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Redfern Legal Centre International Student Solicitor Sean Stimson honoured with NSW Human Rights Medal

Solicitor Sean Stimson, the head of Redfern Legal Centre's International Student Service NSW, was last night awarded the NSW Human Rights Medal in recognition of services rendered to the 260,000 international students studying across NSW. The NSW Human Rights Award pays tribute to a person who has made a meaningful and lasting contribution to the advancement of human rights.

Since 2014, Stimson has directed the work of Redfern Legal Centre's free state-wide legal service for international students. The service is funded by StudyNSW to undertake casework, policy, and law reform to address the legal needs of international students studying across the state, and is the only specialist legal advice service of its kind in NSW.

Joanna Shulman, CEO of Redfern Legal Centre said: "This award is well-deserved recognition for Sean, who consistently goes above and beyond for our clients. Sean works passionately and tenaciously to raise awareness about human rights issues affecting international students, dedicating countless hours not only to the international student practice, but also to the coordination and participation in industry, community and government forums."

The Premier's Multicultural Community Awards were presented during the 2019 Premier's Harmony Dinner, held on Thursday 28 February in western Sydney. This annual event highlights outstanding achievements supporting multicultural communities living, working and studying across NSW. Mr Stimson received the NSW Human Rights Award in recognition of his efforts to achieve change around a broad range of systemic human rights issues affecting the international student population, including:

- raising awareness about sexual assault
- highlighting housing and accommodation concerns
- working to address chronic levels of workplace exploitation; and
- advocating for improved access for health and wellbeing services.

On accepting the award, Mr Stimson highlighted some of the many intersecting legal and social issues that international students face, and paid tribute to the hard work of the many volunteers that contribute to the work of Redfern Legal Centre's international student practice.

"Through the work I do at Redfern Legal Centre, I see first-hand the multitude of exploitations that international students experience across all areas of life," Mr Stimson said. "Our efforts to address these issues are possible only through the dedication of countless individuals, including volunteer law students, volunteer solicitors, and law firm McCabe Curwood, who provide invaluable pro bono advice and casework support to international students.

"The service would also not exist without generous funding by StudyNSW, who have supported the service since its inception, and also project funding support from the Fair Work Ombudsman and City of Sydney. I am extremely grateful to be working alongside so many passionate people striving to create lasting change in the lives of international students," Mr Stimson said.

While Mr Stimson said he was extremely honoured to receive the award, he stressed that much more needed to be done to address the needs of the international student community, highlighting the need for increased government funding in this area.

"The international student practice I oversee at Redfern Legal Centre consistently runs at full capacity, with appointments for legal advice booked out weeks in advance. The reality is that there are simply not enough resources to meet the high volume of urgent legal assistance required by international students studying across the state.

"I applaud the leadership shown by StudyNSW in supporting Redfern Legal Centre's International Student Service NSW, and call on government to provide increased funding support in this critical area," Mr Stimson said.

RLC international student solicitor, Sean Stimson and RLC CEO, Joanna Shulman are available for interview: contact Finn O'Keefe, RLC Communications Manager: 02 9698 7277 | 0424 548 019 | finn@rlc.org.au