

Cameron Review of Community Legal Centre Services

NSW Government Response

Community legal centres (**CLCs**) provide an invaluable service to the NSW community. They deliver free legal assistance to more than 50,000 people each year at over 30 locations across metropolitan, regional and rural NSW. By focusing their services on those who need it most, they also ensure that disadvantaged groups within our community receive access to justice.

In April 2017, the NSW Government announced an additional \$6 million for NSW CLCs, to be allocated across the 2017–18 and 2018–19 financial years. To inform future funding allocations, Mr Alan Cameron AO was appointed to conduct a review of NSW Government support for CLCs. The purpose of the Review was to ensure that legal assistance is being directed to people most in need, improve CLC service provision and determine the most appropriate funding model going forward. The Review examined a range of issues, including:

- The type, scope and geographical spread of CLC services that should be funded by the NSW Government
- The funding levels that are required to enable CLCs to deliver those services
- The funding model that should be used to inform the allocation of available funding.

The Review made 12 recommendations, which are intended to enhance service provision, improve transparency, and strengthen the CLC sector overall.

In particular, the NSW Government is pleased to support the preservation of the existing funding envelope over the next four years. This will provide CLCs with greater funding certainty and ensure that they are able to maintain existing levels of service provision.

In addition, the NSW Government will invest an extra \$2.2m per annum from 2019–20 to expand the reach of the sector and address critical service gaps.

An application-based funding model will also be implemented. The sector will be closely consulted in the design and implementation of this new funding model, and individual CLCs will be supported through the application process. The new funding model will not be implemented before 2019–20 to ensure adequate preparation time.

From 2019–20, three year funding agreements will also be implemented to provide CLCs with greater certainty and stability, and to support forward service planning.

The NSW Budget for 2018-19 committed an additional \$15.6 million for CLCs over four years, including the \$3 million for 2018-19 that had previously been committed in April 2017, to go towards the implementation of the recommendations of this Review.

The NSW Government's response to each of the recommendations is set out in the table below.

No.	Recommendation	NSW Government response
1.	CLCs should continue to provide a complete range of legal assistance services, including information and advice, community legal education, case work, representation and law reform activities.	Supported
2.	The NSW Government should provide guidance to CLCs regarding priorities for service provision under State civil law, including housing, debt, and care and protection matters.	Supported
3.	The NSW Government should continue to provide funding to CLCs that engage in strategic advocacy that seeks to identify and remedy systemic issues.	Supported
4.	The existing funding envelope for CLCs should be preserved, including the \$3m p.a. announced by the NSW Government in the 2017–18 and 2018–19 financial years.	Supported
5.	<p>The NSW Government should seek to identify additional funding to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Address critical gap areas (b) Ensure that services that do not currently receive NSW Government funding can be funded without reducing allocations to existing CLCs. <p>Approximately \$2.2m would be required to meet the funding requests made to the Review by unfunded services.</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>In addition to the existing funding envelope, the NSW Government will invest an additional \$2.2m p.a. in CLC services from 2019–20. Community legal services will be able to apply for this funding under the application-based funding model outlined at recommendation 7 below.</p>
6.	The NSW Government should allocate additional funding for Wesley Community Legal Service from the Responsible Gambling Fund	Allocations from the Responsible Gambling Fund are made by the Minister

No.	Recommendation	NSW Government response
		for Racing on the recommendation of the Trustees of that Fund.
7.	The NSW Government should adopt an application-based funding model from 2019–20.	Supported
8.	<p>The NSW Government should allocate funding in 2018–19 to enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) CLCNSW to work in partnership with LJF to develop an evidence base to inform applications for funding, similar to that developed in Queensland (b) CLCNSW to support the CLC sector through the application process, including by developing an application resource guide and other supporting materials. <p>The Review considers that approximately \$300,000 would be required to conduct this work.</p>	Supported
9.	Legal Aid NSW should no longer be responsible for determining funding allocations but should continue to administer CLC funding agreements.	The NSW Government considers that Legal Aid NSW should continue to be responsible for managing funding allocations due to its expertise and experience in this area.
10.	A minimum three-year funding cycle should be implemented to provide CLCs with funding stability and certainty.	Supported
11.	The NSW Government should invest in the development of an outcomes measurement framework.	Supported

No.	Recommendation	NSW Government response
12.	Legal Aid NSW, in consultation with the CLC sector, should seek to identify unnecessary duplication in relation to reporting requirements and report its findings to the NSW Government.	Supported