

Cameron Review of Community Legal Centre Services

Factsheet



Community Legal Centres (**CLCs**) are not-for-profit organisations that provide free legal help to people experiencing disadvantage. They help more than 52,000 people each year at over 30 locations across NSW.

In 2017, the NSW Government asked Mr Alan Cameron AO to review CLC services in NSW in order to inform funding allocations, improve service provision and ensure that assistance is being directed to people most in need.

The Cameron Review made a number of recommendations, the vast majority of which have been accepted by the NSW Government.

What are Community Legal Centres?

CLCs are independent community organisations that provide free information, legal advice and related services. They help more than 52,000 people each year at more than 30 locations across metropolitan, regional and rural NSW.

CLCs provide early, practical support to help people understand legal issues and take action before they spiral out of control. They assist with most areas of law, including debt, domestic violence, child protection, consumer and housing matters. CLCs focus on helping people who are experiencing hardship and disadvantage. This helps to ensure that disadvantaged groups within the community can access the justice system.

Record funding for CLCs

CLCs will receive record state funding of \$45 million over the next four years, including almost \$20 million in additional funds. This is in addition to discretionary payments from the Public Purpose Fund (PPF), which in 2018-19 was \$2.4 million.

This injection of additional funding responds to the Cameron Review, which recommended that the NSW Government maintain its existing CLC funding commitment, including the additional \$3 million allocated in 2017-18. It also recommended that an additional \$2.2 million be invested each year to address gaps and expand the reach of the sector.

The NSW Government has accepted these recommendations. An additional \$3 million has already been allocated in 2018-19. From 2019-20 the sector will receive a funding boost of \$5.2 million per year for three years. This funding is in addition to the \$6.7 million in core funding already allocated by the NSW Government, bringing the total investment to almost \$12 million each year.



The NSW Government has asked Legal Aid NSW to implement the new funding model. The CLC sector will be closely consulted and individual centres will be supported throughout the process.

Why does the NSW Government fund CLCs?

CLCs provide expert advice to help people resolve issues early. This provides significant benefits to individuals and families, including less stress and financial hardship. It also reduces the likelihood of problems getting worse and ending up in court.

The NSW Government considers that additional investment, combined with greater funding certainty and a new funding model, will assist the CLC sector to strengthen its services, expand its reach and continue to provide practical legal assistance to those most in need.

Greater funding certainty

CLCs will enter into three-year funding agreements under the new funding model. This will enable CLCs to engage in forward planning which will deliver better outcomes for the community. Currently, funding is allocated each year and is generally based on the amounts CLCs have received in the past.

New source of funding for CLCs

After talks with the NSW Law Society Council, the NSW Government will introduce legislation to deal with the \$88 million surplus in a fund used to pay legal professional negligence claims, arising from the collapse of insurance giant HIH in 2001. This fund has now fulfilled that purpose.

Half of the unused funds will boost the reserves of the present legal professional indemnity insurer Lawcover Insurance Pty Ltd, the other half will provide a new ongoing funding source for CLCs. The monies will be invested into a new account within the PPF, with any interest earned directed to CLCs or reinvested.

How will funding be allocated?

The Cameron Review recommended that from 2019–20 a new application process be introduced to allocate funding to CLCs.

The new application-based funding model will help to ensure that government funding is aligned with changing demographics, community demand and quality of service delivery. It will also increase accountability and transparency and ensure that public funds are invested based on evidence of greatest need.

Cameron Review of CLC Services

Mr Cameron consulted extensively, including with Legal Aid NSW, Community Legal Centres NSW and the National Association of Community Legal Centres. Mr Cameron also visited staff from community legal centres and other organisations in rural and regional NSW.



For more information

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