

## **Question on Notice**

**No. 929**

**Asked on 13 October 2015**

**MS BATES** ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND MINISTER FOR TRAINING AND SKILLS (HON Y D'ATH)—

### **QUESTION:**

With reference to recent reports in the Gold Coast Bulletin that the Robina Community Legal Centre remains unfunded by the Labor Government and my speech in the House on this issue—Will the Attorney-General confirm whether any funding will be allocated to support the vital work of the Robina Community Legal Centre?

### **ANSWER:**

I thank the Member for Mudgeeraba for her question.

The Robina Community Legal Centre (RCLC) is not government funded. It is a relatively new organisation that is run by volunteers. It has approached the Queensland Government on a number of occasions for funding.

The Queensland Government has already allocated the State funding available for legal assistance services delivered by community organisations (mostly Community Legal Centres [CLCs]) for 2014-17 (\$30.34 million in total). The types of legal assistance services include: information; referral; legal advice; community legal education; duty lawyer services; and representation services. Funding for these services is allocated under a model that includes strategies designed to improve frontline service delivery and better manage service demand. A key strategy of the model is to maximise the services that can be delivered with the available funding by building on the existing government funded service system where possible and only funding new services if necessary.

The 2014-17 allocation includes a total of \$664,021 for legal assistance services to be delivered in the Gold Coast area by the Gold Coast Community Legal Centre and Advice Bureau (Gold Coast CLC) over the three years.

Gold Coast CLC is a mature CLC that is highly experienced in delivering specialist domestic violence legal services and is integral to the wider domestic violence service system response in the Gold Coast area.

Specialist domestic violence legal services are also provided in the Gold Coast area by Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ) through its Southport office and phone line.

I am advised that Gold Coast CLC has a long-standing referral relationship with LAQ for conflict and other situations. This referral relationship ensures that services are available for both partners in domestic and family violence matters.

An additional \$100,000 (one off) allocation has recently been made to the Women's Legal Service to enhance operations of its domestic violence hotline so that more vulnerable women and their children can access the legal assistance that they need.

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015-20 (the NPA), the Queensland Government is currently in the process of allocating a total of \$2.704 million of Commonwealth funding to eligible organisations for the delivery of additional legal assistance services in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

The additional funding is temporary (for 2015-16 and 2016-17 only) due to scheduled cuts to Commonwealth CLC funding in 2017-18. If the Commonwealth proceeds with the scheduled cuts, Queensland will receive \$2 million less of CLC funding per annum.

Given the temporary nature of the additional funding, applying the strategy of building on the existing government funded service system is particularly important. This approach will ensure that the temporary additional services can be implemented using existing infrastructure. It will allow for services to be delivered without creating significant additional administrative costs; maximising the number of services that can be provided to vulnerable Queenslanders with the available funding.

The additional temporary funding is being allocated through a tender process which opened on Monday 26 October 2015 and was advertised to eligible organisations. The key eligibility requirements are:

1. The organisation currently receives legal assistance service delivery funding allocated by the Queensland Government under the Community Legal Services Program; and
2. The organisation meets the quality standards for legal assistance funding (certification under the CLC National Accreditation Scheme or compliance with the Human Services Quality Standards, as applicable).

RCLC does not meet the first eligibility requirement, therefore, it is not eligible to apply for the additional temporary Commonwealth CLC funding.

Meeting the relevant quality standards and/or being a member of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services does not automatically qualify an organisation to receive legal assistance service delivery funding.

The Queensland Government will determine the funding objectives, strategies, and eligibility requirements for the allocation of legal assistance service delivery funding for the 2017-20 triennial funding cycle prior to undertaking the relevant procurement process.

Community organisations, including CLCs, exist independent of government. Although many receive government funding, some do not. Many of these organisations seek and receive support from a range of sources to deliver their services, including: private donors; partnerships and in-kind contributions from businesses; and government and non-government grants programs.