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Community Law Australia



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 28 September 2012 – for immediate release

Queenslanders left adrift as funding cuts force vital housing advice services to close their doors

Community Law Australia today raised concerns that Queenslanders faced serious service gaps and rising disadvantage from the Queensland Government's axing of the Tenancy Advisory and Advocacy Services (TAAS) program.

Campaign spokesperson Hugh de Kretser said that the 23 services which relied on the funding were in various stages of packing up and trying to finalise work for clients.

The vast majority of funding for TAAS comes from interest generated on tenant's bonds.

"These are vital services that helped thousands of Queenslanders maintain tenancies. Cutting them will create injustice and increase homelessness. Many people who need help will have nowhere else to turn.

"Many people will simply give up on their rights. Those who try to represent themselves will create costs for the tribunal as it tries to provide a fair hearing for people totally unfamiliar with the law and tribunal procedure.

Examples on the Ground:

Caravan & Manufactured Home Residents Association (CAMRA)

Caravan and Manufactured Home Residents Association spokesperson Ron Whittington said that their Wynnum service would be forced to break their lease and sell their assets before the 30 September.

"In these last two weeks we are finishing up case files – having to tell clients we cannot do anymore for them is heartbreaking.

"We are tying up the loose ends as best we can and attempting to equip our clients to self-represent in the Tribunal."

- 27,000 people live in caravans across Queensland
- Around 15,000 Queenslanders live in manufactured homes, although it is harder to quantify; they are primarily elderly and retired people on low incomes.
- CAMRA helped 600–700 households last quarter.
- The service has operated for 20 years in Wynnum, Brisbane and services the entire State by phone.
- CAMRA and the Tenant's Union of Queensland worked with Monte Carlo residents some years ago to purchase the Caravan Park in Cannon Hill. This park is now under threat of sale by the State Government.

Tenancy Advisory and Information Service in Whitsunday

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Service Coordinator Julie Scanlon said that the community which had relied on their services for 17 years would now have to travel 126 kms away to reach the nearest housing office.

“We work really closely with all the services in our area. This area has quite limited access to help – it’s going to be a big change for our community.

“We were seeing around up to 100 households per month. We’ve been a part of this community for 17 years.

“We found out our funding was being pulled by finding a media release online, a letter from the Government confirming it came a week or so later,” said Ms Scanlon.

CLA Spokesperson Hugh de Kretser said the impacts of the cuts were evident.

“You can’t just close 23 services without having major repercussions in the community. It will force clients onto other already stretched services, create disadvantage and will marginalise Queenslanders’ ability to seek help when they need it most,” said Mr de Kretser.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact media officer Ben Ruse on 0409 510 879. www.communitylawaustralia.org.au