



Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc



2 April 2014

Senate Standing Committees on Economics
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: economics.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee,

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Repeal) (No. 1) Bill 2014

Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc (**QAILS**) represents 33 community legal centres in Queensland. Our member community legal centres are independently operating not-for-profit, community-based organisations that provide free legal services to the public, focusing on the disadvantaged and people with special needs.

The Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) Inc (**Federation**) is the peak body for 51 community legal centres across Victoria. The Federation leads and supports community legal centres in pursuing social equity and access to justice. The Federation:

- Provides information and referrals to people seeking legal assistance.
- Works for law reform to develop a fairer legal system that better responds to the needs of the disadvantaged.
- Works to build a stronger and more effective community legal sector.
- Provides services and support to community legal centres.
- Represents community legal centres' priorities and interests.

QAILS and the Federation support the establishment of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (**ACNC**), and recommends that the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Repeal) (No. 1) Bill 2014* not be passed.

QAILS and the Federation recognise that not-for-profit organisations must operate in a transparent and accountable way, especially where those organisations are the recipients of public funds. In our view, aspects of community legal centres' reporting obligations are unnecessarily duplicative, complex and do not promote greater accountability.

The establishment of the ACNC promotes transparency and accountability, and will reduce the burden on not-for-profit organisations. As the ACNC develops and matures, multiple reporting will reduce (including where state and territory regulators are responsible for the operation of incorporated associations and other functions of community organisations). Reducing the reporting burden will allow organisations, including community legal centres, to focus on the services that support their client communities, and that contribute to a fair and just society.

Rather than abolishing the ACNC, QAILS and the Federation recommend all levels of government commit to supporting the 'one stop shop' regulator for community organisations, allowing community organisations to 'report once and use often', strengthening funders', regulators' and community's confidence in the work of charities and not-for-profits.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you, if required.

Yours sincerely,

James Farrell
Director
Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc.
director@qails.org.au
(07) 3392 0092
www.qails.org.au

Liana Buchanan
Executive Officer
Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc
executiveofficer@fclc.org.au
(03) 9652 1505
www.communitylaw.org.au