

# **Role of the Community Member – Legal Aid Review Committee (LARC)**

## **Information Sheet**

This Information Sheet answers frequently asked questions about the role of the Community Member on a Legal Aid Review Committee (LARC).

### **What is a Legal Aid Review Committee?**

The Legal Aid Review Committee (LARC) is an independent decision-making committee established under s53 of the Legal Aid Commission Act 1979 (NSW). LARC is responsible for determining appeals made by legal aid applicants or legally assisted persons in relation to decisions made by Legal Aid NSW. A legal aid applicant can appeal against a decision to refuse his or her application for legal aid.

A legally aided person can also appeal against a condition of the grant or a variation of a grant of aid which includes a decision to terminate legal aid. Once LARC has determined the appeal, it will inform the appellant of its decision. The decision of LARC is final and there is no other avenue of appeal against a LARC decision.

### **How many Legal Aid Review Committees exist?**

Currently there are six Committees:

- x3 Committees consider Family Law related matters (incl. State Care & Protection matters)
- x3 Committees consider Criminal Law and Civil Law related matters

### **Who are members on a Legal Aid Review Committee?**

Each of the six Committees consists of a Chairperson, a community member (who is not a legal practitioner) and a joint nominee from the Law Society of NSW and the NSW Bar Association. There are 1 or more persons to act as an alternate member during the absence or illness of a member.

### **Are members remunerated for their services?**

No. All positions are non-remunerative positions. No expenses are reimbursed when utilising your personal devices to review material.

### **What is the role of a Community Member on a Legal Aid Review Committee?**

The Community Member is not a legal practitioner but has an appreciation of the problems of the economically and socially disadvantaged. The other Committee members will be legal practitioners. When making their decision the Committee must comply with Legal Aid NSW policies and guidelines. Members must read the appeals and supporting documentation before each meeting and make notes which should be discussed with other members before jointly making a final decision.

### **What is the term of office of a member?**

A member will be appointed for a term not exceeding 2 years and shall be eligible for reappointment as a member.

### **How are meetings conducted during Covid?**

Microsoft Teams video conferencing is used to hold LARC meetings remotely which provide members with a reasonable opportunity to participate in meetings. We propose to continue with virtual meetings in the future. *LARC meetings commence at 5pm and are usually held on a Wednesday.*

Also, we utilise Microsoft OneDrive for file sharing where members are given access permission to receive LARC reports via the cloud storage service OneDrive. With this mode of file sharing, members download the reports to their personal device, such as PC, laptop or tablet to review prior to their scheduled meeting.