

MEDIA RELEASE



NEW SOUTH WALES
BAR ASSOCIATION

INCREASED FUNDING NEEDED TO ENSURE ACCESS TO JUSTICE

16 August 2024

The NSW Bar Association supports calls for the increased funding of legal assistance services to ensure that everyone has access to justice.

The legal profession has published an [open letter](#) to key Commonwealth and state and territory ministers, co-ordinated by the Law Council of Australia, identifying the urgent need for increased and certain funding.

“The most vulnerable people in our community depend upon the services of the legal assistance sector, often at times of great distress,” NSW Bar Association President, Dr Ruth Higgins SC said.

“Without increased and certain funding, victims of domestic and family violence, and other vulnerable people, will be left without the support they often urgently need, compromising their safety and wellbeing.”

“Legal Aid NSW, Community Legal Centres, and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) play indispensable roles in the justice system, but cannot meet ever-increasing demand due to inadequate funding.”

“Despite an ‘Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership’ concluding that current funding levels are insufficient, the Commonwealth and state and territory governments have not provided any certainty to the legal assistance sector beyond the current partnership agreement.”

“The NSW Bar Association calls upon all levels of government to provide increased and certain funding to the legal assistance sector under the next partnership agreement. There is an urgent need to address the gross shortfall in funding for grants of legal aid in areas such as criminal and family law. The unrealistic allocation of funding disadvantages clients in the preparation of their cases as well as those members of the private legal profession who take on difficult and complex cases for extremely low rates of compensation.”

“Governments cannot address the disadvantages faced by First Nations people and will not be able to meet the Closing the Gap targets without properly funding the legal assistance sector,” Dr Higgins said.

The open letter and further information are available on the Law Council of Australia’s [website](#).

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