

Wednesday, 1 July 2020

## MEDIA RELEASE

### FUNDING BOOST FOR ALBERT PARK COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES TO AID CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

First Step Legal Service, Southport Community Legal Service and St Kilda Legal Service are set to share in joint funding of almost \$30 million from the Andrews Labor Government, and the Commonwealth, for community legal centres across the state to respond to coronavirus (COVID-19).

First Step Legal Service will receive \$321,500, Southport Community Legal Service \$75,000 and St Kilda Legal Service \$546,500 to support the continued delivery of frontline legal assistance services during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Member for Albert Park Martin Foley welcomed the funding, which will provide more members of the community with access to justice as they face the challenges arising from COVID-19.

Community legal centres are responding to increased demand due to the impacts of COVID-19, providing vital support to Victorians facing economic and personal difficulties to help them get back on their feet.

First Step Legal Service works within a mental health and drug and alcohol treatment clinic based in St Kilda and provides advice and representation to clients actively engaged in treatment, with a special focus on people experiencing family violence.

Southport Community Legal Service provides free legal advice to people in the City of Port Phillip and assists victims of crime seeking applications to VOCAT.

The St Kilda Legal Service provides legal assistance to residents in the cities of Port Phillip, Stonnington and Bayside, as well as operating a Community Outreach Program, Family Violence Program and the LGBTIQ Legal Service.

The funding boost will also help each service upgrade technology so that more community members can access the help they need remotely and digitally while the COVID-19 restrictions remain ongoing.

The Victorian Government's \$17.5 million COVID-19 response is in addition to funding recently agreed with the Commonwealth under the *National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25 Agreement*.

The Agreement will see an additional \$4 million in funding each year for the legal assistance sector in Victoria compared to the expiring *National Partnership Agreement 2015-20*.

#### Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jill Hennessy

*"Our community legal centres are on the frontline, helping Victorians who need support every single day – this funding will ensure they provide this support virtually, to more Victorians."*

#### Quotes attributable to Member for Albert Park Martin Foley

*"These Centres do vital work supporting people in our community every day, this extra support recognises that work as well as the challenges of operating during the coronavirus pandemic."*

*"With this funding boost our community can be assured that they will continue to have a place to turn for legal help when they need it."*