

For immediate release
13 June 2016

Women and children in Cairns first to benefit

Women and children in Cairns experiencing violence will be the first to benefit from today's ALP commitment to provide additional funding for community legal services in the region.

In Cairns at 11.30am today, Sharryn Howes, ALP Candidate for Leichhardt has committed to an additional \$300,000 funding for the Cairns Community Legal Centre over the next three years, if the ALP is elected in July.

'In the last year, Cairns Community Legal Centre assisted 2,000 people with legal problems,' said Giselle Negri, Director of the Cairns Community Legal Centre. 'When people in our community are facing a legal crisis, we're often the only safety net they can access. 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. It's important work, which is valued by people in Cairns.'

James Farrell, Director of Community Legal Centres Queensland, echoed Ms Negri's comments. 'This commitment to the Cairns community is part of the ALP's larger commitment to providing legal help to people experiencing family violence,' said Mr Farrell. 'Demand for these services has doubled in the last year across Queensland, and our services are struggling to meet the community's need.'

'There is however still tremendous uncertainty around funding for these important services, with a funding cut of 30% scheduled for next year, and commitments from Labor and the Coalition focussed on legal help for people affected by family violence,' said Mr Farrell. 'Community legal centres, and the communities that rely on our services, need certainty, to ensure that services will continue to be delivered.'

'These vital services shouldn't be a political football – we need all of our political leaders to commit to supporting to the hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders who have a legal problem each year,' said Mr Farrell. 'While this is an important announcement, we call on all of our political leaders to work with us to ensure access to justice for all Queenslanders.'

Ends

NOTES:

Cairns Community Legal Centre Inc. is a not for profit community organisation that provides legal services and referral for the benefit of members of the community experiencing disadvantage. The Centre is one of more than 200 community legal centres nationwide. www.cclc.org.au

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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