

## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Attorney-General George Brandis QC launches new program to tackle family violence in Melbourne's east**

Attorney-General George Brandis QC launched Eastern Community Legal Centre's (ECLC) new family violence program, **SAGE - Support, Advice, Guidance, Empowerment** – at the Centre's AGM on Wednesday 16 November. SAGE provides a unique 'wraparound' service for women experiencing or at risk of family violence, including legal, social and other support.

ECLC CEO Michael Smith said the program, which integrates with other service providers across Melbourne's east, seeks to engage women most in need of assistance.

"The demand for family violence support has surged in recent years but many women still face barriers to accessing help. The SAGE program takes a partnership approach that's more likely to reach women who fall through the cracks of mainstream and standalone services," said Mr Smith.

Women from especially vulnerable population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from migrant and CaLD backgrounds and women with mental health issues or a disability, will have priority access to the SAGE program.

"With the SAGE program launched, we have greater capacity to provide a culturally safe service that responds to the whole-of-life issues that can arise with family violence," said Mr Smith.

In the 2015/16 year, ECLC assisted a record number of clients with 38% of the Centre's work related to family violence matters and another 22% related to family law. ECLC assisted 945 clients at the Ringwood Magistrates' Court as part of its family violence Intervention Order Support Service, up 20% from the previous year.

ECLC was one of 12 legal assistance providers nominated by the Federal Government in 2015 to develop a specialist family violence service under the [Women's Safety Package](#).

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