

## **Taxpayers footing bill for unnecessary jail time**

Prisoners who are refused parole and can't afford a lawyer, have very limited access to legal advice. This is needlessly extending prison jail times and taxpayers are footing the bill said Prisoners Legal Service earlier today.

The Queensland Parole System Review recently highlighted the importance of legal challenges to parole refusals as both reducing the costs associated with keeping people in jail and enhancing accountability and good decision making.

The review identified that of 141 parole decisions challenged between 2001 and 2015, approximately 50 decisions were reconsidered.

"There is considerable cost to the government when someone is kept in prison beyond their parole eligibility date," said Prisoners Legal Service Director Peter Lyons.

"There are also significant benefits in ensuring that decisions about whether a person should be released back into the community are properly considered."

"The Prisoners Legal Service is the only organisation that provides free legal advice and representation to prisoners for parole refusals."

"Unfortunately, as a small community legal centre, the Service has limited resources and more than 60% of prisoner's calls seeking assistance go unanswered. We simply don't have the resources we need to help every prisoner with their parole refusal."

He said it was regrettable that the service was facing a 30 per cent drop in funding as of July this year leaving many more prisoners without legal advice and increasing costs for the taxpayer.

James Farrell, Director, Community Legal Centres Queensland the Prisoners Legal Service was facing a funding cliff that would end up costing the Government more in keeping people in custody than funding the legal program itself.

'In July this year the Commonwealth Government will cut almost 30 per cent of funding to community legal centres across Australia. Community Legal Centres Queensland is calling on Malcolm Turnbull and George Brandis to reverse this decision to ensure people facing parole get the legal help they need and the protection they deserve." he said.

**Ends**

### **NOTES:**

1. 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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