

JENNY LEONG MP

MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN

**THE
GREENS**

23 October 2017

Mr Alan Cameron AO
Cameron Review
Justice Strategy and Policy Division
Department of Justice
GPO Box 31
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Mr Cameron,

Re: Review of Community Legal Centre (CLC) Services

I am a member of the Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of Newtown in the NSW Parliament. Our office provides a range of support to constituents living in the electorate. Often these are matters that require legal assistance or advice, so we regularly refer constituents with a range of legal issues to CLCs for assistance.

In addition to this, we hold in high regard the specialist research and policy expertise offered by CLCs to support legislative reforms. CLC advocacy at an individual and systemic level is crucial in addressing issues people face interacting with our legal system or in receiving legal assistance.

Many of our most vulnerable constituents present at our office with complex issues including criminal matters, fines, or a range of concerns relating to their public or social housing tenancies. Our office has neither the resources nor the skills to provide the scope of advice required by these constituents, and yet they require assistance of this type to access justice. They are often unable to afford private legal assistance at market rates or able to negotiate complex systems without support.

It is important to our office that when we refer a vulnerable constituent for a legal service we can be confident that they will be treated with dignity and respect. The deep connections that CLCs have in the community and with other non-government services and the holistic approach CLC practitioners take in addressing their clients' issues in partnership with other community services is a point of difference crucial to the successful work of CLCs in our local community.

We are also aware that not everyone we refer to a CLC is able to be assisted, because of the existing unfunded demand. We also greatly valued the expertise of specialist community legal centres in considering law reform issues relevant to a great many of our constituents. As an example, our office has relied on the expert advocacy of the Tenant's Union of NSW and Women's Legal Service NSW (WSLNSW) in relation to the statutory review of the Residential Tenancies Act in understanding issues experience by tenants in NSW.



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Through their close links with communities, practice expertise and systemic advocacy, WLSNSW were able to bring to our attention serious shortcomings in the Residential Tenancies Act as it stands which increase the vulnerability of women who experience domestic and family violence while living in rental housing. WLSNSW were able to propose a range of practical solutions for consideration based on their expertise and lengthy experience supporting clients in this situation.

Locally, we have collaborated extensively with Marrickville Legal Centre to achieve positive outcomes for individual and groups of tenants in public housing within the electorate. They have also provided our staff with vital training and advice which has boosted the advocacy we are able to provide to our constituents. Our staff regularly seeks advice from Redfern Legal Centre in dealing with a range of constituent requests. We have also worked with that team to ensure that tenants of the Waterloo public housing estates receive advocacy during their relocations as the site is redeveloped.

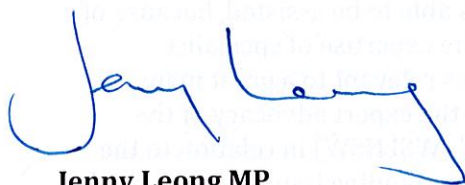
The Newtown electorate has a strong LGBTIQ+ community and the Inner City Legal Service's specialist support in this area has been vital for many of our constituents. Our discussions with that team have helped to inform our wider advocacy of several LGBTIQ+ justice issues. We have also worked with the Aboriginal Women's Legal Service to help inform our strategy around domestic and family violence in the electorate.

With the role out of the NDIS we expect a significant increase in demand for specific advice about individuals' entitlement to support and the design of NDIS packages. With the anticipated loss of advocacy services for individuals experiencing a disability, the specialist advice provided by the Australian Centre for Disability Law and the Intellectual Disability Rights Service is particularly necessary to assist vulnerable people with a range of disabilities.

All of these centres provide unique, expert and community-connected advice, advocacy and services that are crucial to ensuring access to justice for our community. If you have any questions about our submission, please contact our office on 9517 2800.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Leong', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jenny Leong MP
Member for Newtown