



CLSD Riverina Meeting – Qtr 1

Thursday 7th March 2024

11am – 1.00 pm (online)

MINUTES

1. Opening – 11am

- Acknowledgement of country

2. Purpose of today's meeting

- **CLSD partnership purpose:** to work collaboratively to identify and address unmet legal and related non-legal needs of people in the Riverina region. We do this by:
 - making better referrals/ referral pathways
 - working on projects and devising new services, and
 - coordinating our efforts.
- **Today's meeting purpose**
 - Build on our legal referral knowledge.
 - The next Riverina Roadshow location.
 - CLSD Legal Referral Guide from action items.

3. 11.05 am – 11.25 am

- **Introductions.**

Present: Melissa Van Lierop (Intereach), Jacqui Comb (Minute Taker - Intereach), Jennifer Farrow (Intereach), Ellie Haas (NSW Legal Aid Solicitor, Wagga), Tim Ngui (NSW Legal Aid Solicitor, Wagga), Seema Sanghi (Legal Aid NSW, Program Coordinator for CLSD), Sue Killham (Narrandera Shire Council), Kathie Makeham (Services Australia), Kim Busuttil (WDO, Legal Aid), Janaya Carney (Aboriginal Customer Advisory Officer, Revenue NSW), Jessica Roberts (Wagga Women's Health Centre), Jasmine Woodland (Anglicare), Hannah Cartwright (Marathon Health), Charles Debaecker (Pathways Murrumbidgee), Michael McKibbin (Marathon Health), Jacinta Ryan (VERTO Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service), Tanya Jones (Disability Advocacy, ADACAS), Jacqueline Jennings (Services Australia), Stephanie Howard (Youth Officer, ALS Wagga), Jessica Brennan-Clark (Field Officer, ALS Wagga), Colette Quin (Greater Albury CLSD Coordinator and Community Engagement Worker & Coordinator Hume Riverina Community Legal Service), Nicholas Wright (TAFE NSW, Leeton), Scott Boyle (Financial Counsellor for Anglicare), Geraldine Higgins (Intereach), Yvonne De Borde (McCarther Legal Centre), Kahran Ingram (Aboriginal Legal Service Mental Health Officer), Tracy Wood, Natalie Chwah (Legal Aid NSW), Laurence Crawford, Sarah Lehman, Annette Weeks, Sarah, Margie (Anglicare), Belinda Moore, Keryn Foley.

Apologies: Kate Halliday (NSW legal Aid)

- **Review of Leeton Legal Help Roadshow Nov 2023.**

Mel -

Leeton TAFE hosted the event which was dedicated to providing support for individuals facing a range of legal challenges.

FIRSTLY, a BIG Thank you to **Nick Wright** for offering his fabulous TAFE Campus facilities to us for use over the two days.... not only for us to create a base to deliver the services being offered, but in particular for the assistance he provided to his community, whom he is passionate about and extremely dedicated to.

The event provided assistance to those seeking a free NSW birth certificate; legal advice for those dealing with unpaid fines, family law issues, money troubles and housing, and also those interested in creating a Will.

Legal Aid & Intereach's involvement - **Kate Halliday, Seema** and **herself** along with Intereach staff **Geraldine Higgins** and **Simone Murphy** supported community members with Birth Certificates and Birth Registration applications. Can I Please just make a special mention to Gerry and Simone from my Intereach Team who both took time away from their regular work commitments to support myself and the community's in which they both live and work with.

Yvonne De Borde - who works for Macarthur Legal Services – was the coordinator of 3 Solicitors from her organisation who flew into Griffith and spent two days traveling to Leeton and assisting clients with Will preparation and certification.

Danielle Plumb - who works for Legal Aid as a Paralegal in the Work Development Order Civil Law Division, supported clients with assistance and information around WDO's & fines.

Jayana Carney - who works for NSW Revenue as an Aboriginal Advisory Officer supported and provided information to clients around outstanding fines and pathways forward.

In summary, it was a huge success and really well received by the community. The Leeton event took a total of **34 applications for certificates** (a few of those were post-event) and **6 applications for registrations. 20 Wills** were created and certified by Macarthur Legal Centre solicitors and multiple WDO enquiries and help were provided along with and fine enquiries and solutions were provided on the day.

We've received very positive feedback, with many requests for further Legal help events to be held again, both there and other lots of different locations. OVERALLL it was a fabulous and very successful EVENT for the LEETON community.

Tim – Had a query from a partner agency about accessing a birth certificate for a client – how can someone get a birth certificate between events?

Seema – Created a template that people can use between CLSD events – it's online and a guide for NSW and QLD. The best thing to do with the client would be to put your letterhead and information about the client and reasons as to why they shouldn't pay i.e. facing homelessness, coming out of DV, have no ID to apply. That is available on the CLSD website.

Seema - This links you to the factsheet with info to apply for a fee waiver birth certificate <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-partners/cooperative-legal-service-delivery-program/clsd-birth-certificate-partnership>

Gerry – She has got a man that’s nearly 60 without a birth certificate, he has spent majority of his life in and out of the prison system and he wasn’t registered as a child, he has ID.

Seema – people can self-register (can talk further offline).

Ellie – She thought the event was a clever model and would like to replicate it with other locations, she thought it ran really smoothly. If someone had multiple issues, there were other organisations there to assist them as well. It was a positive and welcoming environment and felt very impactful.

Jasmine – They are more than happy to host something at the Ashmont Community Hub.

4. 11.25 am - 12.30 pm

- **Case Study – Legal referral knowledge - Homelessness, Family law, Civil**
Ellie Haas & Tim Ngui – NSW Legal Aid Solicitors

Breakout rooms – each group to provide some notes of their discussion.

Room 1 -- Tim Ngui - Solicitor Legal Aid NSW

17yr old, Janelle

Janelle is a 17-year-old Aboriginal woman who was removed from her family due to concerns around substance abuse, transience, and neglect. Janelle and her siblings were placed with their grandparents, but experienced breakdown of this placement. This resulted in Janelle spending time in foster care, crisis accommodation and residential out-of-home-care.

Most of Janelle’s placements have broken down because her carers were unable to provide the therapeutic care that her complex needs required. Janelle has often had to couch-surf with friends or sleep on the streets, where she was exposed to further violence and alcohol and drug use. Janelle has also spent time in juvenile detention.

Janelle struggles with drug and alcohol issues, as well as mental health issues which has included incidents of self-harm. Her homelessness has impacted on her education, employment, maintaining professional appointments to address her drug use and mental health, and her experiences have engendered a mistrust of welfare agencies. Janelle has a significant amount of fines debt owing due to sleeping on trains without tapping on and not having a concession card.

- What are X non-legal issues?
- Where would you refer X for help?
- If X was an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander person, how would, if at all, your referrals for them change.

Legal issues

- Large amounts of fines
- Out of home care – after care

- Legal Aid Specialist for Youth

Non legal issues

- Homelessness
- Debts
- Substance abuse
- Mental Health

Where to refer

- Legal aid specialist for Youth
- Specialist homeless services to assist with managing supports and referrals.
- Centrelink Indigenous Services Worker –
- TAFE enrolment – Shower and other facilities
- GP – Mental Health and Drug use for further possible referral Mental health plan

Would you change due to First Nations

- Aboriginal Legal Services
- ALS Mental health support?
- Indigenous services worker Centrelink
- Look for connection to community
- One person to assist through the journey

Mel – Regarding the identified Centrelink Aboriginal specific pathways for people having issues, they would be key things to add to the Legal Services Guide as we need to expand on these types of key contacts.

Room 2 – Ellie Haas - Solicitor Legal Aid NSW

Justine

Justine and her 11-month-old baby have come to you for help. Justine is 26 years-old, had a mild intellectual disability and is sleeping rough. She was living with her boyfriend in a private rental property but is too scared to go back because he hits her and yells at her when he gets drunk. She stopped paying rent and has received arrears notices from the real estate agent.

Justine has tried applying for social housing but was told over the phone that she isn't eligible because her last tenancy was ended by the Tribunal. Revenue NSW has suspended Justine's driver's licence because she owes \$647.20 in fines. Justine receives the JobSeeker Payment from Centrelink. She also has a mobile phone debt and has been contacted by a debt collector.

- Identifying the legal and non-legal issues – the knowledge was strong on the possible referrals for housing, Centrelink, DV, fines.
- ALS is an important legal service to include when speaking with clients who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, but their Civil Law Services are growing so there not yet able to assist with every type of Civil law service so it's important to check first.

- There are lots of different referrals that could help these individuals
- It would be a lot for the individual to take in all of the information, especially if there are language barriers

Seema – did any find any gaping issues or services to think out that would help?

Nick - Is there a case worker supporting them?

Gerry - askizzy.org.au - Search for services nearby, ie. housing, money help, support for DV, when you put in your post code it comes up with all the services in your area.

TIM to present and talk to the whole meeting on a legal topic of choice.

He is a Specialist Homelessness Lawyer at Legal Aid Wagga, and he is going to discuss how to refer clients to their service and what they offer.

He is a Specialist Homelessness Lawyer at Legal Aid Wagga.

- The main purpose of his role is to provide legal advice to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- He can provide one-off advice, if a client needs a letter sent, or an appeal lodged, and can provide ongoing legal assistance with representing clients at the tribunal.
- Has been representing client's with defending tenancy, or if they need repairs, or compensation for breaches of tenancy agreement
- At the Wagga office they have 2 civil lawyers (him and Ellie) and 1 in Albury covering the Riverina area.
- They also have:
 - Criminal lawyers – Assist people with charged with criminal offences and generally need to be facing a jail term.
 - and, Families lawyers – support clients with relationship breakdown with children involved.

Top 7 civil issues at Wagga office:

1st issue - Fines/ WDOs - preferred way to deal with fines is WDOs (where client can work off fines debt up to \$1000/month in an approved activity (ie drug and alcohol treatment, mental health treatment, life skills courses, budgeting, cooking etc). They can apply for fines to be written off for up to \$5,000 if eligible with Revenue NSW. If they aren't eligible, they will be referred to WDOs services sponsor organisations.

2nd issue – Housing - They can help if someone has been knocked back, help the lodge an appeal, or if repairs are needed and the landlord has breached their obligation to keep the premises in a reasonable state of repair, hep with liaising with housing.

3rd issue - Victim's Compensation – if client has been injured in some way, they may have been assaulted or domestic violence. For general assault they could get the client payment of it's \$1,500, if assault involved grievous bodily harm it's \$5,000, and if client is suffering from DV they can put in a

immediate needs support package and get up to \$5,000 immediately to help with finding a safe place to rent, paying bond, rent, putting up camera on the property.

4th issue – Employment problems – where the client has been sacked by their boss, unfair dismissal application – there only 21 days so they are urgent, they need to get the application into Fair Work Commission in 21 days, so the earlier they get the application the better. They can also give General Protections Advice.

5th issue - Police Complaints – if police have acted beyond their powers. If there has been a breach of the Act the client may have a valid claim against the police.

6th issue - Mental Health matters – guardianship orders

7th issues - Consumer Law – this is often with cars where the client has bought a car from dealer and there is a mechanical fault within the 3 months and dealer refuses to give refund, they can help may civil claims.

How to refer clients to their service?

Law Check-up Tool Client Referral Form - [Law Check Up Client Referral form.pdf](#)

Annette – Will there be another Birth Certificate Day? Rental Bonds to get housing are also requiring a birth certificate which is difficult for people.

Tim – There is a periodic birth certificate clinic held in the area, the issue is on their agenda at the next meeting. There may be scope for Legal Aid to host another one but can't commit yet. There is also the link for the template for clients to apply for between the events.

Kathie – Once they confirm their ID with Centrelink it stays there, a customer might have provided their birth certificate and lost it.

Seema – If people are seeing a trend in the community with people not able to access community services due to lack of ID, please let them know.

Scott – Their biggest issue with ID for the Indigenous community is with Superannuation, accessing super from family who have passed.

Gerry – 90 Days No Reason to vacate the premises issues with real estates, it's particular single mums.

Jacinta – Lots of push in political space about tenant advocates and unions trying to abolish the no grounds notices. Unfortunately, there is little they can do with the law being as it is but would still always encourage clients to refer to tenancy advice services to get nieces check, if it's not valid it can't be enforced. They can also still assist with the tribunal process and remind clients to not move out on a termination notice it does not end the tenancy just receiving that notice and seek advice from Tenant Advice Service.

Gerry – NILS loans for DV clients can be used for bond.

5. 12.30 pm – 12:50 pm

- **Discuss and agree on location for the next Riverina Legal Help Roadshow**

Lots of requests to go back to the Leeton area, will go back at some point but it's not the next one.

Seeking for something in Wagga Ashmont Community Hub or even Wagga Intereach office.

They might put out a survey and get feedback.

Popular locations suggested:

- Narrandera
- Griffith
- Junee

Mel – it would be good to get an agreement in the next week or two to allow time for coordinating and organising.

- **CLSD Legal Service Directory (Mel shared in chat)**

Version 1 – it needs an update.

ACTION: Mel will do some updating (if anyone wants to reach out to Mel to add anything in, please do so).

6. 12.50 – 1.00pm

- **Partner update and news.**

Kim – WDO update, fines managements – there are new guidelines coming out in the next couple of months. There are some good developments happening;

- changes to mentoring - available for everyone (now there are more things than can fall into the scope of mentoring; cultural activities, bush regeneration, driving courses – these are compliance-based activities and people can get up to \$1,000 per month for complying, previously they were \$30/\$50 per hour)
- Changes to the way interstate WDO can be done; Previously have to have NSW fines and live in NSW, now they don't have to. Hopefully by next CLSD meeting she can share guidelines and give more of an update.

Centacare – Keryn involved in running 'Caring Dads' program – it's targeted at dad's who have been abusive and looking at supporting them, and what's involved in fathering. They are doing it in conjunction with Calvary Drug and Alcohol next term. All the classes on offer are on the website, people can self-refer on website. A suggestion for the Roadshow, the RTA days baby seats and helmet days, if these can be in conjunction as getting baby seat tested is hard currently.

Mel – Intereach are getting some Family and Mental Health team members trained in baby seat testing so they may be able to assist in that area.

7. Next meeting Qtr2 - 30th May 2024 (10am - 12 pm) Planning meeting Online Wagga Wagga