



The Hon Ray Williams MP

Member for Castle Hill

Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

14 July 2020

MORE FREE LEGAL SUPPORT FOR CASTLE HILL LOCALS IMPACTED BY COVID-19

Domestic violence victim-survivors, Aboriginal Australians and people who've lost their jobs and homes as a result of COVID-19 will be among those to benefit from a Commonwealth funding boost of more than \$15.6 million for NSW's legal assistance sector.

Member for Castle Hill Ray Williams MP said free legal services in Castle Hill will receive a funding boost to help support disadvantaged locals impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

"COVID-19 has placed immense pressure on families and households across Castle Hill," said Mr Williams.

"Many Castle Hill locals are facing job losses, tenancy issues, financial insecurity and, horrifically, the increasing risk of violence behind closed doors.

"This investment will help meet the increased demand seen by our hardworking legal assistance services. It will ensure vulnerable members of our community know their rights and get the free legal advice they need to get back on their feet."

Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said that more than 40 per cent of this funding will be directed towards frontline services helping people experiencing domestic and family violence.

"We have heard horrific stories from victims and advocates about domestic violence perpetrated while victims have been isolated alongside their abusers due to COVID-19," Mr Speakman said.

"In the last nine weeks alone five women and one man have been tragically killed in domestic violence incidents across NSW.

"We all have a part to play in tackling this epidemic. This funding will help victim-survivors get the advice they need to ensure perpetrators are held to account, support them in escaping violent households and ultimately help us save lives."

The funding package will also enable the legal assistance sector to increase its ICT capabilities to deliver more services remotely and to reach more people across NSW. A total of \$2.35 million has been allocated to help legal assistance services transition to greater virtual service delivery.

The COVID-19 Project Agreement is part of the Commonwealth Government's \$63.3 million commitment to support legal assistance services respond to the coronavirus pandemic.



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The Government's funding allocation to the NSW legal assistance sector supports frontline services and ICT capabilities as follows:

Legal Aid NSW – \$5.24 million to boost staff and respond to increases in demand for its civil and family law, domestic and family violence and child protection services, and more than \$1.26 million to support ICT enhancements.

Community Legal Centres (CLCs) – \$4.34 million to increase frontline service delivery capacity across the CLC sector, and more than \$1.09 million to support ICT enhancements in the CLC sector.

Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) - \$3.68 million to bolster the capacity of the ALS to deliver services including family and criminal law and child protection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW. ALS will also receive ICT funding directly from the Commonwealth Government.

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