

Case Study – Many Beaches Community Legal Centre

Current funding arrangements

MBCLC receives funding from the Federal Government (\$72,000 p.a.) and the Tasmanian State Government (\$12,000 p.a.). The MBCLC has leased its premises from the Cascade City Council since 1990 for \$6,000 p.a., which is approximately 50% of the market rental.

The local political landscape

The MBCLC provides legal services to disadvantaged individuals who live within its catchment area. The MBCLC catchment area, as determined under the Commonwealth State Legal Services Agreement, includes low income and disadvantaged individuals living in the following electoral divisions:

- The marginal Federal electorate held by Mr Close, the Minister for Ageing, who is a member of the Blue Party (which is in Government). At the last election, Mr Close won his seat by a margin of 50 votes.
- The safe Federal electorate held by Mrs Bank, an opposition backbencher from the Red Party, who holds her seat by a 22% margin.
- -The marginal State electorate held by the Premier of Tasmania, who is from the Red Party and currently holds onto government by one seat in the Tasmanian Parliament.
- The safe seat held by the Shadow Minister for Housing, Mr Dwelling, who is from the Blue Party and holds his seat by a 12% margin.
- The local government area of Cascade City Council, which is controlled by a local group of community independents that support the popular Mayor, Mr Ambitious. Mr Ambitious has not ruled out running for a State or Federal electorate in the coming elections.
- The local government area of Blandville Shire Council, which is controlled by the Blue Party and the Mayor is Mr Lackey, who is also a part time adviser to the Shadow Minister for Housing.

A State election is scheduled for December this year and the next Federal election is due to be held towards the end of next year. The local government elections are not due until 2010.

The operational and policy environment

The lease in favour of MBCLC expires in July next year and the Cascade City Council has notified the MBCLC that at a recent meeting of the Council, it was resolved that the 'legal centre building' be demolished at the expiry of the lease and the site be redeveloped to meet the growing demands for aged accommodation within the Cascade City, which has a rapidly ageing population.

The MBCLC is well aware of the ageing population issue in the area because, the centre has recently been inundated with elderly clients who have been evicted from local State government owned public housing estates for not meeting the rental obligations imposed upon them as tenants.

Most of the evicted tenants have failed to meet their rental payment obligations because they have had their pensions cut under the Federal government's new 'retirement to work' policy, which punishes pensioners who fail to re-enter the workforce as seasonal fruit pickers under the Federal government's recently announced policy to address skills shortages.

MBCLC has been struggling to keep up with the stream of elderly clients coming into the Centre since these changes were introduced and the Centre's Management Committee has formed the view that the MBCLC requires another solicitor to meet the increased client demand. There are no available funds within the MBCLC's existing budget.

Develop an effective lobbying strategy for the MBCLC.