

# Community legal centres are in a funding and workforce crisis.

Chronic underfunding and funding insecurity have plunged community legal centres into crisis. In 2023, community legal centres turned away over 1,000 people a day nationally. We estimate at least 340 were victim-survivors of domestic and family violence

Wages in our highly feminised sector are lower than those for similar roles in the public and private sectors, leaving our workforce struggling in the face of heightened cost-of-living and housing pressures. As the funding crisis deepens, demand grows, and workloads increase, more workers are experiencing vicarious trauma and burnout.

Ahead of the May federal budget, community legal centres asked for urgent funding to meet growing demand for services and increase workers' pay, and for funding security beyond 30 June 2025. The budget delivered neither of these things.

With less than a year's funding left, community legal centres are now in the most uncertain position we have faced in a decade. Right now, centres are making difficult decisions about which programs and outreaches to cut back, which workers to let go, and when to close their books.

**It's already too late to prevent the crisis. It's not too late to prevent total catastrophe, but the countdown is on.**

If December 2024 comes and goes without a guarantee of significantly increased Commonwealth funding under the next legal assistance funding agreement, community legal centres will not have funds in their accounts come 1 July 2025.

Every day that passes without funding security puts the people who rely on community legal centres to stay safe, housed, and financially secure at even greater risk. Community legal centres want to focus on helping people, not be forced to spend precious time and energy planning for redundancies and closures.

## WHAT WE NEED

**\$35 million this year** to address the workforce crisis facing community legal centres.

**At least \$270 million per year** for community legal centres from 1 July 2025, committed by December 2024.

**An extra \$95 million per year** for frontline domestic and family violence work.



*Community legal centres are at breaking point. The deadline to prevent crisis has already been and gone. To avoid total catastrophe, community legal centres need guaranteed ongoing funding by December 2024.*

## WHAT'S AT RISK?

### Everyday legal help to prevent crisis

Community legal centres help hundreds of thousands of people a year to resolve everyday problems in areas like housing, relationships, debt and money problems, and discrimination.

**People trust their local community legal centre to support them early, before legal problems snowball to crisis points.**

### Holistic, trauma-informed support

Community legal centres recognise the impacts of trauma and discrimination on people's ability to access justice. We know that many people's legal issues are connected to other social and financial problems. To help people holistically, community legal centres employ not just lawyers but social workers, financial counsellors, Aboriginal community development workers, tenant advocates and more.

**People come to community legal centres for holistic, trauma-informed support to untangle lots of different but connected problems all at once.**

### Frontline domestic and family violence work

Community legal centres play a crucial role in preventing and responding to domestic and family violence. Frontline family law and family violence services make up the largest area of work for the community legal sector.

**People go to community legal centres for help to keep themselves and their children safe from violence.**

### Education to help people and communities avoid legal problems

Community legal centres understand that the best thing is often to help people avoid the legal system altogether. We educate and empower communities to prevent legal problems from emerging.

**People can avoid legal trouble when they can access community legal education from their community legal centre.**



Northern Territory  
Community Legal Centres

