

# LEGAL AID MATTERS

BE AFRAID WITHOUT LEGAL AID

## WHAT IS LEGAL AID?

Legal aid was set up by the Federal Government in 1973, recognising that:

*"...one of the basic causes of the inequality of citizens before the laws is the absence of adequate and comprehensive legal aid arrangements throughout Australia ... The ultimate object of the Government is that legal aid be readily and equally available to citizens everywhere in Australia and that aid be extended for advice and assistance of litigation as well as for litigation in all legal categories and in all courts." (Senator the Hon Lionel Murphy AO QC, Attorney-General)*

This resulted in the establishment of the Australian Legal Aid Office in 1973, followed by the establishment of the State-based Legal Aid Commissions. These offices provide the majority of free or low-cost legal assistance to those in need.

Eventually, other forms of legal services were established with modest government funding, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, in recognition of the specific and essential need for culturally appropriate representation for the First Australians
- Community legal centres, which provide essential legal advice and referral services, relying heavily on voluntary and pro bono work from private lawyers
- Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, which provide essential joined-up legal services to Indigenous victims of family violence.



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