



MEDIA RELEASE

27 April 2019

Community Legal Sector Welcomes Greens Access to Justice Policy

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) welcomes the Access to Justice Policy released today by the Australian Greens. The Policy includes significant additional funding for legal assistance services, including community legal centres.

The Access to Justice Policy includes an additional \$954 million in funding for Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and Legal Aid Commissions as well as a range of other measures.

“Community legal centres help hundreds of thousands of everyday people and people experiencing discrimination and disadvantage when they need it most every year. We welcome the Greens policy commitment to core funding for our centres as well as funding in key areas of work” said Nassim Arrage, Chief Executive Officer of NACLC.

“We are facing increasing demand for our help but are forced to turn away hundreds of thousands of people each year due to insufficient funding and lack of resources. The Productivity Commission and others have been clear about the need for a significant injection of additional core funding and the Greens policy does just that- committing to \$61.3 million additional core funding for centres to meet existing unmet legal need”.

“The breadth of the funding commitments in the Policy is testament to the breadth of our work as a sector and the huge number of people across Australia that we help in many different areas of law that affect people in their everyday lives” he added.

“Community legal centres help people with credit and debt legal issues and see first-hand how the misconduct of banks and other financial bodies hurts people experiencing discrimination and disadvantage. The significant commitment of \$218.4 million for consumer financial legal advice through community legal centres and the National Debt Helpline is welcome and would provide important funding to help us to support people to assert their rights, get out of debt and protect their livelihoods”.

“In relation to addressing the impact of family violence, there is also a welcome \$40.4 million to extend and nationally roll out specialist units and health justice partnerships. We have already seen the difference that the existing specialist units have made to the lives of women and children across Australia and welcome this commitment to expand this important model”.

“Given our sector expertise in working with people experiencing elder abuse, we are pleased to see \$57.7 million for national rollout of specialist units and health justice partnerships to support people experiencing elder abuse”.

“The Environmental Defenders Offices across Australia are the only public interest environmental law organisations in Australia. They provide vital legal help to people across Australia on environment and planning issues, run community legal education programs which allows community members to understand the laws and decisions that affect them, as well as important broader policy and law reform

work with the aim of protecting our natural environment. As a result, we welcome the inclusion of \$16.8 million funding to the EDOs”.

“We are pleased to see recognition of the role and value of our work as a peak body though a \$6.8 million funding commitment, as well as the work of the other legal assistance peaks and funding to support our national quality and continuous improvement framework that supports delivery of high quality services across Australia”.

“Importantly, the Policy also includes crucial funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and Legal Aid Commissions. The funding for community controlled organisations in particular is an important part of ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access culturally safe legal services across Australia”.

“Finally, we have called for a regular survey of legal need to inform service delivery and funding allocation and support the Greens commitment of \$8.5 million to fund this important work that underlies evidence-based decision making about the sector moving forward”.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Nassim Arrage, CEO on 0408 092 256 or Nassim.arrage@naclc.org.au

Amanda Alford, Director Policy and Advocacy on 0421 028 645 or amanda.alford@naclc.org.au