

## Taree - Forster CLSD Program meeting

28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 – First Steps Count Child and Community Centre, 4 Myall Ave, Taree

### MINUTES

**Present:** Hannah Dixon (Regional Coordinator, MVNS), Emma McGuire (Mid-Coast Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services), Cindi Ulstrup (Services Australia), Melanie Kallmier (Mid-North Coast Legal Centre), Meggie Molony (Mid-North Coast Legal Centre), Kylie Naylor (Youth Justice), Ron Dennison (Legal Aid NSW), Chloe Harrison (Legal Aid NSW), Anne Cregan (Gilbert + Tobin Law), Louise Spittles (Youth Drug & Alcohol NSW Health), Lindsay Hobson (Samaritans), (Services NSW)

**Apologies:** Craig Partridge (Wesley Mission), Sarah McFadden (Wesley Mission) and Tenille Harris (MSS), Seema Sanghi (Legal Aid NSW)

Agenda item	Discussion	Action/Outcome
1. Opening	Melanie acknowledged the meeting took place on the lands of the Biripai people and welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2. Purpose of today's meeting	To discuss issues raised at previous meeting about young people (YP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To gain a better understanding of what services are available in the region to support young people who are in contact with the police and the justice system</li><li>YP on bail and attending school</li><li>YP involved in domestic and family violence</li><li>Diversions activities available in the region / barriers to accessing them</li><li>Treatment of YP in court</li></ul>	
3. Guest speakers	<b>Legal Aid NSW, Chloe Harrison</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Early intervention / holistic treatment is a specific focus for Legal Aid and successful stakeholder partnerships are needed to achieve this.</li><li>The best way to achieve early intervention is the <b>use of referral to services relevant for YP and their social / legal / well-being needs.</b></li></ul>	

- Legal Aid offer **free legal advice to YP under 18** for both civil and criminal matters.
- **Legal Aid Youth Hotline 1800 10 18** should be used when in custody for YP to obtain **free legal advice** and to gain an understanding of their legal rights.
- **Legal Aid does offer custodial visitation** for YP in YJC's.
- Diversionary programs are not available to all YP as reflected by legislation, needs to be diverted to other social services diversionary programs.
- Drop-in centres – **not in enough areas**, therefore not accessible for YP and once entered the justice system it is usually too late.
- **How can we prevent YP returning to court?**

#### YP issues in court

- Court support
- **Translation** – e.g. making sure they understand their legal rights the legal matter that is unfolding.

#### Children's Court Process

- Interviewed by authorities (**many children do not understand their rights relating to being arrested and remaining silent or requesting legal advice**)
- **Recent issue** – YP 14 years old was left homeless – bail requested an address, but a residential address could not be provided, therefore they were detained in custody due to the residence condition as imposed by their bail conditions.
- Services had failed (unable to provide emergency accommodation), the Magistrate failed to comprehend the risk of homelessness. As a result, **this person was held unnecessarily in custody.**
- Bail conditions including curfew or attending school – often breached as these conditions may limit them from going to school or even wanting to attend.

#### Local contact:

- a. **Port Macquarie:** 02 5525 1600

### Legal Aid NSW Service

**Youth Hotline:** 1800 10 18 10 (24-hour service for people under 18 to obtain legal advice or information)

### Questions

How active are FACs in the area?

- Not often active.
- If the YP is already within the FAC's system usually they have an active role, however if not allocated to the team YP often fall through the gaps.
- If parents still hold power (parental rights) it is quite difficult to intervene – great issue may be tracking down parents if the YP is not living with parents.
- Other agencies are forced to step up once bail conditions are enforced – **YP do not need to be in YJC if it can be prevented.**

What are the alternatives to Youth Justice Centres? hotel accommodation?

- **YP often left homeless after detention**, currently there aren't any services able to provide immediate services throughout LGA.
- Push for crisis accommodation and bail beds - [NSW Government Crisis Accommodation \(Bail\)](#)
- Once YP hit court they are often risk assessed out of relevant services and find they are left stranded.
- YP from detention often released into homelessness as DCJ cannot supervise after detention or provide assistance.
- As it stands there is minimal early intervention to prevent homelessness for YP leaving YJC.

Mid North Coast Legal Centre, **Melanie Kallmier**

- Potential to refer people to legal services to register birth and obtain birth certificates or birth registration for Centrelink and other services.

	<p>Services Australia, <b>Cindi Ulstrup</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Misconception – <b>can be registered</b> for Medicare but <b>not registered</b> at birth as each are through two separate government bodies at various levels, which are not followed up by any government agency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Medicare is run through Federal Government.</li> <li>b. Centrelink is also run through Federal Government.</li> <li>c. Births, Deaths and Marriages is run at State level.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Enrolling Your Baby in Medicare</a> – Cindi has advised there is a loophole, parents can claim Centrelink by filling out various parts of the document given at the hospital but may not be registered for Medicare.</li> <li>• Food bank does serves <b>180 people per day at the Uniting Church</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>Is there an opportunity for YP to work at the Uniting Church soup kitchen and/or BBQ?</p> <p>Could services periodically attend the food bank to promote local services to the community?</p> <p>Youth Drug &amp; Alcohol Services, <b>Louise Spittles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YP being released into homelessness from hospital discharge.</li> <li>• Gaps have widened around YP rather than closed – their needs are more complex than ever.</li> <li>• Greatest trend is YP who are starving – not being fed or do not have access to financial services including Centrelink (may be correlated to Birth Certificate issues).</li> <li>• There are <b>no Youth Health services</b> – specifically health-based services including GP, vaccinations, sexual-health checks, all specific to YP in this region.</li> </ul>	<p>Can we connect YP with services (MNCLC / Legal Aid / G+T Law) to make <b>Ombudsman complaints</b> and help them advocate for themselves (regarding treatment from NSW Health, YJC's and alike government services)?</p> <p>Minister has statutory responsibility to YP to make sure they are not homeless when released from NSW Health services – <b>can this be a systemic change?</b></p> <p>(G&amp;T happy to work with Legal Aid and MNCLC to pursue civil action against Minister - Anne Cregan)</p>
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- **MERIT is a great service** – a voluntary, pre-plea program for adults in the Local Court who have issues related to their alcohol and other drug use - no intakes until May – only for adults – must be 18 years old to participate.
- Negative attitude towards mental, services are not equipped to provide “treatment”.

### Questions

Is there a significant concern of child removal if the children are registered at birth, particularly for First Nations People?

### Juvenile Justice, **Kylie Naylor**

- May contact Kylie at any time for advice for DCJ issues and ombudsman advocacy.
- Suicide of YP suffering homelessness is far too great.
- Lack of access to Centrelink is a significant impact to criminality for needs (Issues relating to bank accounts / birth certificates / a lot of barriers to go through administrative processes / age limit for Centrelink (16 years of age)).

### Headspace, **Lindsay Hobson**

- YP homelessness is a significant issue.
- Head Space assist with mild to moderate mental health issues – unfortunately **cannot deal with YP who have complex and high mental health needs.**
- Acutely suicidal YP will be referred to NSW mental health services.
- Crimes YP disclose to this service **must be reported to Police** as per company policy.
- Perhaps there needs to be **referral to Legal Aid** when YP disclose crimes, to support YP from both sides.
- **Tuning into Teens** – coming into second half of year TBA – [Tuning into Teens](#)

	<p>MidCoast Tenancy, <b>Emma McGuire</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YP with criminal record can they obtain tenancy? – <b>usually not checked</b> but still could impact application, most problematic factor are issues or debts relating to previous tenancies.</li> <li>• Share house issue disputes can impact possibility of obtaining tenancy.</li> <li>• No age limit to become a tenant, however, must have a certain capacity to enter into tenancy agreements.</li> <li>• Ending 'No Grounds Eviction' Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Template Letter</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Ending 'No Grounds' Eviction Summary</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>MSS, <b>Tenille Harris</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">MSS Family Services Flyer</a></li> </ul>	
<b>4. Arising challenges?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed changes to bail laws for YP - <a href="#">Tougher Bail Laws for YP &amp; 'Post &amp; Boast' Offence NSW</a></li> </ul>	
<b>5. Partnership actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Birth certificate update:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth Certificate Day to be held in Forster at Tobwobba, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024 10:30 – 2:30pm.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. My community Directory -</b> <a href="#">My Community Directory - Mid Coast</a></li> <li><b>3. Antenatal Program</b> (Reach out to Manning Base) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• follow up to register the birth / obtain birth certificate (2 months from the birth) – at the time of home visit.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. Pulteney Street Youth Services will be turned into a Youth Space</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not open yet but coming soon! Details TBA</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>5. Is it possible to have the Court List days for Taree &amp; Forster changed to help services attend the courts and provide services / information?</b></li> </ol>	
<b>7. Next meeting</b>	<b>29 May 2024 – Venue TBA</b>	

