

Media Release



Federation of
Community Legal Centres
VICTORIA

Budget brings welcome boost to legal assistance

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The Federation of Community Legal Centres has welcomed the boost for legal assistance services in the 2013 Federal Budget as a step in the right direction.

“The allocation of \$10.3 million to community legal centres, \$30 million to Legal Aid and \$12 million to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services will improve access to justice for people who can’t afford a private lawyer,” said Federation Executive Officer Liana Buchanan today.

She said the specific funding for community legal centres reflected recent acknowledgment by Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus that community legal centres do some of the most difficult legal work in Australia, and have an impact through their staff, volunteers and pro bono support far greater than their level of resources.

This is borne out by research commissioned last year by the National Association of Community Legal Centres, which showed that community legal centres provide \$18 of benefit for every dollar invested.

“While further investment is needed at State and Federal level to address unmet legal need, these funding announcements represent a clear recognition of the problem and a good start on a solution.

“We are also pleased that comments by the Attorney-General indicate an openness to consider further funding measures following the current national review of legal assistance services,” Ms Buchanan said.

She noted that funding for legal assistance, including community legal centres, was a joint Federal and State responsibility, and that in Victoria a number of factors were driving demand for community legal services including population growth, the State Government’s law and order approach and recent changes to Victoria Legal Aid guidelines.

“People who can’t access Legal Aid are increasingly turning to community legal centres for help.” Ms Buchanan said.

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