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# Community Law Australia



## MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 29 August 2013

### **Caxton CLC urges candidates to reveal their plans to address legal crisis**

Caxton Legal Centre has written to its local candidates in the seats of Brisbane and Lilley to ask them to outline their plans to address the access to justice crisis.

As the local community legal centre, Caxton Legal Centre provides vital legal help to residents from the two electorates and is concerned that access to justice has not yet been addressed in the local area.

Community Law Australia commended Caxton Legal Centre and said that despite recent increases in funding to individual centres there was still huge unmet demand for free legal help among Australians who can't afford to pay for a private lawyer.

Community Law Australia spokesperson Carolyn Bond said: "Access to justice is a major issue for people in this area, which is why the major candidates are being contacted to ensure that they make their position known to local residents.

Caxton Legal Centre said that the top legal issue they encountered was by far, employment issues, but that they were also busy with tenancy, employment, consumer, debt and family violence matters.

2012 research shows that people who already live with significant disadvantage, such as people with a disability, are twice as likely to experience legal problems and need help from a community legal centre.

About one-quarter of the population experience a substantial legal problem each year. Financial strain was associated with 29% of problems, stress-related illness with 20%, physical ill health with 19%, relationship breakdown with 10% and having to move home with 5%. Legal problems related to family issues had the most adverse consequences.

(see [http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/LAW\\_AUS/\\$file/LAW\\_Survey\\_Summary\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/LAW_AUS/$file/LAW_Survey_Summary_FINAL.pdf) )

Scott McDougall, Director of Caxton Legal Centre, said: "Community Legal Centres assist people with legal problems that go to the core of what we value in our lives – family, security and the ability to participate in society as equals.

In 2012-13 family law comprised half of the ten biggest areas of law for our community legal centre. The majority of these relate to the contact that people have with their children, their children's living arrangements or family and domestic violence," Mr McDougall said.

Community Law Australia spokesperson Carolyn Bond said: "Without proper access to justice, people may miss out on legal help when they need it most.

"Unresolved legal problems can often escalate, causing financial, social and health problems. CLCs can help people address these problems before it's too late.

"It saves money overall to provide access to legal help for Australians who can't afford a lawyer. It's also vital in ensuring that everyone is equal under the law.

“Legal problems can crop up at any time – but access to quality legal help shouldn’t depend on your bank balance or where you live. This is why we are encouraging local candidates to make their commitment to access to justice known so that local residents can make an informed choice on Election Day,” Ms Bond said.

*Community legal centres provide free legal help to people who can’t afford a private lawyer. They assist with problems such as housing, employment, consumer issues, debt and family violence, and are often a source of early advice and assistance to help prevent problems from escalating.*

**MEDIA: Spokespeople include: Carolyn Bond on 0412 032 987 and Director of Caxton Legal Centre, Scott McDougall on 0400 547 390. For media inquiries, contact Anaya Latter: 0432 121 636**