



Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department

Social Inclusion Division

**COMMONWEALTH
COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
PROGRAM**

GUIDELINES

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CCLSP Guidelines

These Guidelines provide information to all stakeholders of the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program (CCLSP). They set out the essential principles and obligations governing the management of the program and the delivery of services.

Stakeholders in the CCLSP are funded community legal service providers, the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC), and State-based Program Managers - the legal aid commissions in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania and the Attorney General's Department of South Australia.

Some States also provide funding for community legal services. Under a collaborative arrangement between the Commonwealth and the State funding bodies, the CCLSP and the State community legal services programs operate under a single service agreement with community legal service providers known as the Community Legal Service Program (CLSP). Where applicable, additional guidelines, specific to State funded programs, are included as an attachment to these Guidelines.

The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that the Program Outcome, equitable access to legal assistance services for disadvantaged members of the Australian community and those with special needs, is achieved in collaboration with Program stakeholders. To that end the Commonwealth endeavours to consult with all stakeholders on the future direction of service delivery including, where possible within the framework of Commonwealth budget processes, allocation of new and additional funding. This cooperative approach is designed to achieve excellence in service delivery.

1. THE COMMONWEALTH COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM - INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 About the Program
 - 1.2 Program Objectives
 - 1.3 Program Outcome and Outputs
-

1. The Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program - Introduction

1.1 About the Program

The Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program ('the Program') is a dedicated program within the Attorney-General's Department which supports and funds community legal services as part of the Commonwealth's contribution to legal aid in Australia. Services delivered by community based organisations form a vital part of the Commonwealth's multi-layered approach to addressing the legal needs of the disadvantaged members of the community.

Community legal centres (CLCs) are community based, independent non-profit organisations which provide a range of assistance on legal and related matters to people on low incomes and those with special needs. They are a key component of Australia's legal aid system and provide a distinctive form of service that complements services provided by legal aid commissions (LACs) and the private legal profession. For the purposes of these Guidelines, CLCs include all organisations funded under the CLSP.

The Program provides funding for generalist as well as specialist community legal services. Those CLCs in receipt of funding for generalist community legal services may provide assistance on a broad range of legal matters. In recognition that there are some areas of law, as well as elements of the community, that would benefit from specialist legal services, the Commonwealth also provides funding for specialist services in a range of areas. These sub-programs include services for women (including indigenous and rural) and youth as well as child support, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* matters, welfare rights, and environmental issues.

1.2 Program Objectives

CLCs funded under the Program are required to provide services which meet the Program objectives.

The objectives of the Program are set out below:

- Community legal services assist people, individually or collectively, as well as the community overall. Assistance is directed towards people who experience some form of systemic or socio-economic barrier to accessing legal services and/or whose interests should be pursued as a matter of public interest.
- Community legal service clients receive early assistance through the provision of appropriate information and referral.
- Community legal service clients gain a practical and improved understanding of legal and other options available to them through the provision of appropriate advice.
- Community legal service clients, through the provision of appropriate casework, gain an increased opportunity to pursue outcomes consistent with their legal rights or entitlements and community legal service resources.

- Community legal education provides people, service providers and other agencies with opportunities to:
 - improve their awareness of the law, legal processes and other regulatory mechanisms where appropriate
 - increase their ability to understand and critically assess the impact of the law and the legal system on themselves, and/or
 - improve their ability to use the law, legal system and other regulatory mechanisms where appropriate.
- CLCs undertake law reform and policy work to meet the priority needs of the target groups and communities with whom they work.
- All services are delivered efficiently and effectively in order to provide accessible, responsive, respectful, understandable and useful services to clients.

1.3 Program Outcome and Outputs

As a Commonwealth agency, the Attorney-General's Department uses an accrual based outcomes and outputs framework for managing resources and ensuring effective service delivery. Central to this approach is the articulation of an outcome statement for the Program.

The outcome statement for the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program is:

Equitable access to legal assistance services for disadvantaged members of the Australian community and those with special needs.

This outcome underpins the specific outputs of the Program that comprise the core service activities delivered by CLCs. Core service activities include the provision of information and referrals, advice and casework on legal or related matters, and undertaking of community legal education and law reform activities.

CLCs funded under the Program are required to provide a range of reports and data so that the Department can monitor, manage and account for output delivery and the achievement of the Program objectives.

2. CCLS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1 CCLS Program Arrangements
 - 2.2 Roles and Responsibilities
 - 2.3 Relationship with Stakeholders
-

CCLS Program Administration

2.1 CCLS Program Arrangements

The Attorney-General has portfolio responsibility for the Program. The Indigenous Justice and Legal Assistance Division of the Attorney-General's Department is responsible for the administration of the Program and is accountable to the Attorney-General and to Parliament for the operation and expenditure of the Program.

Under the Program, the Commonwealth provides funding to community legal service organisations through a service agreement. The Service Agreement defines the obligations of each party and provides an accountability framework for the expenditure of public funds.

The Commonwealth purchases services from the legal aid commissions in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania and from the Attorney General's Department of South Australia to assist in the management of the Program in each State under a cooperative working relationship. State Program Managers (SPMs) are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Program in these States. The Commonwealth directly manages the Program in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Commonwealth has the following defined roles and responsibilities:

- to develop and implement national policy and provide strategic direction for the Program
- to administer the Program nationally including:
 - disbursing Program funding subject to the relevant Parliamentary Appropriation and Ministerial approval and in accordance with the provisions of the Service Agreement
 - developing and maintaining Service Agreements and Program Guidelines
 - establishing procedures to ensure compliance with Commonwealth accountability requirements
 - providing and maintaining a national data collection scheme
 - liaising with SPMs to facilitate timely and appropriate reporting and the attainment of Program objectives
- to provide information and advice to CLCs to assist them in meeting their obligations under the Service Agreement and when new data collection systems are introduced
- to support nationally consistent quality assurance measures for service delivery
- to monitor and report on performance targets nationally
- to conduct Program evaluation and reviews
- to consult with stakeholders on major policy and planning issues for the Program

- to manage the day-to-day operations of the Program in the ACT and NT and in relation to organisations not falling within the direct responsibility of a State-based SPM, and
- to provide information and advice to government about the operation of the Program.

The State Program Managers in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania and South Australia and the Commonwealth when exercising SPM functions in ACT and NT have the following defined roles and responsibilities within their respective States or Territories:

- to manage the day-to-day operations of the Program including
 - implementing service agreements and administering Commonwealth budget allocations
 - monitoring compliance by CLCs within the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement including compliance with accountability and reporting requirements, performance against activity targets and quality assurance measures
 - providing service providers with a first point of contact for all matters relating to the Program.
- to oversee implementation of Commonwealth policy where appropriate
- to advise the Commonwealth promptly of any issues of concern in the day-to-day operations of the Program
- to participate in Program evaluation and reviews in conjunction with the Commonwealth as appropriate
- to contribute to the development of Program policy and planning issues and initiatives
- to provide information and advice to CLCs in meeting their obligations under the Service Agreement and when new data collection systems are introduced, and
- to manage the State Community Legal Services Program on behalf of the relevant State, where appropriate.

Funded CLCs have the following defined roles and responsibilities:

- to assist clients and communities to access responsive, respectful, understandable and useful services in relation to legal issues
- to provide core service activities in accordance with the needs of their target client groups
- to comply with the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement including compliance with accountability and reporting requirements, performance against activity targets and quality assurance measures
- to collect and provide to the Commonwealth data about client demographics and service provision.

CLC clients have the right to expect:

- to have all information provided to a CLC kept confidential
- to be treated with courtesy and consideration
- to be provided with appropriate referral information in circumstances where a CLC is unable to assist them with their problem.

In return, CLCs have a right to expect that clients will:

- arrive on time for appointments
- notify the centre if unable to keep an appointment
- provide all relevant information to assist staff in assessing the issue on which assistance is sought
- treat staff with consideration and courtesy.

Relationship with Stakeholders

The Commonwealth recognises the special skills and expertise within the community legal services sector which contributes to the Program meeting community needs. The Commonwealth aims to build on this expertise by working cooperatively with the sector to ensure that the Program meets its objectives. To that end, the Commonwealth may, from time to time, establish consultative committees and working groups with Program stakeholders for particular projects or Program issues.

The Commonwealth liaises regularly with the NACLC and generally seeks sector input into Program issues through NACLC representatives.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth and each of the legal aid commissions in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Attorney General's Department of South Australia sets out a statement of principles to guide the Commonwealth and the relevant state in the management and support of the CLSP . An SPM Agreement sets out the purchasing arrangement for provision of State Program Manager services. The Commonwealth liaises with State Program Managers through both regular and specific purpose meetings.

3. FUNDING

- 3.1 Commonwealth Funding
 - 3.2 State Funding
 - 3.3 Funding from Other Sources
 - 3.4 Service Generated Income
 - 3.5 Client Contributions
 - 3.6 Recovery of Surplus Funding
 - 3.7 Allocation of New and Additional Funding
-

3. Funding

3.1 Commonwealth Funding

Commonwealth funding under the Program is dependent upon the appropriation amount approved by Parliament in each Commonwealth budgetary cycle. New funding for the Program requires Ministerial and Federal Cabinet approval, and passage through Parliament as part of the Federal Budget process.

Funding from the Commonwealth is usually provided to CLCs on a recurrent basis, subject to satisfactory performance under the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement. Each community legal centre is expected to operate within the limits of its allocated funding, the exact amount of which is set out in each individual service agreement. Funding must be fully acquitted in accordance with the requirements of the Service Agreement.

All CLCs are funded under one or more ‘funding categories’ or sub-programs. Funding categories relate to specific funds provided for particular services or projects, such as, women’s legal services and clinical legal education projects. The full range of current Commonwealth/State funding categories is outlined at ‘Section 7 – Specialist and Generalist Funding’. Some of these funding categories also attract State funding.

3.2 State Funding

State funding is subject to State parliamentary and budgetary processes. Where a State operates a State-based community legal services program, this funding may be provided on a recurrent or one-off basis.

State funding provided under the Service Agreement may be specifically directed by the relevant State Government to any of the funding categories above, or may be provided for a specific State subprogram. From time to time, funding may also be allocated by the State for special projects.

3.3 Funding from other Sources

CLCs may independently obtain further funding from other sources such as fundraising activities and private donations. Where CLCs receive funding from other sources, details of the source and amount of those funds must be reported as set out in the Service Agreement.

3.4 Service Generated Income

Funding received under the Service Agreement may result in the generation of service income (bank interest, fees for community legal education activities, client contributions, and costs recovered and retained). These funds are considered to constitute part of the funding provided to a CLC and are to be disclosed and treated as described in the Service Agreement.

3.5 Client Contributions

CLCs may wish to seek client contributions for certain services. However, clients are not to be excluded from assistance on the basis of their inability to make a financial contribution. It

is fundamental to the Program that services are established to provide legal assistance to the socio-economically disadvantaged members of the community and those with special needs.

In seeking contributions for services funded by the Program, CLCs must ensure that any such policy is in keeping with these Guidelines and individual service agreements.

3.6 Recovery of Excess Funding

For a range of reasons CLCs may not spend all their funding in a particular financial year. In such cases the Commonwealth and/or State is entitled to recover its proportion of the Excess Surplus Funds, as described in the Service Agreement. Community legal centres with an excess may submit a proposal for the expenditure of any excess through the Program Manager in the relevant State or Territory. The Commonwealth will consider all proposals relating to surplus Commonwealth funds in the context of national funding priorities at the time.

3.7 Allocation of New and Additional Funding

The Commonwealth may establish new community legal services or enhance existing services when additional funding is provided under the Federal Budget or when an existing service ceases to operate. In the case of a service ceasing to operate, the Commonwealth may either fund a new service in the same geographical location or reallocate the funding to an area of greater need within the Program. In making decisions about allocation of funding, the Commonwealth considers the demand for services, the capacity of existing service providers and the amount of funding available.

The selection of a new service provider within the Program is managed by the Indigenous Justice and Legal Assistance Division, typically through a tender process which is advertised in local and national newspapers.

If one-off funding becomes available within the Program, the Commonwealth may apply such funds to either discrete projects or the enhancement of existing services.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1 Reporting Requirements

4.2 Data Collection

4.3 Quality Assurance

4. Accountability

4.1 Reporting Requirements

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department must comply with a range of laws in administering the program. One of the most important is the *Financial Management and Accountability Act (Cth) 1997* ('the FMA Act'). This Act lays down the regulatory financial framework for Commonwealth departments and agencies. The FMA Act requires proper evaluation of performance to be undertaken and acted upon. Its aim is to ensure that taxpayers receive value for money in the management of public resources and the use of public property.

CLCs operating within the Program are required to demonstrate appropriate expenditure of public funds. Funds provided for specific purposes must be expended on those activities and must further the objectives of the Program.

Each community legal centre must comply with certain reporting requirements as set out in the Service Agreement to enable the Commonwealth and State Program Managers to monitor and review their progress and performance and to ensure the accountability of the Program.

4.2 Data Collection

Under the Service Agreement, all CLCs are required to collect, and then provide to the Commonwealth, data about client demographics and service provision. All data provided to the Commonwealth in relation to individual clients is de-identified to ensure that client privacy is protected. This information is used by the Commonwealth, State governments and community legal service organisations to:

- describe what the Program is doing
- describe who is accessing services under the Program
- evaluate the performance of the Program in meeting its outcome and objectives
- evaluate the performance of individual service providers in meeting performance targets
- justify support for ongoing Program funding
- plan for future service provision, and
- support development of new policy initiatives.

From time to time, other persons (such as students, local council authorities and/or community groups, etc), request access to information about the Program for research or to support funding proposals. Where data relating to a specific CLC is sought by another community legal centre or by a person or agency outside the Program, the Commonwealth will not release that data without first obtaining permission from the community legal centre in question. On occasions the Commonwealth may have to release information without the permission of a particular CLC. These instances may include a request by a Senate Committee, the Australian National Audit Office or under a Freedom of Information application.

4.3 Quality Assurance

The Commonwealth and Program stakeholders have an agreed set of nine service standards which are used to establish a nationally consistent, foundational level of quality for service provision.

There is a corresponding service standard for each of the core service activities. Service standards are provided for:

- information
- advice
- casework
- community legal education
- law reform and legal policy
- accessibility
- organisational management
- management of information and data, and
- assessing client satisfaction and managing complaints

Under the Service Agreement, all CLCs are required to be fully compliant with all applicable standards.

Where centres provide legal services, they are required to comply with the regulations governing legal practitioners in their State or Territory which reflect the unique professional relationship between lawyer and client. In summary, this relates to the way:

- the client problem is received, assessed, accepted or referred
- client confidentiality is established and protected
- the legal issues are identified and dealt with
- any additional specialist expertise is obtained
- the matter is managed
- information is sought from, and provided to, clients
- client files are established and maintained, and
- court requirements, including filing, are explained to the client and carried out.

These imperatives apply regardless of where a CLC operates or whether the legal service is provided by a volunteer or an employed staff member.

5. SERVICE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Management Committee

5.2 Staff

5.3 Volunteers

5.4 Prioritising Resources

5. Service Management

5.1 Management Committee (or equivalent entity)

To be eligible to receive, or continue to receive funding, an organisation must be a duly incorporated body under relevant State or Territory law operating pursuant to its constitution. As part of incorporation, each organisation is required to have a management committee (or equivalent entity) as its governing body. The primary role of the management committee in regard to the CLSP is to sign the Service Agreement and ensure that the organisation complies with and meets its obligations under that agreement.

The management committee does not play an active role in day-to-day administrative issues unless required to by exceptional circumstances. Its focus is on the provision of strategic direction and corporate governance. It is responsible for the development of broad policy and direction which is subsequently implemented by staff members of the CLC.

Ideally a management committee should have members with expertise in or knowledge of these areas of responsibility:

- legal
- financial
- personnel
- planning and policy and
- reporting and accountability

The management committee should also have appropriate representation or input from the target client group/s of the centre.

In determining the composition of the management committee, consideration must be given to minimising any real or perceived conflict of interest between potential and existing committee members (and their affiliations) and the activities of the CLC. Appropriate procedures need to be in place to deal with such conflicts should they arise.

5.2 Staff

The management committee (or equivalent entity) is the employer of all staff at a CLC and is therefore solely responsible for:

- ensuring all staff, whether employees or volunteers, are appropriately qualified and trained
- ensuring no conflict of interest exists, or is likely to arise, in the performance of the obligations under the Service Agreement by any of employees, agents or sub-contractors

- complying with all relevant legislative requirements, for example in relation to occupational health and safety, and
- providing adequate insurance for workers' compensation, public liability and professional indemnity for all staff.

5.3 Volunteers

CLCs are encouraged to utilise volunteers to enhance their service delivery. Where volunteers are utilised in relation to Program funding and activities, such work needs to be in accordance with individual service agreements and these Guidelines.

5.4 Prioritising Resources

CLCs have a responsibility to ensure that resources are allocated in such a way as to provide the most benefit to the greatest number of people. While there is no simple rule on how to allocate limited resources, decisions should be based on an assessment of individual situations. Factors which a service provider should consider include the:

- extent to which the person is facing some form of social or systemic barrier to accessing legal services
- extent to which the person meets any eligibility criteria set by the service provider
- vulnerability of the person should no assistance or no further assistance be provided
- potential for reaching a resolution at the earliest opportunity which achieves a just and satisfactory outcome for the client
- extent to which the service required by the person falls within the particular scope of services provided by the organisation
- availability of more appropriate assistance through other service providers
- potential of the service provider to assist the person achieve a desired outcome, and
- impact the provision of services to a particular person will have on the ability of the service provider to assist other clients and potential clients.

6. SERVICE DELIVERY

- 6.1 Core Service Activities
 - 6.2 Links with Other Service Providers
 - 6.3 Alternative Dispute Resolution
 - 6.4 Eligibility Criteria
-

6. Service Delivery

6.1 Core Service Activities

CLCs are expected to meet the Program objectives by assisting clients and communities to access responsive, respectful, understandable and useful services in relation to legal issues.

The core service activities are:

The Provision of Information: Information is provided without reference to the specific details of the client's case. Information activities do not include requests for general information such as directions, deliveries etc which form a normal part of any organisation's ongoing business.

The Provision of Advice: Advice is provided when a service provider assists a client to choose between options relevant to their problem. It includes but is not limited to counselling, advocacy, support, referral and/or legal advice. It can also involve assistance with the drafting of simple correspondence as well as phone calls made on the client's behalf during, or as soon as practicable, following the provision of advice.

An Advice is a discrete activity which occurs on an individual occasion. At the conclusion of an advice, there is no follow up action to be undertaken and there is no expectation that the client will have further contact with the service provider about the same problem.

Casework: Casework is an activity where a service provider provides ongoing assistance and/or acts on behalf of a client in respect of a problem.

Community Legal Education (CLE): CLE is the provision of information and education to members of the community on an individual or group basis about the law and legal processes. It is also a process of increasing the community's ability to participate in legal processes by utilising community development strategies.

Law Reform and Legal Policy (LRLP): LRLP is an activity where projects are undertaken which have the potential to influence and effect changes to the law, legal processes and ultimately service delivery. These endeavours enable the community's active participation in the legal system.

6.2 Links With Other Service Providers

To ensure efficient and effective service provision, CLCs should develop and maintain professional links with other organisations and agencies in their local area and develop appropriate referral mechanisms accordingly. For example, in the family law system clients can be assisted in the resolution of disputes through counseling and mediation services provided by approved community organisations funded under the Commonwealth Family Relationships Services Program.

CLCs which provide services to clients who may be experiencing family or domestic violence should ensure that there are appropriate procedures in place for responding to such clients without placing them at further risk.

6.3 Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative dispute resolution is an umbrella term for processes, other than judicial determination, in which an impartial person assists those in a dispute to resolve the issues between them. The term is also used to include approaches that enable parties to prevent or manage their own disputes without outside assistance.

CLCs should aim to assist people to resolve disputes at the earliest opportunity. This requires increased emphasis on providing people with the capacity to resolve legal problems without the need to resort to litigation.

The Commonwealth is committed to increasing the awareness and provision of alternatives to litigation, especially for family law disputes. For many families, post-separation is a life crisis that requires a holistic approach from service providers.

Primary dispute resolution is the term used in Part III of the *Family Law Act 1975* to describe procedures and services for the resolution of family law disputes without the need for a judicial hearing, including counseling and mediation. The Act encourages people to use primary dispute resolution. These services are provided by a range of organisations and private practitioners. The Australian Government has provided funding for dispute resolution services in approved community-based organizations and legal aid commissions.

While community legal service providers should always consider the safety of the client first in determining the most appropriate method of dispute resolution, there are some dispute resolution processes, such as shuttle mediation, which may be appropriate and safe for situations even where there are allegations of family violence, or fear of such violence occurring in the future. CLCs should aim to develop close links with primary dispute resolution services within their local area in order to provide the most appropriate form of service delivery for persons engaged in family law disputes.

Nonetheless, it is important that community legal service providers assess for indicators of family or domestic violence and identify whether there is any immediate safety risk. If there is a risk, then services should support the client to take appropriate measures, or to access services that will enhance the client's safety, for instance, in assisting the client to apply for a protective order, or referring the client to emergency services such as a refuge.

6.4 Eligibility Criteria

A CLC may determine its own eligibility criteria in relation to ongoing assistance and casework provided that its obligations, as set out under the Service Agreement, are met and that such eligibility criteria do not breach Commonwealth, State or Territory anti-discrimination legislation.

7. SERVICES PROVIDED

- 7.1 Generalist Services
 - 7.2 Child Support Services
 - 7.3 Disability Discrimination Act Legal Services
 - 7.4 Commonwealth Community Environmental Legal Program
 - 7.5 Welfare Rights Services
 - 7.6 Women's Legal Services
 - 7.7 Youth Legal Services
 - 7.8 Civil Litigation Project
 - 7.9 Clinical Legal Education Program
 - 7.10 Indigenous Women's Outreach Project
 - 7.11 Rural Women's Outreach Lawyer Services
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7. Generalist and Specialist Services

The Commonwealth funds generalist and specialist services under the Program.

7.1 Generalist Services

Generalist services involve delivery of core service activities across a broad range of legal matters. The services delivered should also reflect the needs of the local community. Specialist legal services such as child support, civil litigation, and child and youth legal services are also delivered through some generalist centres.

7.2 Child Support Scheme Legal Services Program (CSSLSP)

The CSSLSP is a national Commonwealth program designed to help disadvantaged parents who receive or who are seeking child support and parents who pay child support, understand their rights and responsibilities under the Child Support Scheme (the scheme).

The objective of the CSSLSP is to provide information and legal advice to low income parents, particularly (but not exclusively) Centrelink beneficiaries, in relation to their rights and responsibilities under the scheme. Through providing this information, the CSSLSP aims to increase the level of financial support provided to the children of separated parents. Some services primarily assist parents receiving or seeking child support and some services primarily assist parents who pay child support.

To be eligible for services other than advice and associated minor assistance from organisations operating under the CSSLSP, clients must be either a person with a child support liability, or a person entitled to child support, and on a low income or receiving a Centrelink income support payment.

7.3 Disability Discrimination Act Legal Services

Disability Discrimination Act Legal Services (DDAL services) are funded to address the needs of people experiencing discrimination because of a disability or a perceived disability or because a family member or friend has a disability. The core aim of DDAL services is to achieve widespread understanding of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* in the legal services community and to educate CLC workers so that there is a resource of knowledgeable advocates available to assist with access to the complaints mechanism within the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. Community legal education plays a vital role in assisting members of the community to be aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Act.

DDAL services provide advice and/or ongoing casework assistance to people who are appearing before the Federal Court or the Federal Magistrate's Court. Wherever possible, they provide support and encourage people to conduct their own cases as well as assisting disability advocates to take up cases on behalf of clients. Service providers also undertake activities such as research projects and submissions to governments and other bodies. These services should be conducted in accordance with the objectives of the *Disability Discrimination Act*.

7.4 Commonwealth Community Environmental Legal Program (CCELP)

The CCELP is a national Commonwealth program which provides funding to Environmental Defender's Offices (EDOs) to provide legal services to clients on a broad range of issues concerning the quality of the clients' environment. The aim of the CCELP is to ensure that public interest environmental law is effectively advocated through the provision of core service activities. This includes a focus on early intervention strategies such as:

- providing advice on environmental legal issues
- developing community educational activities on environmental law issues, including publications and community workshops or seminars
- developing resources on environmental law for legal practitioners and staff of other environmental agencies
- developing links with other organisations providing services under the CCELP, universities, environmental agencies and other relevant groups to further the CCELP priorities
- promoting and participating in educational activities, publications, and conferences which further enhance the CCELP priorities, and
- conducting law reform, legal research and policy work in the area of environmental law, and enhancing the dissemination of environmental information within the community by participating in inquiries.

Environmental legal services are to be provided on a State/Territory wide basis to ensure that the needs of clients in both urban and rural areas are addressed. Organisations operating within the same state will be expected to work closely together to ensure appropriate coverage of State/Territory needs and issues. All funded organisations should develop specific strategies to provide services to people in rural and remote areas. Specific strategies to meet the needs of, and deal appropriately with, indigenous clients should also be implemented.

7.5 Welfare Rights Services

Welfare Rights Centres provide core service activities for people experiencing difficulties with income support issues. They address the needs of clients with Centrelink and Family Assistance benefit issues and seek to provide independent assistance to people wishing to appeal against administrative decisions by Government agencies.

7.6 Women's Legal Services

Women's Legal Services provide core service activities to women, often providing State-wide services through telephone advice lines. They also undertake community legal education and law reform activities in relation to family law, violence against women, discrimination, and employment.

7.7 Youth Legal Services

Funding is provided for access to core service activities by children and young people and those working on their behalf.

7.8 Civil Litigation Project

Civil litigation project funding enables ongoing representation to be offered to people experiencing a civil legal problem whose dispute contains some element of social injustice but who are either ineligible for legal aid, unable to afford a private solicitor or unable to access a pro bono service. These projects provide legal representation, advice, negotiated settlements and advocacy before Courts and Tribunals. Advice on legal merit, court procedures and evidential requirements is provided to other community centres for particular cases.

7.9 Clinical Legal Education Program

The Clinical Legal Education program aims to forge closer links with Universities to help them promote public interest legal work with their students and improve the quality of and access to legal assistance for socially and economically disadvantaged members of the community.

7.10 Indigenous Women's Outreach Project

Funding is provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's projects to address the particular legal service needs of indigenous women.

7.11 Rural Women's Outreach Lawyer Services

Several generalist centres are funded to employ rural women's outreach lawyers for the provision of legal services to women in rural and remote areas, particularly where isolation is exacerbated by factors such as disability, age and domestic violence.