



## MEDIA RELEASE

3 December 2015

### One year on: community lawyers across Australia call for funding of Productivity Commission recommendations

On the one-year anniversary of the Productivity Commission's Access to Justice Arrangements Report, and in the face of significant funding cuts, Community Legal Centre (CLC) representatives from across Australia have called on all levels of government to take action.

On 3 December 2014 the Productivity Commission released their Report, which found that people across the country were missing out on legal assistance. The Commission recommended that Australian governments provide an immediate injection of \$200 million per year to legal assistance services, with the Federal Government contributing approximately 60% of the funding, and State/Territory Governments contributing 40%.

"It is extremely disappointing that the Federal Government has not formally responded to the Productivity Commission's Report. In fact, despite the very clear recommendations made by the Commission about the need for additional funding, CLCs are facing a funding cliff amounting to a 30% cut nationally from 1 July 2017" said Rosslyn Monro, Chair of the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

"These upcoming cuts will have a significant impact on the ability of CLCs to assist the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community, and inevitably will lead to essential legal services closing down in some communities," added James Farrell, Executive Director of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services.

"The Government has said it is committed to addressing family violence. Yet although it has provided pilot funding to a handful of CLCs to increase help for victims of violence, the Federal Government has scheduled massive 30 per cent cuts from 2017 - cuts that will limit our ability to help those who need it, and may have deadly consequences" said Liana Buchanan, Executive Officer of the Federation of Community Legal Centres in Victoria.

"In the face of increasing demand for our services, including in the key areas of domestic violence and family law, there has never been a more important time to ensure adequate and secure funding of CLCs and other legal assistance providers" said Alastair McEwin, Executive Director of Community Legal Centres NSW.

*NACLC acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Australia and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional owners of the land on which the NACLC office is situated. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present.*

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“The Productivity Commission’s Report provides a blueprint for reform of a range of key elements of the justice system. The Government’s failure to respond is a missed opportunity to address the crisis facing courts, legal assistance services and the justice system more broadly,” said Helen Creed, Executive Director, Community Legal Centres Association (WA).

The representatives called on the Federal Government to respond to the Productivity Commission’s Report and on all levels of government to reverse the 2017 cuts and commit the recommended additional funding to CLCs and the legal assistance sector.

For further information or to arrange an interview contact

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