# Transforming the Community Legal Services Program: Table of actions by theme

This table groups the actions[[1]](#footnote-1) developed in Phase 1 of the CLSP Reform Project into the following thematic streams of work:

1. Funding – Transparency, certainty and Victoria Legal Aid’s (VLA) role as a funder
2. VLA’s relationship with specialist Aboriginal legal services
3. Improved administration of funding
4. Capacity building and technology

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| 1. **Funding: Transparency, certainty and VLA’s role as a funder**
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| **General principles** |
| ***Action 1*** *As a major funder of CLCs, with a commitment to increasing the size of the CLC sector, VLA will take up a stronger and more decisive role in relation to funding decisions and ongoing monitoring of funded services* |
| ***Action 5*** *VLA will continue to support CLCs to operate using a mixed service approach, including by encouraging CLCs to advocate on behalf of their clients and communities. This will be noted in the New Agreement****Action 13*** *VLA will not seek to inhibit early intervention or systemic advocacy activities in CLCs.* |
| ***Action 44*** *VLA will consider its role as system coordinator and will support CLCs to continue to have direct relationships with multiple funders and different areas of government, as appropriate.* |
| 1. **Targeted funding – Quality and meeting legal need**
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| ***Action 2*** *VLA will allocate all future funding to services that can demonstrate capacity and capability to address legal need through providing a range of high-quality legal services* ***Action 3*** *develop more transparent criteria and eligibility for funding which is targeted to address legal need****Action 12*** *set clear funding guidelines that avoid over-prescription of CLC activities and remain relatively stable over time* |
| ***Action 7*** *set new minimum standards for CLC board and management capability* |
| ***Action 8*** *ensure that all future funding is allocated to services that comply with existing and/or new risk management frameworks and continuous learning and quality improvement; for example, the CLC National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) and the PII Risk Management Guide, and/or other frameworks to be developed and agreed with the sector.* |
| ***Action 9*** *ensure that all funded CLCs meet agreed attributes and competencies (acknowledging differences between CLCs) and with due consideration of the unique needs of rural, regional and remote (RRR) services, CLC specialisations and centres receiving multi-source funding, particularly where VLA is not the major funder. These attributes will be regularly reviewed* |
| 1. **Co-ordination and collaboration**
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| ***Action 16*** *ensure that co-ordination of legal assistance service delivery is a cornerstone of future funding agreements* |
| 1. **Transparency**
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| ***Action 17*** *ensure that there is* *(a) greater transparency around funding arrangements and* *(b) better public access to service data.* *This will include establishing reasonable limits on shared information to uphold privacy and confidentiality of client and service information* |
| 1. **Certainty**
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| ***Action 11*** *VLA will work within its role, power and authority to ensure timely notification and disbursement of funding to CLCs****Action 39*** *develop options to improve funding certainty for CLCs, with full consideration of the significant potential implications for VLA’s prudential financial management****Action 40*** *VLA will act within its role and authority to enter into longer term agreements with CLCs, where appropriate* |

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| 1. **VLA’s relationship with specialist Aboriginal legal services**
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| ***Action 15*** *ensure that all CLSP reforms respect the right of self-determination for Aboriginal people, including the right of Aboriginal organisations to be community led and controlled. Competencies will be adopted to ensure that non-Aboriginal controlled CLCs can provide culturally competent and safe legal services to Aboriginal people****Action 46*** *VLA will ensure that any streamlining of funding arrangements occurs in consultation with affected Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and does not undermine their self-determination and autonomy. We will continue to acknowledge and respect the importance of both of those characteristics of ACCOs* |

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| 1. **Improved administration of funding**
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| **Reformed service agreement** |
| ***Action 18*** *design a new, shorter and clearer Agreement that is connected to service quality and includes detailed and transparent policies and procedures that will clarify expectations, mutual responsibilities and complaints mechanisms.* |
| ***Action 19*** *ensure that the new funding and service agreement clarify individual service guidelines****Action 21*** *ensure that funded CLCs are responsible for maintaining information about their service provision on the most effective shared platform* |
| ***Action 20*** *incorporate minimum service standards into the New Agreement* |
| ***Action 26*** *identify new and existing quality frameworks that will enhance the funding and service agreement and CLC standards and quality* |
| ***Action 34*** *include a clear complaints mechanism in the New Agreement that is for all parties and mutually binding* |
| **Modernised workplan** |
| ***Action 14*** *ensure there is stronger alignment/integration of all legal assistance sector reforms, including CLSP Reform* |
| ***Action 25*** *replace the existing CLSP Workplan with a newly developed, fit for purpose CLSP Service Plan* |
| **Reporting and performance accountability** |
| Minimise reporting and compliance burden |
| ***Action 6*** *refine and align reporting and compliance to improve overall efficiency and reduce any unnecessary burden on VLA and CLCs****Action 24*** *ensure that any changes to performance accountability are fit for purpose and not unreasonably burdensome****Action 27*** *research and consider the application of templates and tools that will reduce the compliance burden on CLCs and enhance the quality of reporting****Action 45*** *consider opportunities for improving and reducing multiple reporting requirements* |
| Focus on outcomes |
| ***Action 22*** *ensure the reporting mechanism and associated accountability has stronger focus on appropriate identification of legal need, service designed to meet that need and assessment of outcomes and impact* |
| Financial reporting |
| ***Action 28*** *rationalise financial reporting in line with the Australian Accounting Standards.* |
| ***Action 30*** *define criteria for selecting financial auditors to assist CLCs* |
| ***Action 31*** *provide clearer guidance to funded services about standardised costings in budgets, in light of CLC independence and the considerable differences between CLCs* |
| ***Action 32*** *undertake consultation on an optimal financial reporting method that is not through CLASS* |
| ***Action 29*** *work with financial experts to design a model set of indicators for setting and reviewing funded services’ organisational health* |
| Identify and respond to performance concerns |
| ***Action 33*** *develop new policies and procedures for dealing with centres where there are performance concerns.* |
| **Short term and project funding opportunities** |
| ***Action 35*** *develop a new framework (linked to the New Agreement) for short-term grants that improves notification, funding criteria, allocations and monitoring and reporting****Action 36*** *consider and promote opportunities for CLCs and VLA to collaborate through short-term funding opportunities****Action 37*** *VLA and CLCs will consult with each other at the start of funding cycles to ensure joint planning and the development of joint bids, where appropriate****Action 38*** *VLA will consider the additional costs that might need to be factored in for RRR centres and other centres with special needs and expenses* |

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| 1. **Capacity building and technology**
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| ***Action 4*** *support workforce skill and knowledge development in evidence-based planning* |
| ***Action 10*** *ensure that CLCs have the same access as VLA does to professional tools and development opportunities.****Action 41*** *VLA will take immediate action to support CLCs to get better access to professional learning and practice development tools.* |
| ***Action 23*** *prioritise the development of skills and aptitude in client outcomes measurement* |
| ***Action 42*** *consider an appropriate dashboard and/or online portal for the CLC Funding and Development Program* |
| ***Action 43*** *explore opportunities for the effective use of technology in the delivery of legal services* |

1. Actions that contribute to the same objective have been grouped together. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)