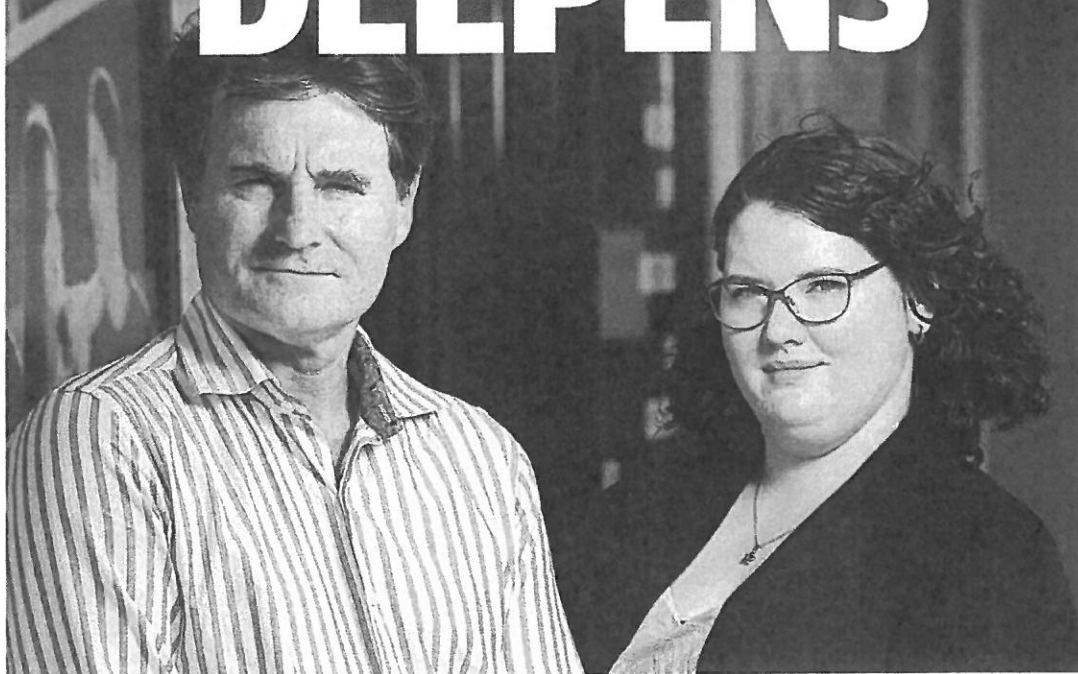


STRUGGLE DEEPENS



UNDER PRESSURE: Solicitor David Maunsell and paralegal Cherie McLaughlin.

Picture: EVAN MORGAN

**DOMANII
CAMERON**



domanii.cameron@news.com.au

ECONOMIC hardship is forcing thousands of Townsville residents to reach out for help as not-for-profit organisations report their busiest period in years.

More than 35,000 residents are doing it tough across the region with NQ Community Services, The Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House Townsville (QPILCH) and The Townsville Drop-In Centre Inc all registering increases.

However, in a struggling econ-

omy, Townsville may lose vital services from QPILCH next year if it cannot secure further government funding. The Townsville branch offers a range of legal services to residents doing it tough.

Managing solicitor of the Townsville office David Maunsell said the organisation was getting busier.

"We are under serious threat of being closed down next March. We're running a campaign to try to stay afloat," Mr Maunsell said.

"We're seeking funding for an-

other three years and are lobbying the Government at the moment and trying to get meetings with the State Attorney-General, Yvette D'ath."

Mr Maunsell said QPILCH was the only place that offered legal services.

"You've got people who have been made unemployed and can't afford their tenancy, you have families under stress," he said.

"The Federal Government wants to cut legal aid by 30 per cent and we're on the frontline.

"Our campaign officially kicked off at the end of July and we're really hoping we can stay afloat to keep assisting Townsville."

NQ Community Services manager Tracey Peace said amid tough times, Townsville couldn't afford to lose QPILCH.

"It's just too important to lose, they're looking for support letters to send off to the Government to keep it going," she said.

"I don't think the general public know how tough people are doing it, everyday mums and dads are doing it so tough.

"Everybody is struggling for money at the moment.

"There's high unemployment, there's drugs and crime, for our clients it's never one issue."

Karl Brasted of The Townsville Drop-In Centre Inc said the organisation also hoped QPILCH wouldn't

close as they provided valuable assistance.

"We can't lose them," he said.

"We've always been busy here but things are on the increase."

Mr Brasted said he was very much on the front line.

"Through case management we help people obtain or maintain accommodation. On average we have 35,000 visits in each year," he said.

"We're unique in that we're the only service of its kind in Australia.

"One in two people suffer mental illness somewhere along their lives so it's very prominent and many people need support locally."