

press clip



Townsville Bulletin

Monday 16/05/2016

Page: 10
Section: General News
Region: Townsville QLD, AU
Circulation: 20641
Type: Regional
Size: 231.00 sq.cms.



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CUT STRAIGHT TO YOUR NEWS

Fund cuts put legal services beyond reach

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TOWNSVILLE community legal services aimed at family law and combating domestic violence fear federal funding cuts could see them answering as low as one in eight calls for help.

Attorney-General George Brandis and Herbert MP Ewen Jones visited the Townsville Community Legal Service last week to discuss what it calls the "funding cliff" facing local community legal centres.

"The Attorney-General understands the pressures facing community legal centres, and acknowledges that a reduction in funding will have a profound impact on our services from July next year," TCLS

director Aaron Finn said. "We're seeing demand for our services increase, particularly with changes in Townsville's economy, and we're incredibly concerned about the impact of a reduction in funding to community legal centres."

North Queensland Women's Legal Service director Anne Lewis said half of the women they helped experienced domestic violence but not all could receive the legal support they needed.

"With inadequate funding, we are only able to answer one out of every eight calls to our 1800 legal advice line at present from women who need help," she said. "More must be done."

Minister for Women Michaelia Cash said the Federal Government would allocate \$30 million to dedicated community legal services.

"I am always concerned

when I hear those types on statistics and ... the funding is now obviously to be worked out as to where it's going," she said.

"It also needs to be remembered, though, it's the State Government that provides services on the ground and the State Government also have a role to play in funding."

Community Legal Centres Queensland director James Farrell said while the LNP's commitment to provide more family violence legal help was welcome, he believed more funding would be required to meet growing demand.

"Last year, Queensland's community legal centres provided legal help to more than 50,000 people but turned away another 80,000," Mr Farrell said.

"We're only able to help two out of five people who are looking for legal help."