



PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 18

ARC Justice hosts Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus visited ARC Justice's Bendigo office today (September 18), after recently announcing \$3.9 billion in funding for legal assistance over five years, including an uplift for pay in the community legal sector.

Dreyfus, along with Federal Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters, met with key staff from ARC Justice, which provides legal services to communities across central and northern Victoria through the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Housing Justice renter support program in Bendigo and the Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre in Shepparton.

The visit came as ARC Justice chief executive officer Damian Stock praised the government's commitment to extending funding beyond June 2025, but sought more clarity on how much of the funds will be allocated specifically to community legal centres (CLCs).

"The recent announcement is an important, appreciated step forward and we're pleased to see pay parity being addressed," Stock said. "But without more detail on how much CLCs will receive, we still don't know if this will be enough to meet the ever-rising demand for services."

Stock said long-term, stable funding is vital to building connection, knowledge and trust with regional communities that are so essential for preventing and reducing social and legal problems.

"While we have accessible offices in Bendigo and Shepparton, major gaps remain in accessing legal assistance across regional Victoria. Geographic isolation, high levels of disadvantage, climate change disasters and growing demand mean we're already stretched thin," he said.

"With certainty, we can now work towards implementing effective, long-term strategies."

During his visit, Dreyfus acknowledged the vital role CLCs play in regional communities in responding to family violence, climate disasters and the housing crisis.

ARC Justice remains optimistic that the funding will help with staff retention, especially by addressing pay parity, but is calling on the government to ensure rural and regional legal services aren't left behind in the allocation process.

About ARC Justice

ARC Justice is a rights-based, for-purpose organisation incorporating the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and Housing Justice, a specialist renter support program based in Bendigo and the Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre based in Shepparton. ARC provides legal and tenancy support services across 13 local government areas in central and northern Victoria, with a team of more than 60 staff working to advocate for and uphold the rights of rural and regional Victorians.

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