



PROGRAM UPDATE Q2 2024

Details about CLSD meetings and regional coordinators are on the CLSD [website](#) along with the records of CLSD meetings and regional legal referral guides.

CLSD Reflection Project

We are now analysing the feedback received from more than 30 stakeholders regarding how CLSD partnerships could be more strongly aligned with their priorities and needs. One of the (early) outcomes is the introduction of CLSD meetings of legal stakeholders only in each of the regions. This was pioneered by the Northern Rivers partnership, and in this quarter legal services meetings are being held in the Central Coast, South Coast, Far West, Riverina and Upper Mid North Coast (formerly known as Kempsey-Nambucca) regions. The meetings held so far this quarter have supported stronger connection between legal assistance services and the regional coordinators who are new to their role and coordination between legal assistance services.

Themes emerging from these meetings include strong interest in developing and updating local legal referral resources and local legal/community service referral, meeting the legal needs of people living in more isolated locations or facing barriers to getting assistance (such as migrant workers), and providing Aboriginal communities with information and help with planning for funerals, wills, future planning documents and small estate administration.

Partnership with Births, Deaths and Marriages

The CLSD Program supports the partnership between the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriage (BDM) and Legal Aid NSW. We are about to finish the 2nd full year of our partnership which expanded this year to provide up to 1000 free birth certificates to eligible people at CLSD events and initiatives, as well as through the Legal Aid NSW Aboriginal Field Officers and Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities (CLSAC).

Earlier this year we drew on our experience to advocate to BDM about how to address low birth registration in some regional and remote areas, the need for a more streamlined approach to processing applications for birth certificates under the general BDM fee-waiver policy that are submitted by legal assistance and community services, applications for birth certificates for children that are made by informal carers and applications made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for birth records of relatives. The responses from BDM on these issues has been positive and we look forward to seeing some policy changes to address these issues.

Demand for free birth certificates is extremely high and the CLSD Program regularly receives requests for help with getting free birth certificates from across NSW from individuals and services. The CLSD Program fee-waiver factsheet, available [here](#), was developed to respond to that demand and build the capacity of legal and community workers

to assist their clients to make applications for fee-waivered birth certificates. Recently Community Corrections staff and community services contracted by Corrective Services were in touch with the CLSD program seeking help with obtaining fee-free birth certificates for their clients. We referred this issue to the NLAFF Prisoners' Forum given the existing arrangement between Corrective Services and BDM for free birth certificates for inmates which appears to be underutilised.

It is notable that the demand for identity documents is often driven by government agencies such as DCJ Housing making it a requirement for people to access their services.

CLSD PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

The Dubbo Services Directory

A collaboration between the CLSD Program, the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/Act, Western NSW Community Legal Centre and Western Women's Legal Support was recently finalised and shared with Magistrates, lawyers and prosecutors working in the Dubbo region.

There is a significant appetite for good quality referral information that is curated for the specific needs of the justice sector, particularly for people facing criminal charges. The support service sector can be fragmented or non-existent in many regional and remote areas and there is also a lack of coordinating/referral mechanisms like the Children's Court Assistance Scheme and the Court Support Scheme.

This Directory covers accommodation, casework and counselling services, drug and alcohol services, financial counselling, health services, food relief, mental health support, youth services, transport and specialist services for women, men and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It will be available on the CLSD webpage and updated annually by our Central West regional coordinator.

Central Tablelands Anti-Racism Training

Anti-racism training for CLSD partners with Indigenous X will be held in Bathurst at Charles Sturt University on 17 and 18 July. The Central Tablelands partnership identified cultural safety as a priority with an action to deliver training for the region. The partnership would also like to increase its engagement with Aboriginal communities in the region.

The Calare electorate had a very low 'yes' vote in the referendum held last year (around 29%) and this year is significant for Bathurst with the 200 year commemoration of the Declaration of Martial Law which involves a week of events. Bathurst is also the location for this year's Koori knockout. Overt racism has started to flare up on social media as these events are being advertised. The aim is to support Bathurst community members and services provider who are willing and able to act as imperfect allies in this space.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Challenges for people in contact with the criminal justice who are on bail or seeking bail with obtaining emergency accommodation have been raised in several regions. One suggestion made at the recent Riverina CLSD meeting is to explore whether a streamlined pathway to Link2Home could be established for these people, their lawyers and advocates.