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**TAVERNER**  
RESEARCH

Report:  
Legal Aid NSW  
Client Satisfaction Survey 2015  
June 2015

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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As part of a series of client experience and satisfaction studies, 615 consenting clients who had received legal advice services from a solicitor at a Legal Aid NSW office, with or without additional minor legal assistance being provided, completed a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) averaging between 15 and 16 minutes.

Legal Aid NSW recruited a total of 1,220 clients to participate in the survey. An oversample was obtained to ensure Taverner Research could successfully contact and interview 600+ clients as part of the survey. The area of law, namely, Civil Law, Criminal Law, and Family Law was also identified for each advice allowing client satisfaction to be assessed for each area. 1,070 of the 1,220 clients who gave written consent to their contact details being provided to Taverner Research were called, with 615 clients successfully contacted and interviewed.

Recruitment began on 23rd February 2015 and 615 interviews were completed by 21st April 2015. This report is based on that sample. The sample included 24 clients who indicated they would need the assistance of an interpreter to complete the survey. Almost no clients indicated that they would need assistance due to a disability, and none required a face to face interview although 15% indicated in the interview that they had special needs due to a disability.

87% of the sample were satisfied (rating 6-10 on a zero to 10 scale) with the service provided by clerical staff with 6% dissatisfied (ratings of 0-4).

87% were satisfied with the service provided by the solicitor (rating 6-10 on a zero to 10 scale) with 6% dissatisfied (ratings of 0-4).

54% considered the service from their solicitor was better than expected while 15% considered the service was worse than expected.

Given the similarity of the results in 2015 to those obtained in 2013, the conclusions and recommendations are similar. Where possible, actions taken since the 2013 survey are taken into account in formulating recommendations. It was concluded from the detailed results that:

- Satisfaction with the service is high.
- Satisfaction with services provided the clerical staff appeared slightly lower than in the 2013 survey (87% compared to 95%), but both were high and the apparent fall was within the range that could occur by chance.
- Satisfaction with the services provided by the solicitors remained high, and was effectively unchanged from 2013.

- The main causes for dissatisfaction with the service from solicitors were:
  - Not being shown respect or sensitivity.
  - Feeling the solicitor did not listen effectively.
  - Not being given all the services sought.
  - Not having questions answered.

It must be kept in mind here that we have only the client's perspective on these cases. Given a fuller picture including the perspective of the solicitor involved, it might have been found that some clients had expectations that were unable to be met.

Clients with special needs were generally having those needs met.

Overall results in the 2015 survey were generally as good as or better than achieved in the 2011 and not significantly below those achieved in 2013 surveys.

In 2011 it was recommended that steps be taken to ensure clients with short time lines before a court or tribunal deadline received advice in time to be helpful, if at all possible. This was reinforced in 2013. The 13% of clients surveyed in 2015 who felt they had not received advice in time to meet critical deadlines accounted for 47% of those dissatisfied with service from the solicitor, and half the very small number (5/12) who were dissatisfied with the service from clerical staff. Keeping the number not seen in time as low as possible continues to be a priority issue.

It is recommended that:

- Legal Aid NSW sustain the resources currently devoted to maintaining the high level of staff commitment, concern for client needs and respectful treatment of clients revealed by the survey results, and to keeping waiting times for service as short as possible.
- Further improvement in outcomes might be achieved by continued specific attention to a range of specific issues identified that arise for client sub-groups. In particular, continued efforts to ensure so far as possible that appointments fit within the client's time frame and that other specific needs are identified and met will sustain and might improve the high level of satisfaction even further.
- To further improve performance on some aspects, consideration should be given to developing, testing and implementing formal protocols to assist staff in deciding how to provide the assistance needed by particular client sub-groups.

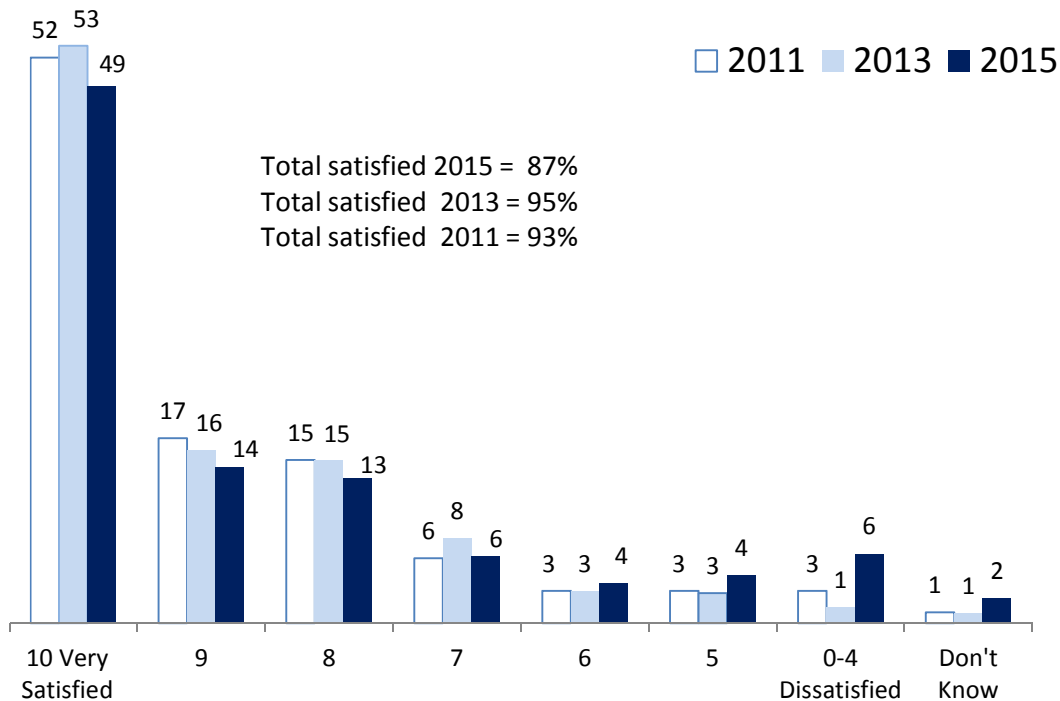
More detailed suggestions are made at the end of this report.

# CONDENSED REPORT

As part of a series of client satisfaction surveys, Legal Aid NSW commissioned Taverner Research to interview clients who had received a legal advice service (with or without minor assistance) about their experience of the service. This section of the report summarises the results, conclusions and implications.

## 1. Outcomes and Satisfaction

### Satisfaction with clerical staff service (Q14, %)



In 2015:

- 87%<sup>1</sup> were satisfied (rating 6-10 on a zero to 10 scale) with the service provided by clerical staff.
- 49% were very satisfied (rating 10).
- 6% were dissatisfied (0-4).
- 6% gave other replies including ratings of 5 (4%) or being unable to give a rating (2%).
- The mean rating was 9.0.

There were no significant changes from the results obtained in 2011 or 2013.

<sup>1</sup> The total satisfied (87%) differs from the totals of the individual values due to rounding.

The twelve who were dissatisfied in 2015 gave as reasons that client service was poor, the staff were felt to be unhelpful, that service was not quick or efficient, that they were given information that was not good or was incorrect, or that staff did not answer questions asked.

Ratings of the five specific aspects of the service given by clerical staff revealed very high satisfaction (92% to 95% for those who felt able to give a rating). For two items, a substantial proportion felt that item did not apply to them or said they did not know how satisfied they were: 20% for how much staff helped them understand the type of services Legal Aid NSW could provide, and 56% for ratings of the sensitivity and awareness staff showed to the client's culture and background.

There were no significant differences in specific ratings of clerical staff performance between those attending for different law types.

In 2015:

- 87%<sup>2</sup> were satisfied with the service provided by the solicitor (rating 6-10 on a zero to 10 scale).
- 49% were very satisfied (rating 10).
- 6% were dissatisfied (rating 0-4.)
- 6% gave other replies including ratings of 5 (4%) or being unable to give a rating (2%).
- The mean rating was 8.5.

There were no significant changes overall from the results obtained in 2011 or 2013.

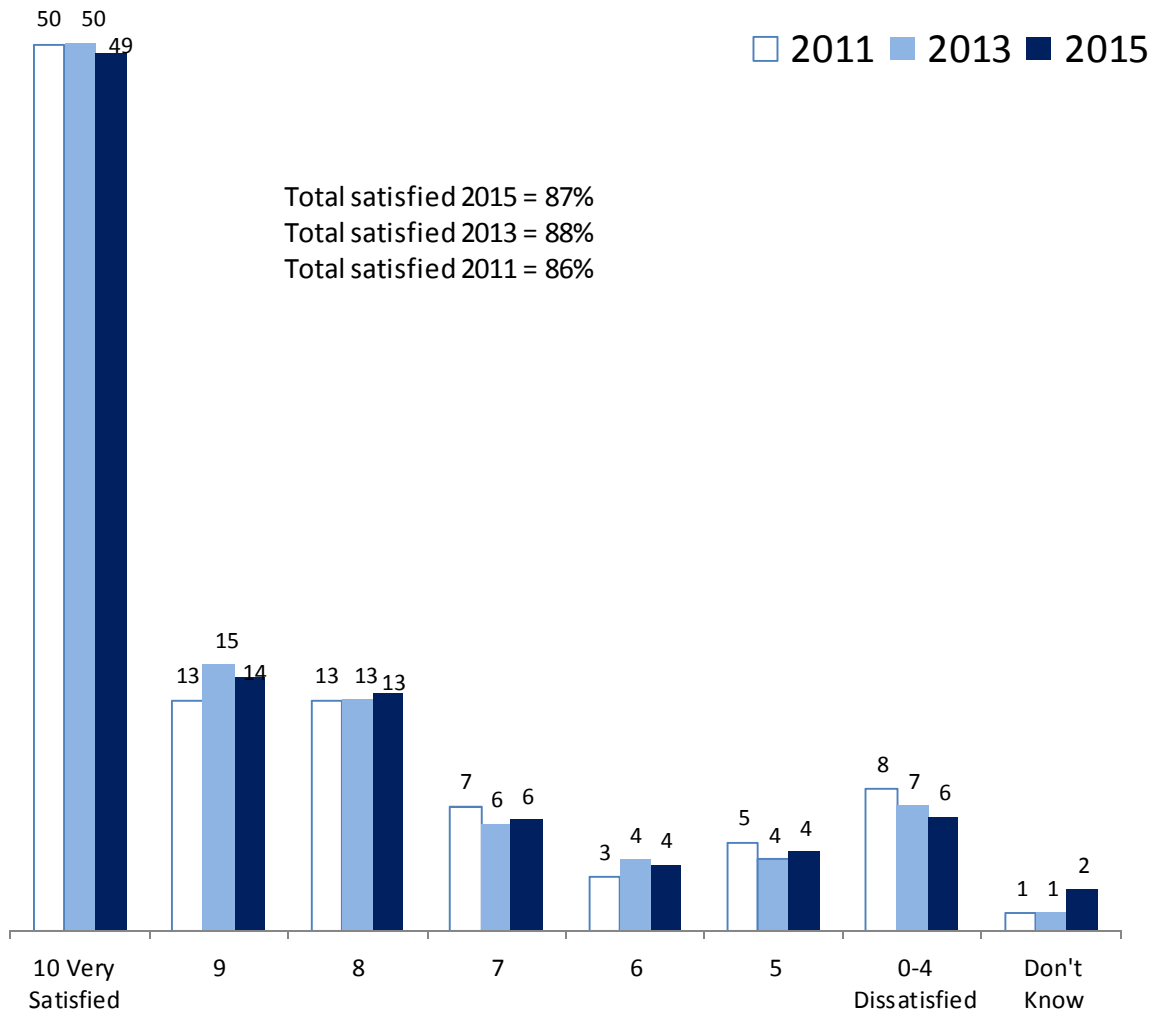
The more common reasons for dissatisfaction among the 39 who were dissatisfied in 2015 were feeling the solicitor did not treat the client with respect (46%), or did not listen (41%). Less common reasons were that the solicitor did not give enough assistance to understand their legal problem (28%), did not answer questions asked (23%), gave incorrect advice or inaccurate information (21%), was rushed or the office appeared understaffed (18%), and that the solicitor did not help with special needs (10%). Two dissatisfied clients (5%) reported the solicitor did not act as promised and one dissatisfied client (3%) mentioned that they were refused service because of a conflict of interest.

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<sup>2</sup> The total satisfied (87%) differs from the totals of the individual values due to rounding.



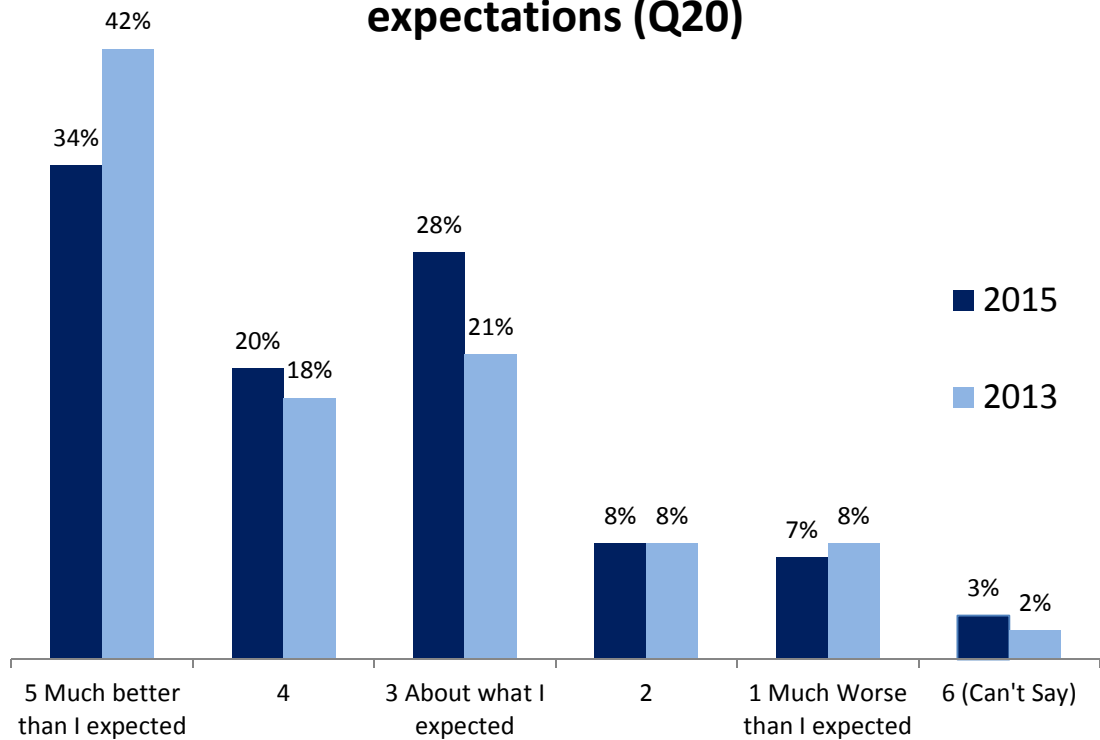
## Satisfaction with solicitor's service (Q18, %)



Ratings of most of the specific aspects of the service provided by the solicitor showed quite similar distributions to overall satisfaction. The only aspect that had a mean rating below 8.6 was the solicitor's ability to help clients who had special needs due to disability (average rating 8.2, but this had increased from 7.8 in 2013). Even for this aspect, among the 9% who gave a rating on this item (with 91% saying it was not applicable to them or that they could not give a rating) only 4% were actually dissatisfied.

When asked to assess how well the service from the solicitor met their expectations, 54% considered the service better than expected (down from 60% in 2013) and 15% considered the service was worse than expected (very close to the 16% in 2013).

## How well solicitor's service met client expectations (Q20)



The more common reasons for saying the service was worse than expected included the solicitor not listening to or understanding or appearing unhelpful or uninterested (6% of the total sample, 30% of those who felt the service was worse than expected); that the answer given appeared sound but was not what had been hoped for or was disappointing (3% of the total sample, 15% of those who felt the service was worse than expected); feeling rushed (3% of the total sample, 14% of those who felt the service was worse than expected); wanting more help or other types of help (3% of the total sample, 12% of those who felt the service was worse than expected); and being told they were not eligible for the assistance they sought (3% of the total sample, 12% of those who felt the service was worse than expected). Other replies were given by no more than 7% of those who felt the service was worse than expected.

For the 54% who were pleasantly surprised (i.e. felt the service was better than expected), the most common reasons given were that the solicitor explained options or told the client what to do (18% of the total sample, and 22% of those who found the service better than expected); was easy to understand (12% of the total sample, 17% of those who were pleasantly surprised); gave practical assistance or a helpful referral (11% and 16%); listened and/or understood and/or was interested (9% and 22%); treated the client well (including treated with respect, that the solicitor cared about them, or did not judge them – 8%

and 11%); provided what was wanted (13% and 9%); or that the client had not expected much and the service was better than expected in unstated ways (6% and 10%). Other reasons were given by under 10% of those who found the service better than expected.

Three reasons were commonly given by those who found the service the same as they had expected - that they got what they had wanted (27%), had options explained or told what they could do (20%) and that the advice confirmed their own plans or ideas (10%).

Most (68%) reported that the interview improved their understanding of their legal problem and situation and 60% felt more confident in dealing with the problem. Half (50%) reported it reduced their level of stress or anxiety (although 13% did say it made this worse). Other areas were reported to be improved by 21-35%. Only the level of stress or anxiety and the client's confidence in dealing with the problem were reported as being made worse by more than 10% (both 13%).

Most (96%) would recommend the service to another person. The overwhelming reason for not recommending the service among the 4% that would not do so was that they were dissatisfied with the service (52%), finding it overall to be poor, insufficient or ineffective; others reported that the service could not help the client (28%) or recommended it be used only as a last resort without further explanation (14%). This confirmed other indications that for some, the outcome was more important than the process in determining their attitude to the service.

## 2. Other Results

### 2.1. Pathways to the service

Legal Aid NSW was usually found directly by the client:

- 79% went to Legal Aid NSW without being referred including:
  - 68% who went directly to Legal Aid NSW without consulting any other source of help.
  - Another 11% consulted another source of help but were not referred to Legal Aid NSW by that source.
- 13% were referred without any explanation of the services offered.
- 8% were referred with some explanation of the services offered.

A wide variety of sources were consulted before approaching the Legal Aid NSW service by the 32% who said they had consulted other sources before contacting Legal Aid NSW. The more common sources consulted about the legal issue before approaching Legal Aid NSW were (as a percentage of the total sample, n=615):

Law Society	11%
Government department	8%
LawAccess NSW	6%
Community Legal Centre	3%
Court or tribunal	2%
Other community organisations	2%
Internet	2%
Dispute resolution/mediation service	2%

More details of these sources are provided in the full report. Overall, the 32% who had consulted elsewhere before contacting Legal Aid NSW was slightly less than the 38% who had done so in 2013, and both these were significantly less than the 51% who had done so in 2011. It appears that the proportion of clients going directly to Legal Aid NSW without seeking help elsewhere first is increasing.

Some (14% in 2015, 19% in 2013) had consulted more than one source.

### 2.2. Accessibility and barriers

Legal Aid NSW is committed to ensuring that the same quality of service is provided to all clients irrespective of their ability. The interview thus asked all respondents about perceived barriers to access, disability and whether this affected the service received, and other possible indicators of disadvantage (ethnic background, preferred language, and concerns about personal safety).

Only 8% reported they had problems gaining access to the service, and some of these were talking about difficulties in obtaining the service they had sought, rather than barriers to making contact and attending. The time spent waiting for an appointment and operating hours that

clients found unsuitable were the most common specific difficulties but each was mentioned by under 3% of the total sample.

While 16% reported they had been frightened as a result of threatened or actual violence in a relationship, only 9% reported they were worried about their safety at home when they attended their Legal Aid NSW advice session; in total 19% were either worried about their safety at home or about threatened or actual violence in a relationship, or both.

8% reported they were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. This group showed no notable or significant differences in satisfaction with the service from clerical staff, the service from the solicitor (if anything being more satisfied with these than others) or with the cultural sensitivity shown them by the solicitor.

27% reported they spoke a language other than English at home. While these respondents were less likely to be very satisfied with the service from clerical staff and the solicitor and with the solicitor's cultural sensitivity, they were no more likely to be dissatisfied with any of these.

4% of those interviewed (15% of those who spoke a language other than English at home) were interviewed by a bi-lingual interviewer fluent in their preferred language.

15% reported they had special needs due to a disability. Most of these 93 clients reported either a physical (52% of the 93) or psychiatric (32%) disability; few reported any other disability as shown below:

Type of disability reported	n=93
Physical disability	52%
Psychiatric disorder	32%
Intellectual disability	24%
Hearing	4%
Visual	2%
Other	1%

One in four of the 93 (26%, a total of 24 respondents) reported they had experienced some difficulty with Legal Aid NSW services as a result of their disability.

### 2.3. Application for grant of legal aid

66% had not applied for a grant of legal aid or had not yet made up their mind whether to do so; 17% had already applied, and 17% intended to do so.

26% of the 107 who had already applied for a grant of legal aid reported they did get the help they needed in filling the application.

68% reported that they did not need help.

1% reported they did not receive help that they needed.

72% of the 28 who said they had received help said this came from an unspecified source within Legal Aid NSW; 21% said it came from the solicitor and 7% from reception staff; 21% reported that they obtained help from a friend (21%) or other sources (18%).

Of the 404 who had not applied for a grant of legal aid and did not intend to do so, 52% said they only sought advice or did not need a grant, 14% said this was because they had been advised by the Legal Aid NSW solicitor that an application would not be successful, 7% were not aware that they might be eligible, 6% said that the Legal Aid NSW service did not have the expertise or for other reasons could not assist with their issue, and other reasons were each given by fewer than 5%. Less than 2% said it was because they found the Legal Aid NSW service poor or left too confused to pursue the matter. Under 1% did not have time to obtain aid before their hearing and under 1% were refused service because of a conflict of interest.

#### 2.4. Legal Aid NSW waiting times

Time spent waiting for an appointment varied widely but most (87%) were seen within two weeks 61% in the same week:

Same day	22%
Same week	38%
1-2 weeks	26%
2-3 weeks	8%
A month or more	3%
Could not say	2%

87% of clients said "Yes" but 13% said "No" when asked: "Did you get advice in the time frame that you needed it, such as before a court deadline?"

Those who said they did not obtain service in time were significantly less satisfied with service from the solicitor (mean 6.7, 19% very satisfied, 19% dissatisfied) than those who did obtain service in time (mean 8.8, 55% very satisfied, 5% dissatisfied); this could have accounted for up to 36% of those dissatisfied with the service from the solicitor and five of the twelve clients who were dissatisfied with clerical staff performance.

#### 2.5. Representation and assistance

9% of the sample reported they had represented themselves in court or at a tribunal; most of these clients had apparently already had at least a first hearing by the time they were contacted to complete the survey.

Excluding those who had not yet been to court (19%) or did not expect they would go to a hearing (7%), 12% had represented themselves.

48% of those who either had represented themselves or were expecting to have a hearing (n=170) reported they had received assistance in representing themselves.

2% reported they had needed assistance that they did not receive, while 27% reported they did not need any assistance.

The types of assistance reported were:

General advice/information only	28%
Given something to use in court	6%
Letter written for client to send	4%
Letter sent on behalf of client	2%
Made phone call on client's behalf	3%
Represented in court	1%
Some other action	5%

Of those given assistance, 74% considered it helpful, with 22% believing it was too soon to say and 5% saying it was unhelpful.

More detail about how the assistance failed to help is given in the main report.

## 2.6. Information from Legal Aid NSW

26% received or picked up a Legal Aid NSW publication.

14% were referred to the Legal Aid NSW website for information.

67% received neither a Legal Aid NSW publication nor information from the Legal Aid NSW website.

## 2.7. Referrals from Legal Aid NSW

36% reported they were referred to other services by Legal Aid NSW.

The more common services reported by the 222 clients who were referred were:

Law Society or lawyers in private practice	29%
Government departments	16%
Community organisations	15%
Dispute resolution/mediation	11%
Court/tribunal	10%
Another Legal Aid NSW office	7%
Pro bono solicitor	6%
Community Legal Centre	5%
Police	2%
LawAccess NSW	2%
Police	2%

Of those referred to other services by Legal Aid NSW, 10% reported that someone at Legal Aid NSW made contact with the service to explain their situation or ask for assistance on their behalf.

Another 41% of the 222 referred clients reported they had themselves already made contact with a service they were referred to; 29% reported that they intended to do so; 14% said they did not intend to make contact and 6% were unsure whether they would do so.

## 2.8. Internet use

74% reported they had access to the internet at home, with another 10% having access away from home (84% having some internet access).

22% of those with internet access had used the Legal Aid NSW website to obtain information before making contact with Legal Aid NSW.

While most of the 135 who had used the site were satisfied with the ease of use (67%) and the usefulness of the information (73%), these levels could be higher. Around one out of ten were dissatisfied with the information found (10%) and slightly more with the ease of finding information (14%).



## 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 3.1. Conclusions

- Satisfaction with the service remains high for both clerical staff and solicitors.
- The main causes for dissatisfaction appear to be the limitations on the services that can be provided by Legal Aid NSW to clients.
- Clients with special needs are generally having those needs met, but there is room for improvement in this area.
- Unrealistic expectations about the level of assistance that can be provided before legal aid is granted or about what can be provided if aid is not granted seem to contribute to the levels of dissatisfaction reported.
- The specific sub-groups that account for most of those who were dissatisfied appear to be those who:
  - received a service after a hearing date or other critical deadline.
  - were dissatisfied with the actual response of the solicitor to the issue they sought advice about due to communication or relationship breakdowns, unmet expectations, perceived inaccuracy in facts the solicitor relied on or mistakes about the information provided.
  - wanted help in representing themselves that was not provided.

### 3.2. Recommendations

1. Legal Aid NSW should sustain the resources currently devoted to maintaining the high level of staff commitment, concern for client needs and respectful treatment of clients revealed by the survey results.
2. Additional improvement in outcomes might be achieved by focussing further specific attention on:
  - a. Identifying critical deadlines and ensuring appointments are scheduled if possible before these dates.  
Rationale: Missing critical dates was a major contributor to client dissatisfaction
  - b. Assisting clients to understand any guidelines or policies that might limit the range of assistance that can be given to clients seeking legal aid, such as the allocation of time for advice sessions.  
Rationale: Disappointment that desired services could not be provided was a major contributor to dissatisfaction and might be reduced by even better communication to prospective clients of what Legal Aid NSW can and cannot provide. While changes have been made to a key publication on the website to make limitations clearer, it

- appears that some clients continue to not be aware of possible limits to the services provided and find out about these only during the advice sessions, leading to disappointment and dissatisfaction.
- c. Ensuring adequate resources are allocated for sessions with heavy bookings for the number of solicitors available. Rationale: This might reduce the time spent waiting to see the solicitor at the office attended and reduce the time pressures that can result in clients feeling rushed that contributes to some instances of client dissatisfaction. Extension of the Head Office "backup solicitor" system for Civil Law cases might assist with this issue.
  - d. Continuing to meet the special requirements of those with physical, intellectual and psychiatric disabilities where these can be identified, with particular attention to establishing what assistance these clients need to obtain equitable service from Legal Aid NSW. Rationale: A few instances of dissatisfaction were due to particular needs of clients with a disability not being identified and met.
  - e. Having reception staff check with clients with physical disability if they are in discomfort and then being empowered to move clients in physical discomfort ahead in the queue and establish protocols to minimise adverse reactions from other clients who then have to wait longer. Rationale: This was a correctable source of dissatisfaction for some clients with a physical disability.
  - f. Remind reception staff and solicitors to continue being alert to the need for assistance in filling out forms for clients with an intellectual disability, or for seeing such clients with a support person who can assist the client to understand the advice being given. Rationale: This was a correctable source of dissatisfaction for some clients with an intellectual disability.
  - g. Checking with any client who mentions personal safety concerns that the response given was helpful, and establishing and resourcing protocols for following through until the client reports that they have received appropriate help or do not require any further assistance. Rationale: Not all clients made staff aware of their concerns about physical safety, and some that did so reported the response received was not helpful. Further systematic effort to identify all clients with such concerns and ensure that the situation is followed through until a satisfactory outcome is achieved could correct a few instances of client dissatisfaction. By setting up and resourcing action protocols, staff can be assisted to know

what they can and should do to deal with these challenging situations.

- h. More actively probing (where appropriate) for client concerns about personal safety; establish and resource clear protocols for dealing with such concerns, including follow up with clients of the outcomes and specification of further action to be taken if the client felt they had not been helped.
- i. Identifying cases where it appears that the client and the allocated solicitor are not communicating effectively and develop avenues to address these concerns to ensure enhanced client service; this might include protocols requiring solicitors to directly ask clients whether they believe their issue and concerns have been listened to, understood and responded to appropriately, or asking all clients to complete a short questionnaire at the end of an advice session that asks them to rate the session on these attributes; this would require that resources to review the replies and take follow up action if the responses indicate there was a problem.
- j. Checking eligibility for and need for a grant of legal aid with any client where representation appears to be required.

Rationale: Although most clients who did not ask about eligibility appeared to have had good grounds for not doing so, it would be appropriate if eligibility were checked during the advice interview for those cases where representation might be needed, even if the client does not raise the issue.

# FULL REPORT

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The following section provides a more detailed description of the survey and results, and re-states the conclusions and recommendations.

## 4. Background

Legal Aid NSW is a statutory body established under the *Legal Aid Commission Act* of 1979 to provide a range of legal advice and assistance services to NSW residents. The organisation has a particular focus on serving residents who are economically or socially disadvantaged. Several previous client satisfaction surveys have been conducted to obtain feedback from clients that can identify opportunities for improvements to services. In 2006, clients who had received advice services were surveyed over all areas of law (family, civil and criminal). The 2008 client satisfaction survey examined one area of law (civil law) over all services types, with over-samples to assess the responses of older people, Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In 2011, 2013, and 2015 all clients who had in the survey recruitment period received advice with or without minor assistance at a Legal Aid NSW office were invited to take part in the survey, except those who had received a grant of legal aid.

The purpose of the 2015 project was to measure client satisfaction with the following specific levels of service from Legal Aid NSW:

Advice services, including:

- Helping a client to select between options for resolving a legal problem.
- Advising a client on their legal liability in a given situation.
- Advising a client on the likely outcome or results of particular courses of action.
- Advising a client what a court might say in a given situation.

Minor assistance involving additional work such as:

- Simple drafting of correspondence and/or documents.
- Making telephone calls on the client's behalf.

Information services when provided as part of an advice service, including:

- Legal information of a general nature.
- Informing the client about sources of legal advice or assistance.

All the clients surveyed had received advice in an interview with a Legal Aid NSW solicitor. Some had received additional minor assistance, and most had been given information. Those who were seen under a

grant of legal aid or who received legal advice as part of an outreach service were excluded from the sample frame of this survey.

Outcomes sought from the survey include:

- Measuring client satisfaction with Legal Aid NSW services.
- Identifying areas where services and client satisfaction could be improved.
- Comparing results to those obtained in 2013 and 2011.
- Comparing results obtained from clients seen about Family Law, Civil Law and Criminal Law matters.
- Understanding how clients are made aware of or referred to the services.
- Understanding the impact the services have on clients.

In conducting the survey it was important that clients whose first language was not English or who identified as having a disability be adequately represented. As expected it was possible to complete all interviews by telephone; 24 were carried out by bi-lingual interviewers and none required the assistance of a telephone interpreter.

Those seeking language assistance were spread across a range of languages, with the more common being Arabic, Cantonese and Vietnamese.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Overview of methodology

Respondent recruitment was carried out by Legal Aid NSW staff who obtained client consent to take part in the survey and to pass on contact information to Taverner Research. This information was obtained by reception staff or the solicitor when the client attended an advice session at a Legal Aid NSW office. Client information was subsequently entered by Legal Aid NSW staff onto an online database. Consent forms were then destroyed. Respondents were not asked to provide their surname.

Clients who had agreed to take part were contacted if possible within three days of Taverner receiving their contact details to conduct the survey by telephone or (if required) make arrangements for other ways to complete the questionnaire. For many it took longer than three days to make contact as they were not available when first called.

Alternative modes for completing questionnaires that were made available included:

- Face to face, by appointment at a mutually agreeable venue.
- With an interpreter using the telephone interpreter service or face to face with an interpreter.
- By an interviewer of a preferred gender.
- Over a longer than the usual duration, including if required taking breaks and resuming at an agreed time.

It was not necessary to obtain any interviews face to face or online.

Some consenting respondents could not be contacted due to incorrect recording of phone numbers or due to their being unavailable within the survey period. Others refused to be interviewed despite having consented when their contact details were obtained. These were rung back by a more experienced interviewer at a different time and asked if they would now be willing to do the interview. This gained interviews with an additional 15 respondents where either the respondent or someone else in their household had initially declined interview.

Given that invitations were issued at an early stage of the client's contact with Legal Aid NSW, there should not be any bias in the selection of the sample beyond that intrinsic to obtaining the sample at a particular time of year. It is also possible that there will be some bias in who is willing to be interviewed. In particular, (as with most surveys) male clients, and clients with lower levels of education, poor English, or with particular disabilities might be less likely than others to consent to participation. While some clients from these sub-groups will consent and complete interviews, they are likely to form a smaller proportion of the sample interviewed than of the population of all clients.

## 5.2. Recruitment Process

The recruitment of clients for the survey occurred when they attended a Legal Aid NSW office for an appointment to see a solicitor for legal advice.

Contact details were obtained on written consent forms and the details were entered into an online data base by Legal Aid NSW reception staff. Taverner set up the data base, and provided a security protected initial web page to ensure only authorised personnel gain access to the data base.

The data base included the following fields:

- Office where recruited (from a list).
- At least one of:
  - Home telephone number.
  - Work telephone number.
  - Mobile number.
- Preferred days and times for making contact.
- Whether wants the help of an interpreter.
  - (IF SO) Which language.
- Whether has a disability that will require special arrangements.
  - (IF SO) Nature of special arrangements.

Data was entered and the consent forms were then immediately destroyed by Legal Aid NSW staff. This procedure was approved and followed to ensure client confidentiality, but prevented any checking back where the phone number(s) provided were incorrect.

Taverner downloaded and updated its records of consenting clients every one or two days and began calling them that evening. However, many were hard to reach so interviews often occurred a week or more after the client attended a Legal Aid NSW office.

## 5.3. Sampling

The numbers recruited by each office in the Legal Aid NSW network were closely monitored and a range of actions taken to keep the recruitment rate as high as possible. There were some marked fluctuations in the success of recruitment efforts.

The following tables break down the number of offices providing referrals in a given range, and the total referrals received and the outcomes.

**Table 1 Number of consenting referrals per office**

Number of Referrals per Office	Number of Offices	Number of Referrals	Percent of all Referrals
200+	1	255	29.1%
101-199	3	345	28.3%
91-100	0	0	0.0%
81-90	1	82	6.7%
71-80	1	74	6.1%
61-70	1	61	5.0%
51-60	2	103	8.5%
41-50	1	43	3.5%
31-40	2	68	5.6%
21-30	2	59	5.2%
11-20	5	78	6.4%
6-10	0	0	0.0%
1-5	1	2	0.2%
None	1	0	0.0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1,220</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Over half the clients recruited for the survey (57%) came from a total of only four offices. Only one office provided no referrals, and only one provided fewer than ten referrals. Of the 24 who were interviewed by a bi-lingual interviewer, nine spoke Vietnamese, six spoke Cantonese, six spoke Arabic, three spoke Dari (from Iran) and one spoke Turkish. Most of those interviewed by a bi-lingual interviewer spoke one of the more common languages sought by clients not fluent enough to be interviewed in English.

**Table 2 Numbers consenting and call outcomes**

Stage Reached	Number	Percent
Initial consent given	1,220	100.0%
Household not contacted	421	34.5%
Not yet called	100	8.2%
Invalid number	50	4.1%
Called, not answered	271	22.2%
Total households contacted	799	65.5%
Contacted, not interviewed	184	15.1%
Refused, not converted	108	8.9%
Language barrier	32	2.6%
Unavailable during survey period	12	1.0%
Reached but not yet interviewed	32	2.6%
Total interviewed	615	50.4%
Interviewed as % of valid numbers		52.6%
Interviewed as % of households contacted		77.0%



The rate of success in reaching those who consented and achieving interviews was consistent with achieving a representative sample of the clients who consented to take part.

#### 5.4. Questionnaire Revision and Testing

The survey questionnaire used in 2015 was checked by the Legal Aid NSW team to ensure full coverage of the key objectives and that code frames were up to date. Only minor changes were made from the questionnaire used in 2013.

As in the previous surveys, it was agreed that respondents would understand that the title "Legal Aid" referred to "Legal Aid NSW". To make the interview script flow more easily and save time, the shorter title ("Legal Aid") was used throughout the interview. All capitalised references to "Legal Aid" in the questionnaire should be read as referring to "Legal Aid NSW".

Interviews averaged between fifteen and sixteen minutes.

#### Piloting

The first 50 Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) interviews were treated as pilots, with additional attention to interviewers noting how interviews proceeded, and a review of the distributions of replies. No issues requiring adjustment were found.

#### 5.5. Project Timelines

Recruitment began on 23 February 2015 and 615 interviews were completed by 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015. This report is based on that sample.

Efforts to encourage offices to recruit clients were more successful than in previous rounds, but it took somewhat longer to complete interviews after referral, partly due to the intrusion of Easter and school holidays into the field period.

#### 5.6. Subtotals and Rounding

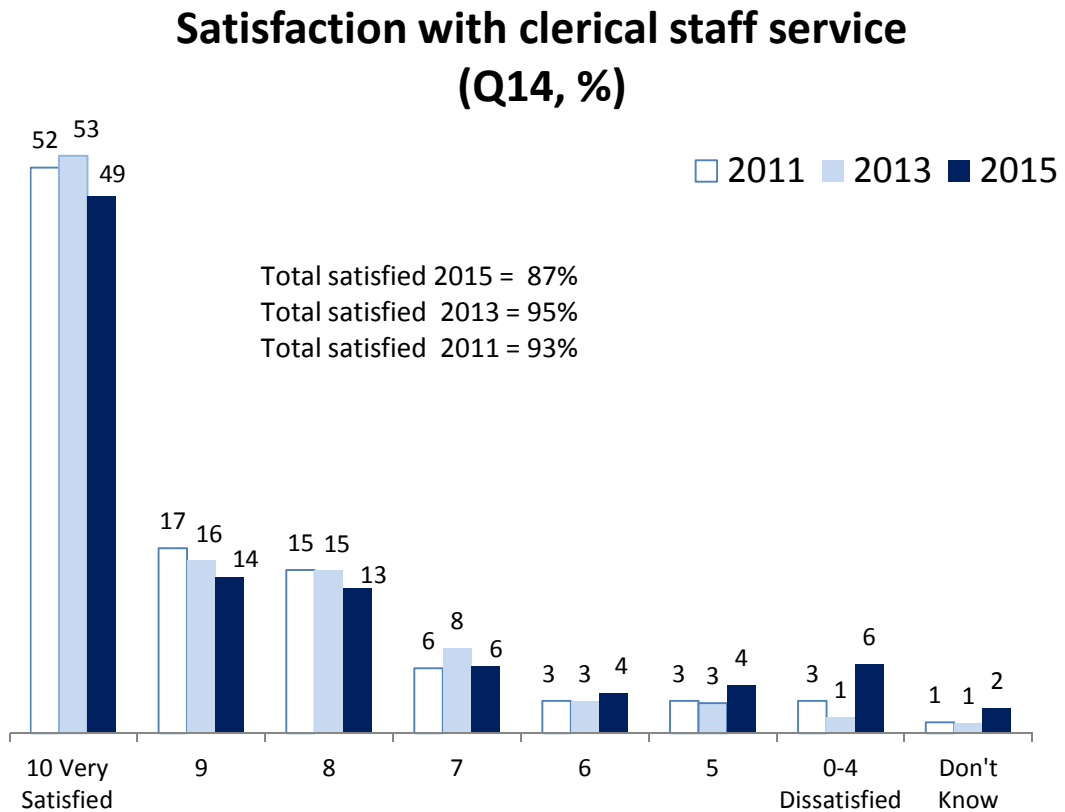
Note that in all figures, individual percentages shown might not add to the subtotals due to rounding.

## 6. Detailed Satisfaction Results

### 6.1. Satisfaction with clerical staff (Q13 and Q14).

Ratings of the satisfaction with the service provided by clerical staff and of specific aspects of their service indicated very high levels of satisfaction, as shown in figures 1 and 2.

**Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with clerical staff service (Q14)**



Q14. Overall, how satisfied were you with the service that you received from the Legal Aid NSW clerical staff at the front desk or on the telephone? Using a scale of zero to 10 where zero means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied;

Base: Total sample (n=615 in 2015)

In 2015:

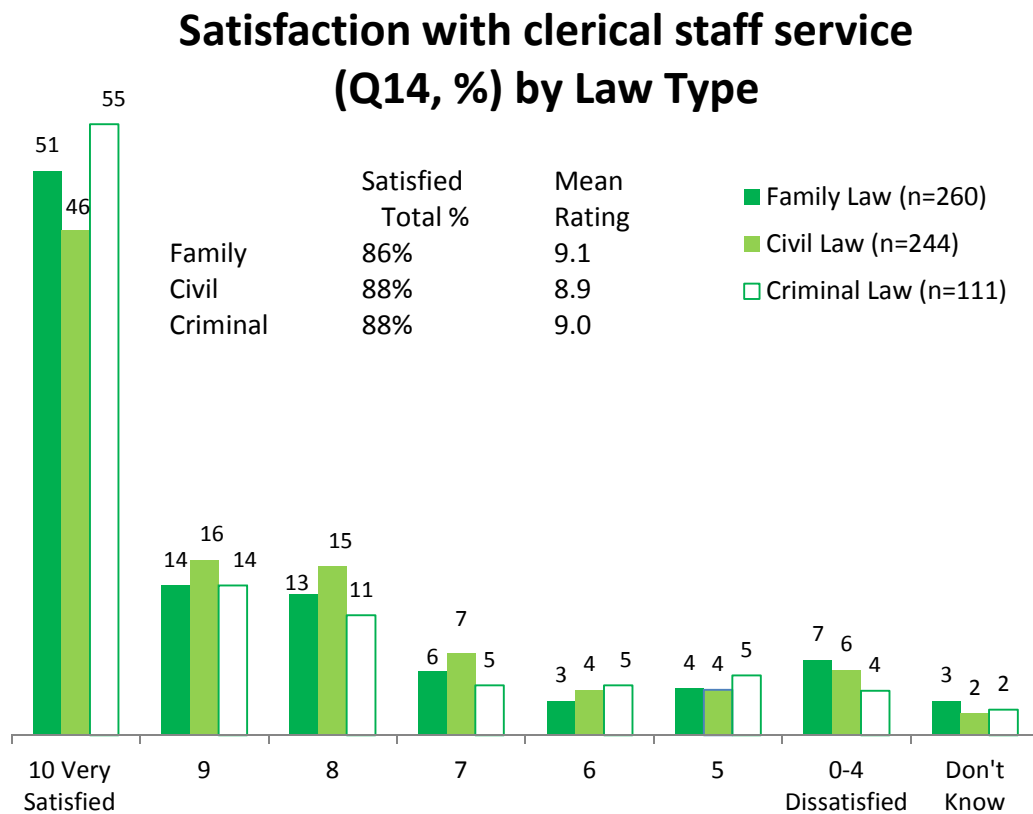
- 87% were satisfied (rating 6-10 on a zero to 10 scale) with the service provided by clerical staff.
- 49% were very satisfied (rating 10).
- 6% were dissatisfied (0-4).
- 6% gave other replies including ratings of 5 (4%) or being unable to give a rating (2%).
- The mean rating was 9.0.

There were no significant changes from the results obtained in 2011 and 2013.

The 12 who were dissatisfied in 2015 gave as reasons that client service was poor (6), the service given was inefficient or slow (5), the staff were felt to be unhelpful (4), that staff gave poor or incorrect information (2), or that staff did not answer questions (1).

Comparison of satisfaction with the clerical staff for those attending about different types of law matter showed no significant differences in overall satisfaction (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2 Satisfaction with clerical staff service (Q14, %) by Law Type**



Ratings of five specific aspects of the service given by clerical staff are summarised in Figure 3. These showed very high satisfaction levels (92% to 95% satisfied, mean ratings of 8.6 to 9.0) for those who felt able to give a rating.

In 2013, one item ('how well clerical staff helped the client understand the type of services Legal Aid could provide") although still reasonably high (88% of those who gave a rating, mean 8.2) was somewhat lower than the others. In 2015 this item was much closer to the level achieved on the other items (92% satisfied, mean rating of 8.6%).

For one item, a substantial proportion felt that item did not apply to them or said they did not know how satisfied they were:

- 50% could not rate the sensitivity and awareness staff showed to the client's culture and background, even higher than in 2013 (when this reached 30%).

The distributions of replies to these items shown in Figure 3 were quite similar to those obtained in 2011 and 2013.

There were no significant differences in specific ratings of clerical staff performance between those attending for different law types.

Details of the responses for the different types of law matter can be found in the cross tabulations submitted separately.

**Figure 3: Satisfaction with aspects of clerical staff service (Q13)**

**Clerical service overall (9.0)**



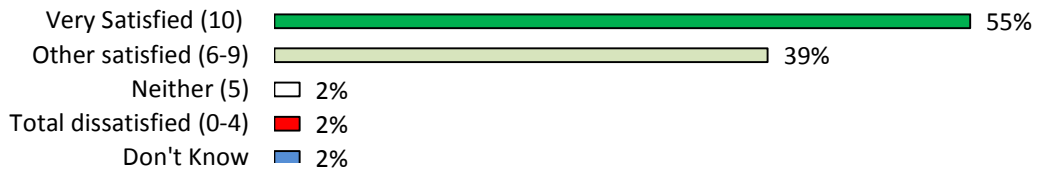
**Respect and sensitivity (9.0)**



**Listened (8.9)**



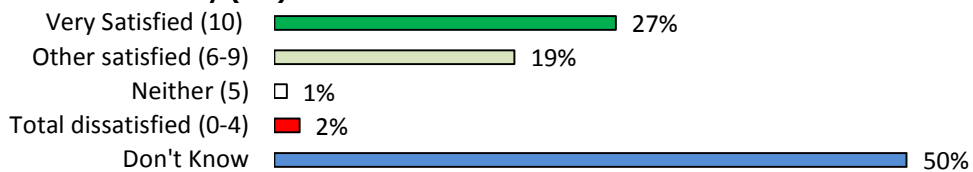
**Explained what to do (8.9)**



**Help to understand services available (8.6)**



**Cultural sensitivity (8.8)**



Q13. I would now like you to think about your most recent contact with a Legal Aid office. Firstly, I will read out some aspects of the service you received from the reception staff you spoke to before seeing a solicitor, that is, the staff who answered the telephone and helped you at the front desk. For each aspect please rate your level of satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means Very Dissatisfied and 10 means Very Satisfied

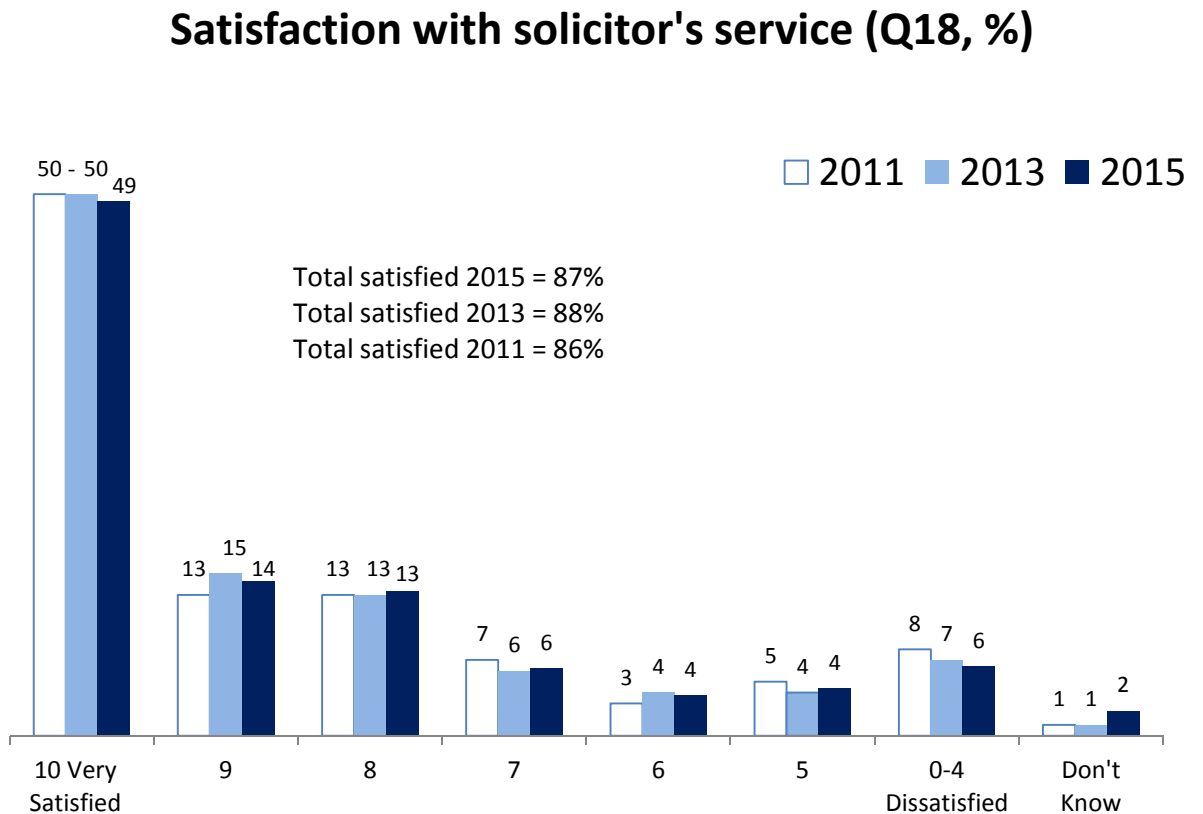
Base: Total sample; mean ratings in brackets exclude "Don't know/Not applicable" replies

## 6.2. Satisfaction with solicitor services (Q17, 18, 20 and 21)

### Satisfaction with solicitor's overall performance (Q18)

Overall satisfaction with the service provided by solicitors was also very high, as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Satisfaction with solicitor's service (Q18)**



Q18. How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the overall service that you received from the solicitor at Legal Aid? Using a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.

In 2015:

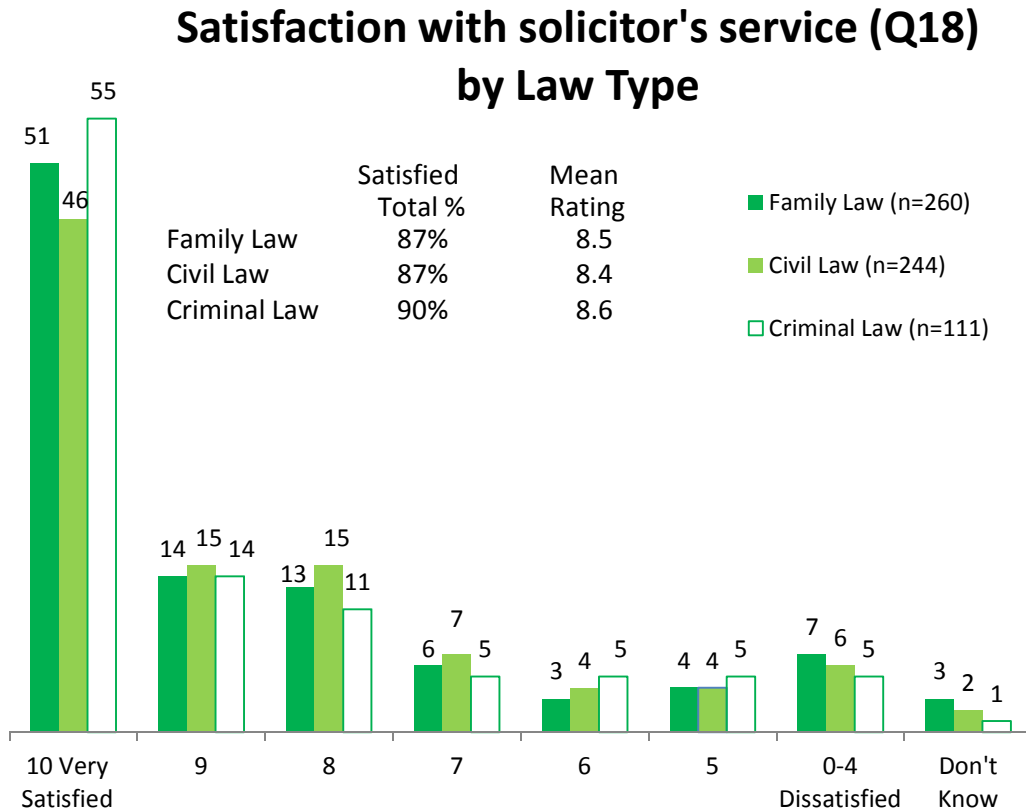
- 87% were satisfied with the service provided by the solicitor (rating 6-10 on a zero to 10 scale)
- 49% were Very satisfied (rating 10)
- 6% were dissatisfied (rating 0-4)
- 6% gave other replies including ratings of 5 (4%) or being unable to give a rating (2%)
- The mean rating was 9.0.

There were no significant changes overall from the results obtained in 2011 and 2013.

The more common reasons given for dissatisfaction among the 38 who were dissatisfied in 2015 were feeling the solicitor did not treat the client with respect (56%), did not listen (41%), did not give assistance to

understand their legal problem (28%), did not answer questions (23%), gave incorrect or inaccurate advice or information (21%), that the solicitor was rushed or the office appeared understaffed (18%), that the solicitor did not help with special needs (5%) or that service was refused due to a conflict of interest (3%).

**Figure 5: Satisfaction with solicitor's service (Q18) by Law Type**



Q18. How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the overall service that you received from the solicitor at Legal Aid? Using a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.

There were no significant differences in overall satisfaction with the solicitor's service between those attending about different types of matter. The lower level of satisfaction for Criminal Law matters found in 2013 was not evident in 2015 with Criminal Law matters producing slightly (but not significantly) higher levels of satisfaction than the other two types of matter (see Figure 5).

Those who said "No" (n=83) when asked "Did you get advice in the time frame that you needed it, such as before a court deadline?" were more likely than others to be dissatisfied (17% compared to 5%) and less likely to be very satisfied (17% compared to 55%).

Other sub-groups that were more likely to be dissatisfied included those who thought the service was worse than expected (38% of 92), those who informed staff of safety concerns and found the response unhelpful (13% of 66) and those who were dissatisfied or gave a rating of 5 to the service from reception staff (60% but of only 20 respondents).

As in 2013, those reporting access problems (4% dissatisfied of 45 respondents); those referred to Legal Aid NSW without any explanation of the services offered (5% dissatisfied of 77); and those who reported difficulties with the service due to their disability (3% dissatisfied of 69) were not particularly more dissatisfied with the service provided by the solicitor, than other respondents despite these groups having shown elevated dissatisfaction in the 2011 survey.

Perceived failure to meet client deadlines, not providing the services expected, and feeling the solicitor did not communicate appropriately thus accounted for the largest number of those who were dissatisfied.

#### Satisfaction with specific aspects of solicitor performance (Q17)

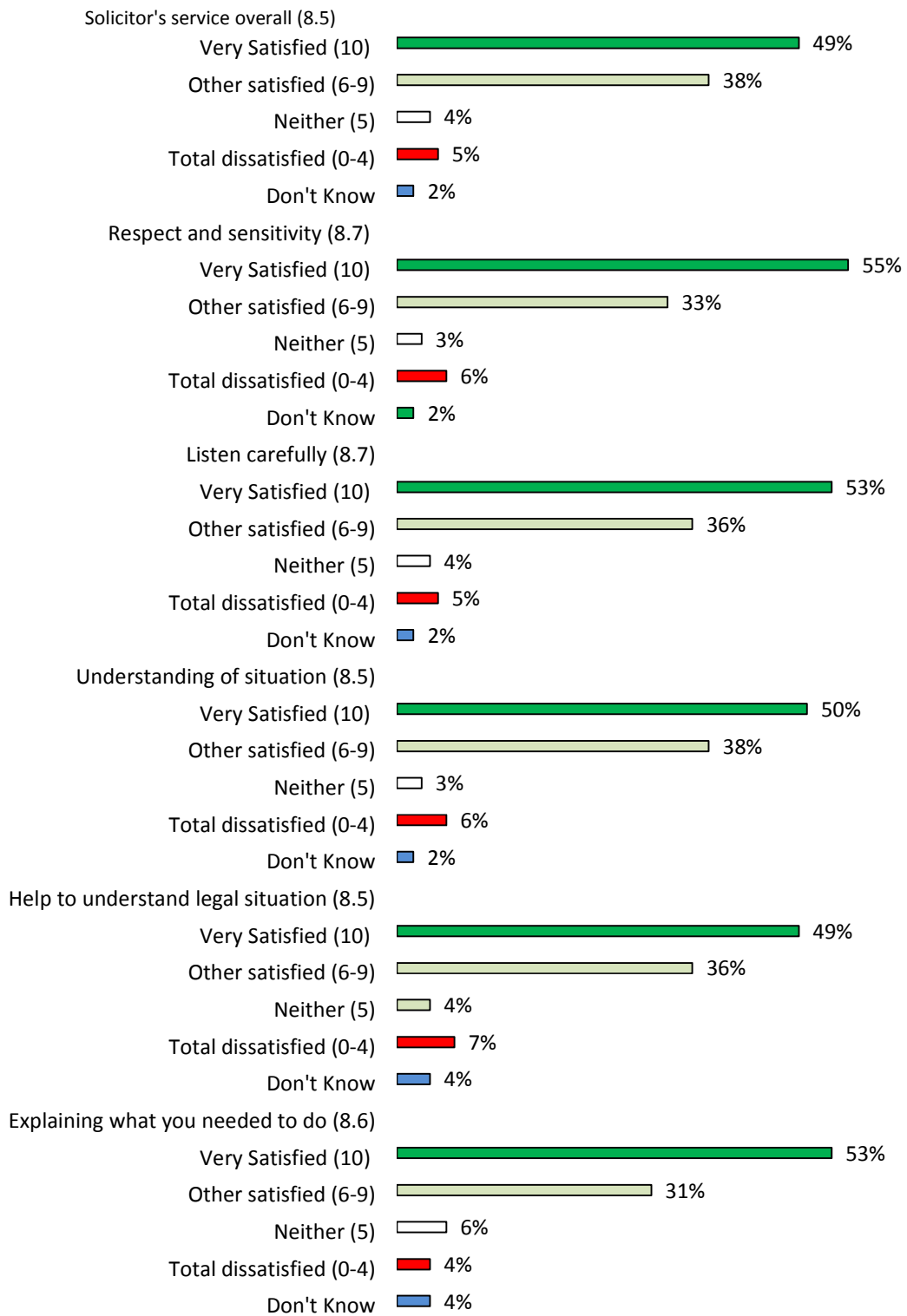
When asked to rate specific aspects of the solicitor's performance, the results were generally similar to the overall rating, as can be seen in Figure 6.

Only one attribute stood out as receiving lower ratings than the others – the ability to help with special needs due to disability. This was only rated by 111 respondents. Thus, while a matter for concern, it actually affected only 21% of the respondents. While 77% (86 of the 111 giving a rating) were satisfied and 51% were very satisfied the mean score of 7.8 was lower than for other aspects. The bulk of the respondents to this item were satisfied, but somewhat less than was typical of the other aspects.

While quite small, this deficit echoed some of the explanations given by respondents for their overall dissatisfaction with the service received.

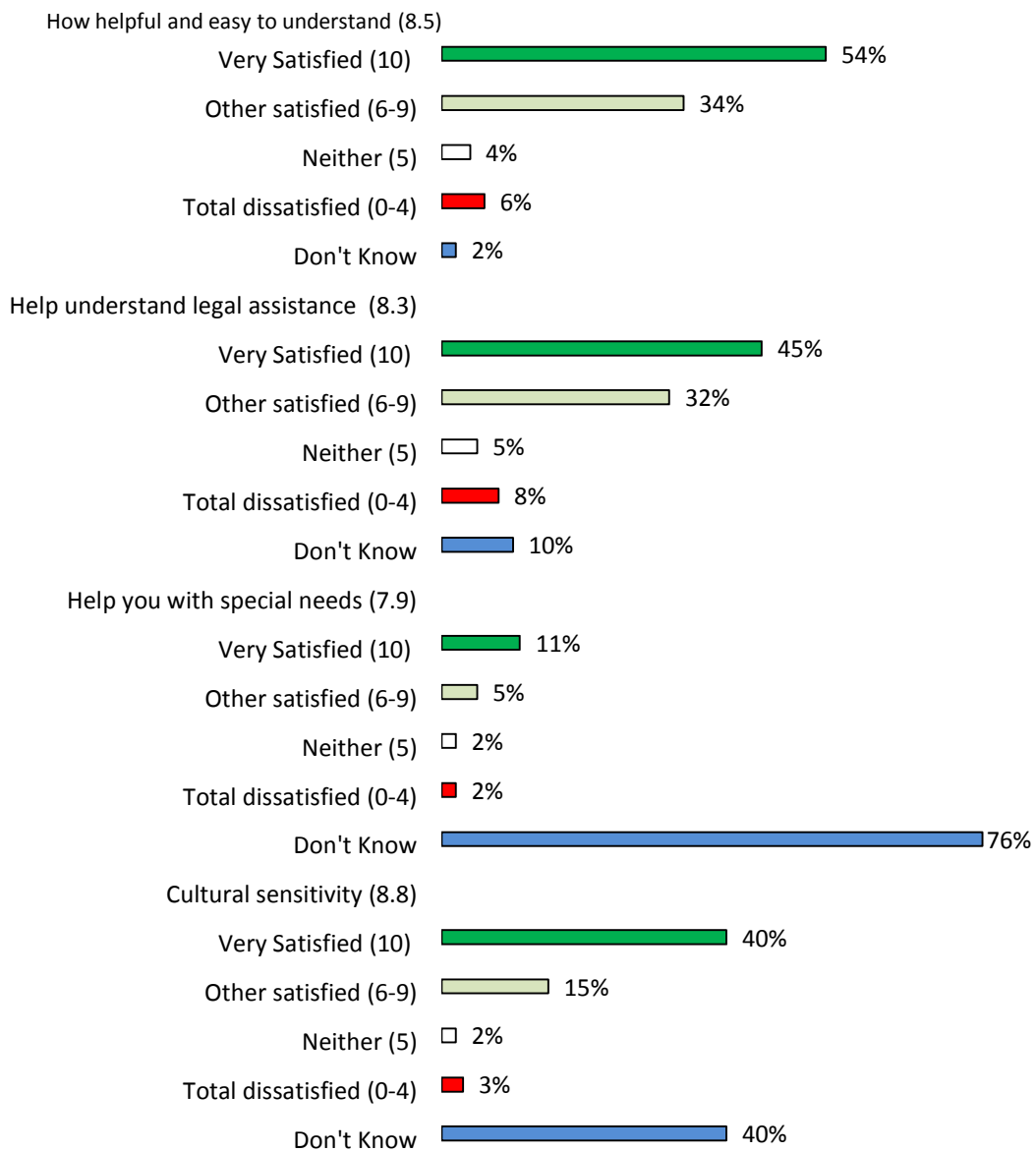


**Figure 6: Satisfaction with aspects of solicitor's service (Q17)**



(Figure continued on next page)

**Figure 6 (cont): Satisfaction with aspects of solicitor's service (Q17)**



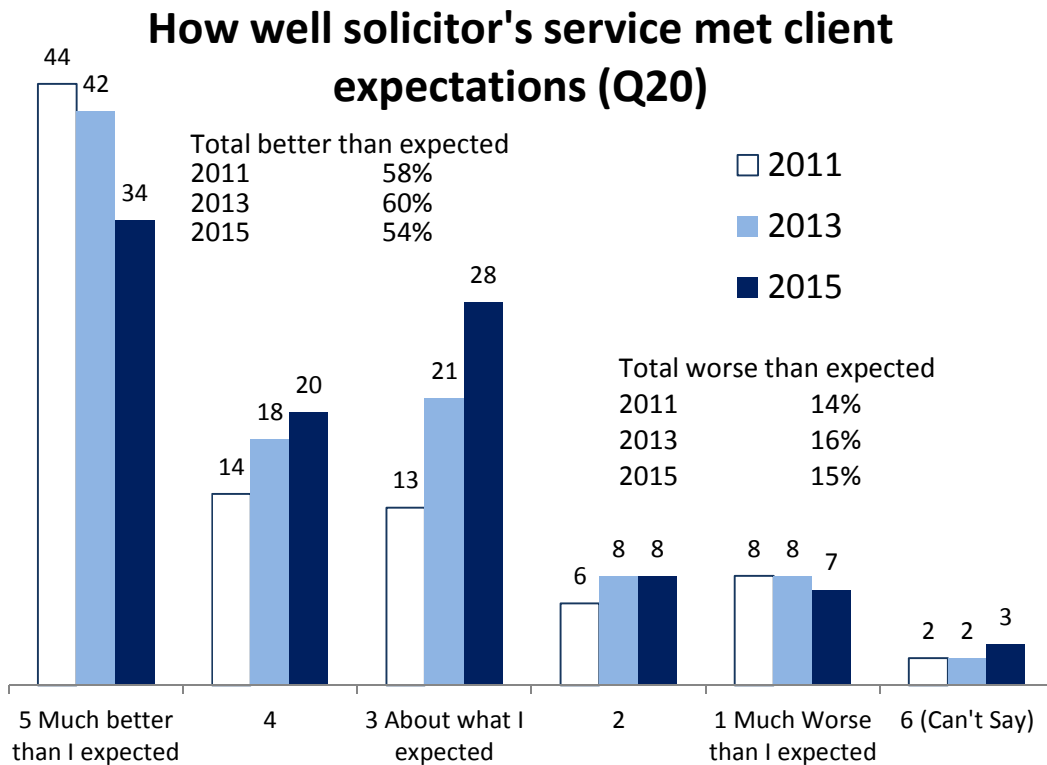
Q17. Can you tell me how satisfied you were with the following aspects of your discussion with the solicitor? For each aspect please rate your level of satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.

1. The respect and sensitivity the solicitor showed you
2. The solicitor's ability to listen carefully when you explained your situation
3. The solicitor's understanding of the problem and the information you were looking for
4. The solicitor's ability to help you understand your legal situation
5. The solicitor's ability to clearly explain what you needed to do next, if anything
6. How helpful and easy to understand you found the solicitor's advice
7. The solicitor's ability to help you understand the type of legal assistance Legal Aid NSW could provide
8. The solicitor's ability to help you if you had special needs due to a disability
9. The level of sensitivity the solicitor showed to your culture and background

Meeting expectations (Q20 and Q21)

When asked to assess how well the service from the solicitor met their expectations, 60% considered the service better than expected and 16% considered the service was worse than expected (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: How well solicitor's service met client expectations (Q20)**



Q20. How well did the overall service that you received from the Legal Aid NSW solicitor meet your expectations? I would like you to use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = much worse than I expected and 5 = much better than I expected.

There was no significant differences between the 2015, 2013 and 2011 ratings on this item. There was a trend for 2015 respondents to be more likely to consider the service about what they expected and less likely to consider it much better than expected. The percentage finding the service worse than expected has been very stable.

The most common reasons for saying the service was worse than expected among the 93 respondents who thought this included feeling they had not been listened to or understood, or that the solicitor was unhelpful or not interested (6% of the total sample and 30% of those who felt the service was worse than expected), finding the answers given were sound but not what the client wanted to hear (3% of the total sample, 15% of those who felt the service was worse than expected), feeling rushed (3% of the total sample, 14% of those who felt the service was worse than expected) that they were not eligible for the assistance sought (3% overall, 12% of those who felt the service was

worse than expected), that they wanted more or different types of help (3% of the total sample, 12% of those who found the service worse than expected) or that promised action was not taken (1% of the total sample, 5% of those who felt the service was not as good as expected). Other replies were given by very few of those who felt the service was worse than expected.

For the 54% who felt the service was better than expected, the most common reasons given that the solicitor explained options or told the client what to do (18% of the total sample and 22% of those who felt the service was better than expected), was easy to understand (12% and 16%), gave practical assistance or a helpful referral (11% and 16%), listened and/or understood and/or was interested (9% and 14%), provided what was wanted (13% and 9%), gave more or more useful advice than expected (6% and 9%), treated the client well (including treated with respect, that the solicitor cared about them, or did not judge them – 8% and 11%), was knowledgeable (6% and 9%) or produced a good outcome (3% and 5%). Speed, confirming the client's own ideas or intentions, and being given time and not rushed were also mentioned by a few.

Figure 8 shows the replies to the follow-up question about the specific aspects of the client's state or situation that the solicitor's service made better, did not affect, or made worse.

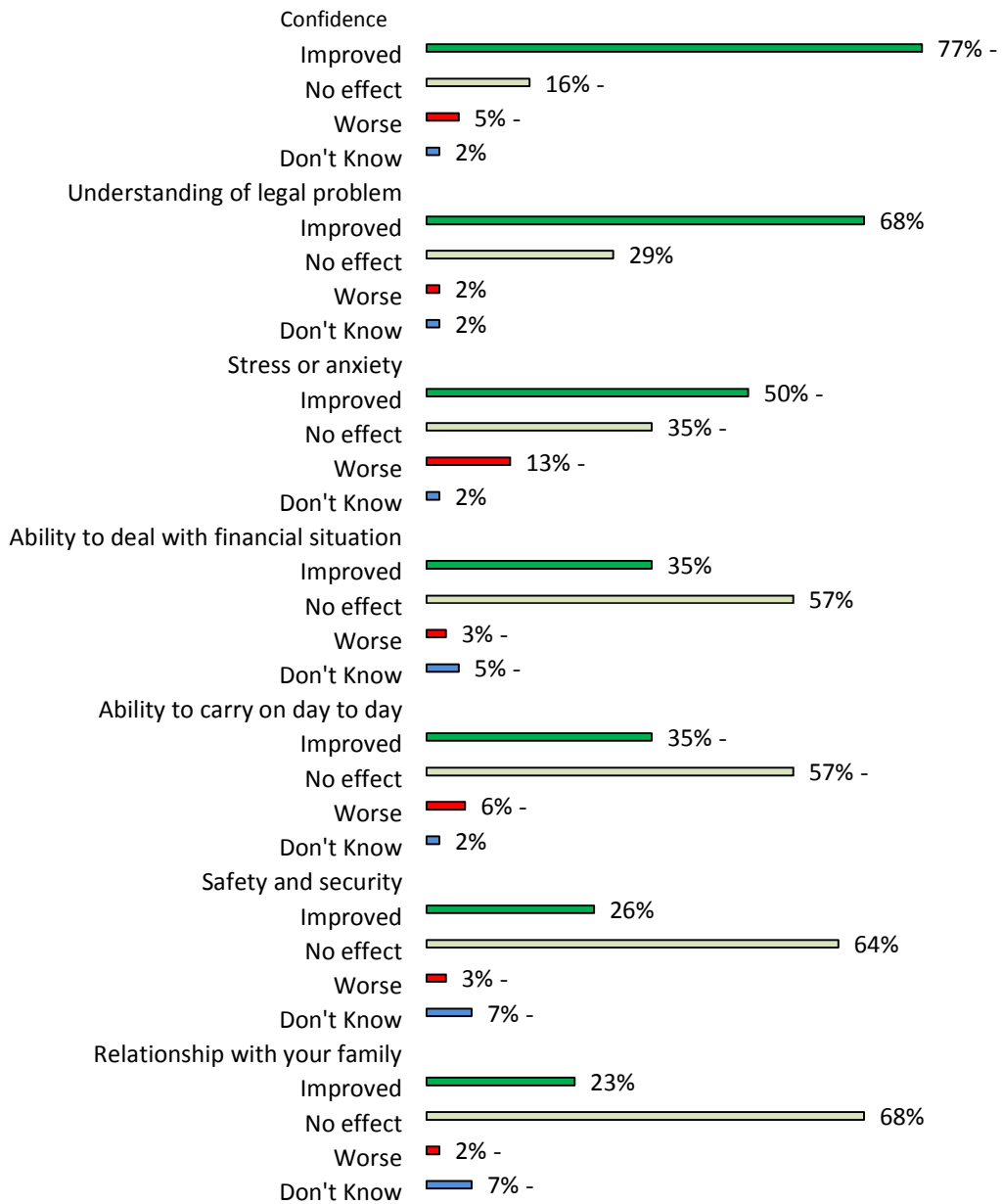
The largest reported improvements were in the client's confidence in dealing with their situation (70%) and understanding of their legal situation (68%). Very few felt their confidence or understanding was worse than before (5% and 4%).

About half reported that the service had reduced their feelings of stress or anxiety (50%) – substantially more than the 13% who reported increased stress or anxiety.

Around one in three reported improved ability to deal with their financial situation (35%), and their day to day activities (35%), one in four that their sense of safety and security had improved (26%). Improvement in the relationship with their family (23%) was the least likely. Reporting these aspects were made worse was 6% or less for each.

It must be recognised that some will inevitably discover that their situation is more difficult to deal with than they had expected, or might have a poorer outcome than they had hoped.

**Figure 8: What the service improved or made worse (Q21)**



Q21.

Did the advice and information you received from Legal Aid NSW improve, worsen or have no effect on 1.

Your understanding of your legal problem and situation

2. Your level of stress or anxiety

3. Your confidence in dealing with the problem

4. Your level of safety and security

5. Your ability to deal with your financial situation

6. Your relationship with your family

7. Your ability to carry on with your day to day activities and responsibilities

Stress and anxiety was the only aspect with more than 6% reporting that it had been made worse (13% worse). Particular sub-groups that were more likely than others to say their stress and anxiety had been made worse were:

- 21% of the 78 who received the service too late for a target date.
  - These 17 respondents were 22% of those who felt reduced confidence.
- 38% of the 24 who reported not receiving the help they needed with a disability.
  - These 9 respondents were 12% of the 78 with increased stress and anxiety.

While there were some similar patterns for other aspects, the level of adverse effects was so low that these were much less marked.

These results confirmed that it is very important to ensure that clients are seen before they reach a deadline and that special attention is needed for those with difficulties due to a disability. While some of the other contributors to increased stress and anxiety identified in 2013 and 2011 showed small effects in 2015, it appears that these were not major contributors to increased stress and anxiety, and that very few respondents felt other aspects of their situation had been made worse.

### 6.3. Recommendation of Legal Aid NSW to other clients

- A very high 96% of all respondents would recommend the service to another person.
- Even among the minority (n=39) who were dissatisfied with service from the solicitor, 64% would still recommend using the service.
- Half those who would not recommend the service (52% of the 39) described the service as poor, insufficient, ineffective or too limited; 28% reported the solicitor could not help them.
- Two in three (67%) of the 39 who would not recommend the service had reported they found the service worse than expected. Explanations given for finding the service worse than expected that were given by a number of those who said they would not recommend the service were:
  - Not getting service or not getting the service they sought was mentioned by 23% of those who would not recommend the service to others; 4 of these 9 were not eligible for the service they wanted, 2 wanted other or additional help that was not given, 1 was refused service due to a conflict, 1 was not seen because she had a child with her, and 1 reported the solicitor did not take action that had been promised.
  - Feeling the solicitor did not listen or understand or was unhelpful or not interested was mentioned by 18%.
  - Being given advice they thought was sound, but was not what they wanted to hear or disappointed their hopes was mentioned by 10%.
  - Feeling they had been rushed was mentioned by 8%.
- Thus, half of those who would not recommend the service either did not get any service, did not receive the service they wanted, had communication problems with their solicitor, or were disappointed despite accepting that the advice given was sound.

## 7. Other Results in Detail

### 7.1. Pathways to the service

Legal Aid NSW was usually found directly by the client:

- 79% went to Legal Aid NSW without being referred including:
  - 68% who went directly to Legal Aid without consulting any other source of assistance.
  - Another 11% consulted another source of assistance but were not referred to Legal Aid NSW by that source.
- 13% were referred without any explanation of the services offered.
- 8% were referred with some explanation of the services offered.

Mean satisfaction and the percent dissatisfied with the solicitor's services indicated lower dissatisfaction for those referred without any explanation of the services on offer, than for those not referred or those referred with an explanation:

	Dissatisfied	Mean
No referral (n=478)	6%	8.5
Referral, no explanation (n=75)	5%	8.8
Referral with explanation (n=48)	13%	8.2

The differences in 2015 were not statistically significant and reverse the pattern found in 2013. Thus whether being referred was explained or not does not have a reliable impact of satisfaction with the service received.

A wide variety of sources were consulted before approaching the Legal Aid NSW service by the 32% who said they had consulted other sources before contacting Legal Aid NSW. The more common sources consulted about the legal issue before approaching Legal Aid were (as a percentage of the total sample, n=615):

Law Society	11%
Government department	8%
LawAccess NSW	6%
Community Legal Centre	3%
Court or tribunal	2%
Other community organisations	2%
Internet	2%
Dispute resolution/mediation service	2%

Other sources contacted before Legal Aid NSW were reported by less than 2% of the sample, and included a friend or family member (1%), police (1%), another Legal Aid Office (1), a health professional (1%) and the Aboriginal Legal Service (1%) and a number of other specific services.



Overall, the 32% who had consulted elsewhere before contacting Legal Aid NSW was slightly less than the 38% who had done so in 2013, and both these were significantly less than the 51% who had done so in 2011. It appears that the proportion of clients going directly to Legal Aid NSW without seeking help elsewhere first is increasing.

The number of sources consulted before contacting Legal Aid NSW ranged from zero (for two in three) to more than six (for 2%):

Zero	68%
One	18%
2-4	11%
5-6	1%
More than 6	2%

## 7.2. Accessibility and barriers

### Access problems

92% had no problems accessing Legal Aid NSW services. Only 8% reported they had problems gaining access to the service – exactly the same as the responses to this question in 2013.

The 46 respondents who said they had an access problem were less likely to be highly satisfied with the service from the clerical staff (27% compared to 58%, significant difference) and tended to be less likely to say they were very satisfied with the service from the solicitor (33% compared to 52%, a substantial but not statistically significant difference).

These respondents were also more likely to be dissatisfied or neutral (ratings 0 to 5) with service from the clerical staff (13% compared to 5%) and to be dissatisfied with the service from the solicitor (16% 0-4 compared to 6%). Both these differences were statistically significant. Those giving clerical staff a rating of 5 either had reservations about the service received or did not care about the service received from clerical staff.

This issue is thus a significant contributor to dissatisfaction and to lower levels of satisfaction.

- The main sources of difficulty reported by the 46 with a difficulty were:

Waiting time	39%
Hours of operation	17%
Phone busy	11%
Distance from the service	11%
Not enough legal staff/appointment times	9%
Could not make contact	9%
Physical access	7%
Other specific problems each less than	5%

- Although small, this overall segment accounts for much of the dissatisfaction with the services received.
- When asked what help they needed, the 46 respondents sought:
 

Increased staff/reduce waiting in the office	48%
Improve initial contact	11%
Improve access in rural areas	11%
Give correct information	9%
Other suggestions each less than	5%
No suggestions	9%
- In 2011 a number of clients who needed additional help to access the service said they would like a change of policy so their case could be accepted and the assistance they sought given. This was much less common in 2013, and in 2015 none of the 46 respondents who sought additional assistance to gain access mentioned this as an issue, confirming that actions taken to clarify what assistance can be given has been largely successful.
- As in 2011, the difference between those in metropolitan and regional areas in being very satisfied with service from the clerical staff and with service from the solicitor significantly favoured regional areas:
  - 50% of metropolitan clients compared to 62% of regional clients were very satisfied with clerical staff service;
  - 44% compared to 58% were very satisfied with service from the solicitor;
  - There was almost no difference in being dissatisfied with clerical staff service (1% compared to 2%) and little difference in dissatisfaction with the solicitor's service (4% compared to 9%).
- There was no metro/rural difference in reporting access problems (9% metro and 6% rural).
- Any effect might be "hidden" by those in rural areas who do have greater access problems not actually obtaining service.

### Safety concerns

- 9% reported they were worried about their safety at home and 16% that they had been frightened of actual or threatened violence in one or more of their relationships.
- 83% of the 119 who had concerns in either or both areas said they had reported this to service staff.

- There was no difference between these 119 respondents and the balance of the sample in overall satisfaction with Legal Aid NSW services as shown in the following breakdown:

	Safety Concerns	
	Yes (n=99)	No (n=494)
Very satisfied with clerical services	56%	56%
Total satisfied with clerical services	93%	95%
Very satisfied with solicitor's services	48%	51%
Total satisfied with solicitor's services	89%	89%
Service from solicitor:		
Much better than expected	30%	35%
Total better than expected	50%	55%
Worse than expected	19%	14%

- Among the 99 with safety concerns, giving good advice or information was the type of assistance most likely to be reported (39%), followed by referral to an effective source of assistance (10%), and help in getting an AVO (4%). Only 9% said they received no help or insufficient help, 9% that the advice given was not helpful, 4% that they were referred somewhere without getting any direct help, 4% that it was too soon to say, 3% that they were not taken seriously, and 2% that the Legal Aid service was unable to help with the problem; 7% said help was not needed. Other replies included staff listening, understanding or otherwise being supportive (4%), receiving other types of assistance (2%) and being refused service because the threatening party had already been given service (1%).
- 31% reported that the response was unhelpful; among these 31 respondents, 29% reported there was no help or insufficient help given; 19% found the advice given was not helpful; 19% said they did not need any help; 13% that it was too soon to say; 10% (3 cases) said they were not taken seriously. One respondent reported that conflict of interest prevented any assistance as the person they feared had already been given assistance. This had occurred in one case in 2013 and two cases in 2011.
- The small group who found the response to informing staff of their safety concerns unhelpful (n=31) was less likely to be highly satisfied with the services provided by clerical staff (45% compared to 62% of the 68 who found the response helpful).
- When asked to rate satisfaction with service from the solicitor, 23% of the 31 who informed staff about their safety concerns and found the response unhelpful were very satisfied, and 13% were dissatisfied. These results were quite different from the 68 who said they had informed staff about their concerns and that the response was helpful or that they did not need any help (56% highly satisfied, and 3% dissatisfied) and from the 19 who

did not tell anyone about their safety concerns (58% very satisfied, and 11% dissatisfied).

- There was a similar effect on the percentage who reported their expectations were met much better than expected – 13% of the 31 who told staff about their safety concerns and found the response unhelpful rated the service as much better than expected, compared to 38% of the 68 who told staff of their concerns and found the assistance given helpful or did not need help, and 30% of the 20 who did not seek assistance.
- A similar pattern was evident for the percentage who found the service overall below what was expected – these were 45% of the 31 who found the response to informing staff of their safety concerns unhelpful, 7% of the 68 who told staff of their safety concerns and found the response helpful or said they did not need help, and 15% of the 20 who did not inform staff about their safety concerns.
- The sub-groups reported among those who had concerns about their safety are quite small, which limits the power to detect differences that are statistically significant. However, reversing the pattern found in 2013, those who found the response unhelpful were generally less satisfied and more dissatisfied than those who received a helpful response or did not inform staff of their concerns. The size, consistency across measures and logical consistency suggests that the effect identified is real.
- These results are consistent with those found in 2011; in both surveys, the effect was very much as would be expected.
- Given this, it appears reasonable to conclude that the response received from staff when a client reports safety concerns can impact on satisfaction with the service received for the better (if the response is found to be helpful) or worse (if the response is found to be unhelpful).
- As would be expected, clients attending for Family Law matters were more likely to express such concerns (27%) than those attending for Civil Law (15%) or Criminal Law (11%). Those with the concerns were slightly more likely to report these to staff of the Legal Aid NSW office if attending for a Family Law (86%) or Civil Law (83%) matter than if attending for a Criminal Law matter (66%) – a smaller difference than in 2013, but with a very small sample of those attending for Criminal Law matters saying they had safety concerns, these results must be treated with caution.
- We had recommended in 2013 that staff more actively probe for such concerns with those attending and especially among those attending for Criminal Law matters. However, ensuring that appropriate action can then be taken then would need to be given a very high priority and the client response followed up and further action taken if the client felt they had not been

helped. While doing this could present a real challenge given the many pressures that staff are working under, the results in 2015 suggest that better identification of these clients and helpful responses to them are being achieved.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background

- 8% (48) reported they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. These respondents were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with the service given by clerical staff (6% compared to 2%) and somewhat (but not significantly) more likely to be very satisfied with the service from the solicitor (66% compared to 49%).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were somewhat (but not significantly) more likely than others to be very satisfied with the service from the solicitor (66% compared to 49%). There were no other noteworthy differences between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents and others in satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services provided by clerical staff or solicitors, or with the solicitor's sensitivity to their cultural background, as can be seen below.

○ Clerical services overall:	V. Sat'd	Dis'd
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	62%	6%
Others	55%	2%
○ Services from the solicitor overall:	V. Sat'd	Dis'd
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	66%	5%
Others	49%	7%
○ The solicitor's sensitivity to their cultural background:	Sat'd	Dis'd
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	66%	9%
Others	57%	4%

(NOTE: those not giving a rating excluded)

- Given the relatively small number of respondents who were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island backgrounds (at most 46, and for some items only 35 gave a rating), it appears that the responses might have been more polarised, with more being very satisfied and more being dissatisfied; however, the differences could have been solely due to chance.

### Languages other than English

- 27% (n=164) reported they spoke a language other than English at home. These respondents were as satisfied as other respondents with:
 

○ Reception services overall:	Sat'd	Dis'd
Languages other than English (n=164)	95%	2%
Others (n=449)	95%	2%
○ Reception service sensitivity to their cultural background:	Sat'd	Dis'd

Languages other than English (n=124)	96%	2%
Others (n=179)	92%	4%
(NOTE: those not giving a rating excluded)		

- Services from the solicitor overall:
 

	Sat'd	Dis'd
Languages other than English (n=164)	88%	7%
Others (n=449)	89%	6%
  
- The solicitor's sensitivity to their cultural background:
 

	Sat'd	Dis'd
Languages other than English (n=125)	90%	4%
Others (n=141)	91%	6%
(NOTE: those not giving a rating excluded)		

- Those who spoke a language other than English at home did tend to be less likely to say they were very satisfied with the service from clerical staff (46% compared to 59%), with the solicitor's services (41% compared to 54%) and also with the level of cultural sensitivity shown by clerical staff (48% compared to 60%) and by the solicitor (50% compared to 66%). There were almost no differences in dissatisfaction shown on these items. Given the consistency of the differences it appears that those speaking a language other than English at home were less enthusiastic about the services provided than other respondents, but were no more likely to be dissatisfied.
- 18% (29) of those interviewed who spoke a language other than English at home (164 respondents) preferred to have the assistance of an interpreter when at Legal Aid NSW. Of the 29, 21 (72%) asked for an interpreter and eight did not. Two of the 21 who had asked said their request was not competently handled, while the other 19 said it was handled competently.
- The 29 who asked included six who did bring someone with them to interpret, eight who used the Telephone Interpreter Service, and two obtained an interpreter (but did not use the Telephone Interpreter Service).

### Special needs due to a disability

- 15% (n=93) reported they had special needs due to a disability. 15% of the 93 had more than one disability.

The 93 who reported having special needs identified as having:

Physical disability	52%
Psychiatric disability	32%
Intellectual disability	24%
Hearing impairment	4%
Visual	2%
Others	1%
Not stated	0%

- 25% of the 93 reported that they had needed assistance.
- The assistance required was quite varied. While nine said that in fact they did not need anything further or that nothing could be done to assist them, several mentioned needing more time for the appointment, one would have liked a specific appointment time, another would have liked the solicitor to speak more slowly and another had asked the solicitor to speak more slowly and loudly; a couple said they had been handled very well; several others said they had someone with them who could give the help needed.
- It is difficult to draw any general conclusions about how to better service such diverse needs beyond emphasising the importance of asking if clients need any assistance, responding with respect and making efforts to find ways to give equal service despite the client's disabilities. The numbers that had needs they felt were not met were very low so it appears that the needs of most clients with a disability are being met.
- Reception staff might need to check with clients with physical disability if they are in discomfort, and then to be empowered to move clients in physical discomfort ahead in the queue – although this risks creating dissatisfaction for other clients who then have to wait longer.
- Reception staff and solicitors might need to be even more alert to the need for assistance in filling out forms for clients with an intellectual disability, or for seeing such clients with a support person who can assist the client to understand the advice being given.
- When those with a disability were compared to all other respondents, differences in satisfaction with the service from clerical staff, with service from the solicitor, and perceptions of the service as being worse than expected showed only small differences that were all consistent with chance.
- Those with psychiatric disability (n=30) were less likely than others with a disability to be very satisfied with service from the clerical staff (33% compared to 59%) and with service from the solicitor (37% compared to 57%) but were slightly more likely to consider the service given was better than expected (57% compared to 48%). There were only very small differences in the percentage dissatisfied or considering the service worse than expected. These differences are based on groups that are small small enough to ensure even substantial differences could be due to chance, this does suggest that it will be more difficult to achieve high levels of satisfaction with clients who have a psychiatric disability than with clients with other types of disability.
- The small sub-group among those with a disability who indicated that they needed assistance to obtain service (n=26) did tend to be less likely to be very satisfied with service from the solicitor

(39% compared to 55% of others with a disability, n=69) and were significantly more likely to consider the service given was worse than expected (30% compared to 10%). There was little difference in the percentage very satisfied with service from the clerical staff (48% compared to 52%).

- The results underline the need to identify clients with a disability (especially a psychiatric disability), to identify what assistance they require and do whatever can be done to provide that assistance. However, where this was not successfully done, the effect was to reduce the level of satisfaction rather than to produce dissatisfaction.

### 7.3. Grants of legal aid

- 17% (n=107) had already applied for a grant of legal aid, and 17% (n=104) intended to do so
- 26% of the 107 who had already applied reported they did get the help they needed in filling in the application  
68% reported that they did not need help  
6% reported they did not receive help that they needed (close to the 7% in 2011 and higher than the 1% in 2013).
- Legal Aid NSW staff were the main sources of help for the 28 who were given the help they needed. Specifically, those given help were assisted by the Legal Aid NSW solicitor (21%), Legal Aid NSW clerical staff (7%) or unspecified Legal Aid NSW staff (32%), with 57% reporting one or more Legal Aid staff members gave them help. Some reported receiving help from a friend or relative (21%), or some other source (21%).
- Those who had not applied and did not intend to apply for a grant of legal aid were asked their reasons for not applying. The explanations given were:
 

Only wanted advice, not a grant	40%
Legal Aid solicitor advised not eligible	14%
Grant not needed	12%
Not aware might be eligible	7%
Legal Aid cannot assist with my issue/lack expertise	6%
Preferred to represent myself	4%
Able to arrange other affordable representation	4%
Believed had little chance of approval	3%
Each other reason given by at most	2%
- The 7% who said they were not aware they might be eligible might have missed a chance for a grant, but the other replies all suggest that the decision was made on appropriate grounds. It would still be desirable to check on eligibility during the advice interview for those cases where representation might be needed, even if the client does not raise the issue.



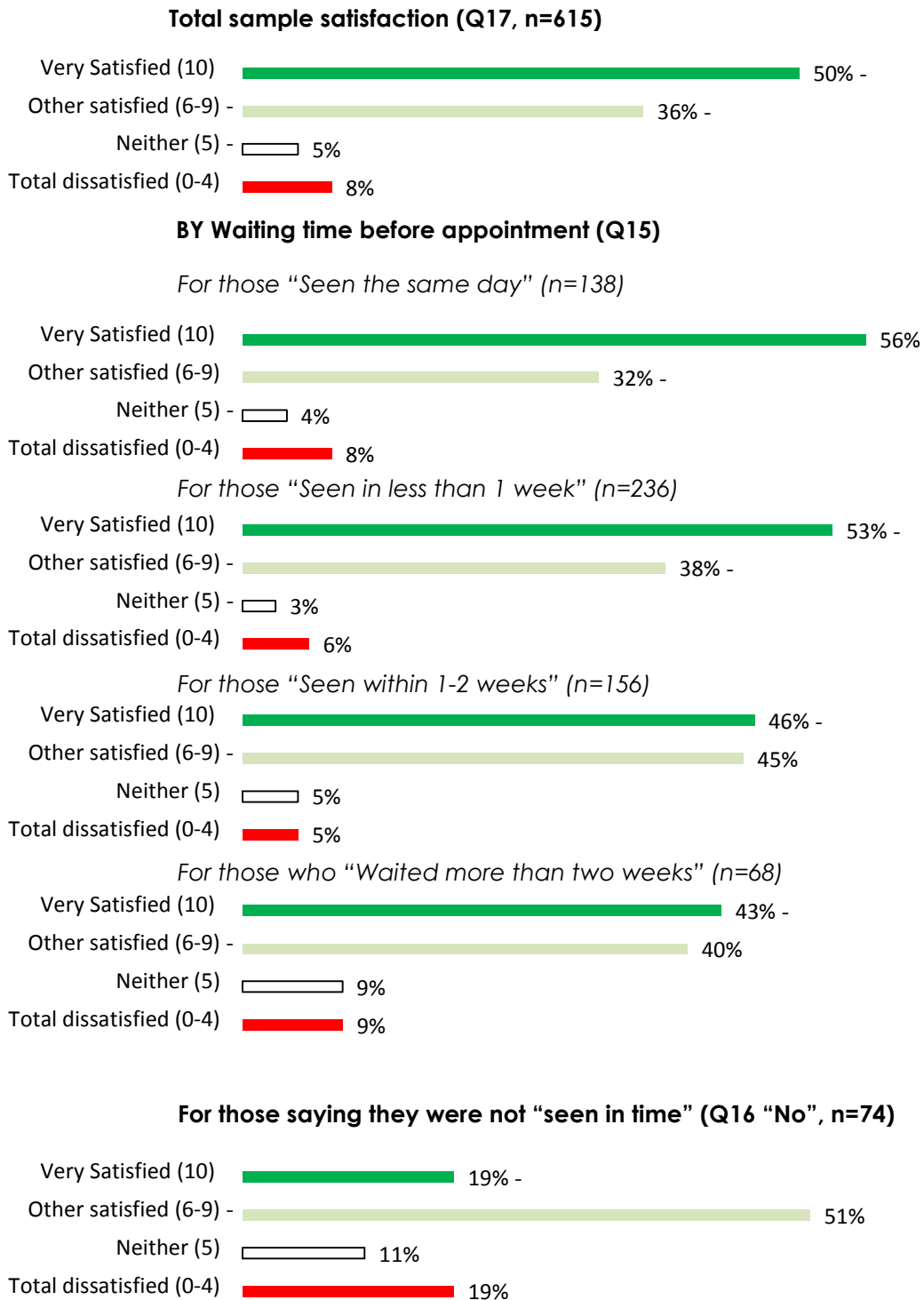
## 7.4. Waiting time

Waiting time varied widely:

Same day	22%
Same week	38%
1-2 weeks	26%
2-3 weeks	8%
About a month	1%
More than a month	1%
Could not say	2%

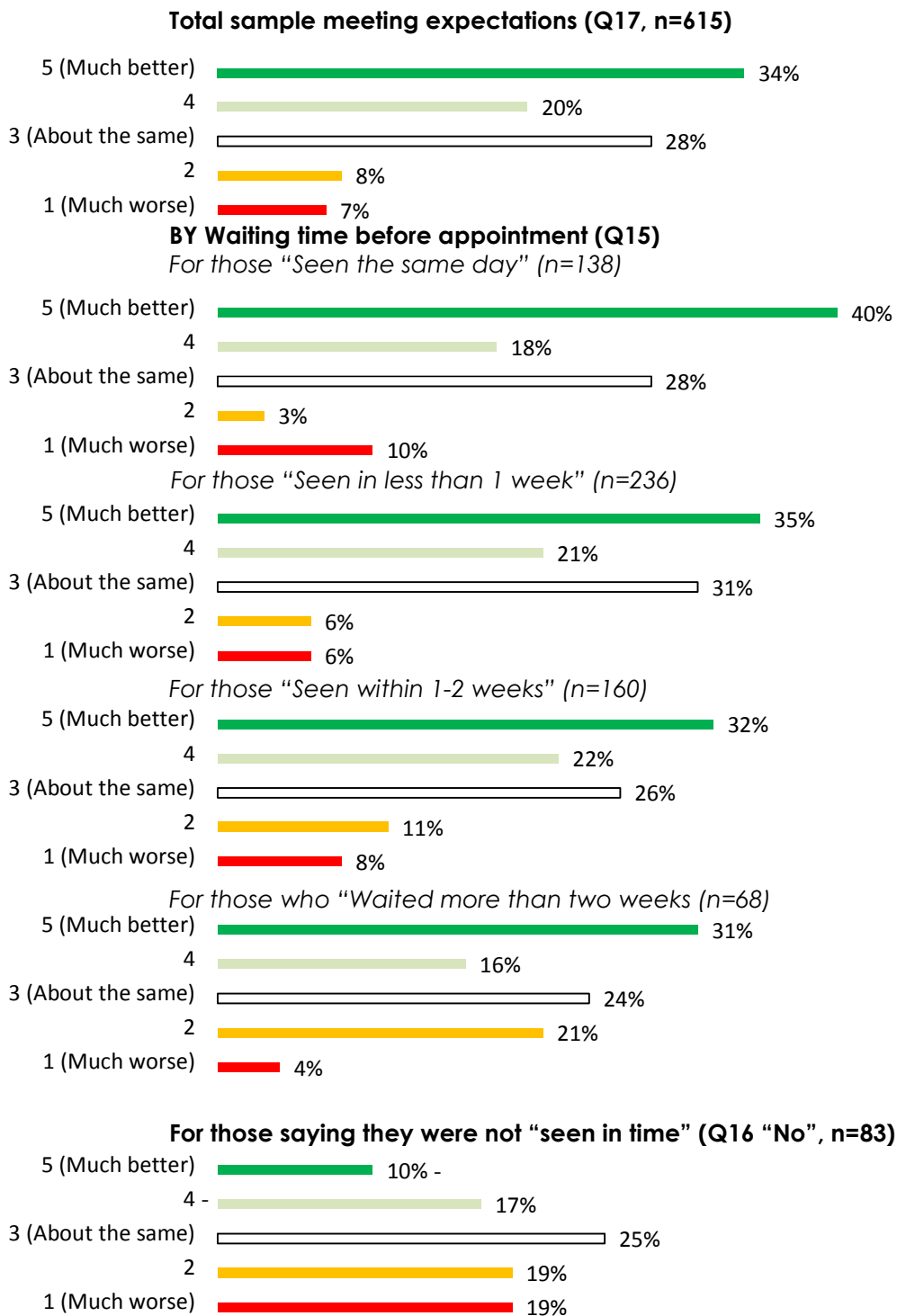
- For 87%, the advice was obtained in time, but 13% said it was too late to meet a court date or other deadline.
- Waiting time had a relatively small effect on satisfaction with the service so long as it was given in time (see Figure 9).
- The differences found were not statistically significant although there was a regular trend for the percentage who were very satisfied to decline as waiting time increased.
- There was no regular pattern in the percent who were dissatisfied and any differences were not significant.
- However, as already mentioned, failure to schedule the interview in the desired timeframe was the most common cause of dissatisfaction with the service from the solicitor; 19% of these 74 respondents were dissatisfied and only 19% highly satisfied compared to 5% dissatisfied and 55% highly satisfied among those who were seen in time.
- The pattern can be seen very clearly in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Satisfaction with solicitor (Q17) by waiting time (Q15)**



- A very similar pattern was evident for ratings of how well the service met the respondent's expectations as can be seen in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Meeting expectations (Q17) by waiting time (Q15)**



- Although there was a steady fall in finding the service much better than expected as waiting time increased, these differences were within the range that might occur by chance.
- The percentage who considered the service worse or much worse than expected increased with waiting time from 13% to 25%. Again these differences were within a range that might occur by chance.

- Those who considered they were seen too late were much more likely to consider the service much worse than expected (19% against 6%) and much less likely to rate it as much better than expected (10% against 38%). These difference were statistically significant.
- The importance of seeing clients if at all possible before critical dates was strongly confirmed. Further reducing those seen after critical dates could further improve overall satisfaction and perceptions of the service.

### 7.5. Representation and assistance

- 9% of the sample reported they had represented themselves in a court or tribunal hearing related to the issue they had sought advice on.
- Excluding those who had not yet had a hearing (19%) or did not expect they would have one (7%), 12% had represented themselves.
- 48% of those who either had represented themselves or were expecting to do so at a hearing (n=170) reported they had received assistance in representing themselves.
- 25% of these respondents said they needed assistance but had not received any. Another 27% said no assistance was needed.
- The 40 who said they had needed further assistance that they had not received and had given an overall rating of the solicitor's service were much less likely than other respondents to be very satisfied (25% compared to 52% of all other respondents giving a rating), and were much more likely to be dissatisfied (28% compared to 7%), accounting for 11 of the 39 (28%) dissatisfied respondents
- The types of assistance reported as actually given were quite varied (n=170):
 

Legal advice	28%
Gave a letter or something similar to use in court	8%
Wrote a letter for you to send	4%
Made a phone call on behalf of the client	3%
Sent a letter on behalf of the client	2%
Represented in Court	1%
Gave some other reply	5%
39 needed, none given	25%
No assistance needed	27%
- A much lower percentage reported they had been represented in court than in the 2013 survey.
- Of those given assistance, 74% considered it helpful, 22% believed it was too soon to say and 5% that it was not helpful.

- The four respondents who found the assistance given was not helpful described their reasons for saying this as the solicitor refusing help or not being interested (two cases) or that the assistance did not achieve the desired outcome (two cases).
- Given the very small number involved, it was not appropriate to explore the impact on satisfaction of receiving assistance that was found unhelpful.

### 7.6. Information from Legal Aid NSW

- 26% received or picked up a Legal Aid NSW publication.
- 14% were referred to the Legal Aid NSW website for information.
- 67% received neither.
- Among those who received information from publications or were referred to the Legal Aid NSW website, the majority agreed that the material provided was easily understood, helped them understand what to do next, improved their understanding of their situation and helped them feel more in control. The percentages can be seen below.

Agreement rating on 0-10 scale:	(6-10)	(8-10)
Was easy to understand	85%	71%
Improved understanding	85%	65%
Helped understand what to do next	77%	65%
Helped me feel more in control	73%	58%

- Between 4% and 12% disagreed with the statements, with the statement most likely to attract disagreement being "Helped me feel more in control".
- Agreement with statements was somewhat lower than had been found in 2013, suggesting that the additions to the material available might not meet client needs for clarity and actionability quite as well.

### 7.7. Referrals from Legal Aid NSW

- 36% reported they were referred to other services by Legal Aid NSW.
- The more common services reported by these 222 were:
 

Law Society/private practitioner	29%
Government department	16%
Community organisation	15%
Dispute resolution service/mediation	11%
A court or tribunal	10%
Another Legal Aid NSW office	7%
A pro bono solicitor	6%
Community Legal Centre	5%
Police	2%

LawAccess NSW	2%
GP/Health Professional	2%

- About half of those who were referred to other services were referred to other providers of legal advice.
- Of the n=222 who were referred, 10% reported that someone at Legal Aid NSW made contact with the service to explain their situation or ask for assistance.
- A further 41% reported that they had made contact with a service they were referred to, and 29% that they intended to do so; 14% said they did not intend to make contact and 6% were unsure whether they would do so.

### 7.8. Internet use

- 74% reported they had access to the internet from home, with another 10% having access away from home; 16% did not have web access.
- 22% of those with internet access had used the Legal Aid NSW website to obtain information before making contact with Legal Aid.
- Opinions about the ease of use and usefulness of the information on the website among the 135 who had used it were generally favourable:

	Total Satisfied (6-10)	Highly Satisfied (8-10)
Ease of finding information	67%	53%
Usefulness of information	73%	50%

- Around one out of ten were dissatisfied with the information found (10%) and slightly more with the ease of finding information (14%).

## 8. Conclusions

- Satisfaction with the service is high.
- Satisfaction with services provided by solicitors and clerical staff (both 87%) remained high (over 85%).
- The main causes for dissatisfaction appear to be:
  - Advice appointments being scheduled too late to meet the client's timeframe, such as a court deadline
  - Not receiving the services expected
  - Feeling the solicitor did not communicate appropriately
  - For a few, the actual quality of the work done was considered poor. A substantial proportion of these can be attributed to lack of time or poor communication with a few reporting what they considered to be mistakes about the facts of their case
- There were no substantial differences between those seen for different types of matters in:
  - The satisfaction ratings;
  - The reasons given for the satisfaction ratings;
  - Seeing the solicitor's services as better or as worse than expected.
- We have no data on those with Criminal Law matters only seen at court without having an appointment in a Legal Aid NSW office. Results for this group might be quite different from those reported here.
- It must be kept in mind here that we have only the client's perspective on these cases. Given a fuller picture including the perspective of the solicitor involved, it might be found that some clients had expectations that could not reasonably be met.
- Clients with special needs are generally having those needs met.
- While relatively few respondents had or planned to represent themselves in court and believed they had not received the assistance they needed or that they needed more assistance than they had been given (n=42, 7% of all respondents), these respondents were much less satisfied with service from the solicitor, and accounted for 28% (11/39) of the respondents expressing such dissatisfaction.
- Some respondents reported lack of clarity in how clerical staff outlined the services available from Legal Aid NSW and about the processes that they needed to undertake to obtain assistance from Legal Aid NSW. However, this resulted in very few being dissatisfied overall with the service from clerical staff.

## 9. Recommendations

1. Legal Aid NSW should sustain the resources currently devoted to maintaining the high level of staff commitment, concern for client needs and respectful treatment of clients revealed by the survey results.
2. Additional improvement in outcomes might be achieved by focussing further specific attention on:
  - a. Identifying critical deadlines and ensuring appointments are scheduled if possible before these dates.  
Rationale: Missing critical dates was a major contributor to client dissatisfaction
  - b. Assisting clients to understand any guidelines or policies that might limit the range of assistance that can be given to clients seeking legal aid, such as the allocation of time for advice sessions.  
Rationale: Disappointment that desired services could not be provided was a major contributor to dissatisfaction and might be reduced by even better communication to prospective clients of what Legal Aid NSW can and cannot provide. While changes have been made to a key publication on the website to make limitations clearer, it appears that some clients continue to not be aware of possible limits to the services provided and find out about these only during the advice sessions, leading to disappointment and dissatisfaction.
  - c. Ensuring adequate resources are allocated for sessions with heavy bookings for the number of solicitors available.  
Rationale: This might reduce the time spent waiting to see the solicitor at the office attended and reduce the time pressures that can result in clients feeling rushed that contributes to some instances of client dissatisfaction. Extension of the Head Office "backup solicitor" system for Civil Law cases might assist with this issue.
  - d. Continuing to meet the special requirements of those with physical, intellectual and psychiatric disabilities where these can be identified, with particular attention to establishing what assistance these clients need to obtain equitable service from Legal Aid NSW.  
Rationale: A few instances of dissatisfaction were due to particular needs of clients with a disability not being identified and met.
  - e. Having reception staff check with clients with physical disability if they are in discomfort and then being empowered to move clients in physical discomfort ahead in the queue and establish protocols to minimise adverse



reactions from other clients who then have to wait longer.  
Rationale: This was a correctable source of dissatisfaction for some clients with a physical disability.

- f. Remind reception staff and solicitors to continue being alert to the need for assistance in filling out forms for clients with an intellectual disability, or for seeing such clients with a support person who can assist the client to understand the advice being given.  
Rationale: This was a correctable source of dissatisfaction for some clients with an intellectual disability.
- g. Checking with any client who mentions personal safety concerns that the response given was helpful, and establishing and resourcing protocols for following through until the client reports that they have received appropriate help or do not require any further assistance.  
Rationale: Not all clients made staff aware of their concerns about physical safety, and some that did so reported the response received was not helpful. Further systematic effort to identify all clients with such concerns and ensure that the situation is followed through until a satisfactory outcome is achieved could correct a few instances of client dissatisfaction. By setting up and resourcing action protocols, staff can be assisted to know what they can and should do to deal with these challenging situations.
- h. More actively probing (where appropriate) for client concerns about personal safety; establish and resource clear protocols for dealing with such concerns, including follow up with clients of the outcomes and specification of further action to be taken if the client felt they had not been helped.
- i. Identifying cases where it appears that the client and the allocated solicitor are not communicating effectively and develop avenues to address these concerns to ensure enhanced client service; this might include protocols requiring solicitors to directly ask clients whether they believe their issue and concerns have been listened to, understood and responded to appropriately, or asking all clients to complete a short questionnaire at the end of an advice session that asks them to rate the session on these attributes; this would require that resources to review the replies and take follow up action if the responses indicate there was a problem.
- j. Checking eligibility for and need for a grant of legal aid with any client where representation appears to be required.

Rationale: Although most clients who did not ask about eligibility appeared to have had good grounds for not doing so, it would be appropriate if eligibility were checked during the advice interview for those cases where representation might be needed, even if the client does not raise the issue.

## 10. APPENDIX

### 10.1. Sampling Error

There is an expected level of 'sampling error' in any data collection process under which the entire population (or universe) is not being surveyed.

As long as the sample is selected in a suitably random probability manner, there are some (statistically unavoidable) standard levels of error which can be assumed given the sample sizes and the item endorsement rate. These are shown in the following table.

#### Confidence intervals (to nearest 0.1%) by sample size and "true" value

Base Sample Size (total sample or sub group) (assumes a representative sample)	Absolute confidence Interval Around Observed Percentage Result...at 95% confidence limit		
	Endorsement Rate of 90% + / %	Endorsement Rate of 75% + / %	Endorsement Rate of 50% + / %
100 interviews	5.9	8.5	9.8
150 interviews	4.8	6.9	8.0
200 interviews	4.2	6.0	6.9
300 interviews	3.4	4.9	5.7
400 interviews	2.9	4.2	4.9
500 interviews	2.6	3.8	4.4
600 interviews	2.4	3.5	4.0
800 interviews	2.1	3.0	3.5
1,000 interviews	1.9	2.7	3.1
1,600 interviews	1.5	2.1	2.5
2,000 interviews	1.3	1.9	2.2
2,300 interviews	1.2	1.8	2.0
2,600 interviews	1.2	1.7	1.9

With an assumed population endorsement rate of around 50%, if only 100 interviews were conducted with a particular sub-group, we could be 95 percent confident that the true opinion will fall within a maximum of up to  $\pm 10$  points of the achieved result.

For example, if 60 percent of respondents in a random sample of 100 give a particular answer the true percentage could be anything

between 50 and 70 percent at a confidence level of 95%. In addition to such a large confidence interval, this small sample size might not allow for reasonable representation from specific demographic groups or reliable statistical comparisons between different groups or areas.

With a sample size of 400 respondents, we could be 95 percent confident that the true percentage response given an item endorsement rate of 50% would be reduced to between 45.0 and 55.0 percent.

The only substantial gains in precision from having samples of over 1,000 is that this allows more precise assessment of segments within the population surveyed, particularly for some lower incidence segments.

## 10.2. Statistical power to detect differences

If two samples each of 400 are compared, there is considerable room for observed differences to be considered within the range that could be due to chance variations. With two samples each of 1,200 the power to detect differences in very much increased. As the size of samples being compared falls below 400, the power to detect differences of a given size is falls off quickly.

The power of samples to detect “true” differences between populations also varies with the assumed size of the difference between the populations. The larger the difference between two populations, the greater the power of random samples of a given size to detect that difference.

Lenth (2001) describes a calculator to estimate statistical power for comparing two proportions<sup>3</sup> which can be accessed at the link shown in the footnote.

Applying this, we find that the chance of detecting a difference between two random samples of 400 varies as shown in the following table with the “true proportion” in Population 1 ( $P_1$ ) and Population 2 ( $P_2$ ), and the consequent difference between the two populations ( $P_1 - P_2$ ).

With these sample sizes, there is a very limited chance of detecting a difference of around five percentage points, although this is somewhat higher when the true proportions go over 80%. There is a good to excellent chance (effectively 80% or more) of detecting a difference of 10 percentage points.

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<sup>3</sup> Lenth RV (2001) Some practical guidelines for effective sample size determination *The American Statistician* 55(3):187-193

Link to calculator: <http://www.cs.uiowa.edu/~rlenth/Power/>

**Power to detect specified difference\* at 95% level of confidence, n<sub>1</sub> = n<sub>2</sub> = 400**

P <sub>2</sub> **	True population proportion in Sample 1 (P <sub>1</sub> )								
	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%
55%	27.0%								
60%	79.3%	27.4%							
65%	98.9%	80.5%	28.4%						
70%	100.0%	99.1%	82.5%	30.0%					
75%		100.0%	99.4%	85.4%	32.4%				
80%			100.0%	99.7%	89.1%	36.3%			
85%				100.0%	99.9%	93.3%	42.4%		
90%					100.0%	99.9%	97.3%	52.9%	
95%						100.0%	100.0%	99.60%	72.3%

\* The "difference" = P<sub>1</sub> - P<sub>2</sub>

\* P<sub>2</sub> = "True" population proportion in Sample 2

The power to detect differences of a given size between two random samples of 100 is very much less as shown in the following table.

Unless the "true" proportions are quite extreme (above 80% or below 20%) there is typically less than one chance in ten that a true difference of 5 percentage points will be detected. To achieve a better than 80% chance of detection with two samples of 100, the true difference needs to be 20 to 30 percentage points.

**Power to detect specified difference\* at 95% level of confidence, n<sub>1</sub> = n<sub>2</sub> = 100**

P <sub>2</sub> **	True population proportion in Sample 1 (P <sub>1</sub> )								
	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%
55%	8.7%								
60%	24.5%	8.8%							
65%	51.7%	25.4%	9.0%						
70%	78.8%	53.4%	26.5%	9.2%					
75%	94.5%	81.0%	56.2%	28.3%	9.7%				
80%	99.3%	95.8%	84.0%	60.3%	31.1%	10.4%			
85%	100.0%	99.6%	94.2%	88.0%	66.2%	35.5%	11.5%		
90%		100.0%	99.9%	98.6%	92.6%	74.5%	42.9%	13.6%	
95%			100.0%	100.0%	99.6%	96.9%	85.6%	56.5%	18.8%

\* The "difference" = P<sub>1</sub> - P<sub>2</sub>

\* P<sub>2</sub> = "True" population proportion in Sample 2

This clearly limits the power of comparisons between sub-groups in this survey and justifies caution in concluding that observed differences are purely due to chance.

### 10.3. Piloting

Piloting involves additional briefing of interviewers to take careful note of hesitations, signs of respondent uncertainty, and any questions asked or comments made by respondents, as well as any questions that do not appear to flow or are difficult to read. Interviewers are debriefed and their notes collected at the end of each shift until the target number of pilots is completed.

Frequency distributions for each question ("hole counts") are also prepared and reviewed to identify any problems with the pattern of skips written into the questionnaire.

Replies to any verbatim questions or "Other (specify)" responses are listed out and reviewed. It is sometimes possible at this point to introduce some unprompted pre-codes or additional prompted codes to cover verbatim responses that have been collected. This can speed interviewing and reduce the costs of coding and back-entry of codes.

Occasionally problems emerge that require some respondents to be called back to ask a question that was incorrectly skipped or to clarify a response. This is managed as part of the normal interviewer validation process in which 10% of all respondents are called back, their eligibility for the survey verified, and a selection of the questions re-asked. This is a standard part of our quality control process.

Interviews are excluded and replaced if call-backs cannot resolve problems that are vital to drawing valid conclusions from the survey.

In our experience, the vast bulk of pilot interviews can be used as part of the final sample without any change being required.

#### 10.4. The questionnaire

The full text of the questionnaire follows.

Text in **bold type** was read out by the interviewer.

Text in BLOCK CAPITALS was an instruction to the interviewer or the programmer.

**LEGAL AID NSW 2013 CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY  
FINAL CATI QUESTIONNAIRE**

Q99PRE

**DO NOT MENTION LEGAL AID UNTIL YOU ARE SURE YOU ARE SPEAKING TO THE DESIGNATED RESPONDENT**

**Hello, my name is <NAME> and I am calling to speak to <RESPONDENT> who agreed recently to talk to someone from Taverner Research where I work. Could I speak to <RESPONDENT> now?**

IF NOT AVAILABLE MAKE AN APPOINTMENT. IF ASKED WHAT IT IS ABOUT EXPLAIN:

**We will be asking about a service <RESPONDENT> used recently. Talking with us is completely voluntary and anything we are told will be treated in complete confidence with all identification removed.**

WHEN SPEAKING TO THE RESPONDENT:

**Hello, my name is <NAME> and I am calling because I understand you recently received advice from Legal Aid and agreed to doing an interview about that experience. The interview should take 15 to 20 minutes.**

**Do you recall talking with a Legal Aid solicitor and agreeing to do an interview?**

IF YES: **Can we go ahead now?** CONTINUE IF POSSIBLE. IF NOT READY NOW MAKE AN APPOINTMENT.

REINTRODUCE IF NECESSARY

**Please answer all the questions as openly as you can. Anything that could identify you will be removed from the data once we have finished the interviews. Reports will give results for groups of people so no individual can be identified. While we would like you to answer all the questions, you can say if you would prefer to not answer any particular question. We can stop and call back at another time if you prefer.**

1. Recalls agreeing to do interview able to go ahead
2. Recalls agreeing to do interview wants another time – MAKE APPOINTMENT
3. Recalls seeing solicitor but does not want to be interviewed – THANK & TERMINATE
4. Does not recall seeing solicitor – THANK & TERMINATE



## **PART ONE: FINDING OUT ABOUT AND ACCESSING LEGAL AID NSW**

### **Q1. PRIOR CONTACTS**

**Just think back over the process of working out where you could get help for your legal problem.**

**Did you contact or look into any other organisation, people or sources for help before contacting Legal Aid?**

1. No, Legal Aid was the first place contacted GO TO Q5
2. Yes
3. Can't Say

### **Q2 NUMBER USED**

**How many different organisations, people or sources did you contact or look at before your Legal Aid interview?**

1. None GO TO Q5
2. One
3. 2-4
4. 5-6
5. More than 6
6. (Unsure – but more than one)

### **Q3 INFORMATION SOURCES**

**Which organisations, persons or sources of information did you contact for help before your Legal Aid interview?**

PROBE AS REQUIRED TO ASSIST CODING

MR

1. Used Legal Aid before
2. Another Legal Aid office
3. Family/Friend
4. Aboriginal legal service
5. Community Legal Centre
6. Community organisation
7. Court/tribunal
8. Dispute resolution/Mediation
9. Government department (inc Centrelink)
10. GP/Health professional
11. Internet
12. Law Society/Private practitioner
13. LawAccess NSW
14. Library
15. Police
16. Prison
17. Publications/Media
18. Telephone book
19. Union/Association
21. Women's Domestic Violence Advocacy Service
20. Other (please specify)

### **Q4. REFERRAL**

**Did any of these refer you to Legal Aid?**

IF YES:

**Did whoever referred you to Legal Aid explain about the services that Legal Aid could offer?**

1. Was referred and services explained
2. Was referred but services not explained
3. Was not referred
4. Can't Say

Q5. ANY ACCESS PROBLEMS

**Did you experience any problems in accessing Legal Aid's services?**

IF REQUIRED EXPLAIN:

**By accessing we mean things like finding how to make contact, getting in touch, organising an appointment and getting to the interview.**

1. Yes – had problems
2. No problems – GO TO Q7
3. Can't Say – GO TO Q7

Q6. NATURE OF ACCESS PROBLEMS

**What was the problem?**

READ OUT ONLY IF NEEDED TO CHECK YOUR CODING OF THE REPLY.

MR

1. Physical access
2. Geographic distance
3. Waiting time
4. Phone busy
5. Language assistance
6. Hours of operation not appropriate
7. Other (please specify)

Q6A. HELP NEEDED

**How could Legal Aid have helped you overcome that problem?**

RECORD VERBATIM

Q7. SAFETY CONCERNS PREAMBLE

**I would now like to ask you a couple of questions regarding your safety at home at the time you came to Legal Aid**

Q7A SAFETY CONCERNS

**At the time you came to Legal Aid to see a solicitor were you worried about your safety at home?**

1. Yes
2. No

Q7B RELATIONSHIP THREATS

**Did you feel frightened as a result of threatened or actual violence in any of your relationships?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Can't Say

IF 2 IN Q7A AND 2 OR 3 IN Q7B GO TO Q8

\* [Q7C ASKED IF YES IN EITHER Q7A OR Q7B]

Q7C SAFETY CONCERNS

**Did you let Legal Aid staff know about your concerns?**

1. Yes
2. No – GO TO Q8

Q7D HELP WITH SAFETY CONCERNS

**Did they help you with your safety concerns?**

(IF YES PROBE): **How did they help?**

(IF NO PROBE): **What was not helpful?**

1. Yes gave help (SPECIFY HOW)
2. No – did not help (SPECIFY WHY NOT)

RECORD VERBATIM

Q8. ATSI

**Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not stated

Q9. LOTE

**Do you speak a language other than English at home?**

1. Yes
2. No – GO TO Q11
3. Not stated – GO TO Q11

Q9A LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME

**Which other language do you speak at home?**

DO NOT READ OUT. CODE BELOW.

1. Chinese
2. Arabic
3. Italian
4. Greek
5. Vietnamese
6. Spanish
7. Tagalog
8. Hindi
9. Korean
10. Macedonian
11. Croatian
12. German
13. Serbian
14. Turkish
15. Indonesian
16. Persian
17. Assyrian
18. Tamil
19. Polish
20. French
21. Other (Please specify)

Q10. LANGUAGE PREFERENCE FOR INTERVIEWS

**When you generally contact Legal Aid would you prefer to speak**

READ OUT 1-2

1. In English – GO TO Q11
2. In your language through an interpreter
3. Other (Please specify)

Q10A. HANDLING OF REQUEST FOR INTERPRETER

**Did you ask Legal Aid NSW for an interpreter?**

IF YES: **Was your request handled well?**

1. Asked and handled competently – GO TO Q10D
2. Asked was not handled competently – GO TO Q10B
3. Did not ask – GO TO Q10C

Q10B. REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION WITH INTERPRETER SERVICE

**What were you dissatisfied about?**

RECORD VERBATIM

GO TO Q10D

Q10C. REASONS FOR NOT ASKING FOR AN INTERPRETER

**What were your reasons for not asking for an interpreter?**

CODE IF POSSIBLE. DO NOT READ OUT.

PROBE: Were there any other reasons?

MR

1. I feel confident using English – go to Q11
2. No need – go to Q11
3. I didn't know the service was available
4. Brought someone with me to interpret
5. Did not know I could
6. I did not feel comfortable asking
7. I don't feel comfortable using the interpreters
8. I thought I might have to pay for an interpreter
9. I don't trust the interpreters
10. I don't feel confident in the interpreter
11. An interpreter wasn't available in my language
12. I wanted to speak with a man/woman
13. Other (SPECIFY)
14. Can't explain

IF 4 IN Q10C GO TO Q11 AND FILL Q10D WITH CODE 1

IF NOT 4 IN Q10C GO TO Q11

Q10D. USE OF INTERPRETER

**Did you use anyone to interpret for you?**

IF YES AN INTERPRETER WAS USED: **Was that someone you brought with you, the Telephone Interpreter Service or someone from another interpreter service?**

IF NO-ONE USED TO INTERPRET CODE AS 4.

1. Brought someone to interpret
2. Telephone Interpreter Service
3. Another interpreter service – not by telephone
4. No interpreter used

Q11 HAS DISABILITY

**Do you consider yourself to be a person with special needs due to a disability?**

1. Yes
2. No – GO TO Q12
3. Not stated – GO TO Q12

Q11A. TYPE OF DISABILITY

**What disability do you have?**

DO NOT READ OUT.

1. Hearing
2. Visual
3. Physical
4. Intellectual
5. Psychiatric
6. Not stated
7. Other [PLEASE SPECIFY]

Q11B. NEEDS MET

**At the time you came to Legal Aid did you experience any difficulties as a result of your disability?**

1. Yes – RECORD VERBATIM
2. No – Go to Q12
3. Not applicable – nothing needed – GO TO Q12

Q11C. HOW NEEDS COULD BE MET

**How could Legal Aid have met your disability needs?**

RECORD VERBATIM

Q12. WHETHER LEGAL AID GRANT SOUGHT

**Do you intend applying for a grant of legal aid as a result of the advice you received from the Solicitor?**

**IF REQUIRED PROBE: Have you already applied?**

1. Yes –already applied
2. Yes – but not applied yet - GO TO Q13
3. No - GO TO Q12c

Q12A. NEEDED HELP WITH APPLICATION FORM

**Did you need help filling out an Application Form for a Grant of Legal Aid?**

**IF YES: Did you get it?**

1. Got the help needed
2. Needed help did not get it – GO TO Q13
3. Did not need help – GO TO Q13

Q12B. WHO PROVIDED HELP

**Who provided that help?**

RECORD VERBATIM

GO TO Q13

Q12C WHY LEGAL AID GRANT NOT SOUGHT

**What made you decide to not apply for a grant of legal aid?**

**DO NOT READ OUT**

1. The Legal Aid solicitor advised me an application would be unlikely to succeed
2. I thought I would have little chance of approval
3. Did not have time to apply and get approval before hearing
4. Preferred to represent myself
5. Able to arrange other representation I could afford
6. Able to get free representation elsewhere
7. Other reason (PLEASE SPECIFY)

## **PART TWO: FRONT DESK/ RECEPTION**

ASK Q13R FOR EACH STATEMENT IN Q13L

Q13R. SATISFACTION RATINGS

**I would now like you to think about your most recent contact with a Legal Aid office.**

**Firstly, I will read out some aspects of the service you received from the reception staff you spoke to before seeing a solicitor, that is, the staff who answered the telephone and helped you at the front desk.**

**For each aspect please rate your level of satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means Very Dissatisfied and 10 means Very Satisfied.**

**How about ...**

- 0. Very dissatisfied
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10. Very Satisfied
- 11. (Can't say)
- 12. (Not applicable)

Q13L. SATISFACTION ASPECTS

- 1. The respect and sensitivity clerical staff showed you**
- 2. The extent to which the clerical staff listened when you explained what you wanted**
- 3. The way clerical staff explained what you needed to do (e.g. forms to fill out, appointments, waiting process)**
- 4. How well clerical staff helped you to understand the type of services Legal Aid could provide**
- 5. The sensitivity and awareness staff showed to your culture and background**

IF 2 OR 3 IN Q11 GO TO Q14

Q13a CLERICAL HELP WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

How about the ability of the clerical staff to help you with any special needs due to your disability?

CODES AS FOR Q13R

Q14. OVERALL SATISFACTION

**Overall, how satisfied were you with the service that you received from the Legal Aid clerical staff at the front desk or on the telephone? Using a scale of zero to 10 where zero means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.**

0. Very dissatisfied

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6

7

8

9

10. Very Satisfied

11. Don't Know/Can't Say

IF 5 TO 11 IN Q14 GO TO Q15

Q14A. REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION

**What were you dissatisfied about?** (WAIT FOR REPLY. ONLY READ OUT CODES IF NECESSARY)

MR

1. I was not given good information

2. Staff were not helpful

3. Information provided was not correct or accurate

4. Staff did not answer my questions

5. Customer service was not good

6. Service was not efficient/quick

7. I was given no advice/guidance

98. Other SPECIFY

99. Can't say

**PART THREE: ADVICE and MINOR ASSISTANCE**

Q15. TIME FROM CONTACT TO INTERVIEW

**How long was it between your first contact with Legal Aid (to make an appointment) and when you were able to speak with a solicitor?**

READ CODES FROM 1 UNTIL ONE IS ENDORSED. DO NOT READ OUT CODE 7.

1. The same day

2. Less than 1 week

3. Between 1 and 2 weeks

4. Between 2 and 3 weeks

5. About a month

6. More than a month

7. (Can't say/ Don't remember)

Q16. TIMELINESS

**Did you get advice in the time frame that you needed it, such as before a court deadline?**

1. Yes

2. No

ASK Q17R FOR EACH STATEMENT IN Q17L

Q17R. SATISFACTION WITH SOLICITOR

**Still thinking about your last visit to Legal Aid, I would now like you to focus on the time you spent with the Legal Aid solicitor during this visit.**

**Can you tell me how satisfied you were with the following aspects of your discussion with the solicitor? For each aspect please rate your level of satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.**

COPY CODES 1-12 FROM Q13R

Q17L SOLICITOR PERFORMANCE

- 1. The respect and sensitivity the solicitor showed you**
- 2. The solicitor's ability to listen carefully when you explained your situation**
- 3. The solicitor's understanding of the problem and the information you were looking for**
- 4. The solicitor's ability to help you understand your legal situation**
- 5. The solicitor's ability to clearly explain what you needed to do next, if anything**
- 6. How helpful and easy to understand you found the solicitor's advice**
- 7. The solicitor's ability to help you understand the type of legal assistance Legal Aid could provide**
- 8. The solicitor's ability to help you if you had special needs due to a disability**
- 9. The level of sensitivity the solicitor showed to your culture and background**

IF 2 OR 3 IN Q11 GO TO Q18

Q17a SOLICITOR HELP WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

How about the ability of the solicitor to help you with any special needs due to your disability?

CODES AS FOR Q17R

Q18. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH SOLICITOR

**How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the overall service that you received from the solicitor at Legal Aid? Using a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.**

0. Very dissatisfied
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. Very satisfied
11. Don't know

IF 5-11 IN Q18 GO TO Q20



Q19. REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION WITH SOLICITOR

**What were you dissatisfied about?**

**ALLOW TIME FOR RESPONDENT TO REPLY. IF REQUIRED READ CODES 1-7**

MR

1. I was not shown respect/treated sensitively
2. The solicitor did not listen effectively
3. I was not assisted to understand my legal problem
4. Advice and information provided was not correct or accurate
5. Staff did not answer my questions
6. The solicitor did not help me with my special needs
7. The solicitor was not sensitive of my culture or background
8. Other (please specify)

Q20. HOW WELL EXPECTATIONS MET

**How well did the overall service that you received from the Legal Aid solicitor meet your expectations? I would like you to use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = much worse than I expected and 5 = much better than I expected.**

1. Much Worse than I expected
- 2.
3. About what I expected
- 4.
5. Much better than I expected
6. Can't Say

Q20A REASON FOR RATING

IF 1 OR 2 IN Q20: **How did it fall short of what you expected?**

IF 3 IN Q20: In what ways did it meet your expectations?

IF 4 OR 5 IN Q20: **In what way was it better than you expected?**

ASK Q21R FOR EACH ITEM IN Q21L

Q21R EFFECTS

**Did the advice and information you received from Legal Aid NSW improve, worsen or have no effect on ... DISPLAY ITEM FROM Q21L**

1. Improved
2. Worsened
3. No effect
4. (Can't say)

Q21L OUTCOMES

1. **Your understanding of your legal problem and situation**
2. **Your level of stress or anxiety**
3. **Your confidence in dealing with the problem**
4. **Your level of safety and security**
5. **Your ability to deal with your financial situation**
6. **Your relationship with your family**
7. **Your ability to carry on with your day to day activities and responsibilities**

Q22 SELF-REPRESENTED

**Did you represent yourself in a court or tribunal concerning your legal matter?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Has not been to court/tribunal yet
4. Matter will not go to court/tribunal

IF NOT 1 OR 3 IN Q22 GO TO Q25

Q23. ASSISTANCE PROVIDED.

**What assistance did you receive from Legal Aid to represent yourself?**

READ OUT 1-4

MR

1. Wrote a letter for you to send
2. Sent a letter on your behalf
3. Gave you something (like a letter) for you to use in a court or tribunal
4. Made a phone call on your behalf
6. Assistance needed, none given
7. No assistance needed
5. Other (please specify)

IF 6 OR 7 IN Q23 GO TO Q25.

Q24. ASSISTANCE WAS HELPFUL

**Was this helpful to your legal situation?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not yet/too soon to say

IF 1 OR 3 IN Q24 GO TO Q25

Q24A. HOW ASSISTANCE NOT HELPFUL

**In what way was it not helpful?**

RECORD VERBATIM

#### **PART FOUR: LEGAL AID NSW PUBLICATIONS**

Q25 COLLECTED PUBLICATIONS

**During your advice session or at reception**

READ OUT 1-2. CODE THOSE ENDORSED

MR

1. Did you receive or pick up any Legal Aid publications
2. Were you referred to any online materials or website?
3. (NONE OF THESE)

IF 3 IN Q25 GO TO Q27

ASK Q26R FOR EACH STATEMENT IN Q26L

Q26R

Thinking about the information you received, could you please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Please use a scale of zero to 10, where zero means you strongly disagree and 10 means you strongly agree.

0. Strongly disagree
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. Strongly agree
11. Don't know
12. Not applicable

Q26L STATEMENTS

1. It improved my understanding of the law or my legal situation
2. It was easy to understand
3. It helped me understand what to do next
4. It helped me to feel more in control of my situation?

**PART FIVE: REFERRALS FROM LEGAL AID NSW (Preamble)**

Q27 WHETHER REFERRED

**Did Legal Aid NSW refer you to another organisation or person for further information or assistance with your problem?**

1. Yes
2. No

IF 2 IN Q27 GO TO Q28

Q27a WHERE REFERRED

**What organisation(s) did Legal Aid refer you to?**

ONLY READ OUT SELECTED CODES IF REQUIRED TO ALLOW ACCURATE CODING.  
MR

1. Another Legal Aid office
2. Aboriginal Legal Service
3. Community legal centre
4. Community organisation
5. Any Court or Tribunal
6. Dispute resolution/Mediation
7. Government department (including Centrelink)
8. GP/Health professional
9. Law Society/Private practitioner
10. Library
11. Police
12. Pro bono solicitor
23. LawAccess NSW
24. Family Relationships Centre
13. (Other – specify)

99. DK

Q27B CONTACT MADE

**Did someone from Legal Aid then contact them to explain your situation and/or ask for assistance on your behalf?**

1. Yes
2. No

IF 1 IN Q27B GO TO Q28

Q27C WHETHER MADE CONTACT FROM REFERRAL

**You said someone from Legal Aid DID NOT contact the organisation for you to explain your situation and/or ask for assistance on your behalf.**

**Have you contacted that organisation or person?**

DO NOT READ OUT

1. Yes
2. Not yet but intend to
3. No and do not intend to
4. Not sure – might make contact

## PART SIX: OTHER

### Q28 INTERNET ACCESS

**Do you have access to the Internet ...**

READ OUT 1-4.

MR

1. At home
2. At work
3. As a student
4. In some other way
5. No access

IF 5 IN Q28 GO TO Q30

### Q28A USE OF INTERNET BEFORE LEGAL AID

**Before contacting Legal Aid or attending an advice session at Legal Aid, did you use the Legal Aid website to try and find information about your legal problem?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not stated/unsure

IF 2 OR 3 IN Q28A GO TO Q30

ASK Q29R FOR EACH STATEMENT IN Q29L

### Q29R

**Can you tell me how satisfied you were with the following features of the Legal Aid website? Please use a scale of zero to 10, where zero means you very dissatisfied and 10 means you are very satisfied.**

COPY CODE FRAME FROM Q13R

### Q29L WEBSITE STATEMENTS

1. The ease of finding information
2. Usefulness of the information

### Q30 RECOMMENDATION

**To finish up, would you recommend Legal Aid NSW to another person needing legal advice?**

1. Yes
2. No

IF 1 IN Q30 GO TO Q99FIN

### Q30A REASON FOR NOT RECOMMENDING

**Why not?**

## CLOSING INTERVIEW

### Q99FIN

**That is the end of the survey. The survey was conducted for Legal Aid New South Wales and they greatly appreciate you taking time to complete the survey.**

**Your answers will help them improve management of Legal Aid services in New South Wales. In case my supervisor needs to check something about your answers, could I have your first name and the best phone number to call you on?**

**If you wish to check that my company is listed with the Market Research Society, you can call the Market Research Society Survey Line on \_ 1300 36 4830 \_. My company's name is \_ Taverner Research \_.**

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