



Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc

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For immediate release

Community Legal Sector re-engages with state government

QAILS were delighted that the Attorney-General announced amendments to the Standard Suite of Contracts for Social Services with the changes effective from 17 February. The announcement meant that the community legal sector once again has the opportunity to continue important law reform work.

Cristy Dieckmann, Policy Officer for QAILS commented, 'The changes will benefit disadvantaged people. When community legal sector lawyers see the law operating unfairly or with unintended consequences, we can once again address these difficulties. Under the previous government we were stopped from highlighting these problems.'

'Community legal centres can continue to deliver vital services. For example we helped 46,000 individuals last year, providing 100,000 pieces of information and advice and opening over 9,000 new cases,' Ms Dieckmann went on to say.

Advancing law reform is a cost effective way of delivering access to justice. The recent Productivity Commission *Report on Access to Justice* noted that, "legal assistance lawyers...are uniquely placed to identify systemic issues, particularly those affecting disadvantaged Australians."

The Productivity Commission reported that there is not always sufficient funding to support all people that contact community legal centres. Advocating for changes to the law, complements other forms of frontline service and 'stretches the funding dollar'. In addition to recommending an immediate injection of \$200m for legal assistance services, the Productivity Commission expressly recommended: "The Australian, State and Territory Governments should provide funding for strategic advocacy and law reform activities that seek to identify and remedy systemic issues and so reduce demand for frontline services."

QAILS also welcomes the commitment, the Attorney-General has shown to community legal services by co-signing with fellow Attorneys-General in a request to the Federal Attorney-General not to cut funding in the May budget.

Ends

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Notes to editor:

QAILS is the state based peak body representing 33 funded and unfunded community legal centres operating throughout Queensland. QAILS's works for a fair and just Queensland and an important part of this mission is to promote community legal centres to people in need. For further information about our work visit:

www.qails.org.au.