



CLSD Program Quarterly Report

Q4 2023

The CLSD Program [webpage](#) has

- A calendar of regional partnership meetings and contact details for the regional coordinators.
- Information from each CLSD region, including regional profiles, action plans and meeting minutes.

Information about our **birth certificate partnership** with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, including a fact sheet on the availability of free birth certificates under the partnership and other options for obtaining a free birth certificate, is available on our webpage [here](#).

CLSD Reflection Project

The Reflection Project will explore how CLSD partnerships might be more strongly aligned with the expectations of key stakeholders and what improvements could be made to our communications and planning activities.

Tell us what you think about the CLSD Program! Stakeholders are invited to talk with us about their needs and expectations by attending a consultation meeting, responding to a survey or contacting us directly to share their thoughts. The CLSD webpage has a [factsheet](#) on the Project, which includes consultation questions to consider, and a link to the online survey.

Issues and activities from the regional partnerships

GREATER ALBURY

Q 4 face to face and online meeting 15 November

The partnership undertook a review of its activities and set priorities for next year.

Activities

In partnership with the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service a birth certificate event was held on 15 November. Lawyers from Legal Aid NSW Albury and Hume Riverina Community Legal Centre also participated to offer law check-ups.

A Cut It Out Forum was held by the partnership in Albury on 23 October 2023 for hair, beauty and health professionals, and real estate agents on recognising and responding to domestic and family violence. Presenters and facilitators included the local Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program, Hume Riverina Community Legal Service, local police and Yes Unlimited.

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A revised guide to free legal services has been released.

CENTRAL COAST

There is currently no regional coordinator in place for this region and the CLSD Program is supporting the region on an interim basis.

A further meeting/information session was held at Regional Youth Support Services on Monday 6 November to create stronger connections between youth workers and services and legal assistance services.

Youth workers and community workers heard from James Clifford, Clifford Managing Solicitor Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT Children's Criminal Law Practice and Sidar Demirbag from the Legal Aid NSW Children's Legal Service about police and Children's Court issues.

CENTRAL TABLELANDS

A planning meeting was held online on 9 November. Discussion focused on

- the needs of young people
- lack of culturally appropriate support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in smaller court locations in the region
- the need to engage with youth services around the options for dealing with fines and identifying points for early intervention and advocacy
- a proposal to develop anti-racism project for the region
- increasing engagement with First Nations communities in the region
- an increase in ADVOs made against women and Indigenous women in Orange and Bathurst; and
- increasing WDO opportunities for people with fine debt and exercise of discretion not to issue fines.

CENTRAL WEST

For Q4 the partnership held information meetings on the Voice Referendum on 5 October with guest speaker Ruby Langton-Batty from Ashurst.

FAR WEST

Q4 meeting 30 November in Broken Hill

The Intellectual Disability Rights Service is now providing CLSD regional coordination for this region, and Chris Richard has been appointed as the new CLSD regional coordinator/JAS advocate for the region.

This meeting focused on issues affecting people with disability, including problems with NDIS service providers in the region, ranging from fraud to lack to services for people with complex needs. The thin market for NDIS services in Broken Hill and surrounds creates challenges for people with disability. Partners were encouraged to promote complaints about NDIS providers amongst NDIS participants so that the NDIA can take appropriate action.

Hunter

Q4 meeting 30 November

This meeting was held at Survivors R Us (SRU) a self-funded charity focusing on survivors of domestic violence. It was an opportunity to build stronger referral pathways between

community services and legal assistance services, focusing on domestic and family violence. Participants were able to also hear about the work being done at SRU.

A new guide to free legal services has been released.

KEMPSEY/NAMBUCCA

Q4 meeting in Kempsey on 12 December

The Q3 meeting was held on 24 October in Kempsey and focused on tenancy and homelessness. The Mid Coast TAAS, Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre and Legal Aid NSW (Port Macquarie) led a discussion on a range of tenancy issues including rent increases, repairs, ending tenancies where there has been domestic violence, temporary accommodation and challenges in applying for housing and housing assistance. Local issues raised by partners included homeless people being threatened an infringement notice if they did not move on from Crown land and the widespread passing on by real estate agents to tenants of the fee imposed by Services Australia for the use of Centrepay.

A Kempsey legal information day was held on 16 November in partnership with Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, which included the availability of free birth certificates.

The December Q4 meeting provided attendees with information and current data about coercion and control, how it's being experienced in the community and referral pathways to specialist services. Inspector Vince Nicholls from the Kempsey police spoke as well as Katherine Yager from Dhulawang Family Dispute Resolution service. Some data was shared from the CLSD program highlighting the number of ADVOs being made against Aboriginal women by local courts – an increasing trend in the region and questions were raised about misidentification of perpetrators and the potential criminalisation of primary victims of DV. Discussion centred on the introduction of the coercive control legislation in 2024 and what impact, if any, it would have on the current culture in the community and the workload of services, particularly in supporting survivors with evidence-gathering.

MOREE

Q4 meeting 24 November.

This face-to-face meeting focused on recent service and legislative changes in the care and protection of children area. Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT spoke about the Legal Assistance for Families Partnership Agreement (LAFPA) between the Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT and Legal Aid NSW which promotes early access to legal help for families having contact with DCJ about their children, and the active efforts component of Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Family is Culture) Act 2022 which had just come into effect.

In addition, Just Reinvest NSW presented on the high-level outcomes of a survey of Moree services who work with young people and their families or carers. This survey, a joint initiative of the Moree CLSD partnership and Just Reinvest, sought to get better understanding what each service provides, and how they refer to each other and what gaps exist. The survey results (18 services) reveal that while there are programs available in Moree and surrounding areas, there is little for young people to on the weekends, the majority of services are only open 9-5 on weekdays and that young people aged 18-25 years have the most service provision, closely followed by 13-17 year olds.

NORTHERN RIVERS

Q 4 planning meeting 14 November

Partners agreed on a different format for meetings of the partnership. Traditionally this CLSD partnership has met in 4 locations across the region. Over the last 6 months the regional coordinator has piloted a new approach of holding forums promoting engagement between legal assistance services and community service around specific issues, such as domestic violence and family law. Over the next 2 years the partnership will trial an annual meeting of legal assistance services, 2 forums and 1 general meeting in each calendar year.

SOUTH COAST

There is no regional coordinator in this region and the CLSD Program is supporting the region on an interim basis.

Activities

Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT held an event hosted by Anglicare, a specialist homelessness service, in Moruya on 30 November offering free birth certificates and law check-ups. It was well attended and there have been many requests for similar events to be held in 2024.

TAREE/FORSTER

The Q4 meeting 29 November.

A birth certificate clinic, hosted by First Steps Count, and supported by Legal Aid NSW Port Macquarie and the Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre was held on 26 October.

The Q4 meeting was a lively gathering of varied services working with young people in the region. The purpose of the meeting was to gain a better understanding of young peoples' needs, as seen by the services dealing with them and to bring attention to what is available for young people, how services can meet young peoples' needs and what service gaps exist. Attendees listed many issues in the region from long wait lists for housing, lack of employment opportunities due to transport issues, to disengagement from school. Attendees split into 3 main theme groups to dig deeper into what appeared to be the pressing issues: housing/homelessness; identification issues and mental health.

RIVERINA

Q4 meeting and legal information and access day at Leeton 16 November

The Leeton Legal Information Access Day supported by Legal Aid NSW, Intereach, TAFE NSW and Macarthur Legal Service and Revenue NSW offered the community information about legal services, free birth certificates, help with fine debt, wills and legal advice was held at the Leeton TAFE on 16 November. Partners assisted a broad range of people who needed help with fines, civil and family law problems.

In the afternoon CLSD partners met with local services to discuss their work and to hear about the challenges faced by their clients. Leeton has limited free legal services, and like many small towns in regional NSW a significant group of people face unmanaged fine debt affecting their ability to maintain or seek a driver's licence. Recent data from Revenue NSW shows that 773 people owe \$ 1809 092 with most of that debt being owed for more than 2 years. Like many regional areas the options for addressing that debt through a WDO are limited. One service we met with shared how challenging it is supporting their clients to obtain ID or a driver's licence, which is vital for employment in the area, who have fine debt and have had

licence and business restrictions imposed. Local services also raised concerns about the quality of some NDIS service providers and guardianship.

This was the first time that this CLSD partnership has held an event, or met, outside of Wagga Wagga, and its success was secured through the unflagging work of the regional coordinator Mel Van Lierop and her colleagues at Intereach (our CLSD regional coordination service for the Riverina).