

For immediate release
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Labor commits \$300,000 legal help for the Mackay area

People in Mackay needing access to free legal advice and assistance, will benefit from today's commitment to provide additional funding for the Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre.

In Mackay at 12.30pm today, Frank Gilbert, Labor candidate for Dawson committed \$300,000 to fund the Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre over the next three years.

"This service has assisted over 1,739 people over the past 3 years with legal advice, information and ongoing assistance, and there is a growing need for families who are struggling to make ends meet to access legal advice," said Jessica Brake, Manager and Principal Solicitor at the Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre. "The number of people we are assisting has greatly increased with the centre providing advice to 775 clients this year alone."

"We cannot meet the needs of our community to access legal advice without continued and increased funding. Already we have a waiting list of four weeks for the generalist service and one week for our tenancy service. The increased funding will allow us to employ a full time solicitor who can focus on family and employment law. This will help us to continue to provide professional and supportive advice to people in our community who would not otherwise have been able to access it," Ms Brake went on to say.

James Farrell, Director of Community Legal Centres Queensland, echoed Ms Brake's comments. "This commitment to the Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre is part of the ALP's larger commitment to providing legal help for people in Queensland," 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 domestic and 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 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:

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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