

Hunter CLSD Program meeting

16 February 2023, 11am-1pm, Raymond Terrace

MINUTES

Present: Bill Cotterill (Veteran’s Affairs and HNE Health), Brianna, Jess and Ann Fletcher (Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Service), Treena (Employment Plus), Sarah Pritchard, Jade Ernst, Winnecke Baker, Josie (Legal Aid NSW); Jill Green (Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT), Julie and Maddy (Justice Advocacy Service); Sarah Breusch (University of Newcastle Legal Centre), Albert Ponte (Hall & Willcox), Bronwyn Ambrogetti (Hunter Community Legal Centre); Kira Levin (Public Interest Advocacy Centre), Nicole Grgas (Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service), Caitlin Macinante (Kate Washington’s Office), Seema Sanghi (Hunter CLSD Regional Coordinator); Francis Silva and Kayla Sanderson (Aboriginal Services Unit, DCJ)

Agenda item	Discussion	Action/Outcome
1. Welcome, acknowledgment	Seema acknowledged that this CLSD Program meeting took place on the lands of the Worimi people.	
2. Purpose	<p>CLSD Program objective To work collaboratively to identify and address unmet legal and related non-legal needs of people in the Hunter region. We aim to do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Making better referrals and referral pathways- Working on projects and devising new services, and- Coordinating our efforts. <p>Meeting objective Participate in a legal issue spotting exercise to increase understanding of local referral pathways; ensure services know about the new legal outreach clinic in Raymond Terrace starting in 2023; action development based on community needs and local data, particularly around fine debt.</p>	

3. Legal issue identification exercise

Case Study

Delray is 18 and has been sleeping on his cousin’s couch for several weeks since he split up with his girlfriend. His cousin has asked him to leave several times as he doesn’t like Delray’s bags lying around his lounge room and needs the couch for when his kids stay.

Delray has nowhere to go. He asked to stay at the local homeless shelter, but they're full. He can't apply for housing as he can't find his birth certificate and he doesn't want to go back to his ex-girlfriend's house to look for it. She said that she threw all his stuff out anyway.

Delray doesn't have a job and doesn't have any income. He isn't on Centrelink and doesn't have any ID to apply for unemployment benefits. His cousin has been feeding him since he moved in and is getting tired of paying for him. Delray's cousin has asked him to move out by Friday.

Delray has seen a nearby park, where he thinks he could sleep without anyone seeing him. He has asked his cousin if he can store his stuff for a little longer, but there is lots of stress at home, so his cousin isn't happy about the situation.

Delray's cousin comes to see you to help Delray. He doesn't want to throw him out onto the streets but can't have him in his house. Delray's cousin has high unpaid fine debt and the extra financial burden is causing stress with his ex-partner, who is asking for more money for childcare.

Issue	Referral ideas/comments
Lack of ID	<p>When Legal Aid NSW is helping someone with their legal issues and not having a birth certificate is connected to their matter a solicitor will support their client to apply for their ID.</p> <p>The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in NSW also has a general fee-waiver policy that services can use to apply for a certificate on behalf of their client at any time if they are eligible.</p>
Homelessness	<p>Help Delray to access support through Link2Home 1800 152 152. Their purpose is to link people with emergency accommodation. Link2Home must speak directly with the client, you can't call up on behalf of your client unless they are present with you, so they cannot help people while</p>

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="439 193 748 268"></td> <td data-bbox="748 193 1680 268">they are in custody. There are also limits on the number of times people can access this service annually.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="439 268 748 448">Not accessing Centrelink</td> <td data-bbox="748 268 1680 448"> <p>Delray should be encouraged to contact his local Centrelink office for support accessing payments that he is eligible for.</p> <p>The Centrelink Community Team are returning to the Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Service next month monthly.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="439 448 748 560">No access to public transport due to no income</td> <td data-bbox="748 448 1680 560">Getting access to Centrelink payments should go a little way to helping Delray with this issue.</td> </tr> </table>		they are in custody. There are also limits on the number of times people can access this service annually.	Not accessing Centrelink	<p>Delray should be encouraged to contact his local Centrelink office for support accessing payments that he is eligible for.</p> <p>The Centrelink Community Team are returning to the Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Service next month monthly.</p>	No access to public transport due to no income	Getting access to Centrelink payments should go a little way to helping Delray with this issue.		
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<p>4. New legal outreach clinic</p>	<p>Homeless Person’s Legal Service clinic in Raymond Terrace</p> <p>Through its Homeless Persons Legal Service (HPLS) the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) runs weekly civil law clinics in Sydney for people at risk of homelessness and people experiencing homelessness. These clinics are run in partnership with private lawyers who offer their services pro-bono.</p> <p>PIAC and private law firm Hall & Wilcox have partnered to start a HPLS clinic in Raymond Terrace.</p> <p>Clinic Hours Fortnightly from 12 – 2pm in Raymond Terrace (start date TBC)</p> <p>Eligibility People who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness are eligible for advice from this service. Homelessness includes people who are living in inappropriate housing, for example housing that is overcrowded.</p>								

What the lawyers at this clinic can help with

- **Financial hardship:** credit card debts, fines, difficulty paying loans, debt collectors
- **Consumer or contract issues:** unfair contracts, insurance, door to door sales, scams, funeral policies, superannuation
- **Centrelink:** pensions and payments, debts, fraud prosecutions
- **Housing:** eviction, repairs, rent or issues with Housing NSW/community housing
- **Violence:** victim of violence, apprehended violence orders (AVOs), victims' compensation
- **Criminal matters:** charges by police, court attendance notice, bail
- **Discrimination or harassment:** in employment, education, provisions of goods and services, housing
- **Complaints about government authorities:** police, schools, government departments
- **Employment:** loss of employment, entitlements, bullying/harassment

What the lawyers at this clinic cannot help with

- **Family law:** including divorce, child support, childcare and child protection
- **Immigration:** visa issues, refugee applications
- **Property:** disputes about property
- **Personal injury:** compensation for injuries through accidents or a workers compensation claim
- **Wills:** writing wills, challenging a will or the distribution of an estate

How to refer

The clinic will be advertised as a drop-in clinic; however the lawyers would really appreciate receiving a referral form beforehand if a service is referring a client.

The referral form is [here](#)

Receiving a referral form beforehand allows the lawyers to:

- triage the client (some issues may be addressable without the client needing to attend the clinic) and make external referrals when needed
- conduct a conflict check
- prepare their advice in advance of the appointment so that they can have everything ready for the client.

	<p>Can you attend the clinic with your client? Yes, absolutely. So long as your client consents to you being there, you can attend the appointment to support your client. This is encouraged for clients that benefit from this additional support.</p>	
<p>5. Local issues</p>	<p>Transport Fines Raymond Terrace has the highest rate of transport fine debt in the Hunter region. All bus services in Raymond Terrace and between Raymond Terrace and Newcastle are privately operated, which makes negotiating for free or cheaper travel for certain people very difficult. Also, Newcastle and Raymond Terrace do not have the cheaper transport scheme for seniors that operates in regional NSW, as these locations are not considered regional for the purpose of this scheme.</p> <p>Ways to tackle fine debt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and Development Orders (WDOs): allow eligible people to reduce their fine debt by engaging in support services or completing programs. Local WDO champions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Service: provides WDOs through case management and support groups like parenting groups. The Neighbourhood Service can also help people to access a WDO if they are seeing a psychologist through a mental health care plan. ○ Employment Plus has a psychologist on board who can sign off on WDOs for all Employment Plus clients across the Hunter. ○ Awabakal: people seeing psychologists through this service can access WDOs. ○ For a full list of current sponsors in the Raymond Terrace/Port Stephens area see here or contact the CLSD Program (clsdprogram@legalaid.nsw.gov.au) • Fine write-offs: lawyers from Legal Aid NSW can help eligible people to apply to Revenue NSW to have some, or all their fine debt written-off, depending on the size of the fine. Contact the Newcastle Office for support: 4929 5482 <p>Domestic Violence Services noted that domestic and family violence is the biggest source of homelessness locally for women and children. Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Service meets regularly with police, who have advised that for the past 2 months, the Port Stephens area and surrounds has had the highest rate of applications for Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs) in the state. The</p>	

	<p>Neighbourhood Service currently has over 300 children under 5 on their books for regular case management.</p> <p>Local Legal Services can support women and children who are impacted by family and domestic violence in many ways. They can help with family law issues following separation and civil law issues like debts, access to child support, and tenancy issues.</p> <p>Legal Aid NSW Newcastle: 4929 5482</p> <p>Hunter Community Legal Centre: 4040 9120</p> <p>Access to ID (birth certificates)</p> <p>Services including Employment Plus and the Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Service noted that many clients do not have their birth certificate, which can prevent them from accessing the supports that they need, like housing, or starting programs that lead to employment.</p> <p>The NSW Registry General Fee Waiver Policy</p> <p>The NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages has a general fee waiver policy that services can use to apply for a fee-free birth certificate <i>at any time</i> for their clients if they are eligible. Eligibility includes people who are currently experiencing domestic violence, people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, people who have been impacted by a natural disaster in the past 6 months, members of the Stolen Generations, and children under 18 years-old who are living in poverty or just above the poverty line.</p> <p>Contact clsdprogram@legalaid.nsw.gov.au for information about how to use this fee-waiver policy to apply for a birth certificate for your client.</p>	
6. Next meeting	11 May 2023, venue TBC	