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Hospital bed pledge

Labor promises \$11m to ease ED pressure

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CAIRNS Base Hospital will see up to 40 new beds funded by Labor should the party win next month's Federal Election.

Labor candidate for Leichhardt Sharryn Howes said a Shorten Government would spend \$11.6 million on fitting out 2100sq m of currently unused hospital space.

She said the extra space would be used to accommodate the growing number of patients in the emergency department.

"This hospital funding is wonderful news for Cairns and the surrounding areas," said Ms Howes. "The health of our communities is of vital importance."

Cairns Community Legal Centre has also been promised a cash injection of \$300,000 over three years. Ms Howes announced the funding yesterday as part of a \$43 million national package for frontline legal services.

"Community legal centres across the country, including here in Cairns, work incredibly hard to support people who are often at their lowest and most desperate," Ms Howes said.

Cairns Community Legal

Centre director Giselle Negri said the organisation was often the only safety net for people in a crisis.

"In the last year, Cairns Community Legal Centre assisted 2000 people with legal problems," she said.

"We help people in violent relationships navigate the courts, people who are unfairly treated at work, people going through family breakdowns, people who have disputes with banks and insurance companies, and people with disability that are denied access to services."

Community Legal Centres Queensland director James Farrell said demand for community legal services had doubled in the past year.

"There is, however, still tremendous uncertainty around funding for these important services," he said.

"Community legal centres, and the communities that rely on our services, need certainty to ensure that services will continue to be delivered."

