

Appendix 8 Report on diverse clients including multicultural and disability-related matters

The reporting below follows requirements under the Multicultural NSW Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP) Multicultural Framework and the NSW Family and Community Services Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines.

Our diverse clients cover a broad range of groups, including people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people from rural and regional areas and people from LGBTQIA+ communities.

Focus area: Service delivery

Key outcome: Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework

Our organisation delivers legal services to culturally diverse communities across the state and employs culturally diverse staff in a range of roles. Our Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework was developed to assist Legal Aid NSW to create a culturally safe environment for clients and staff. You can read more about the framework on the [Meeting the needs of diverse clients](#) page.

Focus area: Planning

This year, the Legal Aid NSW Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Board, chaired by the CEO, finished its program of work on Project Respect, which is detailed on the [Workforce diversity and equity](#) page. The Board brings together the voices of the Chairs of our staff networks, members of our Executive and a Public Service Association representative.

Focus area: Leadership

Legal Aid NSW has a number of internal networks that have been established for the purpose of creating a safe space for staff from diverse backgrounds and elevating their voices. These include the:

- Aboriginal Staff Network
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Staff Network
- disAbility Staff Network
- Legally Queer Staff Network, and the
- Young Professionals Network.

This year, the leadership committees of each network attended training designed to empower them to engage meaningfully with their network and the wider organisation. Training covered governance within staff networks and developed the practical skills of members of the leadership committees.

Focus area: Engagement

Our Community Language Allowance Scheme, known as CLAS, recognises the skills of employees who can provide on-the-spot language assistance in the workplace.

CLAS is an allowance payable to employees who have a basic level of competency in a language other than English and who work in locations and roles where their language skills can assist clients.

We value the role that some of our staff play in providing language assistance to clients. Receiving the CLAS is an important way staff can have these skills recognised. Staff who are eligible are encouraged to apply.

This year we audited our CLAS allowance usage and discontinued the allowance for recipients who provided language assistance on less than five occasions over the audit period.

Focus area: Disability

Key outcome: Liveable communities

Our draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan was co-designed with clients, the disability community and staff. Final consultation is under way, and we expect to adopt the plan in 2024–25. You can read more about the plan on the [Meeting the needs of diverse clients](#) page.

Key outcome: Employment

In June 2024, Legal Aid NSW launched its new Workplace Adjustment Guidelines. It is important to that all staff feel they belong, are valued and have the support required to thrive at work. We are committed to taking a proactive and person-centred approach to workplace adjustments.

Legal Aid NSW encourages any member of staff with disability, a non-work-related injury or a health condition to request any assistance or adjustment that enables them to perform the inherent requirements of their job safely, reduces or eliminates barriers, and ensures genuine participation and contribution, regardless of seen or unseen individual differences.

Key outcome: Systems and processes

Legal Aid NSW is committed to being an inclusive workplace that fully supports workplace adjustments. We want to ensure that the design and implementation of our human resources and workplace policies, rules, practices and operations do not create barriers or discrimination. In considering this commitment, our DEI Board has determined the principles and guidelines outlined below.

A Workplace Adjustment Working Group has been established to review our processes and develop Workplace Adjustment Guidelines that support staff and managers to foster an inclusive and accessible workplace. A workplace adjustment project officer has been funded for 12 months to develop training and monitor the guidelines.

Service design at Legal Aid NSW

Our DEI Board has determined that our service design must:

- include the experience and input of the users of our services – our clients and people affected by the issue
- include an intentional equity practice in design where we see, acknowledge and disrupt active and systemic inequity and injustice
- include a deep understanding of the systems in which we are working, and our clients are living, and
- take a strategic approach to ensure that our design is grounded in our strategic mandate and our resources.

Involving clients and the community in the design and monitoring of services

We are committed to involving clients and the community in the design and monitoring of services that impact them, and to compensating them for their contributions. We believe practical and appropriate community involvement leads to better outcomes for all.

Key outcome area: Community attitudes and behaviours

Delivered in partnership with National Legal Aid, the Your Story Disability Legal Support service was set up in 2019 to support people to take part in the disability royal commission in a safe and informed way. It also helped people with disability and their families with their legal problems. You can read more about the service on the [National Legal Aid](#) page.