28 April 2022

**The Hon. Jaclyn Symes MLC**

**Attorney-General**

Minister for Emergency Services

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Member for Northern Victoria

49a High Street

Wallan, VIC 3756

By email: jaclyn.symes@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Attorney-General Symes,

**Funding Threatens Vital Legal Support for Victim Survivors**

We are writing to you in relation to the threat to funding for community legal centres in the northern metropolitan region (NMR) in their provision of family violence legal support to victim survivors.

If this funding does not continue the impact on victim survivors in the northern metropolitan region will be profound. Northern Community Legal Centre (NCLC) provides support to approximately 940 victim survivors a year. If funding runs out in June, NCLC could be left with just one family violence lawyer to service a catchment area of over half a million residents.

Last year at Fitzroy Legal Service more than 60% of all matters opened by FLS’ Day Practice were family violence matters. Six lawyers advise and represent victim survivors across two catchment areas, in HJP outreaches, family violence duty lawyer services at two Courts, and through legal advice and casework. Loss of funding will mean fewer lawyers and would significantly impact on FLS’ ability to provide duty lawyer services and outreach to those who might otherwise miss out on legal support.

At West Heidelberg CLC, the funding provides for approximately two thirds of their dedicated family violence practice. In its absence, the provision of family violence legal support will be significantly compromised.

The CLCs in the NMR all provide vital legal support for victim survivors and innovative health justice partnerships which enhance access to legal support. Without this ongoing funding, victim survivors’ safety will be impacted.

We call on the Attorney General to ensure this funding continues for these essential services and consideration is made towards recurrent funding model for this vital service for victim survivors.

Yours Faithfully,

[NAME]

[POSITION]

[CONTACT]