

**Q3 Hunter CLSD Meeting Minutes**  
**17 August 11am – 1pm, Samaritans, Cessnock**

**Attendees:** Kate Packer (Bungree Aboriginal Association), Matt Johnston (Hunter Food Relief), Stephanie Hawes, Seema Sanghi, Lily Cooper and Sarah Pritchard (Legal Aid NSW), Melissa Power (JobLink Plus), Courtney Allen (Maiwell), Nichola Stodart (University of Newcastle Older Persons Legal Clinic), Denise Crossley (Samaritans Cessnock), Kate Loughnan (Hunter Community Legal Centre), Kate Warner and Will Doran (Kurri Kurri Community Service), Nicole Grgas (Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service), Rose-marie Walters (Cessnock Library), Nissa Phillips (CLSD Hunter)

**Apologies:** Yolanda D’Aquino, Kayla Sanderson, Frances Silva, Chrissy Francis, Bud Crawford, Anita Barker

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action
Welcome to Wonnarua country	Kate Packer from Bungree Aboriginal Association welcomed everyone to country and acknowledged the long connection of her people to the lands the meeting was being held on.	
Purpose of meeting	<p><b>A. CLSD Program Objective:</b> to work collaboratively to identify and address unmet legal and related non-legal needs of people in the Hunter region.</p> <p>We do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- making better referrals/ referral pathways</li> <li>- working on projects and devising new services, and</li> <li>- coordinating our efforts.</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Meeting objective:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For partners to practice identifying legal issues, amongst a range of issues, both legal and non-legal, and ensure services know about new services’ eligibility and referral processes.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CLSD partnership action development based on community’s needs and local data, particularly around fine debt and homelessness in the region.</li> <li>● To introduce our new Hunter CLSD coordinator, Nissa Phillips.</li> </ul>	
Introduction	<p>Introducing new Hunter CLSD coordinator Nissa Phillips.</p> <p>Nissa has a long history in the community services sector in Newcastle and most recently involved with Hunter Homeless Connect.</p> <p>Introductions and relational exercise (<i>name, service and why do you come to CLSD, what potential value do you see in CLSD partnerships?</i>)</p> <p>Value in CLSD/attending meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration and building partnerships/ bridges</li> <li>● Help each other</li> <li>● Promote services</li> <li>● Soak up all the info</li> <li>● Early intervention possibilities</li> <li>● Clients have complex needs, we ‘can’t support them fully ourselves’</li> <li>● Share resources</li> <li>● Remind people of what we do</li> </ul>	
Legal Issue identification exercise	<p><b>Legal Issue Spotting:</b> Use of case studies and the Legal Aid tool <a href="#">here</a>. There are various tools, specifically designed for young people; people in prison; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and also for people facing a natural disaster.</p> <p>For this meeting, two case studies were utilised from the fines presentation from the Legal Aid NSW WDO team. Participants were asked to discuss each case using the following questions as prompts:</p> <p>What are the legal issues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What other issues are the people facing?</li> <li>● Who can you refer to for support?</li> <li>● Are there gaps you’re unable to support these people with?</li> </ul> <p>If people identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, would this change your plan of support for them?</p>	

## Case Study 1 - Linda

Linda is a caring grandmother living in Cessnock.

Linda has left an abusive partner after years of domestic violence

Linda has a significant number of outstanding fines, most of which are for driving offences

Linda knows that many of the fines should be in her ex-partner's name because even though the car is registered in her name, he was the driver most of the time

When some of the offences occurred in Kurri Kurri, she can prove she was not responsible as she was caring for her grandchildren in Cessnock at the time

For many of the other offences, she has no evidence to support that she was not the driver, but she is sure she wasn't.

Linda is apprehensive about nominating her ex-partner for any of the fines due to fear of repercussions but she is worried about her demerit points

Unless a management plan is put in place for Linda's finer licence will be restricted, and it will be very difficult for her to visit her family

What can we do to help Linda?



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Legal Aid  
NEW SOUTH WALES

### Linda:

- o Need to prioritise her safety – how long since she left a violent partner? Does she have an AVO in place? Are kids safe? If ex receives a letter from Revenue NSW, will she be safe?
- o Speak to Carrie's place for safety plan and potential of housing transfer, **Contact:** Roxanne Rigg, Case Manager, **E:** [roxanner@carriesplace.org.au](mailto:roxanner@carriesplace.org.au)
- o Contact the **Aboriginal Legal Service** to support Linda with the fines: [Aboriginal Legal Service \(NSW/ACT\) Ltd \(ALS\)](#)

The ALS prioritises cultural safety. Aboriginal community field officers work alongside lawyers to offer the best and most culturally appropriate legal advice and court representation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is currently developing a new civil law practice.

#### ● Fines Clinic

The clinic accepts referrals for clients with all types of fines and operates state-wide.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and young people with fines in NSW are eligible to be referred. The primary focus continues to be assisting and representing clients impacted by unfair COVID public health order fines, but also assist clients with general fines issues in a number of ways, including:

- o requesting the lifting of overdue fine licence sanctions and pausing enforcement of overdue fines while clients receive assistance

- providing legal advice and assistance with challenging fines, managing and reducing payment plan amounts, and referrals for WDOs
  - for clients in severe financial or other hardship, the ALS may be able to apply for write-off of up to \$5,000 of overdue fine debts if eligibility criteria are met
  - the Clinic is staffed by criminal lawyers who can provide criminal law advice about challenging fines at court
- Refer Linda to a legal service (Legal Aid NSW, the ALS NSW/ACT and the Hunter CLC) to look at the fines, to ensure her grandchildren are safe and that she can maintain her license for them

**CONTACT:**

>>**ALS NSW/ACT:** Call 1800765767 or email: fines@alsnswact.org.au.

>>**Legal Aid NSW WDO team:** wdo@legalaid.nsw.gov.au or Law Access provides legal information to anyone with a legal problem in NSW: 1300 888 529.

Or contact the Legal Aid NSW Newcastle office: 4929 5482, email: newcastle@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

>>**Hunter CLC:** For legal advice and information phone (02) 4040 9120 (or Toll free: 1800 650 073) at the following times: Monday 10.00am – 12.00pm; Wednesday 2.00pm – 4.00pm; Friday 10.00am – 12.00pm

- The above legal services could also assist Linda with also pausing her fines while she gathers the evidence to prove she wasn't driving and as a stress relief or ask for a write off based on her circumstances.
- **Revenue NSW Advocates** from organisations, groups or government agencies can act on behalf of customers to help them resolve their debts. Learn how to apply to become an advocate [here](#). It might be helpful to become an advocate if you're working with people with fines and they are not sure about when and where they received them, how much they owe etc.
- Potential of Linda doing a Work and Development Order (WDO) to work off the fines? It was discussed that being a carer and the limited number of appropriate sponsors in the region, given her circumstances, a WDO might not be practical. Maybe psychology appointments at JobLink Plus could be a WDO activity, **contact JobLink Plus:** (02) 4993 6100

- o **Non legal issues:** is Linda supported by her community, linked in with local Aboriginal services? food/supplies for children, **contact Samaritans** for emergency relief if needed: 02 4993 3405; do the grandkids need counselling (have they witnessed DV?); does Linda need financial counselling – contact Financial Counsellor Hunter Valley project: (02) 4933 8999
- o Discussion about the Legal Aid NSW publication '[Charmed and Dangerous](#)'. "A Woman's Guide to Reclaiming a Healthy Relationship", and it being made available in the library and for services to share.



## Case Study 2 - Dan

Dan is 17 years old and lives in Kurri Kurri.

Dan is unemployed, not currently studying and receives Job Seeker payments

Dan has multiple fines which he is unable to pay

Most of his fines are for either travelling on trains without a valid ticket or riding his bicycle without a helmet

Dan also has two Public Health Order (PHO) fines for failing to wear a mask when he was in a store in Newcastle and for visiting his girlfriend's house during lockdown

Dan would like to apply for his driver's licence but knows that his outstanding fines will be an issue

What can we do to help Dan?



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DAN:

- o Can he work off his fines by participating in a Work and Development Order (WDO)? Are there relevant sponsors in the region for him?
- o If Dan is Aboriginal, refer to the ALS (see above 'ALS fines clinic')
- o Dan has options, it's important he speaks to a lawyer about those options - contact a legal service to consider arguing for a write off due to hardship (see contact details above)
- o **Non-legal issues:** Can he do driving training once fines are cleared – JobLink Plus have a program in Cessnock – contact: <https://1800drive4life.com.au/>

Action Plan  
Stocktake /  
Current issues  
in Cessnock

**Hunter CLSD [Action Plan 2022- 2024](#) and [Regional Profile](#)**

- **Fines and fine debt** are relatively high in Cessnock (see snapshot below)
  - The WDO sponsor list shared at meeting needs to be updated. Revenue NSW website lists sponsors [here](#). In the room, Joblink Plus and Youth Services at Kurri Kurri Community Services said they do WDOs.
  - Bungree’s Kate asked if young people know about the WDO scheme, could there be some info sessions at the high school, for example? Could Bungree become a sponsor? Mentoring as an activity is underutilised and it can reduce someone’s fines by \$1000 per month. Is this an activity that Bungree could consider?
  - Nissa met with Revenue NSW’s Hunter and Central Coast Outreach worker and he is keen to attend CLSD events in the region
  - Community Legal Education team at Legal Aid NSW shared the [‘Law for community workers’ podcast link](#) – for more information about certain topics discussed at the meeting, including WDOs and unpaid fines and sexting. Suggestion to do CLE at playgroups in the area.
  
- **Homelessness** in the Cessnock region
  - Matt (left early) had said ‘Hunter Food Relief Centre’ were giving out about 300 meals a week at the Uniting Church (see flyers) and Denise from Samaritans confirmed the increase in the number of people coming for emergency relief on Monday and Tuesdays and Rotary are also offering diners in Kurri Kurri monthly.
  - Samaritans are seeing families with no-grounds evictions; TAAS talked about dramatic increases in rent and that there are no refuges in the area, nor shower facilities (council have started to lock the public toilets at night)
  - Discussion about whether people attending these food relief events have legal issues? Identification issues? Unpaid fine debt? Would it be useful to hold an event at the same time as the meals are being given out with legal assistance available? Need to ensure people understand what is available in advance, and to bring their ID if they want to apply for a birth certificate or have their fines looked at. Need a quiet space as well for a lawyer to speak to people privately. Matt said there is a room at the church hall and possibly could use the library as well

Nissa to send out an updated WDO sponsor list

Nissa to connect Bungree with Legal Aid NSW’s WDO team for support in becoming a sponsor.

CLSD to gauge interest in hosting an online community legal education session for services in Cessnock, also F2F at playgroups with young parents and single parents

Nissa to share food/meal flyer with CLSD partnership

Matt and Nissa to plan a CLSD event at mealtime

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Birth certificates</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hunter CLSD has approx. 75 birth certificates allocated for the next financial year under the extended MoU with NSW Birth Deaths and Marriages. Possibility to use some in the Cessnock region at food relief events, and to also support services to apply for their clients online via the fee-waiver template. More <a href="#">info is here</a>, including a template letter.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Upcoming events and other news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The CLSD are planning an online information session about the legal implications of the Voice, stay tuned.</li> <li>○ CLSD is developing an updated free legal services guide - we need your help with this, so look out for an email asking for contact details</li> <li>○ Nichola shared that the UoN's older person's clinic are having a Wills Day (see attached flyer): <b>4 September</b> 2023. Please note: there is no age requirement to access free legal advice/assistance on the day, and clients do not need to be on a pension to access our free document drafting service on this day.</li> <li>○ Legal Aid NSW shared they are looking at doing F2F in the area again. They will potentially set up an EOI process where services will explain the need they are seeing in the community and if they can offer a secure room for legal advice sessions, insurance, register people and also do follow-up if needed. More info to come re: EOI process. Bungree offered a room at their premises. Will said their highest need is about victim's compensation and unpaid fines; Rose-marie suggested the library as a place to advertise the clinics and also do bookings via Eventbrite</li> </ul>	<p>Nissa to send update when date is confirmed</p> <p>Nissa to share a draft of the guide with the CLSD partnership</p>
Next CLSD Hunter meeting	The next Hunter CLSD meeting will be held on November 23rd, 2023. Lake Macquarie suggested as location, TBC	



All ages

**\$6,600,805**  
Total value of overdue fines

2,302  
Number of customers

9,288  
Number of overdue fines

Average age of overdue fines

< 12 months \$813,768

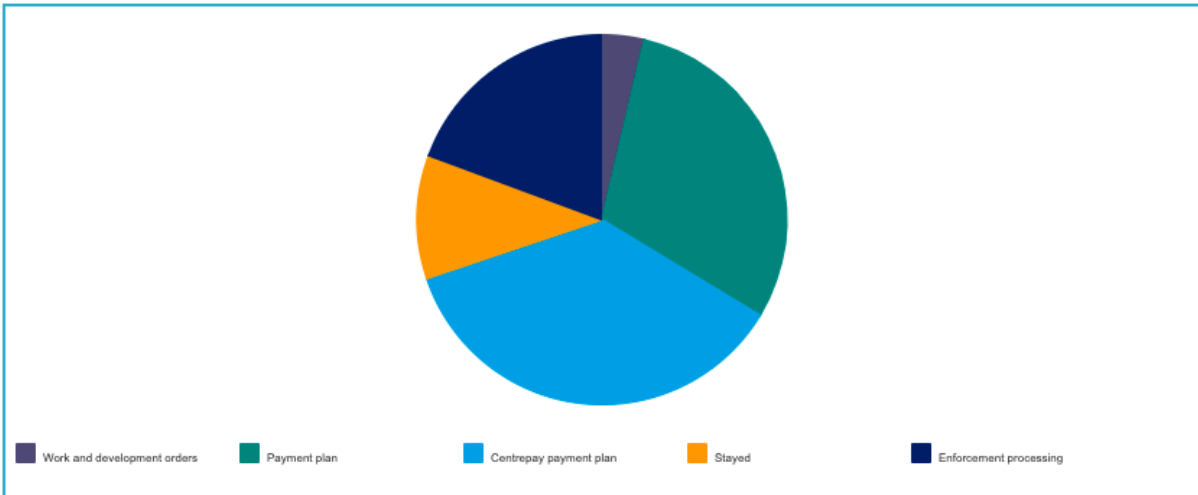
1-2 Years \$978,557

> 2 Years \$4,808,480

Transport for NSW sanctions applied

Licence suspensions	194
Vehicle registration cancellations	37
Customer business restrictions	342
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>573</b>

Status of overdue fines



Types of overdue fines

Number of fines 6,645

Number of court fines 2,643

Value of fines \$2,821,880

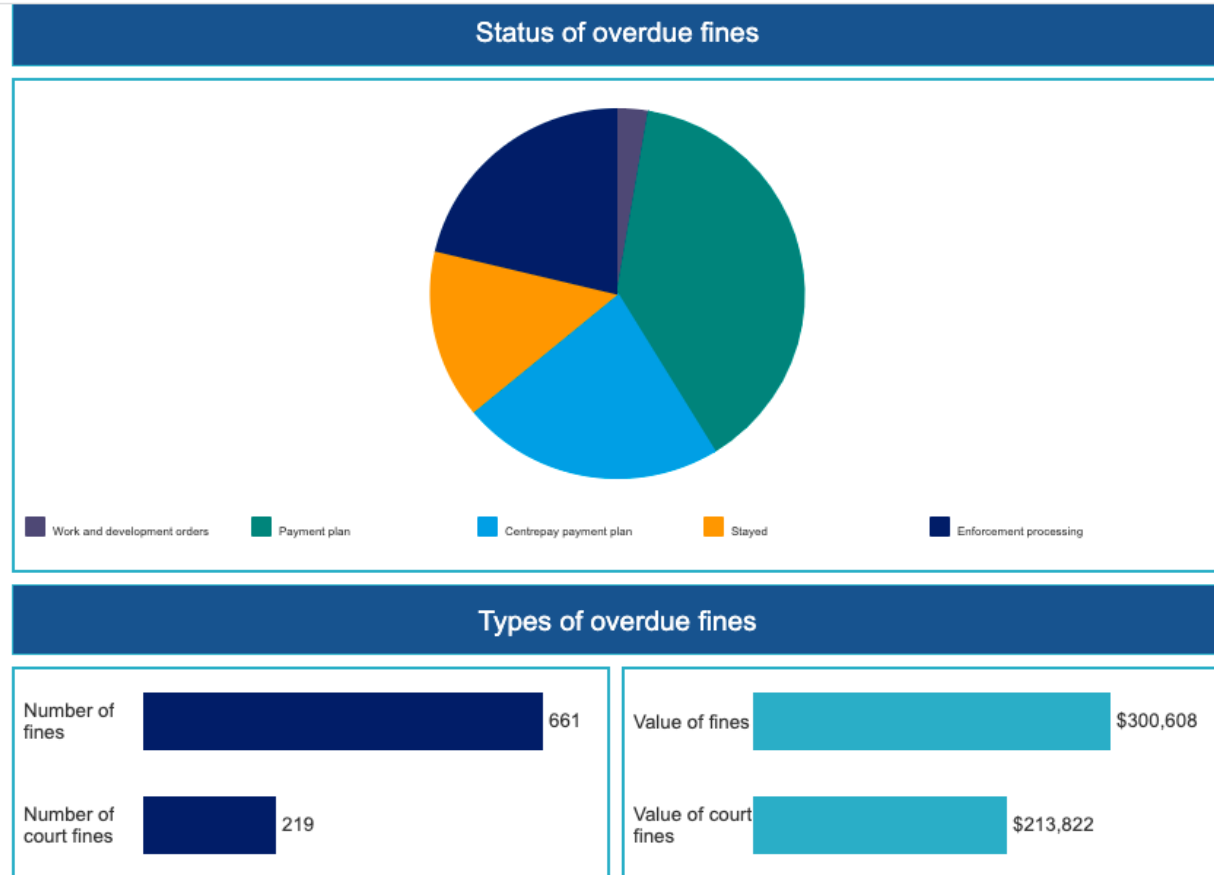
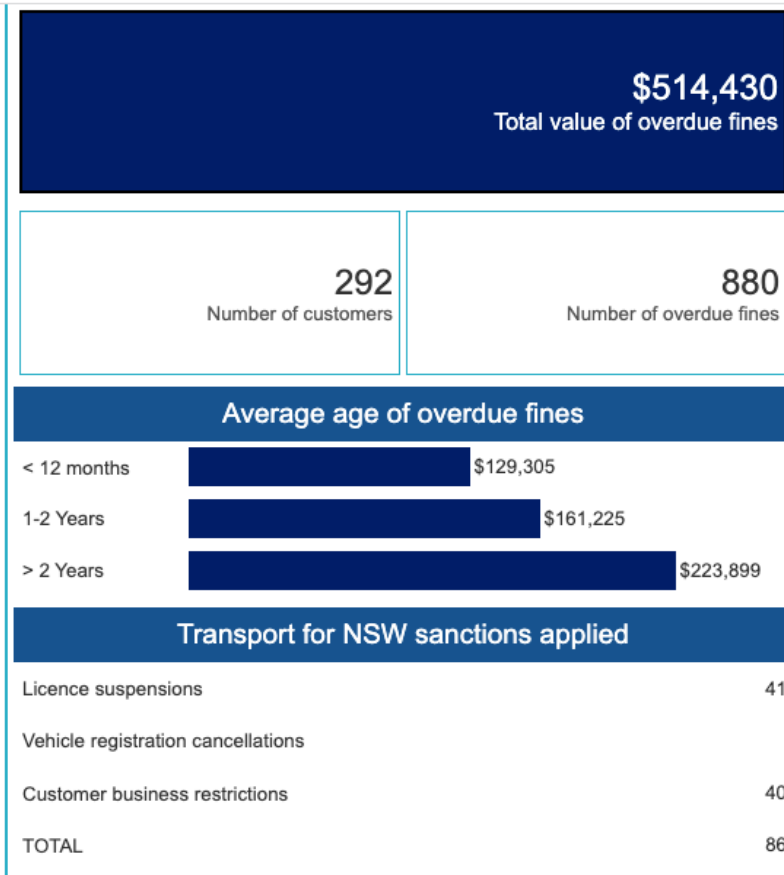
Value of court fines \$3,778,925

Sanctions can be issued multiple times or customers may have more than one sanction issued.

Data as at: 7 August 2023



## Overdue fines of people ages 18-24



*Sanctions can be issued multiple times or customers may have more than one sanction issued.*

Data as at: 7 August 2023