- making a decision on allocation of the additional Commonwealth funding provided in the 2017-2018 Federal Budget as soon as possible
- revisiting its decision to de-fund three centres
- if it is committed to closing these three centres, providing transitional funding and support to the people, communities and centres affected.

For further information or to arrange an interview contact:

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