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Law Council endorses new National Legal Aid report

The Law Council endorses the findings within the PwC report [The benefits of providing access to justice](#) commissioned by National Legal Aid, and welcomes this body of work which will assist to build an evidence base for the challenges that we all know exist.

The civil and family law services provided by Legal Aid Commissions are a bulwark against further hardship and marginalisation. Unfortunately, these services have remained undervalued and underfunded by consecutive governments,” Law Council of Australia President, Mr Luke Murphy said.

This report reinforces previous advocacy from many stakeholders, including the Law Council, for improved funding and highlights the value that investment in the legal assistance sector provides to the Australian community.

“Investment in Legal Aid Commissions, and the broader legal assistance sector, should not be seen solely as an investment in the justice system. As identified in the report, investment in these services provides significant downstream savings in areas such as health, employment and housing.

“This investment not only improves outcomes for many of Australia’s most vulnerable and marginalised people but is also critical in delivering vital savings for governments which can be used elsewhere,” Mr Murphy said.

In particular, the report highlights the importance of Legal Aid Commissions in Australia’s efforts to eliminate family violence in the community, support the wellbeing of victim-survivors and avoid the ongoing costs to Government.

The report notes that for \$1 invested in family and civil law legal aid services by the Australian Government an equivalent benefit of \$2.25 is delivered. When considering the \$267 million in annual Commonwealth funding for services, this indicates that Legal Aid Commissions are providing more than \$600 million in social and economic benefits.

In its [submission](#) to Treasury ahead of the May Budget, the Law Council noted that current Commonwealth funding levels under the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP), including for Legal Aid Commissions, are at approximately half of the level required to meet demand on the sector.

“In considering the Federal Budget and the imminent review of the NLAP, the Law Council calls on the Australian Government to heed the advice of this report and properly recognise and invest in the family and civil law services provided by our Legal Aid Commissions, in addition to improved funding for the entire legal assistance sector.

“All arms of this sector including Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services have a vital role in delivering access to justice across the Australian community,” said Mr Murphy.

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