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Attorney General
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MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW JUSTICE FUND GIVES VOICE TO LEGAL CHATBOT

A Sydney community legal centre (CLC) is harnessing artificial intelligence to help disadvantaged clients under the NSW Government's Access to Justice Innovation Fund, Attorney General Mark Speakman announced today.

Marrickville Legal Centre today launched online chatbot NALA (New Age Legal Assistant) after becoming the first recipient of the annual grants program, which is aimed at reducing barriers to the justice system with tech-savvy solutions.

"NALA answers commonly asked legal questions in real time, auto-generates documents for users, and automates straightforward administrative tasks," Mr Speakman said.

"This frees up CLC staff to assist more people personally with more complex legal problems."

NALA will help clients with traffic-related matters and tenancy issues, as well as booking appointments and preparing letters requesting court date changes.

"This project could revolutionise service delivery in CLCs by reducing the bottleneck of simple queries," Mr Speakman said.

Marrickville Legal Centre's Managing Principal Solicitor Vasili Maroulis said NALA will slash wait times for hundreds of people each week, but it won't replace face-to-face services.

"Just like first responders, frontline legal services must attend to enquiries urgently before legal issues compound into crises," Mr Maroulis said.

"NALA will make legal information more accessible and enable practitioners to do what they do best: helping our vulnerable clients."

Marrickville Legal Centre has also developed a scalable model of this chatbot technology, making it capable of being rolled out to CLCs across the state.

The NSW Government has pledged \$1 million over four years to the Access to Justice Innovation Fund, offering grants of up to \$250,000 each year. Applications for the second round of funding will open on 1 February 2021.

"We encourage ideas from legal professionals, community groups, coders and social entrepreneurs that improve the way legal problems are resolved, or help people navigate the justice system," Mr Speakman said.

"If you have a proposal for an inventive, low cost, high impact project with a focus on socially and economically disadvantaged communities, we want to hear from you."