



**THE HON MARK DREYFUS QC MP
SHADOW ATTORNEY-GENERAL
SHADOW MINISTER FOR THE ARTS
MEMBER FOR ISAACS**

**THE HON JULIE COLLINS MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SHADOW MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
MEMBER FOR FRANKLIN**

**SENATOR CAROL BROWN
LABOR SENATOR FOR TASMANIA**

MEDIA RELEASE

WLS HOBART AT RISK WITHOUT FUNDING CERTAINTY

Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus QC, the Federal Member for Franklin Julie Collins and Senator Carol Brown today visited the Women's Legal Service Tasmania in Hobart.

The WLS offers free and confidential help to women on a range of legal issues, and does important work with victims of domestic violence.

It provides assistance to more than 1,000 Tasmanian women each year.

The WLS also runs 'Girls Gotta Know', an online legal information service for young women launched last year. Funding for this innovative service has been cut by the Abbott Government.

In 2013, the Labor Government provided the WLS with an additional \$400,000 funding over four years. The Abbott Government cut that additional funding last year.

All of the WLS's funding is up for review from 1 July 2015, as is the case for all Commonwealth-funded community legal centres across Australia.

With no certainty of their funding beyond next year Community Legal Centres like the WLS cannot properly plan their operations into the future. If their funding is cut further, that will mean a reduction in the vital service it provides for Tasmanian women.

"CLCs need to sign leases, attract and retain staff, and plan their service programs. It is simply unacceptable that the Government will not provide these important community organisations with any funding certainty," Mr Dreyfus said.

"There is significant fear in the community law sector that the Government has further cuts in store, even after the savage cuts imposed in MYEFO and the Budget."

"Since opening its doors in 1996, the WLS Tasmania has played a critical role ensuring access to justice for women across the state," Ms Collins said.

"Today the service provides vital assistance to Tasmanian women and also makes a valuable contribution to law reform to ensure the legal system is more responsive to issues affecting women.

"The law can be complex and it helps to talk matters through with someone sensitive to your personal circumstances.

"Without certainty on funding, the more than 1,000 women who use these services every year will be left with no support."

Senator Brown said the Women's Legal Service provides a strong voice for Tasmanian women of all ages.

"It is vitally important that the Centre is adequately funded," Senator Brown said.

"Labor calls on the Abbott Government to come clean about their plans for the CLC sector, to give their staff and clients some certainty beyond July 2015."

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