

---

**CORONAVIRUS**

## **Legal centres face having to turn people away as demand soars**

**Gold Coast community legal centres have warned they may have to turn people in need away after a surge in cases caused by the coronavirus crisis.**

---

Lea Emery, [lea.emery@news.com.au](mailto:lea.emery@news.com.au), Gold Coast Bulletin

 Subscriber only | April 9, 2020 11:04am

---

GOLD Coast community legal centres are in desperate need of more funding to help cope with a sudden surge in requests – or risk having to turn people in need away.

A majority of matters in that surge relate to employment issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The legal centres offer free advice to the disadvantaged and rely on government funding, and donations, to keep the doors open.

The Gold Coast Community Legal Centre usually focus on family law and domestic violence issues which makes up about 70 per cent of their work.

Since the pandemic and social isolation regulations were put in place, inquiries about employment law have risen so much they are almost on par with family law and domestic violence issues.



 Gold Coast Community Legal Centre  
principal solicitor Victoria Shiel

---

Employment issues used to be their eighth most popular inquiry.

Gold Coast Community Legal Centre director Victoria Shiel said: “We are getting a lot of small businesses and they can’t afford to keep staff on or pay entitlements and rent and they are struggling.”

Ms Shiel said they were also receiving pleas for help from employees who had been suddenly stood down or made redundant wanting to know their rights.

Across the state’s community legal centres the increase in employment queries has risen by 34 per cent compared to the same time last year.

The Gold Coast community legal centres are no longer offering face-to-face appointments but are speaking with clients via phone and video chat.

Appointments for the next few weeks are scarce.

“One in three queries talk about COVID-19,” Ms Shiel said.

The community centres require the additional funding to hire more lawyers to help provide advice to the huge number of people seeking help.

Ms Shiel said there was one piece of advice she would give to everyone.

“Make sure your sources are credible,” she said.



📷 Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Yvette D'Ath at the Jellurgal Arts Centre on the Gold Coast.

## MORE TOP NEWS

[\*\*Bold police plan to stop out-of-towners coming to Coast\*\*](#)

[\*\*What you can \(and can't\) do over Easter\*\*](#)

[\*\*How Coast drug deal turned into savage attack\*\*](#)

Ms Shiel warned off relying on information from social media or friends.

Instead she suggested going to government websites such as ASIC or the Residential Tenancies Authority which were all producing fact sheets as guides.

Ms Shiel said all the community legal centres had also put together fact sheets dealing with commonly asked questions about COVID-19.

Attorney-General and Minister Justice Yvette D'Ath said the government was working to ensure the viability of community legal centres.

“We recognise the important work they’re doing during these difficult times,” she said.

“We’re working with the Commonwealth to deliver a new National Partnership Agreement which aims to secure additional funding and certainty for these centres and we hope to reach agreement in the near future.

“We also continue to work with Queensland’s community legal sector to provide the resourcing they need to carry out their important work.”

The Gold Coast has community legal centres in Southport and Robina.