

News Release

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ANZ NZ increases support for Community Law

Community Law Centres O Aotearoa has welcomed ANZ's decision to lift the proportion of the Lawyers and Conveyancers Special Fund it will donate to support Community Law services for the next 12 months.

The fund collects interest from banks on solicitors' and licensed conveyancers' nominated trust accounts.

The fund is vested in the New Zealand Law Society and the New Zealand Society of Conveyancers jointly and is held by them in trust for the purposes specified in the Law Practitioners Act 1982.

ANZ will give 35% of the interest it earns on licensed conveyancers' nominated trust accounts held by ANZ to Community Law, up from 20%. In the year from March 2019 to February 2020 ANZ donated more than \$921,000 to Community Law. The increase will be approximately \$270,000 based on current interest rates and economic conditions.

"This increase will help Community Law to sustain free legal support to communities as they battle the impact of Covid-19," says Community Law CEO Sue Moroney.

"While it is likely that the overall value of the Special Fund donation will suffer because of economic conditions, ANZ's offer to lift the proportion it donates to fund our services will help to mitigate this."

ANZ NZ CEO Antonia Watson said many New Zealanders were experiencing hardship and changes to their circumstances as a result of Covid-19.

"ANZ has supported the important work of Community Law for many years. As the effects of Covid-19 reach into the lives of so many people, it's more important than ever for them to have access to legal support and services," she said.

Community Law has already seen a surge of people needing employment law support about their jobs due to Covid-19, even though they have only been able to offer services remotely since Alert Level 4 came into force.

"We expect to see this increase substantially when Community Law Centres open for face-to-face services again," said Sue.

"Sadly, even more people will be eligible for our free legal services because they have lost their income. They are likely to need help with employment law and then because of their new financial position they may have landlord problems, WINZ issues and debt problems they need legal support with too.

"Community Law needs increased funding to support those who have been affected by the epidemic response and ANZ's increased support will help us respond to community needs."

Despite the challenges, Community Law has continued to provide access to justice while the country battles Covid-19.

"I'm proud that 24 Community Law Centres made a quick pivot to remote services, while keeping up to speed with rapidly-changing laws and taking on complex cases," says Sue.

“Supporting people to keep their jobs, their homes, their families and their livelihoods is our priority right now.”

For media enquiries contact Siobhan Enright on 021 991 325