

## Central Tablelands CLSD Minutes Tuesday 18 May 2021 via ZOOM

**Present:** Eveleen **May** (Disability Advocacy) Cherry (Systemic Policy Officer, Disability Advocacy), Matthew **Elbourne** (South West Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service- VERTO), Joshua **Scotland** (Legal Aid NSW), Susan **Kaniesk** (Joint Child Protection Response Program, Bathurst) Therese **Short** (Service Manager, Bathurst and Oberon Neighbourhood Centres), Donna **Flood** (Welfare Rights Legal Centre), Winnecke **Baker** (Legal Aid NSW), Arlia **Fleming** (Centre Director/Principal Solicitor Elizabeth Evatt CLC), Michelle **Graves** (Youth Horizons), Rochelle **Thompson** (Community Engagement Officer, Services Australia), Jill **Marshall** (Legal Aid NSW, Orange), Rebecca **Bohun** ( Manager CW, WDV CAS), Leona **Bishop** (Manager, Relationships Australia Bathurst).

**Apologies:** Peter **Ringbauer** (Solicitor in Charge, Legal Aid NSW Orange), Debbie **Gaudi** (Manager, Binaal Billa), Gayle **Chambers** (Registrar, Lithgow Local Court), Greg **Rohan** (Immigration Advice and Rights Centre), Venessa **Possum** (CEO, Blue Mountains Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre), Megan **Bargwanna** (Manager Community Services, Bathurst Regional Council), Mick **Madden** (Orange Aboriginal Medical Service), Kym **Scanlon** (Myst), Lorraine **Murphy** (Central West Women’s Health Centre)

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Responsibility/ Time
1. General welcome & acknowledgement	<i>Arlia opened the meeting by welcoming partners and acknowledging the lands of the Gundungurra and Darug Peoples, whose sovereignty was never ceded.</i>	
2. Service updates and good news stories	<p><b>Arlia Fleming – Centre Director/Principal Solicitor Blue Mountains Central Tablelands CLC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The CLC recently coordinated a multi-agency response to help a long-term client impacted by domestic and family violence to achieve greater safety for herself and her children.</li> <li>- Tina Napier has recently resigned from her role at the CLC and with CLSD.</li> <li>- New community caseworker, Saffron Harris has joined the CLC to provide holistic support to clients.</li> <li>- Senior tenant advocate Ben Connor is on long-service leave.</li> <li>- The name of the centre should officially change to Blue Mountains and Central Tablelands CLC before the end of the financial year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Leona Bishop - Relationships Australia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support groups are continuing online, including supporting children after separation.</li> </ul>	

- Relationships Australia would like to provide a local men's behaviour change program and may contact partners to support future funding applications.
- There is an elder abuse counsellor and mediator available at Relationships Australia for people to refer to.

#### **Rebecca Bohun – Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service**

- Currently receiving 400 referrals monthly from police for incidents of domestic violence perpetrated against women.
- The WDVACS has employed more staff to meet the demand.
- There is a pilot men's behaviour change program at Housing Plus in Orange that is available for referrals. The WDVACS staff act as family support workers for the partners of the men who do the program.
- The [Orchard Women's Refuge](#) in Orange is open. The Orchard provides:
  - o A safe and culturally appropriate space for about 72 families each year.
  - o A supportive environment for victims to recover.
  - o 6, 2-bedroom apartments, outdoor spaces, private playgrounds for children, counselling rooms, audio-visual equipment, study rooms, a creche, kitchen and BBQ area.
- Blue Mountains and Central Tablelands CLC are holding community legal education about family law, victim's support and ADVOs in June.

#### **Matthew Elbourne – VERTO**

- There is a new financial counsellor working at VERTO.
- Tribunals might go back to providing hearings face to face. This is a good way to help clients through duty services, but it might make things more difficult for remote and less mobile clients.

#### **Susan Kaniesk - JCPRP**

- There has been an increase in the number of ADVOs that have been able to put in place to protect children, which is really positive.

#### **Joshua Scotland – Community Legal Education, Legal Aid NSW**

- For Law Week Legal Aid is delivering lots of CLE in partnership with local libraries about neighbourhood disputes and money and debts.
- It is important to be aware of the [Stolen Generations reparations scheme](#), which **will end in July 2022**.
- Legal services can help people with their applications and also to seek a review if their application is denied.

- ❖ Leona and Bec to talk about opportunities regarding the delivery of Men's Behaviour Change programs in and around Bathurst.

- You can listen to a podcast about the scheme [HERE](#).

**Jill Marshall – Legal Aid NSW**

- Law Week talks about money and debts are underway; Bathurst yesterday, Cowra today and Orange tomorrow.
- Unfortunately, are seeing quite a lot of elder abuse matters so hope to do another CLE event about this later in the year.
- Recently achieved a good result for a client who had been a victim of domestic violence. Legal Aid was able to get a significant mortgage debt waived because her partner at the time had put her name down on the mortgage documents without her knowledge or consent.

**Eveleen and Sherry – Disability Advocacy**

- Disability Advocacy is keen to promote awareness of the [Disability Royal Commission](#).
- Unfortunately, the waiting list locally is closed while recruitment for a new advocate is finalised.
- Disability Advocacy is expanding to work in systemic advocacy and policy and Cherry is working in this area.
- Early results from a survey that DA is conducting show that about 45% of people are unsatisfied with the NDIS.

**Therese Short - Manager, Bathurst and Oberon Neighbourhood Centres**

- There has been a focus on family law issues at the legal clinic and an increase in Work and Development Orders.
- The Men Connect programs are having great outcomes. This is a peer support program on Monday night; one week it might be purely conversations, another week they might repair bikes for donation or pack hampers, there is a lot of variety.

**Rochelle – Community Engagement Officer Services Australia**

- Services Australia staff are visiting communities in person.
- Services Australia has introduced an appointment-based system so that people don't need to wait around at a service centre for the next available time.
- Call the regular Services Australia payment line to make an appointment.

**3. Guest Speaker**

**Donna Flood – Welfare Rights Legal Centre**

- See full presentation sent with the minutes –

- The [Welfare Rights Legal Centre](#) specialises in social security law – everything to do with Centrelink.
- The legal centre is independent of Centrelink and covers all of NSW, except the Illawarra.

- ❖ Contact Donna about bespoke training for your service if your service is interested in

- Welfare Rights provide legal advice and representation and can provide community legal education.
- Welfare Rights is interested in increasing the knowledge and skills of all community workers to spot and help their clients with social security issues.

Your client:

- Might not know that they have a social security issue and even if they do, they might not think that there is a solution.
- Might have limited understanding and may not know the steps that they can take themselves.
- Needs to be aware that attempting to solve something themselves can also have risks.

The following situations could be a red flag for a social security issue:

- Someone facing eviction because they can't pay their rent.
- Someone being accused of stealing essentials like food or clothing.
- Someone alleging that they have been scammed because money is missing from their bank account.

**Contact Welfare Rights as a first step about any issue, no matter how big or small, to do with a Centrelink payment.**

**02 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028 (toll free outside Sydney metro)**

**Intake Times**

Monday 9:30am – 12:30pm

Wednesday 9:30am – 12:30pm

Thursday 1:30pm – 4:30pm

**4. CLSD Program partnership actions**

**Forbes Community Legal Education and Community Day**

- Very successful event, attendees were impressed with the quality of information provided during the community legal education events.
- It was a great opportunity to connect Binaal Billa and the First Nations Women's Legal Program and Western Women's Legal Support.
- About 50-60 birth certificate applications were taken by Births, Deaths and Marriages.

**ROCP in Cowra to re-open in person**

- Legal Aid NSW is working to re-open its Regional Outreach Clinic Program (ROCP) clinic in Cowra.
- A launch event will be planned in Cowra in the new financial year.

❖ Please contact Jill Marshall (Legal Aid NSW, Orange) if your service is interested in participating in the launch event in Cowra.

<p><b>5. Any other issues or requests</b></p>	<p><b>Leona Bishop - Relationships Australia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The waitlist for problems related to domestic violence is still very long. Relationships Australia is still working through its covid waitlist.</li> </ul> <p><b>Jill Marshall - Legal Aid NSW</b></p> <p><i>Family Law</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family lawyer Joshua Pigott has met with Catholic Care and Binaal Billa to reinvigorate service delivery and referrals in Parkes and Forbes.</li> <li>- Josh is meeting with the WDVCS on Friday about Parkes and Forbes as well.</li> </ul> <p><b>WDVCAS and VERTO - Tenancy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VERTO has seen a significant increase in ‘no grounds evictions’ even if there are grounds.</li> <li>- Agents and landlords are choosing this option because it is more straightforward for them.</li> <li>- Haven’t seen more cases of DCJ evicting people before their criminal matter is finalised, which had been raised at our last meeting.</li> <li>- People should not assume that what their agent or landlord tells them is true – it is very important to get a second opinion via VERTO.</li> <li>- The WDVCS is finding it difficult to find housing for clients who are blocked from the social housing waitlist due to previous arrears or property damage, which was sustained while they were a victim of domestic violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Bec from WDVCS to speak to Jill Marshall at Orange Legal Aid about how the civil team can appeal to appeal this ban.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Next meeting</b></p>	<p><b>17 August</b></p>	

Organisation	Name	Contact Details
Welfare Rights Legal Centre	Donna Flood	<a href="mailto:donna@welfarerights.org.au">donna@welfarerights.org.au</a>
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Legal Aid NSW (CLE)	Joshua Scotland	<a href="mailto:Joshua.scotland@legalaid.nsw.gov.au">Joshua.scotland@legalaid.nsw.gov.au</a>
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