



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Thursday 24 July 2014 – for immediate release**

### **Budget cuts place free legal help further out of reach for Queenslanders**

People in Queensland are less likely to get the legal help they need, as the Federal Government continues to cut funds to community legal centres.

In addition to \$19.6 million cuts to community legal centres nationally, announced last December, there was an additional \$6 million cut in the recent Federal Budget.

“The Federal Government says ‘frontline legal services will not be affected’ but these funds currently support significant frontline services,” said Carolyn Bond AO, national spokesperson for Community Law Australia, today.

“Queensland community legal centres will either need to reduce the number of lawyers available to help people, turn away more people seeking help, limit the range of problems they can address, or restrict the regional areas they can cover,” Ms Bond said.

Six of the affected organisations are in regional Queensland, three in outer suburbs of Brisbane, and two are statewide specialist legal services.

“Regional Queenslanders will be most affected by these cuts,” Ms Bond said.

The types of services that could be affected include:

- specialist legal services for tenants facing eviction across Queensland;
- specialist family law outreach services in Coomera;
- general legal help for the Inala community;
- family law services on the Sunshine Coast and in Townsville, helping people when their relationships end;
- statewide legal help for people who have disputes with Centrelink; and
- legal help with family violence applications at Southport Magistrates’ Court.

“Even before these damaging cuts, community legal centres were already grossly underfunded and struggled to meet increasing demand for help with serious legal problems from people unable to afford a private lawyer. These cuts will only make that situation worse,” Ms Bond said.

“We know that community legal centres are already very efficient in the help they provide, and that nationally at least 500,000 Australians miss out on legal help every year. The answer is funding community legal centres properly to meet increasing need, not cutting their funding,” Ms Bond said.

Community legal centres give free legal help to disadvantaged Australians experiencing relationship breakdown, workplace mistreatment, family violence, debt, eviction, homelessness and other legal problems that severely impact their lives. They address the growing gap between people who qualify for legal aid, and those who can afford a private lawyer.

As well as these cuts, the Government has stopped centres doing any policy or law reform work with their funding.

“While it’s a small part of their overall work, community legal centres are in a position to identify repeat problems based on the experiences of their clients to bring about changes that prevent problems in the first place,” Ms Bond concluded.

### **Further information**

[Federal budget cuts to community legal centres in the news](#)

[Economic benefit of community legal centres strong, says cost benefit analysis](#)

[Community legal centres accuse Federal Government of gagging](#)

[Last chance for law services to be heard, fighting to protect the most vulnerable](#)

[Brandis restrictions starting tomorrow seek to silence community legal centres speaking out on unfair laws, policies and practices](#)

[Advocacy and frontline services vital to achieve access to justice](#)

### **To arrange an interview**

Darren Lewin-Hill on 0488 773 535