

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Commonwealth funding backdown welcome but still zero funding for EDO**

**26th March 2015**

Community Legal Centres Tasmania welcome the decision by the Commonwealth Attorney-General George Brandis to reverse the proposed funding cuts to Community Legal Centres and other legal assistance services.

Jane Hutchison the Chair of CLC Tas stated:

“We are pleased that the Attorney-General George Brandis has reversed his decision to cut $12 million from community legal centres across Australia over the next two years. We welcome the Attorney-General’s recognition of the vital role CLCs play in delivering access to justice”.

Today’s decision will help to secure Tasmania’s community legal centres and allow services to continue to be delivered to vulnerable Tasmanians. This is a particularly welcome outcome for centres facing imminent staff cuts and reduction in programmes.

Ms Hutchison noted, however, that the Attorney-General’s decision did not restore funding to the Environmental Defenders Office, which was terminated in 2014. She said:

“The failure to reverse cuts to the EDO is concerning, and threatens the survival of the service. The Productivity Commission recommended last year that funding be restored, to allow EDOs to assist people affected by poor environmental health and to take action to protect local and regional environments. CLC Tas urges the federal Government to take on this recommendation and re-fund EDOs to provide access to justice on public interest environmental matters”.

Ms Hutchison also expressed disappointed that the Attorney-General had reaffirmed the advocacy restrictions on community legal centres introduced last year:

"CLCs Tasmania believes that advocacy is a vital task for community legal centres in preventing legal problems that would otherwise increase the number of cases that walk into our centres every day. Funding for these activities is important to addressing systemic access to justice issues"

**For further information:** Jane Hutchison on 6223 2500(w) or 0417 596 919