



MEDIA RELEASE

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Leading community legal centre representatives from across Australia say funding cuts risk lives

Leading Community Legal Centre representatives from across Australia met Friday in Sydney to discuss Commonwealth funding of Community Legal Centres (CLCs), the proposed National Partnership Agreement (NPA) for Legal Assistance Services, and the impact of these on essential community legal services.

“This year CLCs in South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory will be facing funding cuts. From 2017-2018 CLCs nationally face a Commonwealth funding cut of 30%” said Michael Smith, NACLC Chair.

“This will have a significant impact on the ability of CLCs to assist the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community and may require the closure of some CLCs as well as cuts to vital programs” Mr Smith continued.

“The Productivity Commission last year recommended that an extra \$200 million be provided by Australian governments to legal assistance services to meet unmet legal need. Instead, CLCs are facing immediate funding cuts in some jurisdictions and further cuts in the future” said Rosslyn Monro, NACLC Board Member and CEO Women’s Legal Service Queensland.

“Community Legal Centres are essential in delivering free legal help for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community and funding cuts will have a direct impact on frontline services and the ability of these people to get the legal assistance they need, which may ultimately cost lives” added Liana Buchanan, Executive Officer of the Federation of Community Legal Centres in Victoria.

In addition, the new NPA is likely to continue a restriction on the use of Commonwealth funding for policy, advocacy and law reform work done by CLCs. “The early intervention and prevention work that CLCs do is crucial in addressing systemic issues and, as the Productivity Commission highlighted, is highly cost effective” said Nassim Arrage, Chair of Community Legal Centres NSW.

The representatives called on all levels of government to:

- commit the necessary additional funding to CLCs
- ensure that the new NPA ensures CLCs can provide services to clients most in need
- encourage CLCs to undertake vital policy, advocacy and law reform work

For further information or to arrange an interview contact Michael Smith, NACLC Chair on 0421 437 883

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.