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Access to Justice Arrangements
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Inquiry into Access to Justice Arrangements

National Legal Aid (NLA) welcomes the decision of the Australian Government to initiate a Productivity Commission inquiry into access to justice arrangements. NLA represents the directors of the eight state and territory legal aid commissions and works collaboratively to achieve better access to justice policy outcomes at a national level.

The scale of the combined service delivery output of Australia's legal aid commissions in 2012-13 included 382,000 duty lawyer services; 374,000 instances of legal advice and minor assistance; and 137,000 grants of legal aid. In addition, legal aid commissions reached out to an even greater number of people to provide telephone information and community legal education.

As the leading providers of front line legal services to disadvantaged Australians, we have an obvious interest in the objective investigations which the Productivity Commission will be undertaking over the 15 month life of the inquiry. As public sector bodies, we present ourselves as being in a position of strength to be able to provide a highly informed insight into the operations of Australia's justice system. For this reason, we openly invite the Productivity Commission to draw upon the information, experience and knowledge of Australia's eight legal aid commissions. We make this offer in the best traditions of public sector accountability, so that the Productivity Commission can be informed in its deliberations by a reliable source of information.

Over the course of the inquiry you will receive a formal submission from NLA. I also expect that some of the state and territory legal aid commissions will make separate submissions to the inquiry. In the meantime, NLA believes that it is best placed, at this early stage of the inquiry, to draw out potential areas of interest under the

terms of reference that are of most relevance to the legal assistance sector. Our comments in this regard are included in the attachment to this letter. NLA has more detailed information under each of the points which are raised and is happy to provide this upon request.

NLA is very keen to maintain an open discourse with the Productivity Commission on matters relevant to the inquiry. If you wish to discuss any matter please do not hesitate to contact me . Alternatively, you may also make contact with Mr Malcolm Bradshaw of Legal Aid Western Australia , who has been appointed as convenor of a working group to prepare National Legal Aid's response to the inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Reilly
Chair