



**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 20, 2026**

## **ARC Justice hosts Victorian Minister for Climate Action in Bendigo**

ARC Justice today (NB: May 20) welcomed Victorian Minister for Climate Action Lily D'Ambrosio to its Bendigo office for discussions about disaster recovery, climate resilience and access to justice in regional communities.

The visit also included Bendigo West MP and Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly Maree Edwards, representatives from the Federation of Community Legal Centres and ARC Justice executive staff.

Discussions focused on the impacts of floods, fires and other climate-related disasters across central and northern Victoria, including the increasing legal, financial and housing pressures communities face during recovery. It also touched on broader community resilience and climate adaptation programs.

ARC Justice CEO Damian Stock said disasters continued to affect communities long after the immediate emergency response ended. "Disasters don't end when the water goes down or the fires are contained," Stock said.

"We continue to see people dealing with insurance disputes, housing instability, financial stress and complex systems months and sometimes years later. Our catchment has experienced repeated climate-fuelled disasters in recent years, including major floods and this summer's fires, so these are issues our communities are living with in real time."

Stock said ARC had used the meeting to speak about the importance of stronger co-ordination, earlier support and long-term investment in community resilience. "We know communities recover better when local services are properly connected, properly resourced and involved early."

The Minister spoke about the importance of Victoria's climate resilience work to the regions. "Regional communities are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. Our government is listening to local organisations like ARC Justice who play an important role supporting people through recovery and helping strengthen community resilience," she said.

Edwards said the visit was a valuable opportunity to hear directly from ARC Justice. "This great local organisation plays an important role in supporting regional communities through increasingly complex challenges," she said.

Federation of Community Legal Centres CEO Louisa Gibbs said community legal centres played a critical role in supporting communities to prepare for and recover from disasters, which are increasing in severity and frequency at an alarming rate.

"We are pleased to see the Victorian Government recognising the work of community legal centres in this space and collaborating with our sector to improve the way we operate to support disaster-affected communities," she said.

### **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 close to 70 staff.

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