

Question on Notice

No. 1746

Asked on 23 October 2019

MR C WHITING ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (HON Y D'ATH) –

QUESTION:

Will the Attorney-General outline how the Palaszczuk Government's investment in community legal centres will help Queenslanders, in particular the residents of the electorate of Bancroft?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Bancroft for his question.

Since the implementation of Queensland's legal assistance model in 2013, Queensland has become a national leader in its approach to planning for and delivering legal assistance services.

Over 2017-20 the Palaszczuk Government allocated \$61.2 million of Queensland and Commonwealth funding to community organisations to provide free or low-cost legal services to vulnerable and disadvantaged Queenslanders.

I am pleased to advise that over the period 2020-25, community organisations, mostly community legal centres, will have access to over \$120 million in Queensland and Commonwealth funding and five year contractual arrangements.

The change to five year funding cycles demonstrates strongly that this Government has both listened to the legal assistance sector's concerns about funding certainty and acted to alleviate them.

Moving to five year funding cycles will provide greater stability for community organisations as it means they will be able to attract and retain experienced and valued staff to maintain service continuity for clients. A five year funding term will also allow community organisations to better plan for services for clients who, as we know, are often highly vulnerable.

The tender process to allocate these funds for the delivery of legal assistance services by community organisations opened on 23 October 2019. It will close on 4 December 2019 allowing organisations six weeks to respond to the tender.

The community legal sector is a vital part of our justice system, helping ensure access to affordable and accessible legal advice and support. In 2018-19 Community organisations provided more than 264,000 legal assistance services to clients across Queensland including those in the Member's seat of Bancroft. Allowing persons with low incomes to access free legal support and referral services is critical in ensuring a safe and prospering community.

I urge members and constituents to contact Community Legal Centres Queensland, or look on their website at communitylegalqld.org.au if they are in need of legal support.