

For immediate release
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Workers' calls for help ignored

One of the first reactions from someone who feels they have been unfairly sacked is to seek legal advice.

They find themselves with their usual expenses, unable to pay for a lawyer, not eligible to receive Legal Aid and many turn to a community legal centre to get the help that they need.

Unfortunately from 1 July they may find that their phone call will go unanswered as the Turnbull Government plans to reduce federal funding to community legal centres by 30 per cent.

Community legal centre staff are already stretched to capacity and struggling to respond to the volume of calls including from people who have unfair dismissal claims.

These people are phoning and because of the sheer volume of calls, are unable to get through. If they do get through they typically find that all appointments are booked out.

According to Community Legal Centres Queensland Director James Farrell nearly half of all Queenslanders will experience a legal problem this year and very few will be able to afford or access legal help.

"Currently, for every four workers who get help from a community legal centre we turn away another three because we don't have the resources to provide them with the help that they need," he said.

"The Productivity Commission has called for an urgent injection of \$200 million for legal assistance services across Australia.

"The government has rejected that recommendation from its own expert economic advisers, and instead chosen to shift existing resources.

"State and Federal Governments can't continue to kick the can on legal assistance funding; they need to provide workers with certainty and make a meaningful commitment to ensuring Australians can access legal help when they need it.

"Community Legal Centres Queensland is asking all workers to support the campaign to reverse the funding cuts by speaking to MPs from both parties and both levels of government about the need for a well-funded community legal service to protect the rights of workers."

Mr Farrell also urged workers to use their social media accounts and the hashtag #fundequaljustice to help keep the issue in the public eye.

-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
2. If you do find yourself having been dismissed from work, you should be aware that:
 - Generally you must have been employed for at least 6 months and earn less than \$136,700 per year to have a chance of an unfair dismissal claim;
 - To be successful, you would have to show that the dismissal was harsh, unjust or unreasonable;
 - You have 21 days from the dismissal to start your claim.

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