



Don't play politics with DV funding, warn community lawyers

Community Legal Centres Queensland is concerned that political parties are 'playing politics' with election commitments claiming to support family violence legal services, while failing to reinstate legal assistance services for other vulnerable Queenslanders.

'Increasing the legal help available for a victim of violence is important, and the Coalition's announcement today should be commended. Politicians shouldn't be playing politics with this issue, but working with on-the-ground experts to deliver appropriate support services to vulnerable Queenslanders. This will ensure that people can get the legal help they need,' said James Farrell, Director of Community Legal Centres Queensland.

'The pending 30% funding cut for community legal centres has not been reversed, which means more and more people will be turned away when they're facing a crisis. We need to make sure people can access legal services when they're in crisis.'

Today's announcement confirms that \$30m will be allocated to legal assistance services over three years, and that, if re-elected, the LNP Government will consult with states and territories and legal service providers to allocate funds to priority services. This announcement builds on the Turnbull Government's *Women's Safety Package* released in September 2015, which was criticised for ignoring the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors, for its ad hoc allocation process and lack of consultation. The funding is part of a \$100m allocation over three years, announced in last week's budget, which was also criticised for failing to meet the growing need for crisis services.

'People leaving violent relationships experience all kinds of legal problems – seeking protection orders from court, navigating complex family law problems, keeping a roof over their heads, continuing to work, addressing financial pressures and debts,' said Mr Farrell.

'Community legal centres and other legal services offer a holistic approach to dealing with these problems. Any funding decisions must understand the complex and intertwined legal problems people face when escaping violence. Governments must ensure that they recognise that many vulnerable people have legal problems, and we must have a safety net for everyone.'

'The Coalition has now joined Labor and the Greens in committing to invest in legal services for people experiencing violence, and it's great to have support from across the political spectrum. But more must be done,' said Mr Farrell.

Community Legal Centres Queensland Inc (formerly QAILS) is the state-wide peak body representing community legal centres in Queensland. Queensland community legal centres have 40 years of service delivery experience providing free information, advice and referral, casework and representation to the community. www.communitylegalqld.org.au

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