



Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP  
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice  
Minister for Training and Skills

In reply please quote: 3254312

**09 JUN 2016**

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Level 18 State Law Building  
50 Ann Street Brisbane  
GPO Box 149 Brisbane  
Queensland 4001 Australia  
**Telephone** +61 7 3719 7400  
**Email** attorney@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petitions 2585-16 and 2535-16 received by the Queensland Parliament on 11 May 2016, regarding the request for funding for a Coordinator and Practice Manager for the Robina Community Legal Centre (RCLC).

I respect and value the work the legal profession contributes to fair and equitable access to justice through Community Legal Centres (CLCs) and their volunteers.

I understand that RCLC, an organisation that commenced in February 2014 and is run by volunteers, is experiencing difficulties meeting the demand for its services. I note that securing funding for a Coordinator and Practice Manager is a priority for the organisation, so that it can free up its volunteer practitioners. I understand that RCLC did not receive Queensland or Commonwealth legal assistance funding in the 2013-14, 2014-15 or 2015-16 financial years.

The Queensland Government, through Legal Assistance Strategy and Funding, Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG), allocates funds from the Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund (LPITAF), State Budget and Commonwealth Government for the delivery of legal assistance services to vulnerable and disadvantaged Queenslanders by Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ) and community organisations.

A key strategy of the applicable Queensland funding model, given the finite resources available, is to maximise the services that can be delivered with the available funding. This involves building on the existing Government funded service system where possible and only funding new services if absolutely necessary. Information about the model is publically available at: [www.qld.gov.au/legalinvestment](http://www.qld.gov.au/legalinvestment).

This approach ensures that the services can be implemented using existing infrastructure. This means that services can be delivered without creating significant additional administrative costs, maximising the number of services that can be provided to vulnerable Queenslanders.

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The Queensland Government has allocated the available funding for legal assistance services to be delivered by community organisations for 2014-17 (\$30.97 million in total over 2014-17 of Queensland funding and \$17.31 million in total over 2015-17 of Commonwealth funding).

This included an allocation of \$664,020 of Queensland funding over 2014-17 and \$1,045,866 of Commonwealth funding over 2015-17 to the Gold Coast Community Legal Centre and Advice Bureau (Gold Coast CLC) to deliver legal assistance services to vulnerable people in the Gold Coast area.

I am very concerned with the funding cliff that CLCs across the country are facing in 2017-18 with the Commonwealth Government reducing funding by \$2 million per annum in Queensland alone.

These services are in addition to services provided by Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ). LAQ services are accessible to Gold Coast residents through LAQ's Southport office and State-wide phone line (1300 65 11 88). Further information about LAQ services is available at: <http://www.legalaid.qld.gov.au>.

The Gold Coast CLC has a long-standing referral relationship with LAQ. It is also 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. As a result, it has recently increased the delivery of domestic violence duty lawyer services at the Southport courthouse through an arrangement with LAQ.

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.

Information about other grants programs administered by the Queensland Government is available at: <http://www.qld.gov.au/community/community-organisations-volunteering/funding-grants-resources/qld-government-grants/index.html>.

The delivery of free legal services to vulnerable Gold Coast community members by RCLC is an invaluable contribution to the community. I acknowledge and appreciate the dedication and hard work of RCLC management and volunteers, and wish them well in their endeavour to secure funding for their requested positions.

Yours sincerely



**YVETTE D'ATH MP**  
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