



Mark Speakman
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Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

MEDIA RELEASE

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COVID-19: \$15.6M BOOST TO LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Domestic violence victim-survivors, Aboriginal Australians and people who've lost their jobs and homes as a result of COVID-19 will be among those to benefit from a Commonwealth funding boost of more than \$15.6 million for NSW's legal assistance sector.

Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said \$13.26 million of the funding would support frontline legal services helping disadvantaged people manage the 'new normal' of the coronavirus pandemic.

"In the face of an unprecedented health crisis, our State's frontline services have gone above and beyond the call of duty. This includes our tireless healthcare care workers, our police and emergency services and those who provide free legal assistance," Mr Speakman said.

"As people face job losses, tenancy issues, financial insecurity and, horrifically, the increasing risk of violence behind closed doors, there are more people than ever contacting Legal Aid, Community Legal Centres and the Aboriginal Legal Service in search of legal support.

"This investment will help meet this increase in need, and ensure vulnerable members of our community know their rights and get the advice they need to help overcome hardships."

The NSW Government will direct more than 40 per cent of the Commonwealth investment towards frontline services helping people experiencing domestic and family violence.

"We have heard horrific stories from victims and advocates about domestic violence perpetrated while victims have been isolated alongside their abusers due to COVID-19," Mr Speakman said.

"In the last 10 weeks alone, seven people have been tragically killed in domestic and family violence incidents across NSW.

"We all have a part to play in tackling this epidemic. This funding will help victim-survivors get the advice they need to ensure perpetrators are held to account, support them in escaping violent households and ultimately help us save lives."

The funding package will also enable the legal assistance sector to increase its ICT capabilities to deliver more services remotely and to reach more people across NSW. A total of \$2.35 million has been allocated to help legal assistance services transition to greater virtual service delivery.

The COVID-19 Project Agreement is part of the Commonwealth Government's \$63.3 million commitment to support legal assistance services respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

Today's funding allocation to the NSW legal assistance sector supports frontline services and ICT capabilities as follows:

Legal Aid NSW – \$5.24 million to boost staff and respond to increases in demand for its civil and family law, domestic and family violence and child protection services, and more than **\$1.26 million** to support ICT enhancements.

Community Legal Centres (CLCs) – \$4.34 million to increase frontline service delivery capacity across the CLC sector, and more than **\$1.09 million** to support ICT enhancements in the CLC sector.

Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) – \$3.68 million to bolster the capacity of the ALS to deliver services including family and criminal law and child protection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW. ALS will also receive ICT funding directly from the Commonwealth Government.