



Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc

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For immediate release

Federal Government to cut funding to states most vulnerable

The Queensland Government has two weeks to accept or reject a proposal from the Federal Government which will reduce the legal help available to Queenslanders. If they accept the proposal, 23 % of federally funded free legal services currently available will be cut from 1 July 2017.

Queensland community legal centres will be forced to turn away even more women and children seeking protection from family violence, disadvantaged people with family law issues or housing problems or who have credit and debt issues, and employees who are experiencing workplace bullying.

A range of community organisations have written to Federal Attorney-General, George Brandis, pleading for the Federal Government to make community legal services available to vulnerable Queenslanders.

The organisations included: Sera's Women's Shelter, Carers Queensland, Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies, Anglicare, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, UnitingCare, Mater Young Adult Health Centre and the Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' League.

They stated, 'Any cuts to federal funding for community legal centres could have a profound impact on the individuals that we work with, and their families and communities. We call on the Federal Government to maintain sustainable funding for community legal centres, and for the important work of all of Queensland's community and social services.

James Farrell, Director of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services (**QAILS**), welcomed the support from these agencies and said, 'These organisations support vulnerable Queenslanders that are more likely to have legal problems. Unresolved legal problems can escalate, leading to added strain and cost to the justice system and further legal, financial, social, and health problems for the individual.'

'These organisations understand and value the vital role of community legal centres, which provide a safety net for people who need legal help. They also understand the impact that any reduction of services will have for their clients, and the broader community,' said Mr Farrell.

'We hope the Federal Government will listen to the community and these services, and ensure vulnerable people can access legal services when they're facing a crisis. They should also accept the Productivity Commission's advice to provide a \$200m funding increase, rather than cutting funding, and services, by a quarter.'

Ends

Media contact:

Catherine Baker, QAILS Communication and Information Officer
Communications@qails.org.au | (07) 3392 0092 | 0432 105 415

Notes:

- A copy of the letter to the Attorney General can be viewed at: http://www.qails.org.au/dbase_upl/Community%20ltr%20to%20AG.pdf
- 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 qails.org.au.