

---

**SOCIO-LEGAL SERVICE FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES LAUNCHES IN CANBERRA**

A new service launched in Canberra this week is helping victims of domestic violence at risk of homelessness to stay on their feet.

An innovative collaboration of philanthropic and community organisations and government, the Socio-Legal Practice Clinic has developed an innovative model of practice shaped around 12 weeks of intensive early intervention legal and social work advocacy for vulnerable individuals and families. It is focussed particularly on preventing homelessness for women and children affected by domestic violence.

“The clinic is the outcome of a funding partnership between the Snow Foundation, the Clayton Utz Foundation, Canberra Community Law and government,” Snow Foundation CEO Georgina Byron said.

“We have a three-year funding association with this project, starting in 2012/13 with a Social Worker Pilot Project through the former Welfare Rights and Legal Centre (now Canberra Community Law). We are delighted that the huge benefits that came out of the three-year pilot program have now resulted in the SLP clinic being established. It is wonderful to see that to date the clinic has assisted almost two-thirds of the clients to either access safe, affordable housing, or enable them to stay in their own homes and community avoiding the trauma of eviction.”

So far the project has helped 72 clients, provided 44 advices, and carried 28 cases which have involved intensive social work and legal support. At the time they were first seen by the clinic, around three-quarters of the clients were vulnerable women with children, 95 percent were in receipt of Centrelink payments and 68 percent of clients were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

“There is obviously a need for this service and along with our funding partners we are thrilled that this important work is able to continue helping some of the most vulnerable people in the Canberra community,” Ms Byron said.

David Hillard, Pro Bono National Practice Group Leader at Clayton Utz and a Director of the Clayton Utz Foundation said: “We are very pleased to be able to work alongside the Snow Foundation to make the Socio-Legal Practice Clinic at Canberra Community Law a reality. This sort of shared philanthropy is part of the future of how charitable foundations need to work, in order to get the biggest bang for the philanthropic buck.

“CCL is one of Australia's most innovative and effective community legal centres, but lawyers cannot solve all problems alone. The Socio-Legal Practice clinic demonstrates the value of a lawyer working with a social worker as part of a client's team, to help understand and address the social issues which contribute to many legal problems, and which can stand in the way of those legal problems being resolved.”

CCL Executive Director/Principal Solicitor Genevieve Bolton said: “We know that having a secure home is the key to avoiding a huge number of potential social and legal problems for which our clients themselves, and the broader community, would otherwise have to address sometime in the future. Having lawyers and a social worker working together makes for a more effective team, and makes the experience of obtaining legal help less confronting for clients.

“An important aspect of the clinic’s work has also been its capacity to put clients in touch with a range of community, financial, counselling and health services, and provide follow up to ensure that clients have been able to get the help and support they need,” Ms Bolton said.

More information on Canberra Community Law: [www.canberracommunitylaw.org.au](http://www.canberracommunitylaw.org.au)

More information on the Snow Foundation: [www.snowfoundation.org.au](http://www.snowfoundation.org.au)

More information on the Clayton Utz Foundation:

[https://www.claytonutz.com/community/clayton\\_utz\\_foundation.page](https://www.claytonutz.com/community/clayton_utz_foundation.page)

5 May 2016

Media inquiries:            Snow Foundation: Georgina Byron 0417 227 506  
   Clayton Utz Foundation: David Hillard 02 9353 4800  
   Canberra Community Law: Genevieve Bolton 02 6218 7922