



The Hon Robert McClelland MP  
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Dear Attorney,

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) thanks you for this opportunity to provide a funding submission. NACLC represents 200 community legal centres (CLCs) around Australia. 128 CLCs receive funds under the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program.

#### **Legal problems create broader problems**

- People who cannot resolve their problems often end up in cycles of decline
- Not resolving legal problems can lead to their escalation in seriousness and the development of further legal problems
- Many people with legal problems have existing complex needs – eg mental illness or other medical issues, family breakdown, housing problems
- Suffering legal problems can lead to people losing their employment and income, suffering stress-related illnesses and relationship breakdown
- The impact of unresolved legal problems represents a significant cost to public services.

#### **Community Legal Centres**

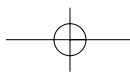
- CLCs play a vital role in helping people resolve their problems and disputes
- The CLC Service Delivery Model effectively assists people with complex needs and multiple legal and social problems
- This Service Delivery Model emphasises early intervention – community education, free timely legal advice, assisting people to help themselves, and systemic advocacy – so that disputes are resolved before they escalate into intractable legal problems
- CLCs effectively assess local legal needs and design services to meet the needs of the local populations they serve
- CLC volunteers and pro-bono relationships harnessed by CLCs are central to the work of CLCs, contributing at least \$23 million to the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program
- The work of CLCs contributes to the delivery of broader government agendas, delivering extensive benefits to the communities they serve and delivering savings to the government. For every dollar of funds provided to a CLC produces, at minimum, \$100 in benefits to the community and savings to government.

#### **Social Inclusion**

*... social inclusion cannot be just an "add on" to 'mainstream' government. Instead we must ensure that government programs and initiatives are delivering on the social inclusion agenda.*

– Julia Gillard, *Social Inclusion: A new portfolio, a new approach*. Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne University. 10 April 2007.

NACLC applauds the government on its social inclusion agenda. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Government on to promote greater social inclusion. The 200 CLCs located across Australia in urban, outer metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas are at the forefront of the provision of quality services which mitigate the effects of social exclusion, promote social inclusion and strengthen the communities that they serve.



## Evidence Based Approach

*The distinguishing feature of these successful models [of social inclusion] is an evidence based approach, including the setting of targets and the development of the detailed plans to meet them.*

– Julia Gillard, *Social Inclusion: A new portfolio, a new approach*. Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne University. 10 April 2007.

- The CLC Service Delivery Model has been developed over 30 years to meet the needs of clients with complex needs and multi-dimensional problems
- The essence of the Service Delivery Model is that it is multi-disciplined in approach, works effectively with socially excluded and disadvantaged communities, targets services to emerging need, is flexible and responsive
- The first phase in the Service Delivery Model is a legal needs assessment of the community which the CLC serves. Along with the needs assessment, the centre surveys other legal service providers and community organisations about the services they provide to identify the gaps in service delivery. This process gathers evidence which informs the CLC's Strategic Plan and directs the targeting of services
- NACLCL has commenced work on a new project which further develops the evidence-based approach to strategic planning that will assist each CLC to more easily target need and design services at the local level to address that need
- CLCs will use legal needs data produced by the NSW Law & Justice Foundation to identify the need at local and state level, together with Dr Vinson's data on social exclusion. CLCs will draw on this emerging evidence to inform the development of revised tools to feed into local strategic service planning. The CLC will then collaborate with other local service providers to determine how best to address the need and use this information to develop their strategic plans
- Alongside the development of evidence based strategic planning, CLCs are working on an Outcomes Measurement Tool to assist their management committees evaluate the effectiveness of their services and their interventions in their local communities
- These initiatives of CLCs reflect the Government's vision for a social inclusion agenda
- For the CLC Service Delivery Model to be most effective, a centre needs to be able to employ a multi-skilled team
- The baseline minimum funding for each CLC to most effectively implement the CLC service delivery model is around \$500,000.

NACLCL notes that the new Government wants to adopt policies and provide services within a fiscally responsible framework. The proposal we present in this funding submission allows for that. After 10 years of being starved of funds, our need for new funds is great. However our submission is presented as a series of targeted proposals to allow the allocation of new funds to be staggered if necessary.

**In total we request \$39m in new funds. Immediately we request \$10.3m to plug the hole created by funding that has not even kept pace with inflation and covers proposals 1 & 2 in the accompanying submission. In the budget for the 08/09 financial year, we request another \$13.7m targeted at specialist service provision and regional and rural Australia, proposals 3 & 4 in the submission. In the next year we request another \$15m to be allocated to those centres that do not receive baseline funding, proposal 5 in the submission.**

CLCs are about community. They are about partnerships and collaboration. They are about effectively targeting services and addressing new needs as they emerge. They are about early intervention. They are about offsetting other government costs. They are about strengthening community. They have always been about social inclusion.

We look forward to your support.

Yours sincerely

Liz O'Brien  
National Convenor

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES**

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