

Finance and Public Administration References Committee

Inquiry into Domestic violence in Australia

Public Hearing – Wednesday 5 November 2014

Questions Taken on Notice – Federation of Community Legal Centres

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Senator RICE: I want to get back to the issue of funding. You said that the need for the family violence services of the CLC is \$1.2 million and up to \$2.4 million. How does that compare with what the current funding is?

Dr Atmore: I would have to take that question on notice.

Senator RICE: Okay. It would be good to know what level of increase there is just to do that. Beyond that, you mentioned your ideal world. Have you done an analysis of how much it is to meet the demand given the increased reporting and the increased demands on the services? What would be needed? What is the level of funding that would be required to meet that demand?

Thank you, Senator Rice and the Committee for the opportunity to respond to this question on notice.

As advised by Victoria Legal Aid:

'VLA provides approximately \$22m per annum to 40 Victorian CLCs through the Community Legal Services Funding Program (CLSP). Most of this funding is not targeted for specific use but is essentially "core" funding. In recognition of the importance of family violence as an area of legal need, a number of CLCs use this "core" funding to provide family violence services.

In addition, some of the \$22m is specifically targeted at family violence initiatives, such as court duty lawyer services. Accordingly, approximately half of the CLCs funded through the CLSP provide family violence at court duty lawyer services, covering all bar two of the courts that run regular family violence lists (courts currently not serviced by a CLC are Horsham and Wangaratta). It must be noted, however, that at the current levels of funding many of these services are stretched.

*Most of this specific family violence funding comes from a State Government allocation to VLA for Family Violence, Rural, Regional and Remote communities and Homelessness (known as FVRRRH funding) which amounted to **\$1,569,844 for family violence services in 2014-15.***

*Two CLCs also receive Commonwealth funding to provide duty lawyer services, a total of **\$131,391 in 2014-15.** In addition, one CLC receives **\$100,000** in 2014-15 of funding for family violence duty lawyer services from the new funding allocations to CLCs by the former Attorney General Mark Dreyfus, which won't however continue beyond this financial year'.*

The Federation has gathered information from our member centres about the extent of urgent unmet legal need for family violence assistance, including for duty lawyer services, and including for courts that may not have a specialist family violence list but still list family violence intervention order matters.

In addition to the CLC noted by VLA above, another CLC has relied on additional Commonwealth funding provided under the former Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus ('additional funding') to provide a regional family violence duty lawyer service at 3 magistrates' courts. This funding will not continue beyond the current financial year. A further 5 CLCs have relied on this additional funding to provide or expand family violence or family violence-related (family law) legal assistance, which will be directly impacted by the cuts.

Some CLCs also rely on time limited grant funding to provide family violence legal assistance. For example, Moonee Valley Legal Service provides advice and casework to two housing estates. InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence is funded for a pilot legal service to assist women from CALD backgrounds who experience family violence. Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre is funded by the Legal Services Board for a dedicated family violence lawyer who attends 5 regional courts and provides assistance on an on-call basis to 2 further sites.

On the basis of the further information gathered by the Federation, I wish to revise the figure I previously provided to the Committee concerning the total additional funding estimated by CLCs to be required to meet essential needs, and including the impact of the additional funding cuts.

We estimate the total amount needed per annum as approximately \$3,750,000, of which \$1,215,000 is required to address the impact of the recent law reform that, as I outlined on 5 November, will create an additional impost on duty lawyers and other forms of legal assistance.

Thank you again for the opportunity to answer this question on notice, and please contact me if you require further information.

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