



MEDIA RELEASE

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ABA WELCOMES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING INJECTION INTO LEGAL ASSISTANCE SECTOR

The Australian Bar Association has today welcomed the Federal Government's announcement to commit an additional \$55.7 million over the next three years to the community legal assistance sector in the upcoming 2017-18 Budget.

Australian Bar Association President, Will Alstergren QC said, "Today's announcement is a significant step to addressing the shortfalls of the current legal assistance budget and shows a firm commitment from the Federal Government to provide crucial and equal access to legal services for all Australians."

"The Australian Bar Association has been a vocal campaigner for increased funding and support to the legal assistance sector, particularly for community legal centres. The Government's re-consideration of this issue, and significant injection of funds is particularly positive news," said Will Alstergren QC.

"The legal profession, particularly the Independent Bars and the community legal centres, have provided an extraordinary amount of pro bono work, which has become unsustainable for many. Today's announcement will be warmly welcomed by the profession and is an excellent first step to ensuring everyday Australians have proper access to justice."

"The increased funding to the Indigenous legal services sector is a particularly substantial commitment and one that the ABA welcomes enthusiastically. The number of Indigenous people coming before the justice system in Australia is a national disgrace and one that can only be addressed through a multi-faceted approach, that includes increased and intensive legal assistance funding."

In welcoming today's announcement, the Australian Bar Association is calling upon all sections of government to work together to ensure that equal access to affordable and quality legal assistance remains a priority. The ABA considers that equal access to justice through the legal assistance sector is a basic and crucial issue for all Australians.

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