

For immediate release  
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## **Funding for Townsville to benefit women and children**

Women and children in Townsville 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 Townsville today, Cathy O'Toole, ALP Candidate for Herbert has committed to additional funding for the Townsville Community Legal Service, North Queensland's Women Legal Service and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service North Queensland. Each of the three centres would receive \$450,000 in funding over a three year period. The announcement will be made at 12 noon at the North Queensland Women's Legal Service.

'When people in our communities are facing a legal crisis, we're often the only safety net they can access. We assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are victims of crime. We legally represent women who have experienced violence in their relationships and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are treated unfairly at work, women going through family breakdowns, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disability who are denied access to services. It's important work, which supports women who are among those with the greatest need,' said Cathy Pereira, Principal Solicitor at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service North Queensland.

'The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services NQ provides a vital service in providing legal advice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women who are the most socio-economically disadvantaged group in Australia,' Ms Pereira went on to say.

'North Queensland women are particularly vulnerable,' said Anne Lewis, Director of the North Queensland Women's Legal Service. 'Half of the women we help experience domestic violence, and we're just not able to provide the legal help they need. We are only able to answer 1 out of every 8 calls to our 1800 legal advice line at present from women who need help. The increased funding will help us to address this unmet need.'

'We're seeing demand for our services increase, particularly with changes in Townsville's economy. In our case, we'll lose 21% of the Federal funding that we've relied on over the last few years to advise Townsville residents on family law and employment law issues. Today's announcement will assist us with helping these people,' commented Aaron Finn, Director, Townsville Community Legal Services.

James Farrell, Director of Community Legal Centres Queensland, echoed Mr Finn's comments. 'This commitment to the Townsville 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.'

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‘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:**

**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](http://www.communitylegalqld.org.au)

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