

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 13 March 2015

ILC funding threat – will our State MPs stand up for free legal services?

Illawarra Legal Centre congratulates NSW Attorney General Brad Hazzard along with all State and Territory attorneys-general throughout Australia for calling on the Federal Government to increase funding to the sector. See their letter attached.

Now we need the NSW Government to also step up to save our services.

Community legal centres (CLCs) are independently operating, not-for-profit community organisations that provide free legal and related services to the public, focusing on people living with disadvantage. We help people who don't qualify for Legal Aid with issues relating to debt, child support, Centrelink, family violence, tenancy and employment law among other areas.

The Federal Government is cutting funding to CLCs from July 1 this year and the NSW Government has not told the CLCs how much money they will receive after that date.

This leaves our local community in danger of losing free legal advice and support. Without the assistance from our community legal centre more people in the Illawarra will find themselves homeless, stressed, out of work, in court without a lawyer, and so requiring more support from the government.

With funding already reduced and further cuts proposed by the Federal Government, ILC will have to reduce its direct services to clients unless the State Government fills the gap.

Around half of Illawarra Legal Centre's core funding is from the 'national partnership agreement' which is the subject of the current negotiations between the state and federal governments.

ILC Coordinator Truda Gray said: "A cut in this funding will affect our services and therefore reduce our capacity to operate effectively for our clients.

"The Federal Government wants community legal centres to focus on 'direct client' or 'frontline' services yet these are the services which will suffer if funding continues to be wound back."

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