**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**New child protection laws will see some children suffer**

Community Legal Centres in NSW are concerned that new child protection laws passed last night will see children removed from their family when it may not be in the child’s best interests.

‘The key to keeping children safe is helping parents understand how to keep their children safe’, said Nassim Arrage, Chair, Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW).

‘Community legal centres help families who don’t understand what to do to keep their children safe. We are worried that this law will see more children removed, without families getting the support they need to keep children safe. This can make things worse for future children.’

‘Support services must be available to families before children are removed from their family. There are not currently enough services to help families care for children, especially in rural areas and for disadvantaged groups. More support services are needed to help parents create a safe and caring environment for their children.’

‘Vulnerable parents, with an intellectual disability or struggling with alcohol or drug addiction sometimes need substantial time and support to help protect their children. These laws do not recognise this.’

‘People facing the prospect of losing their children have to be informed that free legal advice and support services are available.’

‘Community Legal Centres wanted this law amended so that families facing children being removed were given contact details for free legal advice and support services. We also wanted the law amended so victims of violence were not prevented from keeping their family together due to the actions of perpetrators of violence.’

‘Without more money for support services, this law will makes things worse for children who want to be safe and be with their family’, concluded Nassim Arrage, Chair, Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW).

More information:

<http://www.clcnsw.org.au/cb_pages/child_protection.php>

**About Community Legal Centres NSW Inc.**

Community Legal Centres NSW Inc. (CLCNSW) is the peak body for community legal centres (CLCs) in NSW. It has 40 member organisations including generalist and specialist CLCs. CLCs deliver legal services to economically and socially disadvantaged individuals and communities.

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