

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Vulnerable and disadvantaged put at risk by pending funding cuts**

Pending Federal funding cuts to community legal centres across Australia will put some of the most vulnerable people in the country at further risk of harm. Community Legal Centres NSW is calling on the Federal Government to commit to reversing the cuts, in light of support from the NSW Attorney General and commitments from the Labor Party.

As reported in the Sydney Morning Herald: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/vulnerable-at-risk-as-community-legal-centres-face-funding-cliff-20170303-guq29h.html>

"The support from the NSW Attorney General and recent promises from Federal and NSW Labor are a welcome acknowledgement of the crucial role community legal centres play in Australia. But it's the Federal government we need to step up right now," Community Legal Centres NSW Chair Linda Tucker said.

"The amount being cut - \$12.1 million nationally, \$2.9 million for NSW - is a drop in the ocean of a Federal budget, but the impact of losing these funds is enormous.

"Thousands of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community will lose access to the legal system. This will have a knock-on effect across the rest of the legal assistance sector and the wider justice and health systems.

"The legal assistance sector is already underfunded. In 2014 the Productivity Commission recommended an urgent \$200 million per annum injection into the legal assistance sector nationally, simply to meet existing demand. Instead, the Turnbull government is cutting funding to community legal centres by 30 per cent.

"From tenancy and debt help, to child protection and domestic violence, our early intervention work saves people from further emotional and physical harm. Governments can't afford NOT to fund community legal centres.

"We're calling on the Federal government to get out in front of this issue. By announcing secure ongoing funding for community legal centres nationwide, the Attorney General can save jobs and maintain services to some of Australia's most vulnerable people," she said.

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