




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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ADJOURNMENT

Community Legal Centres

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (8.35 pm): Community legal centres perform a vital role for the most vulnerable, marginalised and at-risk in our community, but on 1 July this year the Turnbull government is going to cut 30 per cent of the funding out of that program. Once again, it proves that through the austerity measures of bad federal and state Liberal and National parties the hardest hit is the little guy.

There is no denying that community legal centres have had their fair share of challenges. They face growing demands each year. The Pine Rivers Community Legal Centre has seen a vast spike in the number of clients, with over 3,000 cases in just the last six months. They deal with complex issues, often of a deeply personal nature, such as issues involving family separations, consumer problems, debt, tenancy disputes, employment issues and, increasingly, domestic and family violence cases with duty lawyers at the Pine Rivers Magistrates Court. In my community there is a four-week wait just to access an appointment. That demand illustrates the need for more funding to the service, not less.

We know that early intervention and support can be the best thing for people resolving and dealing with legal issues. The Pine Rivers Community Legal Centre has been an institution for 33 years and some of the volunteer solicitors are foundation members, with a small core team of five mostly part-time workers and over 38 volunteer solicitors. After much work, our local service increased its office space to keep up with demand, particularly through the Thursday walk-in service, which has lines that run out of the door.

A substantial funding cut would result in the service being less accessible, in more ways than one. Insecurity in funding has already led to experienced staff departing, less legal advice available in group sessions and fewer legal services for youth. That is happening while people are stressed, anxious and have highly confidential issues that need to be addressed. Ripping \$34 million out of those services for three years will only create a false economy, while vulnerable and marginalised locals with pressing legal issues are left without help. It is poor policy, it is flawed policy and it is policy that no-one entrusted into leadership should ever support.

I call on those opposite to send a message to the Turnbull government. The message is clear: our communities need more community legal funding, not less; reverse these cuts and support the most at need in our community.