

MEDIA RELEASE

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Launch of new campaign: *Community Law Australia—Fund Equal Justice*

Leading community lawyers from across Australia will meet in Canberra tomorrow to brief Members of Parliament and Senators about the work of Community Legal Centres (CLCs) and call for urgent action to help people missing out on legal help.

The new national campaign, **Community Law Australia—Fund Equal Justice**, is being led by the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC). The campaign is being launched against the backdrop of rising demand for legal help, but funding cuts to crucial Community Legal Centre services.

“Community Legal Centres provide essential legal help to those in need. While family violence and family law are the top specialist areas for CLCs, we provide a range of legal help to people across a range of legal areas, including debt, employment, housing, social security, and child protection” said Rosslyn Monro, Campaign Spokesperson and NACLC Chairperson ahead of the launch.

“New figures released today from the NACLC 2015 Census reveal that CLCs are turning away more than 160,000 people each year. However, there is a looming 30% cut to national Community Legal Centre funding next year under the new National Partnership Agreement for Legal Assistance Services” said Ms Monro.

“In the context of a relatively small overall budget for CLCs, these funding cuts of between \$11m and \$12m every year between 2017 and 2020 will have a significant impact on CLC service delivery, and therefore on the ability of people seeking legal help to receive the help they need. For example, a 30% cut to Commonwealth funding nationally is likely to lead to 36,435 fewer clients assisted and 45,644 fewer advices provided” added Ms Monro.

NACLC calls on the Federal Government to:

- reverse the national funding cuts to CLCs under the National Partnership Agreement (amounting to \$34.83m between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2020)
- immediately inject \$120m per year into the legal assistance sector, consistent with the recommendation made by the Productivity Commission, including at a minimum \$14.4m per year to CLCs and appropriate amounts for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Legal Aid Commissions, and
- commit to developing a process for determining sustainable long-term funding contributions to the legal assistance sector

More information about the campaign is available at <http://www.communitylawaustralia.org.au>

For further information or to arrange an interview contact:

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NACLC and CLA acknowledge 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.