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Community Law Australia



MEDIA ALERT

Monday 30 July 2012 – For immediate release

National justice campaign urges Queensland Premier to reverse tenancy advice cuts

Community Law Australia, a national coalition of more than 200 organisations campaigning for access to justice, has written an open letter (enclosed) to Queensland Premier Campbell Newman urging the immediate reversal of his decision to withdraw funding from 23 organisations providing Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Services (TAAS) across the State.

The letter says the more than 100,000 people annually who seek help with a host of serious tenancy and housing issues including eviction and in many cases homelessness will have nowhere else to go except to poorly resourced and over-stretched community legal centres.

“These cuts not only undermine access to housing justice for ordinary and disadvantaged Queenslanders, they undermine their access to justice for a range of everyday legal issues – issues for which they are unlikely to qualify for government assistance, and for which the price of private legal help is simply out of reach,” said national spokesperson, Hugh de Kretser, today.

The letter rejects the cuts as an inappropriate measure to achieve additional funding for social and public housing, likening the move to sacking doctors and nurses on the pretext of funding the construction of new hospitals.

“The claimed savings from these cuts will have little impact on the 30,000 Queensland households currently waiting for social housing – a problem which itself clearly demands a substantial increase in core government investment.

“Funding must not be taken from the very people and organisations working hard with scant resources to address serious problems of tenancy and housing that have flow-on effects for the cost of court and tribunal proceedings, as well as for other pressured services – including hospitals, health and mental health, child protection, family violence, disability and aged care,” de Kretser said.

Funding for TAAS does not come from public taxes, but from only ten per cent of the interest from rental bonds in Queensland, which has the second highest rental accommodation rate in Australia (33.3%).

The letter concludes with a call to reverse the funding cuts, and to commit to essential funding for other vital public interest programs and organisations – several of which have suffered similar cuts by the Newman Government. The letter has been copied to Federal Attorney-General, Nicola Roxon, and to Shadow Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis.

About Community Law Australia

Community Law Australia is a campaign by a coalition of community legal centre bodies led by the National Association of Community Legal Centres. Community Law Australia is highlighting the crisis in access to Australia’s legal system and advocating for a proper safety net for legal support. Community Law Australia believes that all Australians should be able to access the legal

help they need, regardless of their financial situation, social circumstances or where they live. Community Law Australia launched at the High Court on 16 July 2012.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact media officer Anaya Latter on 0432 121 636. www.communitylawaustralia.org.au