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# Community Law Australia



## MEDIA RELEASE

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

SCALES Community Legal Centre has written to its local candidates in the seat of Brand to ask them to outline their plans to address the access to justice crisis.

As the local community legal centre, SCALES provides vital legal help to residents from the Brand electorate and is concerned that access to justice has not yet been addressed in the local area.

Community Law Australia commended SCALES 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 Kwinana and Rockingham, which is why each candidate is being contacted to ensure that they make their position known to local residents.

SCALES said that the top legal issues they encountered ranged from family and domestic violence matters, residential tenancy matters, and family law children's matters.

Last year SCALES recorded 1,162 requests for legal services they were unable to assist with due to lack of resources.

Gai Walker, Managing Director of SCALES, said that Australians should be able to access the legal help they need regardless of their financial situation, social circumstances or where they live.

"The issues our CLC helps with are important matters that can have a huge impact on an individual or family's stability, wellbeing and ability to participate successfully in society," Ms Walker 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 SCALES Managing Director Gai Walker on 0404 245 339. For media inquiries, contact Anaya Latter: 0432 121 636**