

Funding backflip lifts hope for community lawyers

COMMUNITY lawyers at Suncoast Community Legal Service are hopeful the Federal Government's backflip on its decision to slash funds to not-for-profit legal services will mean its advocacy for the Coast's domestic violence victims can continue.

The service announced earlier this month that an expected funding cut of about one third would likely mean its lawyers would be confined to answering phones rather than taking on cases through the courts.

But Federal Attorney-General George Brandis says a \$55.7 million federal contribution to the community legal sector will be restored in the May 9 budget, with \$39 million to go to community legal centres.

Suncoast Community

Legal Service principal Julian Porter said the funding announcement looked promising, and he would wait to hear whether the devastating cuts to his not-for-profit organisation would be reversed.

The decision about which organisations will receive the reinstated federal

funding now lies with the State Government, Fairfax MP Ted O'Brien said.

A recent explosion of extreme domestic violence on the Sunshine Coast, reported by the Daily over Easter, confirms the importance of continued legal advocacy for victims, Mr Porter agreed.

Mr O'Brien said he made representations to both Mr

Brandis and the state Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath on the issue last year, requesting that a one-off

stream of funding for Suncoast Community Legal Service be renewed, and that these funds prioritise domestic violence victim support.

"From my point of view for the Sunshine Coast, now Federal Government has

stepped up to the plate and confirmed further funding will be provided and it will support addressing domestic violence, we will need to keep the pressure on the State Government to ensure the Suncoast Community Legal Service will get its share," he said. "I think our local Suncoast Community Legal Service is a high performer in this regard."