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Research shows a digital gap in the legal sector

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The 'Building digital capacity for the Queensland CLC sector – Digital Strategy Paper,' which was recently launched, has highlighted that greater investment in technology is needed in community legal assistance services.

The research was undertaken between November 2018 and December 2019 and saw 26 of the 34 community legal centres in Queensland take part in questionnaires, interviews, online calls and face-to-face workshops.

The research showed that more investment would help to close the digital gap and allow community legal centres to be innovative and become digital-ready. It would extend the ability of community legal centres to support Queenslanders who need legal help.

The research showed that the sector lags behind other industries in adopting technology and current IT systems are not fit-for-purpose, lack integration and are not used to their potential. The sector still relies heavily on paper-based and manual processes. While community legal centres recognise the importance of greater digital literacy, process automation, systems usage and strong data management processes, the reality is that limited funding means that providing free legal and support services to vulnerable people is the priority.

Rosslyn Monro, Director, Community Legal Centres Queensland commented, 'Undertaking this research has given a clear indication of where future investment needs to be made. The investment needs to increase digital capability and infrastructure and be targeted to meet the needs of community legal centres and their communities.'

'It showed that the effective use of technology is becoming critical to the sector's ability to be sustainable. The research indicated that there was a risk in adopting new technology but doing nothing was also a tangible threat to the sector and its ability to continue to deliver on its mission.'

The report highlighted several recommendations including developing new websites, implementing digital services for clients, infrastructure improvements and processes for managing technology and data related risks. It provided the sector with a vision and strategy to close the digital gap.

The research was undertaken by Community Legal Centres Queensland and Maysix Consulting with funding from the Queensland Department of Justice and the Attorney General. To read the full report go [here \(PDF\)](https://communitylegalqld.org.au/sites/default/files/downloads/pages/clcq_digital_strategy_paper_2020_v1.0.pdf). (https://communitylegalqld.org.au/sites/default/files/downloads/pages/clcq_digital_strategy_paper_2020_v1.0.pdf).

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