

## Michael Smith

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**From:** Samantha Dunn <Samantha.Dunn@parliament.vic.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 13, 2018 4:05 PM  
**To:** comms  
**Cc:** Michael Smith  
**Subject:** RE: Your plan for addressing urgent access to justice needs in Melbourne's East

Dear Michael and the team at ECLC,

Below is the Greens response to your email.

**1. What commitments will you make to increase resources for legal help in the Eastern region?**

Refer to response to question 2.

**2. What commitments, plans and proposals do you have to improve access to justice?**

The Greens' acknowledge the current crisis in the legal assistance sector, which has been unable to keep up with the unprecedented rises in demand for free legal help. To ensure ongoing and universal access to justice for all Victorians, we have committed to increase significantly the level of State Government funding to the legal assistance sector, including to Community Legal Centres (CLCs).

As part of our access to justice initiative we will:

- **Provide an additional \$132 million over four years** to the legal assistance sector (including Victoria Legal Aid, CLCs and Aboriginal Legal Services).
- Advocate for the Commonwealth Government to formalise a transparent, long-term state and federal government funding agreement for legal assistance.

You can find out more about the Greens' plan for access to justice [here](#).

**3. What commitments will you make to ensure this vital work in the Yarra Ranges continues?**

Refer to response to question 2.

**4. What commitments including funding commitments will you make to the full implementation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence's recommendations?**

**5. What commitments will you make to ensure that legal help is fully integrated into these reforms?**

The Victorian Greens proudly support all 227 recommendations from the Royal Commission. Our Greens leader Dr Samantha Ratnam recently wrote to Domestic Violence Victoria to confirm this position, and we see our first and most important ongoing role as keeping the next state government on track in the delivery of all 227 recommendations, irrespective of which party wins the upcoming state election. There are numerous program and funding delivery aspects of this agenda that need close and careful scrutiny, to ensure that change is impactful and lasting, and to ensure at the policy level we don't make things worse.

We agree that family violence represents the state's biggest crime, health, economic and human rights problem. The incidence, prevalence and recurrence of family violence is at crisis levels, and what we need in Victoria is bipartisan political leadership that will build on the platform we have set to lead the country.

In terms of funding commitments, we Greens will consider what further investment is appropriate in the lead up to the next state budget, taking into consideration evidence and advice from the sector. Nonetheless, we anticipate that as Respect Victoria beds down its processes there will be the need for greater investment in prevention strategies

that embed gender equality. The Victorian Greens understand that family violence is gendered violence. We need to change the way we treat women and those who identify as gender diverse. We need to hold the media and each other to account. We will also work with the sector to get longer contracts and grants so that organisations can plan for their programs over the medium-term not just year by year. We know the security of jobs and stronger staff retention rates the family violence workforce is part and parcel of more effective reform. We also need to ensure family violence programs and strategies specifically address the compounded intersectional disadvantage faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women of colour.

The Victorian Greens supported a number of reforms introduced through the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2017 and the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence Protection and Other Matters) Act 2018, laws which have empowered courts to make own motion interim family violence intervention orders during criminal proceedings, established the Specialist Family Violence Court Division in the Magistrates' Court, and provided the Children's Court greater capacity to act in the interests of family violence victims and survivors through prescribing therapeutic treatment orders to young adults. Beyond these reforms, we understand survivors deserve legal assistance and support when escaping family violence, and would refer you to our justice initiative for the \$132 million we have committed in additional legal assistance funding, including in relation to family violence services.

#### **6. What commitments, plans and proposals do you have to prevent and respond to elder abuse?**

Elder abuse is a complex and under-researched problem. The Greens believe there is an urgent need for the Victorian Government and community organisations to improve the safety of older people in their own homes, in provision of support services and in the wider community. The Greens support the development of a national elder abuse prevalence study not only because of its potential to increase understanding of the drivers, impact and prevalence of elder abuse, but because a national conversation on the issue is a critically important component of awareness raising.

The Greens are committed to:

- Ensuring training on elder abuse is embedded and mandatory for all people working with older people in Victoria;
- Reviewing the extent to which Royal Commission recommendations relating to elder abuse are being implemented and adequately funded, including specifically examining current levels of demand for frontline services and projected increase in demand; and
- Continuing to hold the Victorian Government to account on full and effective implementation of all Royal Commission recommendations.

We can also provide our commitment in principle to maintaining existing Elder Abuse Prevention Networks and the Elder Abuse Prevention Coordinator and to providing ongoing funding to Senior Rights Victoria for employment of a lawyer and advocate for older people experiencing elder abuse (for which we care currently seeking costings).

#### **7. What commitments will you make to support the development and growth of health-justice partnerships?**

The Greens understand that the increased demand for legal assistance has coincided with a greater number of vulnerable clients presenting with complex social, medical and legal needs. Because they are closely embedded in their communities, we also recognise the importance of CLCs, in providing both legal support as well as facilitating non-legal help to complex needs clients through their successful integrated service delivery model.

A part of our commitment to providing \$132 million in additional legal assistance funding, priority will be given to the services/programs experiencing the greatest level of demand, in particular: the summary crime jurisdiction; family violence services; integrated services for complex needs clients (such as Health Justice Partnerships); and, Aboriginal and culturally appropriate services.

We also acknowledge that the current system of inconsistent, short-term funding allocations is incompatible with the commitment of CLCs to build and implement innovative programs that are tailored to their communities. That's

why we will allocate government funding to legal assistance providers over four year periods, so CLCs and other providers will be better able to plan and deliver these programs.

**8. How would your government work across departments to break down 'funding silos' to support programs that work?**

In addition to our plan for access to justice, we have also pledged to build stronger communities through our justice reinvestment initiative. This initiative includes:

- Establishing an Independent Centre for Justice Reinvestment to shift criminal justice funding away from politically motivated decisions towards researched, evidenced-based crime prevention programs.
- Funding a Justice Reinvestment Grant Program worth \$80 million over four years to support communities, organisations and representative bodies initiate local justice reinvestment programs across Victoria.
- Expanding proven positive cost-benefit criminal justice programs such as the Drug Courts and the Courts Integrated Service Program (CISP).

You can find out more about the Greens' plan for justice reinvestment [here](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

All the best and I'll see you at the AGM!

Cheers  
Samantha

**Samantha Dunn MP**

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Greens spokesperson for Forests, the Great Forest National Park & Emerald Link, Water, Tourism, Doncaster Rail, North East Link, Local Government and Emergency Services.

Samantha Dunn acknowledges the traditional custodians of Eastern Metropolitan, the Wurundjeri people.

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