

Question on Notice

No. 45

Asked on 14 February 2017

MR R PYNE ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND MINISTER FOR TRAINING AND SKILLS (HON Y D'ATH) –

QUESTION:

With reference to the ever-increasing demand for services from community legal centres and the 55,000 clients turned away from centres in Queensland last year—

Will the Attorney-General advise what will be the real cost to our community if these, and even more vulnerable clients, need to be turned away from community legal centres should 30 per cent in federal funding be slashed from these centres?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Cairns for his question.

Commencing in 2017-18 Commonwealth funding to Queensland Community Legal Centres (CLC) will drop from \$8.945 million to \$6.958 million. The “Funding Cliff”, will see Queensland receiving close to \$2 million less of total Commonwealth CLC funding per annum.

State and Territory Attorneys-General successfully convinced the Commonwealth Attorney-General to guarantee overall national levels of CLC funding for 2015 until 2017 but that funding will terminate on 30 June 2017 as the Commonwealth presses ahead with scheduled funding cuts from 1 July 2017.

This Federal funding cut means that thousands of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community will miss out on vital legal assistance services.

The cost to Queensland will be real. People will lose their jobs.

Once again the most vulnerable people in our community are being targeted by the Commonwealth Government. These damaging cuts to social justice services will impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as domestic violence support services which are in ever increasing demand.

Despite the looming Federal funding cut, every effort is being made by this Government to mitigate the situation and reduce the significant impact on Queenslanders.

While I am deeply disappointed the Federal Government has not reversed the decision to cut funding to CLCs in 2017-18, the Palaszczuk Government has worked hard to maintain and grow its investment for these critical services as well as the broader legal assistance services sector. The Queensland Government made a significant and far reaching commitment in the 2016-17 State Budget with the injection of \$32.4 million over four years 2016-20 directly to Legal Aid Queensland. This funding commitment allows Legal Aid

Queensland to deliver much needed civil and criminal legal assistance services across the state which support and compliment the services of Community Legal Centres.

I will continue to call on the Commonwealth Government to reverse these damaging cuts. I will continue to campaign on behalf of the most vulnerable people in our society.