

# About the Legal Services Commission

*The Commission is committed to providing the South Australian public with accessible legal information, advice and representation.*

*The Commission seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to justice within the legal system*

# Legal Services Commission 2016-17

## Vision

*To provide quality, independent legal assistance to South Australians*

## Goals

- *To provide clients with accessible information, advice and representation to meet their legal needs.*
- *To work in partnership with other members of the legal community to deliver to our clients equitable access to the justice system.*
- *To provide a safe, healthy, rewarding, satisfying work environment.*
- *To provide quality legal assistance efficiently and effectively.*
- *To satisfy the community that we fulfil our statutory and contractual obligations and are deserving of ongoing financial support.*
- *To provide timely research and advice on legal issues to the government and the community.*
- *To inform governments of the likely impact on the Legal Services Commission and the community of proposed changes to legislation and policy.*

## Functions

*The Legal Services Commission is an independent statutory authority established by the Legal Services Commission Act 1977 (the Act) to provide legal assistance to people throughout the State. It is funded by the South Australian Government and the Commonwealth Government. It has the powers, functions and duties prescribed or imposed on it by the Act.*

The statutory functions of the Commission are to—

- a) provide, or arrange for the provision of, legal assistance in accordance with the Act;

*This year, the Commission—*

- *received 19 612 applications for legal representation;*
- *granted 16 727 applications for legal representation;*
- *provided 14 249 duty lawyer services;*
- *provided 92 980 legal advice and information services.*

- b) determine the criteria under which legal assistance is to be granted;

*The Commission regularly reviews the criteria under which legal assistance is granted.*

*The criteria include means, merit and guidelines tests.*

- c) conduct research with a view to ascertaining the needs of the community for legal assistance, and the most effective means of meeting those needs;

*During the financial year the Commission undertook a client survey to ensure services are tailored to meet clients' legal needs and capability levels. In addition, the Commission conducted research into the needs of disabled South Australians, successfully obtaining a grant under the Commonwealth's Innovation Fund to develop educational resources targeting disabled women and girls experiencing family violence. Following the success of Legal Chat, further research into the needs of the community for online legal information led to the development of 24Legal, an online decision tree to assist clients to access legal information.*

- d) establish such offices and other facilities as the Commission considers necessary or desirable;

*During the financial year the Commission ran offices in Adelaide, Elizabeth, Port Adelaide, Noarlunga, Mount Barker, Port Augusta and Whyalla. Regular outreach services were provided at the Murray Bridge Community Centre and the Adelaide Magistrates Court.*

## Legal Services Commission 2016-17

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- e) initiate and carry out educational programs to promote an understanding by the public (and especially those sections of the public who may have special needs) of their rights, powers, privileges and duties under the laws of the Commonwealth or the State;

*The Community Legal Education program targets four priority groups – new migrants, young people, older people and people with disabilities. These groups are prioritised by the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services and were identified by the Legal Australia Wide Survey of 2012 as amongst the groups most vulnerable to unresolved legal problems.*

- f) inform the public by advertisement or other means of the services provided by the Commission, and the conditions upon which those services are provided;

*The Commission promotes its services to the public through traditional advertising, the Commission website, social media platforms, press releases and media opportunities. This financial year, over 300 media reports (excluding court matters) were published in relation to the work of the Commission.*

- g) co-operate and make reciprocal arrangements with persons administering schemes of legal assistance in other States and Territories of the Commonwealth or elsewhere;

*The Director of the Commission is a member of National Legal Aid, a co-operative body for legal aid directors from Australia and New Zealand. She oversees reciprocal arrangements with other legal aid commissions, community legal centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services. Other employees of the Commission are members of National Legal Aid committees, such as the Family Law Working Group, the Criminal Law Working Group, the Dispute Resolution Working Group, the CLE Working Group and the Grants and National Statistics Working Group.*

- h) where it is practicable and appropriate to do so, make use of the services of interpreters, marriage guidance counsellors and social workers for the benefit of assisted persons;

*The Commission provides interpreters as necessary for clients attending court and for legal advice interviews. This year the Commission provided 3617 interpreter services. During the financial year the Commission commenced a new Commonwealth funded Family Assistance and Support Service (FASS), based in the Family Court. This service increases the capacity of the duty lawyer service and includes a full time social worker to provide assistance to people experiencing family violence.*

- i) encourage and permit law students to participate, so far as the Commission considers practicable and proper to do so, on a voluntary basis and under professional supervision, in the provision of legal assistance by the Commission;

## Legal Services Commission 2016-17

*This year the Commission offered two summer clerkships to Indigenous law students and next year will offer an additional two general clerkships. Law graduates, who do not yet have practising certificates, are eligible to participate in a six week block of work experience at the Commission. Ten graduates participated in this program in the 2016-17 financial year.*

- j) make grants to any person or body of persons carrying out work that will in the opinion of the Commission advance the objects of the Act;

*The Commission engages in many collaborative ventures with other agencies and organisations. A grant was provided to the Northern Domestic Violence Service to provide domestic violence services in conjunction with the Commission.*

*This year the Commission provided resources and expertise to the Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse for the creation of a video resource on the State based assistance services available to those seeking support.*

- k) perform such other functions as the Attorney-General may direct.

*The Commission regularly responds to requests from the State Attorney-General for analysis of proposed changes to legislation and for comment on major reviews and reforms of the State's justice system. In 2016-17, child protection reform, family violence prevention strategies and changes to the criminal law have been major focuses.*

In performing its functions the Commission must—

- a) seek to ensure legal assistance is provided in the most efficient and economical manner;
- b) use its best endeavours to make legal assistance available to persons throughout the State;  
and
- c) have regard to the following factors:
  - i. the need for legal assistance to be readily available and easily accessible to disadvantaged persons;
  - ii. the desirability of enabling all assisted persons to obtain the services of legal practitioners of their choice;
  - iii. the importance of maintaining the independence of the legal profession;
  - iv. the desirability of enabling legal practitioners employed by the Commission to utilise and develop their expertise and maintain their professional standards by conducting litigation and doing other kinds of professional legal work.

# Legal Services Commission 2016-17

## Offices

The Commission offices are located at the following addresses:

### Adelaide

159 Gawler Place  
Adelaide 5000

T: 08 8111 5555  
F: 08 8111 5599

### Elizabeth

Windsor Building  
Elizabeth Shopping Centre  
Elizabeth 5112

T: 08 8111 5400  
F: 08 8207 9333

### Mount Barker

18 Walker Street  
Mount Barker 5251

T: 08 8111 5320  
F: 08 8391 4747

### Noarlunga

Noarlunga House  
Centro Colonnades  
Shopping Centre  
Noarlunga Centre 5168

T: 08 8111 5340  
F: 08 8207 3880

### Port Adelaide

ANL House  
306 Vincent Street  
Port Adelaide 5015

T: 08 8111 5460  
F: 08 8207 6277

### Port Augusta

13 Flinders Street  
Port Augusta 5700

T: 08 8686 2200  
F: 08 8648 5370

### Whyalla

Tenancy 7  
169 Nicolson Avenue  
Whyalla Norrie 5608

T: 08 8620 8500  
F: 08 8648 8950