



Legal services for disadvantaged cut as savage budget bites

Critical legal services will be out of reach for hundreds of vulnerable and disadvantaged Western Australians due to savage funding cuts inflicted in recent State and Federal budgets.

Community Legal Centres Association Executive Director, Helen Creed, said annual funding for community legal centres had been cut by \$240,000 in the Commonwealth Budget and \$264,000 in the State Budget.

“This is a devastating cut for community legal centres which will result in a severe reduction to the services they are able to offer to our communities most disadvantaged,” she said.

“This funding cut will result in centres being forced to cut programs, services and staff.”

The Women’s Law Centre is at risk of losing solicitors and having to cut its unique prison outreach program as of 30 June 2015.

Managing Solicitor of WLCWA, Lesley Kirkwood, said the Creating Hope for Women in Prison (CHIP) program provides vital legal services to incarcerated women in the areas of family law, domestic violence, sexual assault and care and protection matters.

“Since 2004, the Women’s Law Centre has provided critical legal support to women at Bandyup Women’s Prison and the Boronia Pre-release Centre for women,” Ms Kirkwood said.

“We assist women with critical legal issues from child protection to domestic violence matters and our service is not replicated by any other Western Australian service provider.

“We also provide vital support in assisting women to remain safe once they are released into the community. Investment in the program gives incarcerated women hope and thereby help them to turn their lives around is vital.

“Without at least maintaining our current funding levels, the CHIP program will cease as of 30 June 2015, leaving hundreds of women without any access to vital legal services.”

Ms Creed said it was false economy for governments to inadequately fund community legal centres.

“We are seeking an urgent meeting with State Attorney General Michael Mischin to seek clarity on the State Budget and to inform him of the devastating impact the proposed dual budget cuts will have on WA legal services,” she said.

8 JUNE 2015

For further comment: Helen Creed, Executive Director, Community Legal Centres Association (WA). Mobile: 0400175874 Email: executivedirector@communitylaw.net

For further comment: Lesley Kirkwood, Managing Solicitor, Women’s Legal Centre
Ph: 9272 8855 Email: lesley@wlcwa.org.au

The Community Legal Centres Association (WA) Inc is the peak body for community legal centres. Located throughout the state, community legal centres are independent, non-profit organizations who provide legal services to disadvantaged and vulnerable people or those on low incomes who are ineligible for legal aid.