



Robina Community Legal Centre president Ross Lee.

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Sun Community

# Funds have dried up for a Gold Coast community legal centre

DENIS DOHERTY, Gold Coast Sun

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THE Robina Community Legal Centre is set to go cap-in-hand to government and possible corporate supporters in a desperate bid to keep its doors open.

The centre was forced to close its doors after it was knocked back for funding in the most recent round of state government grants, sparking fears more pressure would be put on other Gold Coast centres trying to pick up the overflow from Robina.

Centre founder Ross Lee said the committee hoped to get back to operational status as soon as possible especially to help people who suffered loss damage and debt from the recent floods and employment matters arising out of that.

He said over the centre's five-year lifespan it had given an estimated front-end advice valued at just over \$1 million a year and back office operational work also just over \$1 million. "All we were chasing was \$150,000 to \$250,000 a year," he said.

Maurice Blackburn Lawyers Southport associate Claire Gibbs said a Commonwealth funding cut of 30 per cent in the coming weeks threatened the viability of many community legal centre services.

"All of our solicitors volunteer at the Robina Community Legal Centre," she said. "The legal assistance sector plays a critical role in providing access to justice for disadvantaged Queenslanders who are experiencing a host of challenges including homelessness, mental problems and domestic violence.

"Adequate legal assistance services are critical in ensuring fairness and efficiency in our court system.

"The law should serve everyone, not just those who can afford it".

Victoria Shiel, of the Gold Coast Community Legal Centre, said her centre provided legal help at the Coolangatta and Southport courts for domestic violence victims and gave face-to-face advice at 12 venues across the Coast including Coolangatta, Varsity Lakes and Palm Beach.

"Our centre is concerned at the state funding shortfall for our colleagues in other areas of Queensland and the impact on their communities but very pleased for the Gold Coast that we have had our funding boosted to continue our vital work," she said.





 Gold Coast Community Legal Centre principal solicitor Victoria Shiel.

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