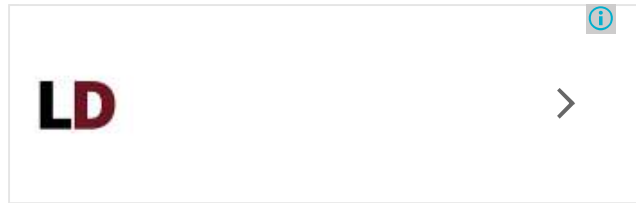


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NEWS

Coast's legal lifeline set to lose 30% funding

19th March 2017 5:00 AM



Julian Porter of Suncoast Community Legal Service.

John McCutcheon

by Jorgia White (/profile/jorgiawhite/)

AS JULY looms, the Sunshine Coast community is preparing for the loss of vital legal support, with community legal centres across Australia set to lose 30% funding.

Former Australian of the Year and domestic violence campaigner Rosie Batty is calling for the government to turn this decision around.

These cuts could mean Coast residents utilising these service could be left in legal limbo, with

no where else to turn.

Suncoast Community Legal Service principal solicitor Julian Porter told the Daily in an interview in 2016 the cuts could impact hundreds of residents.

Mr Porter urged Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, whose government announced the cuts, and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten to make sure our region gets a fair go.

"In smaller communities like ours, a community legal service contributes massively to that feeling of being heard and having received some sound guidance which goes so far for the majority of more able people," he said.

"For the most disadvantaged people in the community this just isn't enough and without lawyers on the ground to do those pieces of work for them, the problems just get worse and worse until they become the whole community's problem."

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The cuts could force the Suncoast Community Legal Service to lose their two paid solicitors who handle the family and domestic violence law.

The service, which covers the Sunshine Coast and Noosa, gave 2864 pieces of legal advice last financial year.

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Yvette D'Ath said the \$2 million cuts to Queensland Community Legal Centres would hit Queenslanders who need the most support.

"It is everyday Queenslanders who access these legal services - mums and dads, grandparents, young people, tenants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people with a disability, people with mental health issues, and the list goes on," she said.

"Some of them are among the most vulnerable in Queensland and we need to support them, not cut vital assistance."

Fusion Australia Lead Youth Worker Ben Ellicopp said for young people in particular, these services are vital.

"Having a legal centre allows for someone to actually feel like they have an understanding of what's going on in their life," he said.

"These centres give people access when they're in one of the worst situations they've been in.

"To have someone to walk them through that process its a very valuable service."

To support Rosie Batty on her quest to save community legal centres, visit www.neveralone.com.au/letter (<http://www.neveralone.com.au/letter>).

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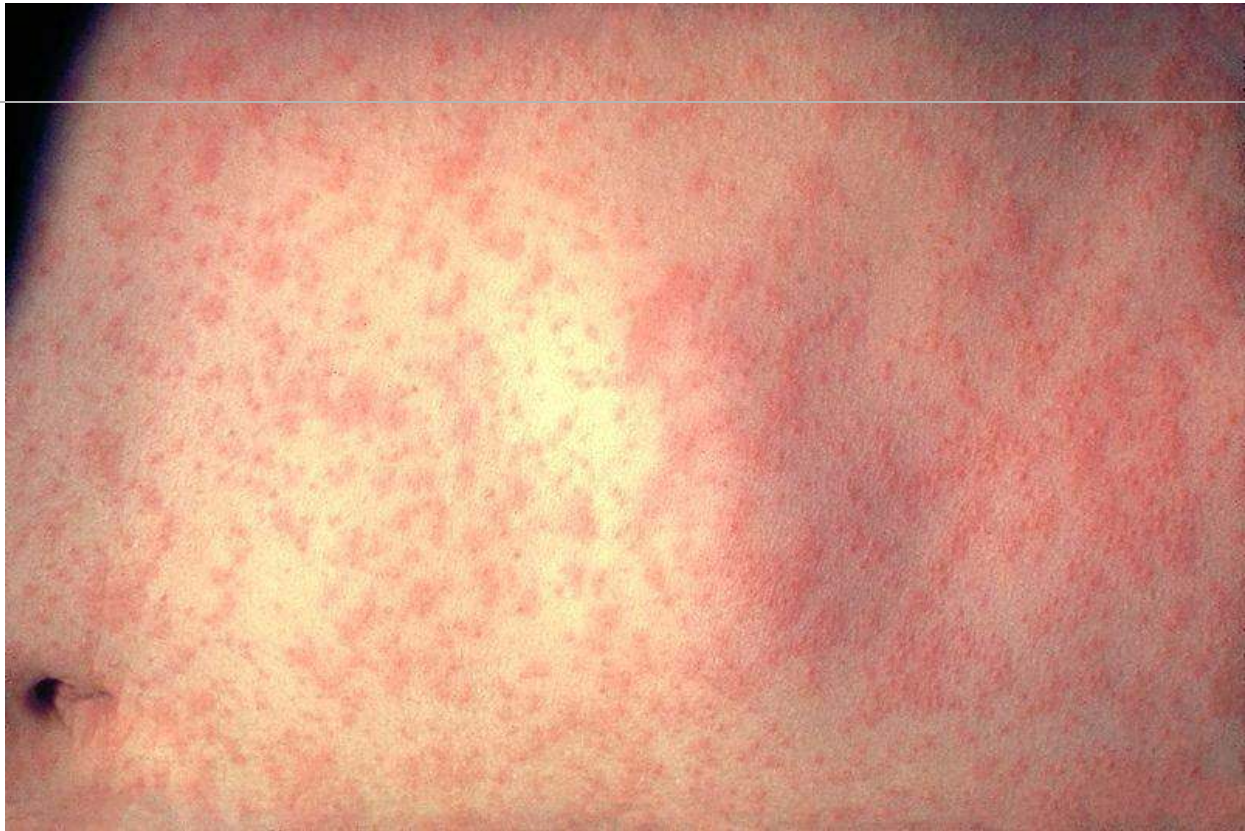
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