

Deputy Premier
Attorney-General
Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation
Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs
Minister for the Environment and Climate Change

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Helen Burnet MP
Member for Clark

By email: haprocedure@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Burnet,

Constituency Question – Legal Aid Services

Thank you for your question in Parliament on 2 September 2026. I provide the following information:

Question

My question is from my constituent Jason, who was unable to access services through Legal Aid, nor through the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, due to capacity issues. He was advised to engage a lawyer privately. Despite trying, he has found that all firms he has approached are at capacity. What will the Government do to ensure there are enough legal services in Tasmania and in Hobart?

Response

Access to justice is a fundamental part of a fair and effective legal system, and the Government recognises the importance of ensuring Tasmanians can access timely and appropriate legal assistance, particularly those experiencing disadvantage or barriers to obtaining representation.

The Government continues to make significant investments in Tasmania's legal assistance sector through both State and Commonwealth funding arrangements. The Government continues to make significant investments in Tasmania's legal assistance sector through both State and Commonwealth funding arrangements.

As part of the 2026-27 State Budget, the State Government has provided Tasmania Legal Aid with funding of \$38 million, over 4 years and a further \$3.5 million grant in January 2026 through the Solicitors Guarantee Fund. Under the National Access to Justice Partnership, almost \$124 million is available for Tasmanian legal assistance providers. Importantly, the National Access to Justice Partnership includes a substantial increase in funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, providing additional support for culturally appropriate legal assistance across Tasmania.

In relation to the constituent's circumstances, decisions about whether an individual matter can be accepted, eligibility for assistance, and the capacity to provide representation are operational matters for individual service providers and are determined in accordance with their policies, priorities and available resources. Similarly, decisions by private legal practitioners regarding the matters they are able to accept are matters for those firms.

The Government recognises that demand for legal assistance services remains strong and that workforce and capacity challenges are being experienced across parts of the legal sector, as is the case in many jurisdictions. The availability of qualified practitioners remains a broader challenge for the sector. That is why, the Government has supported a number of recommendations from the Babb Review aimed at building capacity in the legal sector.

That is why the Government continues to engage with legal assistance providers, Aboriginal legal services and the private profession to understand emerging pressures, identify service gaps and support the effective deployment of available resources. The National Access to Justice Partnership also includes the development of a National Legal Assistance Workforce Strategy, aimed at strengthening workforce attraction, retention and long-term sector sustainability.

The Government remains committed to working with the sector to improve access to legal assistance for Tasmanians, including those in Hobart, and to ensuring the significant investments being made in legal services deliver the greatest possible benefit to the community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Barnett', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Hon Guy Barnett MP
Deputy Premier
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