

CLSD e-update

Oct-Nov 2011

CLSD PROGRAM UNIT NEWS

Staffing at the CLSD Program Unit

Kim Gabler has returned from maternity leave! Kim will be with us 3 days week – from Monday to Wednesday. Kim will be job sharing the CLSD Coordinator position with Glenn Sofinowski who will stay with us 2 days/week and will work with the CLC Program the other 3 days/week. All email correspondence to CLSD Coordinators should go to clsd@legalaid.nsw.gov.au. To speak to Kim or Glenn, call (02) 9219 5691. Jenny Lovric, CLSD Program Manager can be contacted on (02) 9219 5102 or jenny.lovric@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

CLSD planning & 2012 Meetings

CLSD planning workshops continue across CLSD regions, with Far West and Northern Rivers planning meetings held in August and September. Partners' input into and participation in these meetings is greatly valued. We will be settling the Calendar for 2012 meetings during the upcoming round of quarterly CLSD meetings

CLSD e-updates are now on the web

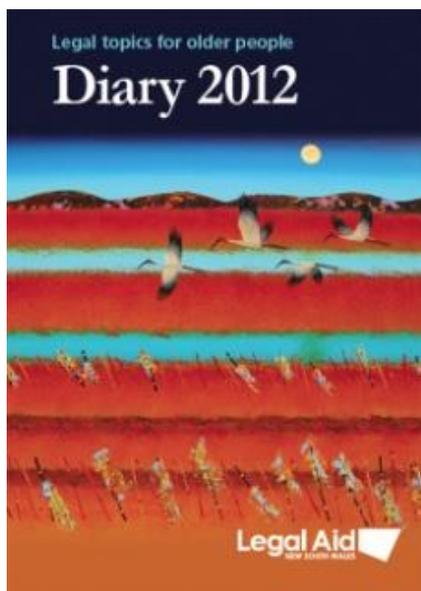
CLSD e-updates are now on the new Legal Aid NSW website. You can find information about the CLSD Program as well as recent CLSD e-updates on our site at <http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/community-partnerships/cooperative-legal-services-delivery-clsd-program>

CLSD roll out

The CLSD Steering Committee has given approval to the CLSD Program Unit to explore rolling out the CLSD Program on the Mid-North Coast. We plan to host an introductory meeting on the Mid-North Coast before the end of the year to gauge local interest in a CLSD partnership in the region. Stay tuned.

CLSD PROJECTS

2012 Diary - Legal topics for Older People



CLSD has collaborated with the Legal Aid NSW Older Person's Legal Program and produced a 2012 diary that contains information about 12 key legal issues and topics of interest to older people. Each month of the diary highlights an issue and refers the reader to where they can find more detailed information on that topic. The diary also has useful telephone numbers and websites and information about other free legal and related services, resources and publications.

We would be grateful if you would help us distribute this resource to as many older people as you can through whatever means you think best, before the end of this year. We will send CLSD Regional Coordinators a box to distribute, but agencies can order directly from Legal Aid NSW by calling (02) 9219 5028 or emailing publications@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Discrimination Toolkit Workshops roll out

Meredith Osborne and Fiona Pace from Legal Aid NSW are looking at rolling out the Discrimination Toolkit Workshops in Far West NSW, Albany and Wagga Wagga before the end of the year.

LEGAL AID NSW NEWS

CEO news

Many of you will be aware of the news that Alan Kirkland sadly left Legal Aid NSW in September. Alan's contribution to the justice sector was summed up in a fabulous farewell on October 28 in glowing terms by Anna Cody (Chair of Community Legal Centres NSW and Director of Kingsford Legal Centre) and John McKenzie, Chief Legal Officer of the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT). The Executive Director, Criminal Law Legal Aid NSW, Brian Sandland described some of Alan's achievements as CEO of Legal Aid NSW over the past three years:

"Alan brought the personal qualities necessary for a CEO coupled with significant achievements for the organisation during his period as CEO of LANSW. Alan was calm, accessible and consultative in his approach to the resolution of issues. He showed a genuine interest in the work of Legal Aid NSW and a commitment to making service delivery changes that would benefit disadvantaged people ... He was innovative and modern in his approach to service delivery and strategically positioned Legal Aid to access more funds for early intervention initiatives. He worked very effectively in law reform across all three program areas. Under Alan's time as CEO, funding increased, staffing increased and service delivery increased. These are significant achievements in his time as CEO. We thank Alan for his contribution to the organisation and wish him all the best for the future."

It was a very special farewell for a very special man who proved he can add cool dancing to his long list of talents.

The Attorney-General has (re)appointed Bill Grant to the role of CEO Legal Aid NSW. Bill Grant will recommence at Legal Aid NSW on 5 December 2011.

Legal Aid NSW is now in cyberspace!

We're now in cyber space on You Tube! We have a station, Legal Aid TV and 2 channels: Best for Kids and What's the law? The URLs are:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/BestForKidsTV>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/WhatsTheLaw>

Legal aid now available for ECT administration inquiries

On 25 October 2011, the Legal Aid NSW Board approved amendments to the Civil Law policies for mental health matters, making legal aid available for electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) administration inquiries before the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) and including the category of "correctional patient" within the policy to reflect a legislative amendment to the *Mental Health Act 2007* (NSW). See Policy Online at:

<http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/for-lawyers/policyonline>

Sexual Assault Communications Privilege - legal aid now available

The Legal Aid NSW Board recently approved amendments to the Civil Law Policy making legal aid available to protected confidants in relation to sexual assault communications privilege. Section 298 of the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* creates a specific category of legal privilege to prevent the counselling records of sexual assault complainants from being used in a court unless the court is able to find that it is in the public interest to do so. In December 2010, the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* was amended to strengthen the sexual assault communications privilege. As part of this legislative reform, the Government also announced funding for Legal Aid NSW to provide legal advice and representation to sexual assault complainants in subpoena applications.

The Legal Aid NSW Civil Law Policy has been amended to make legal aid available to protected confidants to oppose the production of protected confidences and/or the adduction of evidence in relation to protected

confidences. The intention of this specific legal aid funding is to provide legal assistance to *all* sexual assault complainants who are seeking to oppose the disclosure of protected confidences made in the context of counselling. For this reason the matters will not be subject to a means or merit test. While grants of aid will be administered as civil law grants, the criminal law fee scale will apply.

Legal Aid NSW will review the policy 12 months after the commencement date. See Civil Law Policy at 6.17 for relevant changes to the civil law policies. <http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/for-lawyers/policyonline/policies/6.-civil-law-matters-when-legal-aid-is-available/6.17.-sexual-assault-communications-privilege-matters>

Note that the Legal Aid NSW Sexual Assault Communications Privilege Unit will operate shortly (see notice in CLSD e-update September 2011).

Statement of Commitment with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)

Legal Aid NSW has signed a new *Statement of Commitment 2011-2013* with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT). The Statement acknowledges the importance of our partnership and the important role we both play in delivering legal services to Aboriginal people and communities around the state.

The ALS is the primary provider of legal services to many Aboriginal people and the fact that it is a community owned and run organisation is something that Legal Aid NSW deeply respects. See http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/7911/Statement-of-commitment.pdf

What's the Law?

What's the Law? is a legal education project for newly arrived migrants with limited English language skills. The *What's the Law?* kit contains of a DVD with 10 simple stories dealing with the most common legal issues experienced by recently arrived migrants and refugees.



The DVD is suited for use in education sessions with ESL (English as the second language) learners. There are student activity sheets to support each story, and teacher answer sheets. You can view the stories, download the activity and answer sheets below and print them out for group work. You can also order a free copy of the education kit, which includes the DVD and resources. Topics include:

1. The legal system
2. Driving rules
3. Car accidents
4. Buying a car
5. Police
6. Tenancy
7. Centrelink
8. Child protection
9. Family law
10. Family violence

What's the law? Train the trainer calendar

Legal Aid NSW is running workshops to provide teachers, tutors and community workers with the knowledge and confidence to deliver the *What's the law?* education package. The workshops cover key legal concepts, how to deal with legal questions, making legal referrals and where to find more information. See <http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/publications/factsheets-and-resources/whats-the-law>

Family Law Conference papers

Conference papers from the recent Legal Aid NSW Family Law Conference are available here:

<http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/for-lawyers/resources-and-tools/family-law/legal-aid-nsw-family-law-conference-2011>

Legal Aid NSW Child Support Service

The Child Support Service is a specialist service within the Family Law Division of Legal Aid NSW that provides legal advice and assistance on all child support legal issues. We are located in Parramatta in Sydney and provide regular outreach across the metropolitan area and Newcastle. We also visit the following locations on a monthly basis:

- Gosford
- Orange
- Dubbo
- Port Macquarie
- Kempsey
- Coffs Harbour
- Nowra
- Wollongong
- Wagga Wagga

See <http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/family-law/child-support-advice> for more information on the Child Support Service. The Service welcomes queries and referrals to the service on 1800 451 784 or 02 9633 9916.

SECTOR NEWS & REPORTS

John McKenzie from ALS wins Justice Medal!



John McKenzie, Chief Legal Officer of Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) was awarded the Law and Justice Foundation Justice Medal on Monday 24th October 2011 at Parliament House NSW.

John McKenzie began his legal career as a junior lawyer in Moree NSW with the Aboriginal Legal Service, some 30 years ago. Former High Court Chief Justice Sir Anthony Mason presented Mr McKenzie with the Justice Medal for his outstanding achievements over the past 30 years.

"Where many others have fought and then moved on, John remains dedicated and passionate to law reform, and he retains a fresh, innovative approach to legal service delivery," Sir Anthony Mason told the large audience at Parliament House. Sir Anthony specifically cited John's significant contribution to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. "John continues to be committed to ensuring the recommendations of the Commission remain at the forefront of law reform." "John is known for his unwavering commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal people receive proper legal representation and that the underlying issues causing the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system in NSW are strategically pursued," he said.

(source: the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT)

RRR Law



RRR Law is an initiative of the Law Council of Australia funded by the Australian Government as part of a broader project of the recruitment and retention of lawyers in RRR areas undertaken by the National Association of Community Legal Centres Inc.

The RRR Law website has information about legal careers in RRR Australia including:

- Location profiles highlighting some of the interesting RRR destinations to work in

- Development opportunities in RRR areas including a range of training programs to help further develop RRR lawyers' careers
- Case studies from people in RRR destinations to help RRR lawyers get a feel for what it is like to work in a RRR area.
- A database of legal jobs available in RRR Australia.

RRR Law gives current and aspiring legal practitioners an insight into what life is like in RRR Australia by breaking down myths and highlighting the exciting opportunities available to lawyers across Australia. It highlights the benefits of practising law in RRR areas and offers current and future lawyers an alternative option to practising in major cities. See <http://rrrlaw.com.au/> for more information.

False imprisonment case

In June 2011 Maurice Blackburn Solicitors and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre commenced a class action in the Supreme Court of NSW claiming damages for false imprisonment, trespass and/or assault and battery against the State of New South Wales. The class action is open to people who:

- were detained by a member of the NSW Police Force for (only) breach of bail;
- the alleged breach of bail related to offences which had been or were being prosecuted in the Children's Court; and
- at the time of the arrest, the person was not subject to the bail condition which was alleged to have been breached.

A few things to note about these criteria:

- They do not need to be a "young person" - the important criterion is that the breach of bail related to an offence being prosecuted in the Children's Court (that is, the offence occurred when they were 18 years of younger).
- The group is defined in this way (and not by reference to age) so that people who are now over 18 are not excluded we do not exclude people who were being dealt with in the Children's Court but are now over 18 years of age.
- The class action is not open to people whose arrest was for breach of bail AND other offences – i.e the relevant episode of arrest and detention must have been solely for breach of bail.

There is no time limit for joining the class action. The class action has been commenced under the new Part 10 of the *Civil Procedure Act* as an "open class". In other words, the class action is open to everyone who meets the criteria above - those who meet the criteria are automatically "in" the class action unless they decide to opt out. However, in order for a person to derive a benefit from the class action they will need to identify themselves, which is why people should be encouraged to contact PIAC if they believe they may fall within the class. Issues about limitation periods need to be addressed.

If you have any questions about the class action and whether a client may fall within its parameters please contact Kristy Fisher at Legal Aid, Civil Law Division, on (02) 9219 5152 Kristy.Fisher@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

OneGov pilot

OneGov is a direct access service initiative being piloted in Penrith and Orange Fair Trade Centres. During the pilot, trial people can visit the Penrith and Orange Fair Trading Centres to apply for a birth, marriage or death certificate, apply for a Seniors Card, buy National Parks passes, lodge NSW Housing applications, apply for and renew NSW Fisheries licences and receive general information and referrals to a range of other NSW Government services.

OneGov has been designed to improve access to NSW Government services by providing a single point of contact for the community. Watch this space to see how the pilot goes, and whether it will be rolled out in the future.

End the Pay Day Debt Trap

A dedicated campaign website has been set up to provide information on pay day debt and campaign for change. It contains news about the campaign. You can subscribe and get information on what you can do to support the campaign. The website is sponsored by Consumer Law Action Centre, Consumer Credit Legal Centre NSW and Financial Counselling Australia. See <http://www.debttrap.org.au/>

Personal stress, financial stress and violence against women – Crime and Justice Bulletin 151

A recent report by the Bureau of Crime Statistics has concluded that financial stress, personal stress and lack of social support are strong independent correlates of violence against women. The aim of this study was to explore the association between financial stress, personal stress, social support and violence against women.

The report found that the risk of actual or threatened violence was significantly higher for women who lack social support or who in the last 12 months have experienced financial stress or personal stressors such as divorce or separation, death of a family member/close friend, serious illness, serious accident, mental illness, serious disability, inability to get a job, involuntary loss of job and gambling problems.

The risk of actual or threatened violence for a woman at the lowest levels of financial and social stress was 4 per cent. At the upper end of the financial stress distribution (but the lowest end of the personal stress distribution), that risk jumped to nearly 15 per cent. At the upper end of the financial and personal stress distributions, the risk of actual or threatened violence was 36 per cent. These effects held up after controlling for age, being a sole parent, having alcohol and/or drug problems, level of social support and level of personal autonomy. Further research is necessary, however, to determine whether these factors are causes or consequences of violence against women. To read the Report, go to:

[http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/CJB151.pdf/\\$file/CJB151.pdf](http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/CJB151.pdf/$file/CJB151.pdf)

Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Grants Program

The Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Grants Program supports community projects that aim to improve access to justice, particularly for disadvantaged people. The Foundation accepts small grant applications of up to \$5000 at any time. The next application round for general grants of up to \$50,000 closes on 31 March 2012.

You must discuss your project proposal with Jane Kenny, Grants and Legal Information Manager at least 6 weeks before the closing date. For more information on how to apply for a grant, visit <http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/grants/apply> or phone (02) 8227 3200.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) - spread the word

Help spread the word to the community to help everyone understand why the NDIS is so important.

November 27 - December 3 is *Spread the Word Week* - a national week of action organised by *Every Australian Counts* to reach a goal of 100,000 supporters by the end of the year. The aim is to make sure all Australians - our family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and fellow community members - have the chance to hear how the NDIS will change the lives of people with a disability and their families.

Here are some things you can do to get the word out:

- Hold a stall in your community
- Letterbox the houses in your street
- Sign up at least 10 friends and colleagues

To take part in *Spread the Word Week*, contact Every Australian Counts who will send you the materials you will need. See <http://www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au/> for more information.

Relationship between transport and disadvantage

Ongoing difficulties associated with access to transport are commonly referred to as "transport disadvantage". As Australia has comparatively high levels of car ownership, difficulties associated with maintaining private

transport (e.g., financial stress related to initial cost of purchase, as well ongoing costs such as petrol, insurance, car purchase and maintenance) could also be included in the overall definition of transport disadvantage. This article covers these areas – with some attention to the particular disadvantage faced by people in RRR areas. See article at <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/pubs/sheets/rs/rs4.html>

New state-wide legal advice service for international students at Redfern Legal Centre

RLC will start its new legal advice service for international students in NSW on 5 October 2011. The free, confidential service will operate each Wednesday evening from 6:30pm at 73 Pitt St Redfern. Face to face and telephone appointments must be booked by calling 9698 7645. Free interpreters can also be provided.

The service will offer:

- Legal advice on most areas of law. (Advice will not be provided in commercial and conveyancing matters, neighbourhood disputes or for male defendants in Apprehended Violence Order matters.)
- A migration agent to advise students on migration issues associated with their legal problem. (Migration advice will not be provided on permanent residence applications.)

Please promote this service to international students – see <http://www.rlc.org.au/>

If you have any questions about the service please contact Natalie Ross at natalie.ross@rlc.org.au or on (02) 9698 7277.

Pro bono assistance for defendants in some AVO/ADVO matters

The Law Society of NSW's Pro Bono Scheme is now assisting defendants in AVO and ADVO matters in some matters. This assistance includes legal advice, preparing documentation and representation at Court. Applicants that satisfy the Scheme's means and merit assessment may be eligible to receive assistance either "in-house" or by being referred to a pro bono Solicitor. There is a particular focus on assisting men that have a related Family Law matter involving access to their children. Contact the Law Society Pro Bono Scheme on (02) 9926 0364.

Reminder: Survey about police complaints still open

Lawyers, social workers, youth workers, and other client advocates in the community are invited to participate in a confidential online survey on perceptions and experiences of the police complaints system in NSW.

The results will be used to inform improvements to the current system. The project is being conducted by Community Legal Centres NSW together with Professor Jane Goodman-Delahunty at Charles Sturt University. The survey will take 10-20 minutes.

The researchers are interested in your views, whether or not you are familiar with the police complaints system. As well as people with police complaint experience, we also need respondents with no experience of the police complaint system, to allow a comparison within the results. To find out more, and to participate in the survey, go to <http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/agsp/research/complaints-survey>

\$1.5 million to prevent crime in local communities across Australia

Minister for Home Affairs and Justice Brendan Connor has announced \$1.5 million in funding for Neighbourhood Watch Australasia for a expansion of its work "in preventing crime and the fear of crime in Australian communities".

Over the next three years, this funding will enable Neighbourhood Watch to expand its efforts in a number of ways including Specific new initiatives for remote, hard to reach and vulnerable communities to develop strategies to address crime and the fear of crime. See

http://www.ministerhomeaffairs.gov.au/www/ministers/oconnor.nsf/page/Transcripts_2011_FourthQuarter_10October2011-OpeningaddressatNeighbourhoodWatchAustralasiaConference

Discussion Paper on consolidation of Commonwealth Anti-Discrimination Laws

Attorney General Robert McClelland and Minister for Finance and Deregulation Penny Wong have launched a public discussion paper to seek community views on the consolidation of Federal anti-discrimination laws.

There are currently five separate pieces of Commonwealth discrimination legislation: *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*.

According to Mr McClelland, this sometimes inconsistent and unnecessarily complex regime results in confusion in respect to obligations arising under the laws and can increase the cost for legal and specialist assistance. The consolidation project provides an opportunity to clarify existing protections and address areas where there may be gaps. The project also provides the opportunity to ensure consistency with other legislation including the *Fair Work Act*.

Submissions on the discussion paper can be made until 1 February 2012. The discussion paper, details on how to make a submission and further information about the project are available at <http://www.ag.gov.au/antidiscrimination>

RESOURCES

New guide to assist solicitors to make a section 32 application under the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990 (NSW) for clients with an intellectual disability

The Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) have just published a *Step by Step Guide to Making a Section 32 Application for Person with an Intellectual Disability*. The Guide is a resource for solicitors representing clients with intellectual disability who are charged with a criminal offence. It is aimed primarily at those seeking the dismissal of summary criminal charges against their client under the diversionary mechanism under section 32 of the *Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990* (NSW). It provides practical information for solicitors and information about contact and referral points.

IDRS is also providing training for solicitors to accompany this Guide. Details of future training dates and locations for in-house solicitors and private practitioners will be circulated shortly. The Guide is available in hard copy by emailing section32@idrs.org.au or calling (02) 9318 0144. The Guide is also available in pdf-format on the IDRS website at [http://www.idrs.org.au/education/s32Guide/IDRS Section 32 Guide online.pdf](http://www.idrs.org.au/education/s32Guide/IDRS%20Section%2032%20Guide%20online.pdf). It will shortly be made available as an easy to navigate web based version.

New resource for GLBTI people

The Aged Services Learning and Research Centre has produced ***Respect my decisions: it's my right!*** This free resource informs gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people about their and their partners/close friends legal rights in relation to end of life care and treatment. To download a copy, and other materials on end of life decisions, go to the "downloads" section at <http://aslarc.scu.edu.au/index.html>

Career guide for law students and new lawyers

The National Pro Bono Resource Centre has produced a career guide that provides practical information on how students and new lawyers can get involved in volunteering and pursue careers in social justice. To download a copy go to <http://www.nationalprobono.org.au/home.asp>



Boarders & Lodgers Legal Kit Launched



The Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service at Redfern Legal Centre has produced a legal kit for boarders and lodgers with a funding grant from the Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP Salary Trust and with assistance from its pro bono partner, the Mallesons Stephen Jaques Human Rights Law Group.

Redfern Legal Centre has long campaigned for legislation to cover boarders and lodgers and NSW is one of only two States across Australia that lack specific legislation. While the kit contains useful information for residents that are cut out of the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*, it also highlights the inadequacies of available remedies for this marginalised group of society. The kit can be downloaded at <http://www.rlc.org.au/publications/tool-kits.html>

New resources and information - subscribe to the Law & Justice Foundation e-bulletins

This is another plug for the Law & Justice Foundation e-bulletins. The various updates give details about new plain English resources and justice initiatives. Go to <http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/publications/newsletters/ebulletin>.

NEW LEGAL AID RESOURCES

Visa Cancellation Kit

Legal Aid NSW has published a kit explaining what to do if the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is considering cancelling someone's visa, or has already cancelled it, because of a criminal record. It also provides practical assistance in circumstances where a visa is being considered for refusal. Copies are available from the Legal Aid NSW Publications Unit on (02) 9219 5028 or publications@legalaid.nsw.gov.au or

you can download it at <http://lacextra.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/PublicationsResourcesService/PublicationImprints/Files/410.pdf>



Best for Kids

The *Best for kids*, Family Law multimedia community legal education package has been developed with input from many of Legal Aid NSW's family lawyers and the family dispute resolution section, based on their experiences in assisting Legal Aid clients. It is intended to help parents, families and children understand aspects of family law which are often difficult in the heat of a dispute, such as the best interests of children, how the family law system puts children first, family dispute resolution and the role of the Independent

Children's Lawyer. Have a look at the video clips on the new Legal Aid NSW You tube site: <http://www.youtube.com/user/BestForKidsTV> Stay tuned for the upcoming launch of the website, facebook and twitter feed.



ARTICLE

How to save money with grocery unit pricing - Ian Jarratt, Queensland Consumers Association

The huge range of brands and sizes of grocery items in most supermarkets makes it difficult to work out which are the best value for money. One way to do this is to compare the price per unit of measure – the unit price. This is easy now because all large supermarkets must provide the unit price of packaged grocery items such as cartons of breakfast cereals, bottles of milk, and even rolls of toilet paper.

The unit price is shown near the selling price on shelf edge labels and other price signs. Here is an example:



Retailers have always had to show the unit price for products sold from bulk or in random weigh pre-packs, for example fresh meat, cheese, and fruit and vegetables. And, consumers have always made great use of these unit prices to work out the best value for money, after also taking into account quality and other differences.

So now consumers can do the same with pre-packaged grocery products by using the unit prices to compare the value for money of:

- different package sizes
- different brands
- packaged and unpackaged products
- substitutes.

Smart shoppers willing to change brand and package size can use unit prices to make big savings on their grocery bills. For example, recently I found I could reduce by almost 50 percent the cost of a basket of 27 common packaged items by buying products with the lowest unit price rather than buying only the medium size package of a national brand.

Big savings are also often possible by buying fresh/cooked meat, fish, etc loose from bulk rather than pre-packed. Of course, when choosing between products shoppers can, and should, also take account of quality, ingredients, quantity, type of packaging, country of origin, etc. as well as the unit prices.

To get the best value for money consumers need know and look at unit prices regularly because unit prices vary greatly between products, shops, and over time. And, just because an item is; “on special”, a generic brand, in the largest package size, or unpackaged, does not mean it will be the lowest unit price.

I find it easiest to use unit prices by thinking of packaged products I buy regularly only in terms of the unit price not the selling price or the package size. For example, I know that normally I pay only \$0.38 per 100g for corn flakes, \$5.98 per kg for cheese slices, and \$0.18 per 100 sheets for 2-ply toilet paper. This makes it very easy for me to check if there is better value for money on offer anywhere.

Unfortunately, in some supermarkets many unit prices are not easy enough to notice and read - especially for many seniors and others with sight deficiencies. And, sometimes more than one unit of measure is used within a product type, or the wrong unit of measure is used for a product type, or unit prices are not provided for some items.

To complain about any aspect of unit pricing, or obtain more information, call the ACCC’s Unit Pricing Hotline 1300 746 245.

Ian Jarratt is a volunteer with the Queensland Consumers Association. He won the inaugural CHOICE Consumer Action Award in 2010 for his advocacy work which resulted in the compulsory provision of grocery unit pricing by large supermarkets. He can be contacted at unitpricing@australiainmail.com