

## Lawyers to rally over legal aid crisis in election campaign

With the election in full swing and neither party responding to the legal aid funding crisis, lawyers from across Australia will hold rallies and events in major cities during Law Week (16-20 May).

The rallies and events will launch a major national campaign on legal aid funding, with widespread support from the community sector, which experiences the impact of the legal aid crisis first-hand.

Law Council of Australia President, Stuart Clark AM, said most Australians would be shocked at Commonwealth legal aid funding neglect, which has seen a massive rise in unmet legal need.

“Successive federal governments have ripped hundreds of millions of dollars from legal aid, effectively crippling this vital justice safety net,” Mr Clark said.

“As a result, ordinary Australians are being forced to represent themselves in court on a daily basis, or worse ignore their legal problems, with potentially devastating consequences.

“Most people assume that if they require legal help and cannot afford it, legal aid is there to help. Unfortunately they are wrong – the funding crisis is now so bad that even many Australians who are living beneath the poverty line are not eligible. For most people it’s simply unavailable.

“We must decide if justice should be the right of all Australians. Due to enormous cuts in legal aid funding, it is now reserved for those with the means to afford a lawyer. For the rest, it is a lottery.

“This is the question at the heart of the Law Council’s legal aid funding campaign.”

Mr Clark pointed out that the choice to adequately fund legal aid should have been easy for governments concerned about budget repair.

“The Productivity Commission recommended an immediate \$200 million injection into legal aid, which it has found will provide a net economic benefit over the long term,” Mr Clark said.

“Increasing numbers of unrepresented people have filled the court system, creating enormous inefficiencies. Meanwhile, the downstream impact of unmet legal need on health, unemployment and community services has inestimable social and economic costs, which could be avoided.

“The Productivity Commission and other independent economic analysts have found that investing in legal aid would deliver significant net savings to taxpayers.”

Mr Clark welcomed the Government commitment to allocate money to support legal aid as part of its new package to reduce violence against women and their children; and the Opposition’s promise to reverse Community Legal Centre cuts from 2014 Budget. But said much more is needed.

“While supported, these commitments don’t address the systemic funding problem,” Mr Clark said.

“Given decades of deep cuts legal aid, much more funding is needed to end this injustice.

“Whoever wins this election must commit to properly fund legal aid and end this needless crisis once and for all,” Mr Clark said.

Mr Clark urged all Australians who believe in the principle of access to justice to turn out and show their support at the May rallies.

*A list of rallies and events is attached. It can also be accessed [here](#).*

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## Legal Aid Campaign Events (Law Week, 16-20 May 2016)

Date	State/Territory	Event	Contact
16 May, 7:15am	Western Australia	<p>The Case for Legal Aid</p> <p>Law Week Breakfast with Fred Chaney AO</p> <p>Argyle Room, Parmelia Hilton Hotel, 14 Mill Street, Perth</p>	<p><b>Moira McKechnie   Manager Marketing &amp; Communications</b></p> <p>The Law Society of Western Australia  <b>T:</b> (08) 9324 8650  <b>F:</b> (08) 9324 8699  <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:mmckechnie@lawsocietywa.asn.au">mmckechnie@lawsocietywa.asn.au</a>  <b>W:</b> <a href="http://lawsocietywa.asn.au">lawsocietywa.asn.au</a></p>
16 May, 1pm	South Australia	<p>Legal Aid Campaign Rally</p> <p>Gathering for members of the profession and other interested parties. Speakers include the Hon Robyn Layton AO QC and Tim Graham, Director of JusticeNetSA. Claire O'Connor SC will MC the event.</p> <p>The following members of the profession will be available for media interviews at the rally: Patrick O'Sullivan QC (President, Australian Bar Association), Bill Boucaut SC, David Edwardson QC, Marie Shaw QC, and Cheryl Axleby (CEO, Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement)</p> <p>Victoria Square in front of the Courts, Adelaide</p>	<p><b>Michael Esposito   Communications Manager</b></p> <p>The Law Society of South Australia  <b>T:</b> +61 8 8229 0222  <b>F:</b> +61 8 8231 1929  <b>M:</b> +61 422 073 146  <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:Michael.Esposito@lawsocietysa.asn.au">Michael.Esposito@lawsocietysa.asn.au</a>  <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.lawsocietysa.asn.au">www.lawsocietysa.asn.au</a></p>
16 May, 1pm	Tasmania	<p>Rally for Legal Aid</p> <p>Speakers include Michael Hill, recently retired Chief Magistrate of Tasmania, and Kym Goodes, CEO of the Tasmanian Council of Social Service</p> <p>Parliament House Lawns, Hobart</p>	<p><b>Matthew Verney   President</b> Law Society of Tasmania  <b>M:</b> 0438 248 708  <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:matthew.verney@me.com">matthew.verney@me.com</a>  <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.lst.org.au">www.lst.org.au</a></p>

16 May, 1 pm	Victoria	<p>Speaker event with Steven Hynes: 'Access to justice and legal aid in the UK'</p> <p>Neil McPhee Room, Owen Dixon Chambers East, 205 William Street, Melbourne</p>	<p><b>Kerry O'Shea   General Manager Public Affairs and Legal Policy</b> Law Institute of Victoria T: <a href="tel:+61396079373">+61 3 9607 9373</a> (Direct) T: <a href="tel:+61396079311">+61 3 9607 9311</a> (Switchboard) F: <a href="tel:+61396079542">+61 3 9607 9542</a> M: <a href="tel:0401107103">0401 107 103</a> E: <a href="mailto:koshea@liv.asn.au">koshea@liv.asn.au</a> W: <a href="http://www.liv.asn.au">http://www.liv.asn.au</a></p>
16-18 May	Northern Territory	<p>Social Media Campaign (times to be confirmed)</p> <p>Various speaking engagements and activities</p> <p>Speakers include Fiona McLeod SC, President-Elect of the Law Council</p>	<p><b>Megan Lawton   CEO</b> Law Society Northern Territory M: 0418892248 E: <a href="mailto:megan.lawton@lawsocietynt.asn.au">megan.lawton@lawsocietynt.asn.au</a> W: <a href="http://lawsocietynt.asn.au">lawsocietynt.asn.au</a></p>
17 May, 9am	Victoria	<p>Rally for Legal Aid</p> <p>Gathering for members of the profession, stakeholders, media and other interested parties</p> <p>County Court of Victoria Forecourt, 250 William Street, Melbourne</p>	<p><b>Kerry O'Shea   General Manager Public Affairs and Legal Policy</b> Law Institute of Victoria T: <a href="tel:+61396079373">+61 3 9607 9373</a> (Direct) T: <a href="tel:+61396079311">+61 3 9607 9311</a> (Switchboard) F: <a href="tel:+61396079542">+61 3 9607 9542</a> M: <a href="tel:0401107103">0401 107 103</a> E: <a href="mailto:koshea@liv.asn.au">koshea@liv.asn.au</a> W: <a href="http://www.liv.asn.au">http://www.liv.asn.au</a></p>
17 May, 5:30pm	Queensland	<p>Joint Bar Association of Queensland and Queensland Law Society event</p> <p>BAQ President Christopher Hughes QC and QLS President Bill Potts will co-chair the event</p> <p>Held at the Bar Association of Queensland, Inns Of Court, 107 North Quay, Brisbane</p>	<p><b>Matt Dunn   Government Relations Principal Advisor</b> Queensland Law Society T: 07 3842 5862 M: 0423 284 721 E: <a href="mailto:m.dunn@qls.com.au">m.dunn@qls.com.au</a> W: <a href="http://qls.com.au">qls.com.au</a></p>
17 May, 6:30 for 7:00pm	Victoria	<p>The inaugural Cranlana Programme Justice &amp; Society Oration and Dinner</p> <p>Speaker: Steven Hynes, 'Saving Legal Aid'. Cost is \$150 per person, including dinner and drinks</p> <p>Cranlana, 62 Clendon Road, Toorak</p>	<p><b>Kerry O'Shea   General Manager Public Affairs and Legal Policy</b> Law Institute of Victoria T: <a href="tel:+61396079373">+61 3 9607 9373</a> (Direct) T: <a href="tel:+61396079311">+61 3 9607 9311</a> (Switchboard) F: <a href="tel:+61396079542">+61 3 9607 9542</a> M: <a href="tel:0401107103">0401 107 103</a> E: <a href="mailto:koshea@liv.asn.au">koshea@liv.asn.au</a> W: <a href="http://www.liv.asn.au">http://www.liv.asn.au</a></p>

18 May, 8am	ACT	<p>Walk for Legal Aid</p> <p>Members of the profession and public walk to raise awareness of legal aid</p> <p>Walk starts at CLC Hub, 21 Barry Drive, Turner</p> <p>Walk ends at ACT Supreme Court, Knowles Place, Canberra</p>	<p><b>Nicole Karman   Communications Officer</b></p> <p>ACT Law Society</p> <p><b>T:</b> 02 6274 0308</p> <p><b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:nicole.karman@actlawsociety.asn.au">nicole.karman@actlawsociety.asn.au</a></p> <p><b>W:</b> <a href="https://www.actlawsociety.asn.au/">https://www.actlawsociety.asn.au/</a></p>
19 May, 8am	NSW	<p>Joint Law Society of NSW and NSW Bar Association Event</p> <p>Legal assistance funding campaign event</p> <p>Public forum with keynote speaker Steve Hynes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Case studies</li> <li>· Petition</li> </ul> <p>The Law Society of New South Wales, 170 Phillip Street, Sydney</p>	<p><b>Jacob O'Shaughnessy   Media and Public Relations Manager</b></p> <p>The Law Society of New South Wales</p> <p><b>T:</b> 02 9926 0288</p> <p><b>M:</b> 0413 440 699</p> <p><b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:Jacob.oshaughnessy@lawsociety.com.au">Jacob.oshaughnessy@lawsociety.com.au</a></p> <p><b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.lawsociety.com.au">www.lawsociety.com.au</a></p>