



CLSD Riverina Meeting – Qtr. 3
Thursday 29th August 2024
10.00 am – 12.00 noon (online)
MINUTES

Chair – Melissa Van Lierop (Mel) – Riverina CLSD Coordinator

1. Opening – 10am

- Acknowledgement of country

Present: Melissa Van Lierop (Intereach and Riverina Regional coordinator for CLSD), Jacqui Comb (Minute Taker Intereach), Ellie Haas (NSW Legal Aid Solicitor, Wagga), Yvonne De Borde - (Macarthur Legal Service), Jacinta Ryan (VERTO Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service), Craig Maxwell (Murrumbidgee Pathways, Drug and Alcohol), Patrick Undy (Services Australia), Winnecke Baker (Legal Aid NSW, CLSD Program), Leesa Adams (Services Australia), Jacqueline Jennings (Services Australia), Adam Jacobson, Jen Cameron (Salvation Army), Natalie Neumann (Legal Aid NSW), Carol Jones (Services Australia), Judy Solomon (Ashmont Resource Community Centre), Nani Coulter (Sisters Housing Enterprises), Tracy Wood (Youth Justice).

Apologies: Kerry Foley (Centacare), Emille Thomas (Legal Aid), Tanya Jones (ADACAS), Geraldine Higgins (Intereach).

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**
 - Review Riverina Partner Survey
 - Update Coercive Control Laws
 - The next Riverina Roadshow location and type
 - CLSD Legal Referral Guide updates.

3. 10:00 am – 10:10 am

- **Introductions**

4. 10.10 am – 10.45 am

- **Review of feedback from Riverina CLSD Survey July - Aug 2024**

Winnie Baker - (Acting) Project Manager | Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Unit

- What legal problems do your clients experience?
- Where do you mainly refer people?
- How much do you know about the free legal services in your region?
- What gaps in legal service provision do you see? And
- What sort of events would you like the CLSD Program to support?

Purpose of survey:

The purpose of the survey is connected to planning the work of the CLSD program.

The Riverina and other regions are due for a new plan and this is a response to the Reflection Project which happened last year.

From collating the feedback there were two recommendations that came out of the review that relate to planning and how we organise our work.

One of the recommendations was to hold a meeting of just legal services each year, and then to incorporate the outcomes from that meeting into our planning.

They're trialling a new two-step process where we're hoping to develop the action plan for Mel by combining the outcomes from that legal meeting and the responses received from the survey and hopefully more of the responses from the group today - hoping that it will provide and a bit more equitable input into how we plan our work.

It's also an indication of where everybody in the group would like to focus their efforts and where we have capacity to dedicate resources as a group.

The plan isn't static, when they share the final plan, don't think that it's set in stone, if something comes up/other opportunities come up still reach out to Mel, they can add and subtract depending on people's capacity.

**Winnie shared screen and quickly went through the Action Plan*

Tracey – She oversees clients in custody and part of their processes is that they contact state that and enquire on their behalf. It's part of their initial process to enquire about any

outstanding fines and penalties, for under 18yrs they're able to work those off through engaging in youth justice endorsed programs.

Ellie - If there's any fines where WDO is not appropriate or not possible, Legal Aid can also apply for write offs and advocate for that person for the fine to be waived.

Tracy – Most of their young people under 18 they don't have a problem getting them to work off those debts and they can do that through attending the site appointments, counselling sessions and general maintenance that they can do at the centre, but she will reach out for those over 18.

What legal problems do your clients experience?

The group agrees with the summary – it all resonates with the group.

Where do you mainly refer people?

Do you send people to specialist services? As an example, welfare rights is a legal centre that are a specialist service in dealing with Social Security law, so people that might encounter issues with Centrelink, there are specialist in that area and there are other legal centres like this such as the Women's Legal service, Financial Rights Legal Centre, there's the Intellectual Disability Rights Service, Youth Law.

Does anyone use a specialist service? Or if people don't know about specialist services?

Adam - Ability Rights Centre - free legal advice for people with disability (prioritising intellectual disability) in NSW. Based in Sydney but services the whole state.

Jen - Financial abuse for common legal issues, it's been a common trend that they've been coming across recently at their site with the elderly/seniors.

How much do you know about the free legal services in your region?

The group agrees with the summary - spot on with what's been captured.

It would help clients to know more:

Judy – What about Power of Attorney for elderly after diagnoses? They have clients that come in with their elderly parents but say it's too late because they're not at the mental capacity to be able to make that decision.

Ellie - At Legal Aid they provide advice to the affected person so that the elderly person, in this example, and family members can talk about making applications to the Tribunal for guardianship or financial management orders. Family members can apply to NCAT to the guardianship division if they've got concerns.

Craig - No tenancy history is a common problem with people seeking rentals. They advocate for clients using Link 2 Home (L2H) but it's really hard when they're trying to get a rental property and they've been in and out of the prison system, so therefore they don't have a rental history.

What gaps in legal service provision do you see?

What sort of events would you like the CLSD Program to support?

Note: If anyone wants to do the survey they can share the link – Mel can share the link

5. 10:45am – 11:15 am

- **New Laws relating to Coercive Control**

Ellie Haas – NSW Legal Aid Solicitor – Civil Law

DV is a high priority client group across all their practice areas.

There is a new specific offence that's been created, we have the Crimes Act and we have the definitions of domestic abuse, but the main change now is this coercive control offence in intimate partnerships between adults. It's from 1st July onwards.

2021 report - *“Coercive control entails the combination of violent and nonviolent tactics over time to dominate a partner, degrade them, exploit their resources and deprive them of rights and liberties.” Submission to joint select committee 2021*

**Ellie shared screen and went through the abusive behaviour definitions.*

Legal Aid have done a tip sheet.

Coercive control is now a crime.

The accused person needs to engage in a course of conduct consisting of abusive behaviour.

They have to have been or currently are intimate partners.

The intention has to be to coerce or control the other person.

Top 10 things we should know about these offences:

- It isn't actually called 'coercive control'
- It only covers intimate partners
- It only applies to adults
- It only applies from 1st July
- Prosecutor need to prove a course of conduct
- Where it happened matters
- It has a 7-year maximum penalty
- There is a defence
- The victim may not be entitled to support payments
- Bail laws will change

Mel – With their family and mental health work, she is really pleased to see that financial support sort of control clause in there because it happens very often in the work they see.

Jen – They were really waiting for these laws to come in, they are really important changes to help people move forward.

Judy – How hard is it to prove it and with the charges, how do we go about having evidence to have the charges laid?

Ellie – Nat and her chatted about this before, Nat sent her some interesting things discussed at the Crime Conference this year for Legal Aid, and there's a presentation about these new offences. Every single police officer in NSW has to complete training on this new offence.

But also, mobile phone evidence; messages, recordings; bank statements, patterns of deductions; statements from family/friends about has their behaviour changed and if they believe it's because of the intimate partner; CCTV footage.

Winnie – It's important to note as well that coercive control is now also grounds for the imposition of an ADVO.

Winnie – She has heard lawyers talk about screen shotting messages and sending them to a friend and then deleting them from their device is advisable if a partner monitors their phone.

Nat- Regarding questions about what types of evidence; one of the trainings from Women's Legal Service was on corroborative evidence – statements from family members regarding a change in behaviour, public presentation of the person/how they used to dress and now. Bank statements, drifts from clubs/groups etc that they used to be involved in.

Winnie – Some of the lawyers talked about a safe diary, is there someone they can see, someone else who can keep a record/diary on their behalf, a separate email address.

Yvonne - Women's' Legal Service have a number of webinars that are freely available to view if you google Ask Lois.

Ellie - Legal Aid Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) - it can help clients better understand their legal problems and choices that they have.

Judy – She is registered for the training on the 17th September.

Training available – Webinar is on Sep 17, 2024 01:00 PM By Legal Aid

6. 11:15 am – 11:40 am

- **Discuss and agree next Riverina Legal Help Roadshow** - Location/type/when

Judy - Ashmont - they have a lot of elderly people that don't have wills, a lot of them don't have Power of Attorney and Guardianship etc, apart from birth certificates, there is other things that our elderly are missing out on.

Ellie - Wagga (Ashmont area), Griffith or Hay

Yvonne – They've had requests for Hay for wills through the Indigenous Community, and also Narrandera.

Winnie - Maybe Hay 2025?

Ellie – she was at the Homelessness Expo and spoke with Peta Anderson from Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network and she mentioned there is going to be a similar expo in Hay on the 17th of October. She has contacted Jean Woods (Hay Aboriginal Medical Service) and emailed her to see if they can get on board with that.

Mel – What are the groups thoughts on getting something booked in for a Wagga Event?

Leesa – Carolyn Wilson from Service NSW is organising a Community Hub Day and sounds like it's going to be ongoing at the Nara Community Hub. Services attending are; Service NSW, Services Australia, Legal Aid, Community Corrections assisting with fines, Marathon Health, Sisters Housing, First Nations Coordinator, Sure Way Employment services and more. It's tailored towards the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Winnie – Doing the expo in Ashmont would be great.

Mel – What would it look like for Macarthur Legal to come to Wagga?

Yvonne – She will go back to the team and check, they are in the area the week before though, she will chat with Cristina and Melissa and get back to Mel.

They are in Cowra on 21st Oct, Cootamundra - 22nd Oct, Junee – 23rd Oct and Narrandera – 24th Oct.

Action: Winnie/Mel – Will have discussions regarding Ashmont Expo and then get some dates to share around.

7. 11:40 am – 12:00 pm

- **Partner Updates and News** - Information /New Programs/Initiatives/Event sharing
- **CLSD Legal Service Directory – review** any partner updates or additions to directory.
- **Riverina Action Plan 2024-2025**

Partner Updates and News - Information /New Programs/Initiatives/Event sharing

Adam – Have a job advertisement, it's Justice Advocacy Service have advertised for an Aboriginal engagement officer and it can be based in Sydney or regional. They're always looking for volunteers and casuals. JAS have our training modules for our support people and our casuals that come on board and we have a specific training module for Aboriginal people and it's run by our engagement officer, it's a 2 day course, not online, it's on country.

Tracy – Wagga area have been successful in pilot program 'violence reduction unit program', however the name is going to be changed. It is going to be focusing on reducing violence within family homes, in partnership with Riverina police district. It's going to focus on a whole systems response to young people's involvement in violent crime. This is hoping to capture young people aged 8 to 17, whereas we only currently work with young people 10 to 17 on supervised orders. Focusing on early intervention work with young people and their families. They have put ads out for current workers, so there's two key worker roles, and there is a team leader role currently advertised, and that's where that's up to at this time.

Judy – She is the only caseworker here at the present moment, they are recruiting another Aboriginal family case manager (25.5 hrs a week). They are recruiting for another 2 Survive and Thrive. Her program is Lifetime Learning. She only works with children up to the age of 5yrs, and she has 2 spots available. Whereas the Survive and Thrive program works with children up to the age of 12.

Craig – Previously they had some difficulty trying to engage with clients while they're in custody. They got a post custodial support program that's commenced, and it's not just isolated to like the Wagga area. They are just having a bit of trouble getting into June at the moment, but the idea is that they're able to support people coming up to their release date, so 3months pre-release and up to 12 months post release, try and get that sort of thought process happening before they get out about changing their behaviour and linking in with a with services to try and change their substance use history and make future choices. Now visiting other towns; Hay, Deni, Harden, a couple of other areas that we previously were outside of our coverage area.

Jen – Do have spaces available coming up for site visits, to see what they do and how they work. If anyone is interested in coming over it would be great. Drop in and have a chat. Try do it on Friday's, they are at 180 Forsyth Street Wagga. It's also an opportunity for them to be able to sort of gauge what other services are doing as well, because they have such complexities that come through our doors and want to be able to work better with our community members to make sure that they are supported by and referred to the proper spaces where they can get the best care.

Jacqueline - Services Australia has vacancies advertised via their website servicesaustralia.gov.au *Type quick code in search bar of website 'QC54790'

CLSD Legal Service Directory – review any partner updates or additions to directory.
(Mel to share after meeting)

Riverina Action Plan 2024-2025

Work in progress.

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- 8. Next meeting Qtr4 – Legal Free help 2/3-day ROADSHOW to be held in WAGGA end of October 2024– venue - at Ashmont HUB? Venue and Dates TBC – CLSD Service provider afternoon tea get together on last day**