



hume riverina community legal service

MEDIA RELEASE

Cuts to services still planned, despite funding announcement

13 May 2016

The Hume Riverina Community Legal Service acknowledges the announcement yesterday by the Attorney-General and Minister for Women that \$30 million will be given to legal assistance services to enable them to provide more help to those affected by family violence.

However, it is essential to consider this announcement in the context of the \$34.83 million cuts the Government is still planning for Community Legal Centres from 1 July next year.

The Government is taking away \$34 million in core funding for CLCs with one hand, and giving back \$30 million to be shared between legal aid commissions, selected family relationship centres and CLCs for family violence services, and this is despite the Productivity Commission recommendations that \$200 million be put back into legal assistance services.

Hume Riverina Community Legal Service's Principal Lawyer, Sarah Rodgers, said "Family Violence funding is essential for CLCs to help meet the ever-increasing demand in this area, and we acknowledge the Government's recognition of this. However, the net result is still a funding cut. Taking away core funding and replacing some of it with family violence specific money means that other vulnerable people who are not victims of family violence, such as young people, elderly people or people with a disability, may miss out on the generalist free legal advice that they need" she said.

"The new funding will be shared between select CLCs, Legal Aid Commissions and Family Relationship Centres so the result will still mean less funding overall for CLCs. More than half of the clients that currently receive assistance from Hume Riverina CLS have family violence issues. A drop in funding will only decrease the assistance that we are able to provide in the area of family violence."

"CLCs are the community's legal safety net, without adequate funding people just fall through the gaps. The people we help are people who are vulnerable and

disadvantaged, who cannot afford to pay for a private lawyer, and often do not qualify for legal aid.”

Regional Centres are of particular concern. None of the previous funding for the Women’s Safety Package was allocated in the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service’s catchment area (covering North-East Victoria and Southern Riverina of NSW). It is to be hoped that rural and regional Australians in these areas do not miss out again.

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