

Ms Toni Matulick
Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services
SG.64, Parliament House
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Toni Matulick

Inquiry into impairment of customer loans-questions on notice

I refer to your correspondence of 18 December 2015 and provide the following answers to the questions on notice asked therein.

1. Are you able to provide legal aid to cases that relate to loans from banks for retail, small business and commercial loans?

The Legal Aid Commission (ACT) ("Legal Aid ACT") receives limited funding and provides grants of legal assistance in accordance with the Legal Assistance Guidelines determined in accordance with the *Legal Aid Act 1977*. Legal Aid ACT does not provide grants of legal assistance in relation to proceedings arising from a commercial or business relationship between an applicant and the other party.

Realising the unmet need in the community, Legal Aid ACT commenced a Small Business Clinic in late 2014 to provide free advice services to small business owners and operators. The Small Business Clinic is a joint project between the University of Canberra (UC) and Legal Aid ACT as part of the clinical legal education program. Private legal practitioners provide pro bono assistance to clients, and final year law students provide assistance to the practitioners by conducting research on client matters. Legal Aid ACT provides administrative support to the Small Business Clinic including booking appointments, data entry and reception duties. Bookings are made through the Legal Aid ACT Helpline by calling 1300 654 314.

2. Do you have any recommendations for changes in legislation or policy relating to the terms of reference for the inquiry into impairment of customer loans?

We have no recommendations to make at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr John Boersig PSM
CEO
Legal Aid ACT