

Calls for LNP to reverse decision to defund community legal service

Community Legal Centres Queensland is calling on the LNP to reverse its decision to defund the Environmental Defenders Office.

LNP leader Deb Frecklington announced at the Rural Press Club yesterday they would defund the organisation if her party wins the state election, in October, saying: "It's very important that we do not have a state government working against itself."

The Environmental Defenders Office is a community legal centre providing a lifeline to rural and remote communities with free legal advice and support. Many of its clients are farmers and regional Queenslanders who need legal advice on issues relating to their communities, their livelihoods, and their land.

Community Legal Centres Queensland Director Rosslyn Monro said: "We are extremely concerned with the announcement by the LNP to withdraw vital funding from the Environmental Defenders Office. We are urging the LNP to reverse its decision as it will have a devastating impact on regional communities that rely on this service."

"It is a non-government organisation providing legal advice and services to Queenslanders including farmers, low-income families, regional and remote communities."

"Access to justice is not just for the wealthy. Adequate funding of community legal centres ensures that anyone can seek legal advice, support and education."

Environmental Defenders Office receives modest but crucial funding to use the law to protect and defend the state's wildlife, people and places. All of the Queensland Government funding it receives goes towards the provision of frontline legal services to the community.

Ms Monro added: "We are calling on Deb Frecklington and David Janetzki to rethink this decision. Regional Queenslanders will have no choice but to pay for private representation or be forced to self-represent in our state's courts."

Community legal centres are independent, community-run organisations providing legal advice, information, ongoing representation and support. In addition to these services, community legal centres work to prevent legal problems before they occur, by educating people about their legal rights and responsibilities, and suggesting ways to improve laws and practices.

Ends

NOTES:

1. Community Legal Centres Queensland is the state-wide peak body representing community legal centres in Queensland. Queensland community legal centres have 40 years of service delivery experience providing free information, advice and referral, casework and representation to the community. www.communitylegalqld.org.au

MEDIA CONTACT:

Louise Mullins. Communications Coordinator

Email: communications@communitylegalqld.org.au / Phone: 0411 573651