

O'Toole pledges boost to legal aid

KIERAN ROONEY

COMMUNITY legal centres will receive funding boosts to meet growing demand under a Labor government.

Labor candidate for Herbert Cathy O'Toole yesterday announced three legal services working with victims of domestic violence would receive \$450,000 each over the next three years under Labor.

"Community legal services do an enormous amount of work in our community here providing frontline legal services to women in distress, women who experience domestic violence," she said.

"This money will be greatly appreciated in our community. Labor has needed to invest \$43 million nationally because the Turnbull, Abbott and Brandis gathering have taken \$52 million from community legal services nationally.

"That is an absolute disgrace when these services pro-

vide support to the most vulnerable people."

Mrs O'Toole said demand for these services had outgrown the resources available.

"In the last year we saw 160,000 people turned away from community legal services," she said.

"For two of these services this is new funding, for the Townsville Community Legal Service this is almost a doubling of what has been provided by the Federal Government.

"As domestic violence becomes far more commonly known and more people in distress are coming forward, demand is well and truly outstripping the resources."

Townsville Community Legal Service director Aaron Finn said his office was working hard on a tight budget.

"There's a constant demand for legal services to those who need it most ... that is only increasing," he said.