

Election 2019 – Community legal centres

WHAT ARE THE PARTICULAR ISSUES FOR WOMEN?

Beyond the general funding issues for CLCs, two specific program areas that need funding are:

HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS

An RMIT study found that people are more likely to attend non-legal services, like health services, for legal assistance. HJP are effective in terms of addressing violence against women because they get to clients otherwise not reached because of the health care setting. We would advocate for funding the HJP to be increased in a way that builds on existing partnerships.

- Note that the November 2018 Women’s Economic Security Statement included an additional \$29.8 million over three years from 2019-20 to continue the existing Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships currently operated by Community Legal Centres and some Legal Aid Commissions across Australia.

FINANCIAL ABUSE

A recent report by RMIT into financial abuse between intimate partners stated that: ‘Economic abuse is a form of domestic violence that has a significant impact on the health and financial wellbeing of victims, but is understudied.’ Financial abuse is also difficult to measure because it is not recognised as abuse by those who are experiencing it. However, the existing research has found that:

- financial abuse is significantly associated with other forms of domestic violence such as physical and psychological abuse
- women are more than twice as likely as men to experience economic abuse
- the prevalence of financial abuse among women who have sought help from domestic violence services ranges from 78-99%
- disability, health and financial stress are significant markers for financial abuse
- 11.5% of the population have or will experience financial abuse in their lifetime
- one of the highest areas of legal need for victims of domestic violence is consumer and credit/debt
- domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness in NSW
- financial abuse and a lack financial independence is a key reason why women experiencing domestic violence are unable to gain financial independence and gain secure housing.

ELECTION COMMITMENTS

The table below sets out how fully parties' current election commitments address NFAW recommendations: Full implementation Partial implementation No or negative response

NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Provision of additional core funding to all Community Legal Services including specific funding for Aboriginal Legal Services.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
	The budget identifies \$45.4m (20-21), \$52.7m (21-22) and \$53.5m (22-23) for Community Legal Centres; and \$75.5m (20-21), \$82.7m (21-22) and \$84.1m (22-23) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services. This is however a nominal allocation and, with the delivery of funding through a single mechanism, there is no certainty of allocation at the specialist centre-level. Regardless, there is no significant increase in core funding.	
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Provision of specific funding be provided frontline domestic violence services.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
	While the Commonwealth has marginally increased the level of support for women escaping violence, it is still minimal and well below that required. An additional \$75.4 million to continue the Keeping Women Safe in their homes program and to provide emergency accommodation for women and children escaping violence is welcomed. However this amount must be increased to ensure the protection of women and children escaping violence.	
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Continuation of funding for the National Partnership on Family Advocacy and Support Services following the one-off \$7 million provided in 2018-19.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
	The budget identifies \$9.9m (20-21) and \$10.0m (21-22) for Family Advocacy and Support Services. This is however a nominal allocation and, with the delivery of funding through a single	

	mechanism, there have been no guarantees made in terms of allocation at the program-level.	
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Provision of funding for Closing the Gap Refresh process and justice-related measures following the ALRC Report on Indigenous Incarceration.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
	The Government will provide \$276.5 million over five years from 2018-19 to support Indigenous students to undertake and complete study to help close the gap in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.	
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
A long-term funding commitment from Government for the Health Justice Partnerships.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
	The budget identifies \$9.9m (20-21) and \$10.0m (21-22) for Family Advocacy and Support Services. This is however a nominal allocation and, with the delivery of funding through a single mechanism, there has been no guarantee made in terms of allocation at the program-level.	
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Funding enabling Legal Centres specialising in financial abuse to establish a partnership with financial institutions to develop shared training materials to recognise and address financial abuse.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS

OTHER ELECTION COMMITMENTS		
Commitment	Party	Comments
	Choose an item.	
	Choose an item.	
	Choose an item.	

Authorised by Kate Gunn, Sydney.