



MEDIA STATEMENT

22 November 2018

Peak Body Welcomes Government Support for Specialist Domestic Violence Services and Health Justice Partnerships

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC), the peak body for Community Legal Centres across Australia, has welcomed the announcement made by Minister for Women, Hon Kelly O'Dwyer earlier this week extending funding for vital specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships.

As part of the Women's Economic Security Statement, Minister O'Dwyer announced an additional \$29.8 million over three years from 2019-20 to continue the existing Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships currently operated by Community Legal Centres and some Legal Aid Commissions across Australia.

"We welcome the additional investment in these vital services. This funding will mean women experiencing family violence will have ongoing access to the intensive and specialised legal help they need to keep them safe" said Nassim Arrage, Chief Executive Officer of NACLC.

"We know that in many instances engaging with these services is the first time women experiencing family violence feel heard, supported and empowered. They are making a real difference to the lives of women and children across Australia".

"It also means additional funding for five Health Justice Partnerships, which involve collaboration between community lawyers and health services and their patients to address their legal needs and facilitate better health and justice outcomes."

"Without these partnerships and the on-site legal clinics at hospitals and health services, we know that many of the people seen would not have otherwise seen a lawyer or been assisted to resolve their legal problems".

"We also welcome the additional \$2 million per year to support the provision of integrated financial support services, such as advice, counselling and financial literacy to support women experiencing family violence".

"The continuation of funding for these 14 specialist Domestic Violence Units and five Health Justice Partnerships as part of this announcement is an important first step".

"These units and partnerships were established as a pilot. The next step is for the Commonwealth Government to provide funding to facilitate national roll-out of these services".

“The Government has already demonstrated its commitment to the services these centres provide, and we know a recent evaluation of the services found extremely positive outcomes. National roll-out would mean greater access to these vital services for women who desperately need legal help”.

“We look forward to continuing to work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure people experiencing family violence get the legal help they need across Australia” Mr Arrage concluded.

Background

Community legal centres are a vital part of the legal framework in responding to and addressing family violence. In recognition of this, some community legal centres have received specific Commonwealth family violence-related funding in recent years.

For example, since 2015 some community legal centres have been provided limited specific funding under the Women’s Safety Package and Third Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, including:

- \$15 million (of the \$100 million Women’s Safety Package) announced in 2015 to establish 12 new specialist domestic violence units and fund five health justice partnerships within existing legal assistance services located in domestic violence ‘hot spots’
- \$5 million (of the \$30 million funding for legal assistance under the Third Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children) announced in 2016 for CLCs and LACs to extend the Women’s Safety Package pilot projects by 1 year, and
- \$3.4 million to establish six new domestic violence units and support the expansion of an existing unit, announced in October 2017.

This funding and these units were established as a pilot and an evaluation of the units established under the Women’s Safety Package is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

The following organisations operate specialist domestic violence units:

- [Legal Aid New South Wales](#), south-west Sydney and the Central Coast, NSW
- [Western New South Wales Community Legal Centre](#), Dubbo, NSW
- [Eastern Community Legal Centre](#), north-east Melbourne, Vic
- [Murray Mallee Community Legal Centre](#), Mildura, Vic
- [Women's Legal Service Queensland](#), Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Caboolture, Qld
- [North Queensland Women's Legal Service](#), Townsville, Qld
- [Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre](#), north-east Perth, WA
- [Kimberley Community Legal Service](#), Kununurra, WA
- [Legal Services Commission of South Australia](#), Elizabeth, SA
- [Women's Legal Service Tasmania](#), Burnie and Launceston, Tas
- [Central Australian Women's Legal Service](#), Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, NT
- [Women's Legal Centre ACT](#), Canberra, ACT
- [Women's Legal Service Victoria](#), online model, Vic
- [Southern Communities Advocacy Legal and Education Service](#), Rockingham, WA
- [Women's Legal Service South Australia](#), south metropolitan Adelaide, SA

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The following organisations are delivering the health justice partnerships:

- [Inner Melbourne Community Legal](#), Melbourne, Vic
- [Women's Legal Service Queensland](#), Brisbane and surrounds, Qld
- [Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre](#), north-east Perth, WA
- [Legal Services Commission of South Australia](#), Elizabeth, SA
- [Central Australian Women's Legal Service](#), Alice Springs, NT

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