

## Media Release

# New Legal Aid office in far-west NSW to expand regional access to justice

**Wednesday 19 July 2023**

People in far-west NSW will have greater access to free legal assistance with the official opening of a new Legal Aid NSW office in Broken Hill on Thursday 20 July.

Legal Aid [NSW](#) encourages people to visit or contact the office with their legal concerns, particularly if they are struggling with housing or tenancy issues, debt issues or bill disputes, fines, disaster recovery, family breakdown or criminal matters.

Almost 61 per cent of Legal Aid clients live in the regions, where intensifying cost-of-living pressures, combined with physical isolation and social disadvantage, mean the need for free legal services has increased.

The new office will also provide weekly criminal, family and civil advice clinics. Early access to legal assistance is crucial to ensuring simple legal issues don't escalate.

Legal Aid NSW has been providing services to the far-west region on a fly-in, fly-out basis since 2016, and has operated from a small office co-located with Lifeline since 2017. But now clients can seek legal help from a dedicated team of local experts in a permanent 'shopfront' office.

The growing number of lawyers based in the far west has led to several partnerships with local service providers in Wentworth, Broken Hill and Wilcannia over the years, including with the Far West Local Health District, Aboriginal Legal Service and Lifeline.

Because the far-west region is home to one of NSW's biggest Aboriginal populations, the Legal Aid team will partner with specialist teams such as the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities and the Family Law Service for Aboriginal Communities to deliver targeted and culturally safe legal aid.

The expansion of Legal Aid NSW in Broken Hill has already had positive outcomes, with reduced delays in both the District Court and Local Court.

Legal Aid Broken Hill: Level 2, 32 Sulphide St, Broken Hill; phone (08) 8004 9600.

### **NSW Attorney General Michael Daley said:**

"It's a great pleasure to be here today for the official opening of the new Legal Aid Office. People in the regions deserve equal access to legal support and this is part of it.

"The NSW Government wants to see the Broken Hill community and far-west region grow and thrive, and the new Broken Hill Legal Aid office aims to deliver far-reaching benefits to the community.

"Not only will this new office provide nine local jobs, it will also provide access to confidential and consistent legal services to the local community so they no longer have to wait or travel to seek legal assistance."

### **Broken Hill Solicitor in Charge Steven Wright said:**

"The rising cost of living, debt problems and hardship because of drought are common concerns among our clients. When debt is left unpaid it can lead to other issues like housing problems.

“Providing early access to legal help means we can prevent small problems becoming bigger ones.”

**Legal Aid NSW CEO Monique Hitter said:**

“Legal Aid NSW is committed to improving access to legal help in NSW’s regions and remote areas.

“We know demand for legal help in the regions has been growing and access to justice is critical to improve outcomes for those experiencing disadvantage.

“This new office will ensure remote communities and surrounds have the same level of access to high quality legal services as people in metropolitan areas.”

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