

Moree 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter CLSD Minutes

24<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dhiiyaan Centre

10.00am to 1.00pm

**Present:** Denise Haines (NSW Health), Sean Suey-Thorne (Revenue NSW) Laura Lombardo (G & T Law), Annie Nolan (ACFAS - ALS), Paula Jackson (ACFAS - ALS), Ben Graham (NNWCLC), Toni Johnston (AA), Jill Skinner (Flourish Australia), Steven Tinkler (ACFAS - ALS), Adam See (AA), Joy Wilson (HomesNorth), Nickie Murcell (HomesNorth), Jyppsee Steven (JR), Talia Hagerty (JR), Thomas Duncan (JR), Judy Duncan (CLSD), Kate Halliday (CLSD), Sarah Proudfoot (Flattrack), Jake Fing (FamAC), Louise Coady (ACFAS - ALS)

**Apologies:** Peter Duncan, Nicole Pearce, Jennifer Bird, Jason Poutawa, Bernadette Terry, Lorinda Potter, Laura Stefanou, Tamara Kenny, Denise Webb, Lorilie Haines, Crystal Robinson, Frankie Linder, Kelly James, Lisa Coulton.

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Responsibility/Time
1. Welcome, & acknowledgement purpose	Judy	
2.	<p>Jake Fing (FamAC) – Children and Young People (Care &amp; Protection) Family is Culture Amendment Act, and the Legal Assistance for Families partnership Agreement (LAFPA) which s an agreement between Legal Aid NSW, ALS NSW/ACT and DCJ on Care and Protection:</p> <p>There is now a new partnership agreement: Legal Assistance for Families Partnership Agreement between the Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT and Legal Aid NSW to promote early access to legal help for families having contact with DCJ about their children.</p> <p>The Family is Culture report by Professor Megan Davis highlighted issues that we have known about for a long time, it has taken some time for recommendations in</p>	

the report to be implemented.

The most recent of the legislative changes to commence is the active efforts component of Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Family is Culture) Act 2022. As a model litigant DCJ must they are seeking to remove a child from the family they need to show what efforts they have taken to work with child and their family to prevent removal and to keep family together.

This will be a real culture change, and it is expected that active efforts will vary according to the circumstances to that what might be active effort in Moree could be different elsewhere.

Children's Court Magistrates are on board and see their role as that of holding DCJ to account.

Under LAFPA, early legal assistance is available for parents, and there is a streamlined referral process to ALS NSW/ACT and Legal Aid.

An important message for families is that being referred to a lawyer does not mean it is critical or that kids are about to be removed. Underpinning the legislative and referral changes is the intention to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care. There are often opportunities under the Family Law Act to involve other members of a child's family when intervention occurs at early stage, and it is possible to obtain good results in the specialist Indigenous list in the Family Court which expanded to Newcastle a few weeks ago. It is a closed court offering liaison officers who can help with supports for issues such as domestic violence and the Court operates in a very direct way to link people in with supports.

DCJ has statutory obligations where a child is unsafe, but under the new arrangements it is anticipated that there will be new opportunities to work with this. Emergency removals are so traumatic, and the new arrangements are trying to help families get away from this system.

If you know families where children have been removed and the family would like to have contact or seek to change the arrangements, refer to Famac or ALS as a

contact mediation is a way to reopen things. If people have had time to heal, their lives have changed, contact mediation is a good 1<sup>st</sup> step, to working towards a variation of the care arrangements.

**Louise Coady – Principal Family Law Solicitor – Aboriginal Child and Family advocacy Service (AFCAS – Aboriginal Legal Service):**

The new Aboriginal Family and Child Advocacy Service AFCAS, a new ALS initiative based in Dubbo and Moree which incorporates legal and non-legal supports for families. It is based on a Victorian model: the independent family and advocacy model which managed to divert families away from the court system. A multi-disciplinary team of specialist lawyers, civil lawyers and allied health professionals. The team works closely with families during the investigation stage and links the families with assistance and to look at other options, and to advocate on a family's behalf. ALS is currently recruiting a lived experience consultant to guide the work that we do. Also considering a statewide telephone advice service like the CNS to provide advice on child protection which is aligned to Closing the Gap target 12.

Currently the AFCAS team are Moree are Stephen from Toowoomba who has worked as disability support worker as well as in mental health. Annie is studying paralegal studies, and her main goal is to keep mob with mob, and Paula who has been in Moree working the ALS for 5 years in the crime area keen to work in this area. The team started in June 2023 receiving referrals. Anyone can make a referral and the idea is to assist a family where there is a risk. The team is visiting organisations at the moment and are keen to promote the service in the community. AFCAS will be moving to the Moree Crime office and their footprint extends to Mungindi Boggabilla Tamworth Gunndedah and Narrabri.

**Suggestions for community engagement or AFCAS team:**

Visit Boggabilla with the ALS when they do court.

Moree Aboriginal Interagency Group

Also, the Council Roundtable which looks after the Shire

Ada McGrady in Toomelah.

**Talia Hegarty – Research & Data Manager - Frontline Service Survey Feedback – Partnership Moree CLSD & Just Reinvest (JR)**

Talia from Just Reinvestment presented some of the findings from the survey of services for young people and their families, a joint CLSD and JR project in Moree

It can be tricky to get collaboration happening between services because of funding – 3 yr contract funding is limiting. In other cases, some services can have very broad guidelines for assisting but they might be limited when working with another agency that has very restrictive requirements.

One local example is that school children are entitled to have up to 100 days exemption if not participating in school, but Flattrack does not meet the requirements to offer this exemption.

Some services are not available to a child or family if a child is in care. This limits the choice of families.

Another example is some services offering assistance to sustain tenancies cannot assist families with rent payments if they are social housing tenants. Intent is to sustain tenancies – more with private rental in mind.

The results of the survey will be very useful for the community when applying for funding. **Report and Slide attached.**

**Burning issues?**

Fines for people who did not vote? (Referendum)

Other CLSD events coming up:

- Birth certificates event CLSD & CLSAC – 12th Mungindi and 14<sup>th</sup> Moree December plus normal CLSAC clinics – Land Council in Mungindi and Shae Academy for Moree
- Fine debt – fine debt flyer to guide people how to get help.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wills clinic in the first quarter of 2024.</li> <li>• Follow up from the week of CLE events.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Challenges, issues and suggestions</b></p> <p><b>(emerging needs?)</b></p>	<p>CLSAC &amp; Revenue NSW</p> <p>Other CLSD events coming up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth certificates 12 Mungindi and 14 December Moree plus normal clinics – Land Council in Mungindi and Shae Academy</li> <li>• Fine debt – fine debt flyer to guide people how to get help.</li> <li>• Wills clinic in the first quarter of 2024.</li> <li>• Follow up from the week of CLE events.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2024 Meetings</b></p>	<p>Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024</p> <p>23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024</p> <p>15<sup>th</sup> November 2024</p>	