

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES TASMANIA

8 February 2018

To Rebecca White
Leader of the Opposition
33 Cole St
Sorell TAS 7172

via email: rebecca.white@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Bec White,

Re: Community Legal Centres Funding Commitment

With the state election underway we are writing to request your parties support for the important work of the legal assistance sector, and in particular community legal centres.

Community Legal Centres are community organisations that provide free legal advice, information and representation, focussing on the socially and financially disadvantaged and are a vital part of the existing access to justice system. Based on their community service experiences, community legal centres also encourage governments to reform laws and policies to remove the structural and systemic issues that create legal problems, and educate communities about their legal rights and responsibilities to help prevent legal problems from occurring.

In Tasmania, community legal centres have a proud track record of advocacy on behalf our clients both privately, in courts and Tribunals and in response to Government Bills and inquiries.

Unfortunately, our funding from both the State and Federal Governments is not secure meaning that we are constantly struggling to retain staff. This in turn results in a loss of knowledge and an inefficient use of our time as new staff need to be trained which in turn affects service delivery to some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

We therefore call on your party to commit to two elections asks:

- That funding for all community legal centres in receipt of funding from the State Government is included in future budgets as recurrent funding, thereby ensuring that a higher degree of financial security is provided to our services; and

- That the Environmental Defenders Office who lost almost all of their State and Federal Government funding in 2014 have their funding reinstated so that they are not reliant on donations from members of the public for their ongoing survival.

If you require any clarification or we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane Hutchison".

Jane Hutchison
Chair

Community Legal Centres Tasmania
