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Independent Senator for South Australia

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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### **The Government must boost funding for financial rights legal assistance**

I welcome the ALP's announcement that it will boost funding to the financial rights legal assistance sector by \$30 million per year, but more funding is needed.

I called for increasing funding to community law centres in early October 2018, so that every day Australians, sole traders, small businesses and farmers have the legal support they need for financial services disputes.

Commissioner Hayne found that the "desirability of predictable and stable funding for the legal assistance sector and financial counselling services is clear and how this may best be delivered is worthy of careful consideration".

Yet the Government, in its response to Commissioner Hayne's report, only undertook to review the funding arrangements for financial counselling services.

As anyone who works on the front lines assisting people who have issues with the banks knows, financial counsellors and community lawyers work hand in hand.

Earlier this month, I wrote to the Treasurer to ask why funding for the legal assistance sector was omitted from the review (see letter attached).

While the ALP's announcement is a good start, it is a far cry from the additional \$200 million per year the Productivity Commission found was necessary to address the void of community civil law support back in 2014.

The Government should take this opportunity to increase funding for financial rights legal assistance in line with the Productivity Commission's recommendation.

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