



 Sharell O'Brien, NQ Womens Legal Service and Kate Pateman, KLP Family Law, at Rowes Bay golf club for their inaugural charity golf day. Picture: Shae Beplate.

TOWNSVILLE

An unanswered phone call's devastating effect

DANNI SHAFIK, Townsville Bulletin

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NORTH Queensland's Women's Legal Service says a lack of funding sees one in six calls going unanswered every year.

The community centres based in Townsville and Cairns offer a free legal service for women, by women, helping in all areas of law by providing information and referrals.

Up to 5000 requests for help each year are made for legal advice available, in the areas of family law, defacto matters, family/domestic violence, discrimination, sexual assault, child protection and Victims Assist.

Acting Principal Sharell O'Brien said there were not enough resources to answer every call.

"We are quite underfunded from the Government," she said.

Ms O'Brien said 90 per cent of the service's clients were experiencing domestic and family violence.

"For those who can't get assistance quickly, the issue can escalate," she said.

Ms O'Brien said there was no guarantee a woman would work up the courage to make such a call again.

KLP Family Law held a charity golf day at Rowes Bay Golf Club last week and raised more than \$2000 for NQWLS.

The team has vowed to run the event every year.

Owner and lawyer of KLP Family Law Kate Pateman said the firm wanted to support the community.

"NQWLS in particular are very important to us because they help disadvantaged women and children who can't access legal aid," she said.

"They may be falling through the cracks or just don't have the resources and if it wasn't for this service, they wouldn't have access to justice."

Ms Pateman said women were reaching out for help and it was not being heard.

"One unanswered call could end their attempts and result in women remaining in violent relationships," she said.

Ms Pateman said if the women could access help early on, it would break the cycle for the next generation.

>>For details or to donate, head to <http://nqwls.com.au>



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