

Media Release

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SHOCK DECISION FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PLUNGES AWARD WINNING SPECIALIST WELFARE RIGHTS SERVICE INTO CRISIS

Late on Friday afternoon the National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN) learned of the surprising and shocking news that our South Australian member service, the Welfare Rights Centre SA, was unsuccessful in the tender process for National Partnership Agreement funding.

Genevieve Bolton OAM, Chair of the National Social Security Rights Network, said today:

“The Welfare Rights Centre SA is a longstanding, dynamic community legal centre. It is an award winning, specialist welfare rights service. We are surprised and shocked that the tender process conducted by the South Australian Government could have led to this decision.

“We urge the SA Government to restore funding to the Welfare Rights Centre SA, the only specialist Welfare Rights Centre in South Australia.

“Welfare Rights Centre SA has 30 years of experience and expertise in social security law and Centrelink administration. This expertise exists nowhere else outside government. It will be lost if this decision goes ahead.

“The South Australian Government decision also places at risk the Centre’s highly acclaimed outreach services in regional areas and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY lands). These services have been developed over many years. Longstanding relationships which have engendered trust and confidence with local communities have been at the heart of the outreaches’ success. Once gone, the outreaches will be very difficult to re-establish.”

Also at risk is the Centre’s award winning Housing Legal Clinic for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and its highly valued duty lawyer programs at the SA Civil and Administrative Tribunal and Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

“Inability to get timely access to secure income support is often at the root of other legal needs, including housing, credit and debt and family violence.”

“Welfare Rights Centre SA has been highly effective in harnessing volunteer and private law firm pro bono services to increase its reach and provide legal services to disadvantaged people who would otherwise miss out.”

“Welfare Rights Centre SA is a dynamic, innovative, efficient, client driven community service. Yet, its very existence is now seriously under threat unless the South Australian Government intervenes to restore its funding.”

Contact

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