

### **Submission to Productivity Commission**

This submission is made by Community Law Centres o Aotearoa, the national body that represents all twenty-four Community Law Centres around New Zealand.

Community Law Centres (CLCs) provide free legal information, advice, assistance, representation and education to low income New Zealanders who cannot afford a private lawyer. In addition, free legal information presented in easily understood language is available to all New Zealanders, irrespective of income, at [www.communitylaw.org.nz](http://www.communitylaw.org.nz)

The average cost per hour for the delivery of Community Law services is very low at \$65 per hour, made possible by a passionate workforce that accepts work in the community at below average wage rates and a strong volunteer base that delivers their services freely. With 10% of New Zealand's lawyers volunteering at a CLC it also signifies a huge endorsement of the work of Community Law from the legal profession.

Community Law's work is also preventative, mainly through its education and youth programmes, and its work ensures cost savings to the taxpayer as Court case numbers are reduced through early dispute intervention with information, advice and assistance.

CLCs come from a 30 year history of what works well in the community, and relationships with all other community groups are entrenched.

Looking to the future, more could be made of this relationship. CLCs could become Justice Hubs in the community, places where restorative justice and mediation services could be available, where released prisoners and their families can obtain wrap-around legal help to reduce recidivism, and where Whanau ora and other services could work more closely together.

After the Christchurch Earthquake, Community Law Canterbury became the go-to place to assist clients with insurance and all legal problems. The model worked well, and it could be rolled out in other regions.

There is huge expertise in the Community Law sector, and personnel would be happy to work with the Productivity Commission to assist with this thinking.

Below is some key information on Community Law. For more information and discussion, please contact Liz Tennet, CEO of Community Law Centres o Aotearoa.

**23 October 2014**

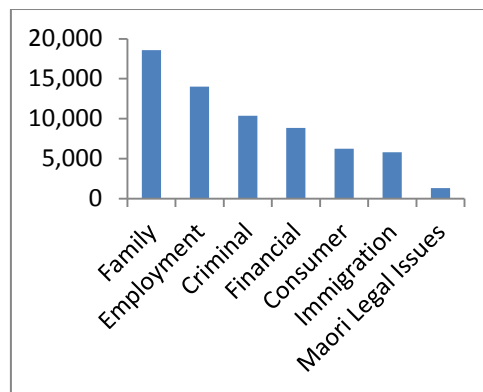
**Elizabeth Tennet**

Chief Executive Officer  
Community Law Centres o Aotearoa  
Level 2, 84 Willis Street, Wellington  
PO Box 24005, Wellington 6142  
Aotearoa New Zealand  
[+64 4 460 4463](tel:+6444604463)  
[+64 27 295 0928](tel:+64272950928)

## Community Law's Key Metrics

- 250,000 clients per year who cannot afford a lawyer;
- Up to 20%<sup>(1)</sup> of New Zealand households;
- Clients are the most vulnerable New Zealanders: 75% have limited means;
- 28% of clients are Māori and Pasifika:
- All New Zealanders have free access to an online legal information website [www.communitylaw.org.nz](http://www.communitylaw.org.nz) that describes the law in simple English and receives nearly one million hits per year;
- Over 1,200 volunteer lawyers attend Community Law Centre clinics and deliver free advice and assistance, which adds \$3.8m in value<sup>(2)</sup>.

## Our Clients' Problems



## The Work of Community Law

- Community Law provides free legal help throughout Aotearoa via its 24 Community Law Centres, some as old as 30 years;
- Community Law services mainly provide information, casework (including assistance, advice and representation), and education;
- Specialist CLCs provide specialist services to Maori, youth and those with disabilities;
- Community Law offers a network of provision throughout New Zealand with efficient back room service and support provided through the national organisation, Community Law Centres o Aotearoa (CLCA);
- Community Law ensures access to justice for all, particularly those on low incomes who cannot afford legal fees. It is at the heart of a civilised society.

## Preventative Services

- Major benefits of preventative work include:-
  - early intervention;
  - reduced or avoided down-the-line court and corrections costs for the taxpayer;
  - reduced financial and other stress on clients, reduced domestic violence;
  - promotion of a healthier society;
  - reduced likelihood of flow-on effects (i.e. crime);
  - promotion of better choices and increased productivity;
- Community Law is very well connected in the community to social and welfare agencies and services.

## Value for money:

Community Law delivers great value for money:-

- Community Law funding represents 0.01% of the total MoJ Budget;
- 24 Community Law Centres employ about 170 staff, 88 of them lawyers;
- 24 Community Law Centres work out of over 140 locations around New Zealand;
- Impressive cost/benefit ratio: For casework alone: \$1 funded = \$5.42<sup>(3)</sup> of service delivery value = cost/benefit ratio for taxpayer of 1:5.4. Casework delivers \$36.23m<sup>(3)</sup> of value each year from around \$6.7m of funding. The 1:5.4 ratio compares very favorably to commercial return ratios of 1:1.10 (i.e. 10% return rates);
- NZIER Report stated<sup>(1)</sup> – “Sound value for money, efficient delivery at low cost thanks to the mix of a paid and unpaid workforce”.

## CLCs Service all of New Zealand

Community Law Centres o Aotearoa (CLCA) is the national body that works on behalf of its 24 Community Law Centre members. The Community Law Centres are spread geographically and also offer specialist disability, youth and Maori land law services nationally:-

Te Ika-a-Māui:	
Taitokerau Community Law	Taranaki Community Law Centre – Te Ture Kaupapa o Taranaki
YouthLaw Aotearoa	Community Legal Advice Whanganui
Waitematā Community Law Centre - Te korowai ture o Waitematā	Hawkes Bay Community Law Centre - Ture Amo Kura o Heretaunga
Mangere Community Law Centre	Baywide Community Law Service
Auckland Community Law Centre	Rotorua District Community Law Centre
Community Legal Services South Trust - Ngā Manukura o Te Ture	Manawatu Community Law Centre – Te Ture Whare Tapere o Manawatu
Auckland Disability Law Centre	Wairarapa Community Law Centre - Te Kai Whare Ture o Wairarapa Incorporated
Tairāwhiti Community Law Centre	Whitireia Community Law Centre
Community Law Waikato – Te Tari Ture-A-Hapori o Waikato	Community Law Wellington & Hutt Valley

Te Waipounamu:	
Community Law Marlborough - Te Ture Umanga Mō Te Iwi Whānui	Dunedin Community Law Centre
Nelson Bays Community Law Service – Te Ao me nga Kaupapa Tuku Iho	Ngai Tahu Māori Law Centre
Community Law Canterbury	Southland Community Law Centre

## References

1. Benefits of Community Law, Indicative CBA of CLCs, NZIER Report to Community Law Centres o Aotearoa, July 2012, Page i, Key Points;
2. Benefits of Community Law, Indicative CBA of CLCs, NZIER Report to Community Law Centres o Aotearoa, July 2012, Page 16;
3. Benefits of Community Law, Indicative CBA of CLCs, NZIER Report to Community Law Centres o Aotearoa, July 2012, Page 17. Figure calculated based on level of Government funding.