

Media Release



Federation of
Community Legal Centres
VICTORIA

Legal funding leaves services out of reach for many women facing family violence

Friday 27 October 2016 – for immediate release

Funding to provide free legal help for women facing family violence announced today by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull will come as some relief to victims and the community legal centres who help them. However, it falls short of restoring Federal Government cuts and does not address growing need for family violence and broader legal help, according to the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

'Additional investment for vital services is always welcome, however the announcement today of \$5m for community legal centres is not enough to help women escaping violence get the assistance they need to obtain an intervention order or remain safe in their home,' McDuff said.

Community legal centres provide vital free legal help for women not only with intervention orders to stop family violence through the courts, but with related legal issues including family law, tenancy, and debt. Family violence orders comprised the top legal problem type for community legal centres in Victoria in 2015-16, with a 19% spike in legal advice, and a 12% increase in cases opened.

'In the face of high and growing need for free legal help with family violence, community legal centres nationally face a 30 per cent cut in Federal funding next July, when they already turn away 160,000 vulnerable people a year. We are concerned about how this will impact our services to people experiencing family violence.

'In 2014 the Productivity Commission recommended an immediate injection of \$200million into legal assistance services to begin to meet this crushing demand and the recent Victorian Access to Justice Review also recommended increasing investment.

'The Government has made clear statements today about their concern for family violence and provided a small boost for some services. We hope to see additional commitments to address the significant demand pressures on legal services and ensure all people experiencing family violence can access the support they need,' McDuff concluded.

For media interview and information

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