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Innovative First Nations justice project for Hunter region

An innovative new justice sector project will give Hunter region lawyers a deeper understanding of Aboriginal cultural issues and their Aboriginal clients.

Legal Aid NSW and The Aboriginal Services Unit, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes at the Department of Communities and Justice will co-host an Aboriginal Justice Services Hub event in Newcastle on Friday August 9.

This event will connect lawyers in the Hunter region with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to help legal clients with issues such as domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, disability and homelessness.

The event will also include cultural competency training and information on how to best work with Aboriginal clients. The training will be delivered through sharing stories about the lived experience of Aboriginal people previously involved with the criminal justice system. That training will also provide unique insights about Aboriginal cultures in the Hunter region.

“Innovative approaches like this are crucial,” says Legal Aid NSW CEO Monique Hitter.

“Almost a quarter of our clients are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Aboriginal people are incarcerated at 13 times the rate of non-Indigenous people, so cultural competency training of this sort is essential.

“We are deeply committed to improving access to justice by working with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and service providers.”

Taylah Gray, Senior Project Officer, Closing the Gap, Legal Aid NSW, says lived-experience storytelling is profoundly important.

“This storytelling can reveal important truths and connect people at a deep level,” Ms Gray says.

“Crucially, the project helps lawyers to feel more confident in delivering services to Aboriginal people and in building stronger connections with them.

“The showcasing of First Nations Peoples lived experience enhances the ability of lawyers to communicate effectively and with a deeper understanding of important cultural factors.

“Community and culture are central to the life of many Aboriginal Peoples, and when there’s a deeper awareness of that it helps to increase access to justice.”

Legal Practitioners can register for the event using the QR code below.

Aboriginal Services Unit, TAO and Legal Aid NSW intend to implement this program in other parts of the State.

Aboriginal Services Hub 2024



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