



WORKING SMARTER: Community Legal Centres using innovation and technology

Community Legal Centres (CLCs) are not-for-profit, community based organisations that provide free legal advice, casework and information and a range of community development services to their local or target communities. Some CLCs also advocate for law reform or conduct test cases to change laws that are operating unfairly or are unclear.

An independent economic cost benefit analysis of Community Legal Centres commissioned by National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) found that on average, CLCs have an economic cost benefit ratio of 1:18; that is, for every dollar spent by government on funding CLCs, they return a benefit to society that is at least 18 times that cost. In order to achieve this sort of economic cost benefit, CLCs are increasingly using technology to deliver services and stretch the legal assistance dollar even further.

This brochure highlights some of the ways the CLCs deliver services to their clients and local communities using technology. Some examples are: providing legal information through mobile and web based applications (apps), radio programs, and social media. CLCs are using technology to provide training to staff and volunteers via customised online e-learning platforms and webinars. There are also examples of how technology has facilitated CLCs working collaboratively with other legal assistance services and the private legal sector to provide services for clients.

The Appening Thing

CLCs have been swift in developing mobile and web based applications (or apps) to engage with the community, provide people with access to information to help resolve their legal issues, and to tell prospective clients about the services the CLC offers. Apps are a particularly cost-effective way to directly access specific groups and communities who may otherwise not be aware of, or seek out, a CLC and its services. Mobile phones are the most common and accessible source of information and communication for many disadvantaged and hard to reach groups, such as young people. As an information source, they also have the great advantage of almost always being with the client!

Girls Gotta Know is a website based app (www.girlsgottaknow.com.au) initially produced as a resource for young women aged 14-24 in Tasmania; it was then rolled out nationally.

Women's Legal Service Tasmania a Hobart based CLC that provides free legal advice and referral to women throughout Tasmania, developed *Girls Gotta Know* after recognising that young women were not engaging frequently with the service's 1800 free legal telephone advice line.

Girls Gotta Know aims to be a one stop destination for young women to access legal information in a non-confronting way. It delivers legal information in a simple, easy to understand and up to date format. Topics include; respectful relationships, staying safe online, living with friends or a partner, workplace harassment and managing money.

The app has been designed to appeal to users by using friendly illustrations and animated graphics to navigate around the site, and users can share articles on social media or by email.

The app was selected as a finalist in the 2013 Melbourne Design Awards, in its category, where it was described as "the first of its kind in Australia."

In August 2013 the success of the app was recognised with the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department granting Women's Legal Service Tasmania additional funding to help roll out the app across all states and territories of Australia. The new nationwide *Girls Gotta Know* came online in July 2014, with assistance from private law firm DLA Piper and Women's Legal Services throughout the country.

Youthlaw is Victoria's state wide specialist CLC for young people. Based in Melbourne's CBD, Youthlaw assists, empowers and advocates solely for young people under the age of 25. It provides young people with free legal services, advocacy, law reform input opportunities and preventative education programs.

Youthlaw developed Streetsmart, (streetsmartvic.com.au) an online guide, aimed at Victorian youth and



The Girls Gotta Know team from Women's Legal Service Tasmania at the website app's launch in April 2013. (L-R): Pauline van Adrichem, Mary Paterson, Susan Fahey, Sabrina Steiert, Katharine Layne, Kim Woolley and Lisa Zeitzen.

designed to be downloaded on smartphones and tablets. It outlines young people's rights when dealing with authorities on public transport and on the street.

The website includes information about the powers and jurisdictions of police, protective service officers, ticket inspectors and security guards in Victoria – and offers practical tips on how young people can handle themselves in situations with these authorities. *Streetsmart* also includes contact details and useful links for young people to get help after an incident, including free legal assistance from Youthlaw.

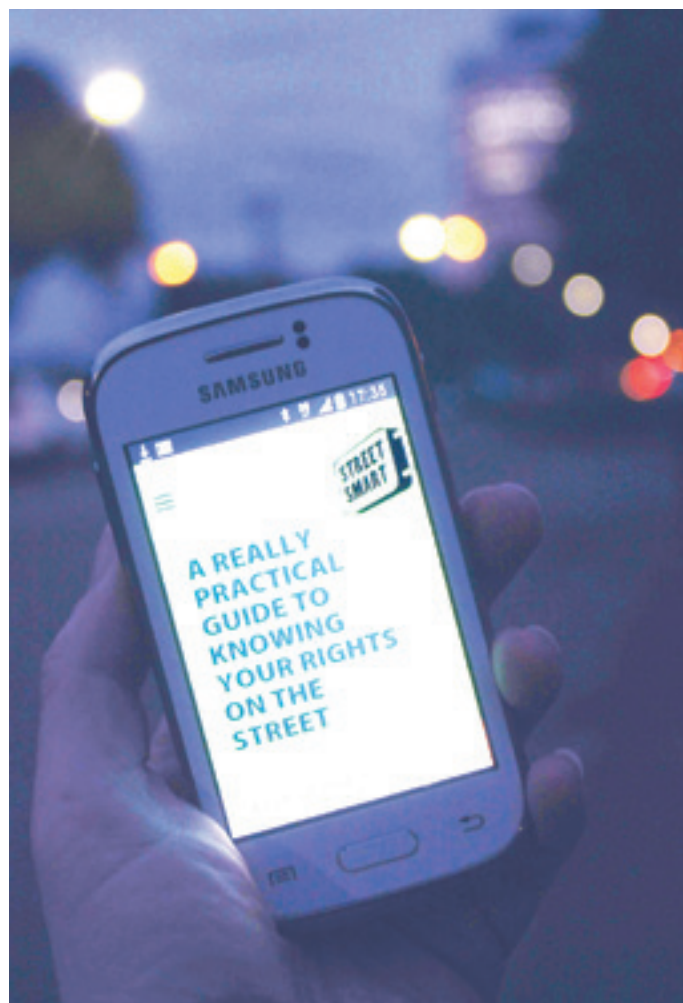
Developed by the Southern Metropolitan Region Integrated Family Violence Executive, the *Ask Someone* app and website (www.asksomeone.org.au) was created to help direct people experiencing family

violence to support services in their local area. **Casey Cardinia Community Legal Service** and **Peninsula Community Legal Centre** are members of the Outer South Peninsula Integrated Family Violence Partnership, and their service details are included in the Legal Advice section of *Ask Someone*. Both organisations are involved in promoting and updating this important local resource.

Ask Someone provides links to information about the court process and legal options. It also provides information for those in relationships with people who use violent and/or controlling behaviours. For example, in relation to making a safety plan, the app details considerations such as; emergency contact numbers, trusted family members/friends that know about the family violence, having a safe place to get to in an emergency and access to money. It also includes information about leaving such relationships.

Access to this information via the mobile app is free and increases accessibility and safety for users as people usually carry their mobile phone with them – or can grab it quickly.

The app was the winner of a 2012 Australian Mobile Award, when it was recognised that “smart phones, iPads and computers are the norm for information seeking” and that through *Ask Someone* “family violence and safety information is accessible to a cohort who traditionally may not seek face to face support.”



Street Smart can be accessed via the web or on a mobile phone

In the *NALCL National Census of CLCs 2014*, 112 CLCs responded to questions about technology methods they used to provide legal advice, information or representation and community legal education.

The top three methods of technology used for these forms of service were:

Legal Information

- **77.7%** of CLCs used email to provide legal information, **75.9%** of CLCs used websites (including blogs) and **36.6%** of CLCs used Facebook

Legal Advice

- **53.6%** of CLCs used email to provide legal advice, **19.6%** of CLCs used skype to provide legal advice and **5.4%** of CLCs used websites (including blogs)

Legal Representation and casework

- **13.4%** of CLCs used email to provide legal representation, **5.4%** of CLCs used skype, **1.8%** of CLCs used websites (including blogs) and **1.8%** of CLCs used online conferencing

Community Legal Education

- **50.9%** of CLCs used websites (including blogs) to provide community legal education, **25.9%** of CLCs used Facebook and **25%** of CLCs used email.

CLCs on the radio



June Lennon, from FVLSAC SA, speaking on radio Umeewarra Radio 98.1 FM about how the organisation can assist Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence.

One innovative way that CLCs have engaged with, raised awareness of their services to, and provided legal information to, their local communities is through hosting regular radio programs.

Established in 2000 in Port Augusta as a pilot program, and funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, the **Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation (South Australia) (FVLSAC SA)** is now a regionalised Aboriginal community controlled organisation (funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet), that provides assistance to Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence and/or sexual assault. FVLSAC SA works with families and communities affected by violence. It has offices in Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and Ceduna and conducts outreach to other communities.

June Lennon, a Senior Aboriginal Engagement Officer with FVLSAC SA can be heard on Umeewarra Radio 98.1 FM station talking to communities about legal issues and their rights.

June says, "on the program (called the Umeewarra media segment) we touch on what services FVLSAC SA provides and how community members can access our service, the referral process and how intervention orders are obtained.

We talk about our staff, specifically our lawyers who join me on the live show, to provide legal advice. I use it to introduce new staff to the community, or staff who are visiting from one of the other regions.

Sometimes we also promote events that are coming up that we want the community to be involved in, like the state wide Aboriginal Women's Gatherings".

The Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre (NRCLC), established in 1996 and based in Lismore in northern NSW, runs a fortnightly radio show, **Aboriginal Legal Access Program**, on community station 88.9 Richmond Valley Radio. The station has a large listening audience in Aboriginal communities in the area.

Hosted by Aboriginal access workers, Nancy Walke and Karin Ness, the program focuses on issues such as family law, rights in public spaces, credit and debt, youth services and domestic violence, as well as providing information about NRCLC events and services. Running since November 2011, the program also features Indigenous music, showcases special events such as NAIDOC Week to celebrate the achievements of Aboriginal people, and conducts interviews with local community members, singers and songwriters, and spokespeople on Aboriginal issues. Feedback about the radio program, including questions and suggestions for topics called in, confirms a loyal band of followers.

The North and North West Community Legal Service (NNWCLS) is a regional based legal service, covering over 98,000 square kilometers – about 12% of the state of NSW! The service's lawyers often travel long distances to meet with clients, over 300kms a day. The centre is based in Armidale but runs monthly 'circuits' to Narrabri, Gunnedah, Moree, Inverell, Walcha, Glen Innes, Tenterfield and visiting Tamworth on a fortnightly basis. The centre's face to face client contact is supplemented by telephone advice provided via free call numbers and their hosting of a weekly radio program – **Law Matters** – on Friday afternoons on Armidale's Community Radio 2ARM 92.1 FM.



The service uses this program to broadcast their legal education sessions to a listener base of up to 30,000 people. The program also hosts talks and interviews with people from local community services and legal services.

The Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) presents a weekly program, *Done By Law*, on Melbourne community radio station 3CR 855 AM. On air since 1980, the program focuses on grassroots social justice issues and current legal news, featuring news from CLCs. The program is sponsored by the Federation and is hosted by legal professionals, as well as non-legal presenters. It is also available as podcasts for free download online. *Done by Law* recently featured the work of **Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre** in Bendigo, and Youthlaw's *StreetSmart* website.



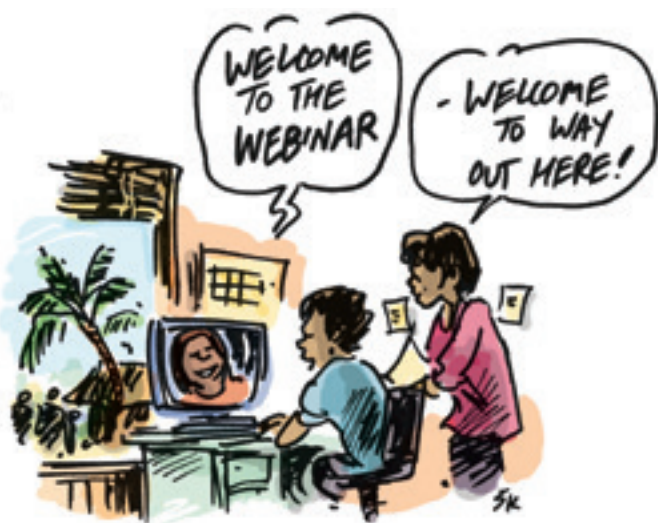
Robert Bucksath, a solicitor from North and North West Community Legal Service, in the studio for Law Matters.

Women's Legal Services Reaching Out To Socially and Geographically Isolated Women

Women's Legal Services have embraced technology as a means to assist disadvantaged and vulnerable women with information and legal assistance. Here are two examples of such initiatives.

Women's Legal Services NSW (WLSNSW) is a state wide specialist CLC that aims to achieve access to justice and a just legal system for women in NSW.

In 2012, WLSNSW launched *Ask LOIS* (Legal Online Information Service), an online community legal education portal at www.asklois.org.au for community workers assisting women experiencing or escaping violence. *Ask LOIS* was set up in October 2011 using a grant from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. In 2013, WLSNSW secured further funding to continue the project through the NBN Regional Legal Assistance Program. Using Armidale as a test region and working in partnership with local community organisations, WLSNSW has made *Ask LOIS* more responsive to the needs of community workers in regional, rural and remote areas.



Ask LOIS provides community workers who have registered as members with free online training and advice on legal issues such as; domestic violence, Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs), family law and child protection. It offers a comprehensive resource library, case studies, videoconference appointments, forums and a domestic violence service directory.

Ask LOIS offers fortnightly free and interactive webinars (online training workshops) hosted by solicitors and experts in the field to discuss complex legal issues and situations so all participants can learn from the discussion and advice. All live webinars are recorded and archived on the website along with summary factsheets, for members to watch anytime, anywhere.

Ask LOIS provides an online legal advice and support service, where participants can connect with a solicitor via telephone or videoconference to get legal information and advice.

Ask LOIS currently has approximately 1,200 members across NSW. In 2013-14, through *Ask LOIS*, WLSNSW:

- delivered 23 live webinars
- reached at least 1,002 live webinar participants (this is known to be an understatement because the presenters know that sometimes there is more than one person observing or participating from the one computer)
- had its archived webinars downloaded and replayed at least 653 times
- provided 49 legal advices to community workers, a 59% increase over the previous 12 months, and
- had summary factsheets downloaded a total of 1,040 times.



Women's Legal Service North Queensland staff member, Glenda Demopolous, and Management Committee member, Siobhan Tangey, at the launch of Ask Nola in Townsville

North Queensland Women's Legal Service (NQWLS) is a CLC with offices in Townsville and Cairns that provides legal advice, casework assistance, and information and referrals for women who reside from Sarina in the south, to the Torres Strait in the north, and west out to the Northern Territory border.

The *Ask Nola* (North Queensland Online Legal Access) website (www.asknola.com.au) is a secure website established and supported by NQWLS that provides regular free legal information for community service providers in rural, regional and remote locations so that they can assist women in their local communities.

Funded through a Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department grant, the website provides free legal information through monthly webinars, factsheets, publications, case studies and links to other services about the legal issues most commonly dealt with by NQWLS, including family law (parenting and property), de facto relationship matters (parenting and property), family/domestic violence, discrimination, sexual assault, child protection, and victims support.

Ask Nola also provides an extensive resource library on a variety of legal and non-legal issues so that community workers in rural, regional and remote locations can better assist and easily locate services for their clients.

Ask Nola particularly aims to improve the accessibility of socially and/or geographically isolated women to legal information and assistance.

Since the launch of *Ask Nola* in April 2014, over 100 individuals and organisations joined as members, 6 webinars have been delivered, and there have been over 64 downloads of past webinars and close to 200 downloads of *Ask Nola* case studies and fact sheets.



CLCs using social media to get the word out

The use of social media and networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat has increasingly become a central part of Australians' daily lives. These social networking services can play a role in CLCs efficiently and economically connecting and building relationships with their supporters and service delivery partners, delivering information about legal and policy developments and advertising their activities. Here are some examples of CLCs using social media.

The Arts Law Centre of Australia (Arts Law) is Australia's independent national CLC for the arts, providing free or low cost specialised legal advice, education and resources to Australian artists and arts organisations. Arts Law's Artists in the Black (AITB) program delivers targeted services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists nationally. With more than 2,500 likes on its Facebook page, over 2,000 Twitter followers and more than 1,200 connections on LinkedIn, as well as a growing presence on other platforms, Arts Law effectively uses social media to promote its legal services, workshops, publications and advocacy work, and to engage with issues of interest to its stakeholders.

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) based in Melbourne is Australia's largest asylum seeker advocacy, aid and health organisation, promoting and protecting the human rights of asylum seekers. With nearly 150,000 likes on Facebook and over 20,000 Twitter followers, social media platforms are an essential part of its communications to inform, educate and influence community attitudes in relation to asylum seeker issues. ASRC uses its Facebook page to tell the stories of asylum seekers and refugees, share photos and stories from its over 1,000 volunteers, myth bust, fundraise, thank its supporters, highlight developments in government policies affecting asylum seekers and share news articles and opinions.

The Environmental Defenders Office QLD (EDOQLD), a specialist CLC providing legal services to Queensland community groups and individuals seeking to protect the environment in the public interest. EDOQLD is closely involved in a number of mining cases and keeps its more than 2,000 Facebook followers informed of government decisions and approvals and other developments relevant to its work.



Some safety measures when using modern technology

Conscious of the dangers that the internet and social media can play in allowing online abuse, harassment and bullying, particularly in the context of interpersonal relationships – and acknowledging that seeking help may sometimes instigate family violence – several CLCs have developed innovative tools and materials to help their clients protect themselves and their privacy.

Services working with victims of domestic and family violence use strategies to help protect their clients from these threats. For example, the Southern Metropolitan Region Integrated Family Violence Executive's *Ask Someone* website – provides a "Quick exit" link on each website page, so that people viewing the services information can click and exit the site and move to a neutral site quickly if they believe they maybe being watched and are in danger.

The **North Queensland Women's Legal Service**, based in Townsville and Cairns, has a 1800 number that does not show up on clients' phone bills, potentially making it safer for women to reach out and seek help without fear of this contact being discovered from phone bills.



Video conferencing increasing access to legal assistance in regional, rural and remote areas

The sheer size and population spread in Australia means providing easily accessible services of any kind is an enormous challenge, and in particular ensuring access to legal services, especially in regional and rural areas. In response to these challenges technology based solutions are increasingly being used to deliver information to support the delivery of legal advice and other legal services to people outside Australia's urban centres as well as enhance collaboration between legal assistance providers.

Video conferencing has assisted many CLCs to expand their existing services, add outreach activities and reduce their travel costs. One advantage of video conferencing over telephone based services is that it enables both verbal and non-verbal communication.

Often CLCs rely on host agencies such as community centres to provide facilities for clients to access services. This opens up opportunities for CLCs to collaborate with local community groups and pro bono law firm partners.

Such technology has provided a platform for CLCs to attract and retain more pro bono and volunteer lawyers by offering a more convenient means for them to deliver services from their own offices rather than at the CLC or an outreach location.

Recognising these benefits, a number of CLCs have developed technology related projects funded under the **National Broadband Network (NBN) Regional Legal Assistance Program**. The \$4 million program provided grant funding from the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department to legal assistance providers to trial NBN based initiatives that strengthened and increased legal assistance delivery in regional areas. To address the challenges of attracting and retaining professional staff in some regional areas, the program is aimed at identifying innovative and collaborative ways of providing legal assistance and sharing knowledge more effectively with regional community legal services.

Several projects funded under this initiative demonstrate the variety of legal assistance that CLCs have been able to provide to regional, rural and remote communities through this program.



Redfern Legal Centre International Students Solicitor providing legal assistance via Skype, as part of the Legal Assistance with Armidale Project (LEAP)

Redfern Legal Centre: Legal Assistance with Armidale Project (LEAP)

Redfern Legal Centre (RLC), in partnership with the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale, used an NBN grant to expand its existing state wide **International Student Advice Service**. This involved the use of new technologies to be more accessible to regional and remote clients. The *International Student Advice Service* was originally set up in response to research undertaken by RLC that identified international students as a highly vulnerable group, particularly subject to exploitation by employers and landlords and sometimes experiencing racist violence and abuse.

The rollout of the NBN in Armidale, and an initial Attorney-General's Department grant, provided an opportunity for RLC to pilot the provision of free expert legal advice to international students living in Armidale, using video conferencing technology.

The **Legal Assistance with Armidale Project (LEAP)** launched in February 2013 uses video conferencing to provide international students with access to free professional and targeted legal advice from RLC volunteer solicitors and solicitors from RLC's pro bono partners. Students can access the service in a confidential setting at the university or in their own home, both inside and outside core business hours.

Utilising video software to see clients face to face, RLC has been able to assist students, who in some cases have interpreters and support people present, despite their being located more than 400 kilometres from the centre. Clients in the project have received advice about credit and debt, discrimination, migration and government complaints.

Student participants have indicated that they prefer speaking with an advisor they can see, as this enhances the overall experience. In addition the students can send

documents through the program and share their computer screen with their solicitor, to quickly convey all the information needed for the lawyer to be able to provide comprehensive legal advice.

Another benefit in using the technology is being able to have a three-way interview with a client in a regional area, a support worker at RLC and a pro bono solicitor advising from their office elsewhere.

RLC was successful in securing a second round of funding in 2013, allowing the project at UNE to continue, and establishing a second project site at the **Coffs Harbour Neighbourhood Centre (CHNC)** in October 2013. Where people in Coffs Harbour can receive free face to face legal advice from specialist solicitors at RLC via webcam. People can choose to either attend the CHNC – which has computers available for webcam appointments or use their own computers at home.

Unfortunately, funding for this project finished in December 2014, and due to general funding shortfalls, this service is not currently being offered.

Connecting Country to City Legal Clinic Service

The **Welfare Rights Centre (South Australia) Inc** was granted \$55,000 in 2012 to extend its metropolitan **Housing Legal Clinic (HLC)** to regional, rural and remote communities of South Australia by providing free online legal assistance via NBN enabled webcam communication.

The HLC provides pro bono legal advice to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. Its seven metropolitan Adelaide services are complemented by their **Connecting Country to City Legal Clinic Service**, which allows HLC's pro bono lawyers to use Skype to talk with disadvantaged clients in regional, rural and remote areas. The most common areas of law where assistance is needed are; tenancy, debt, police and family law issues.

The clients attend welfare and service providers in regional towns, which act as referral and host organisations for the service. For example, UnitingCare Wesley Country SA has six centres set up with a computer and webcam, allowing clients to be linked in with the lawyers in Adelaide via Skype. The host organisations often support clients with a social worker or case worker while they attend the video meeting. In 2012 the project was further enhanced with the NBN funding and focused on the outer southern districts of Adelaide, in particular Goolwa, Victor Harbor and Willunga. The service is still going strongly, with great support from the local community workers who refer and assist clients to attend appointments with the HLC worker and the pro bono lawyer via Skype.

Tasmanian centres extend reach

The **Hobart Community Legal Service (HCLS)**, in collaboration with the **National Pro Bono Resource Centre**, received a grant to increase access to legal assistance for the Sorell area east of Hobart. The pilot project enabled clients to receive face to face pro bono advice from DLA Piper lawyers via video link at the HCLS' outreach office at Sorell.

The service was focused on increasing the capacity of HCLS to service unmet legal needs, helping socially and economically disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community with advice in a variety of areas of law.

The pilot project also led to the development of mutually beneficial mentoring relationships between the lawyers at Hobart CLS and DLA Piper. Lawyers from the CLC were able to telephone a lawyer at DLA Piper for specialist legal advice, particularly in the area of employment law. With this additional expertise, Hobart CLS was able to run a successful hearing at the Fair Work Commission (FWC) on behalf of a client who had been unfairly dismissed by his employer after many enquiries about his unpaid wages. DLA Piper assisted HCLS in the preparation of the outline of submissions and witnesses' statements for the purpose of the hearing, and provided ongoing support and advice on how to run the hearing. FWC ultimately ruled in favour of Hobart CLS' client, ordering the employer to pay \$6,000 in compensation.

Hobart CLS lawyers also benefited from participating in training sessions run by DLA Piper from their metropolitan offices, on topics such as employment law, insurance law and professional ethics. These training sessions strengthened the collegial relationship between the CLC



Leanne Ho (Senior Policy Officer at NPBR), Yvette Eddington (Generalist Solicitor at Hobart CLS' Sorell office), John Corker (Director at NPBR) and Dan Creasey (former DLA Piper Regional Pro Bono Counsel and Manager (Asia Pacific)) meet to discuss their NBN Pilot Project

and the law firm, as well as building the knowledge of the centre lawyers, to better assist clients.

The **North West Community Legal Centre (NWCLC)** in northern Tasmania secured funding from the NBN Regional Legal Assistance Program to establish a mobile Skype unit in the **Wyndarra Community Centre** in Smithton.

Based in Devonport, the NWCLC conducts outreach to Burnie, Smithton and the west coast of Tasmania. Prior to the commencement of the pilot project, which ran from July 2012 to June 2014, NWCLC was only able to service the rural community in Smithton, two hours from Devonport, once a month when staff visited the Wyndarra Community Centre.

In collaboration with the community centre, NWCLC established a mobile Skype unit within Wyndarra, allowing NWCLC to provide one on one legal advice in Smithton between the centre's monthly outreach clinics. This has been particularly beneficial to clients with time sensitive matters.

During the pilot project, the mobile Skype unit assisted NWCLC to service 156 clients, almost 70% of whom sort assistance for Commonwealth law related matters.

The Skype service is supported by IT equipment allowing clients and lawyers at NWCLC to receive and transmit legal documents quickly, confidentially and cheaply – and computers providing clients with links to other legal information and resources.

NWCLC continues to provide this service to assist clients it would otherwise struggle to reach in person.



Kirsten Abercromb, a former Legal Practitioner from North West Community Legal Centre, providing legal assistance to a geographically isolated client through Skype

Meeting clients' information needs

A video from the Employment Law Centre of WA encourages potential clients to use the InfoGuide first prior to ringing, to better assess their legal problem

A number of CLCs use digital tools, or publish detailed information and guidance on their websites, to help clients and prospective clients navigate their services.

Some provide tools for clients to work out for themselves what type of help they really need – which in turn can work as a 'triage' system, helping the CLCs to see more of the people they can most assist, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their services, and ensuring that other people are directed promptly to other places or information that can help them, when relevant.

The Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre (NSCLC) in Western Australia is a not-for-profit CLC that provides disadvantaged people with access to legal services. NSCLC has produced a YouTube video on Booking Appointments at NSCLC. The short video outlines the process of booking an appointment with the NSCLC and provides information about mandatory conflict of interest checks, disability access, the need to pre-book interpreters, and what happens if the centre is unable to assist due to a conflict of interest or lack of relevant expertise. The video helps people understand not just what will happen when they visit the centre, but the reasons for different procedures. By explaining what information they need to provide to make the most of the interview such as the need for an interpreter the meeting with the client is more effective, improving the client's experience and the efficiency of the centre's service.

The manager of NSCLC, Karen Merrin, explains the rationale behind the video: "our community is one of the nation's most diverse, with 65.5% of all people and 72.3% of all parents born outside Australia. The use of visual tools delivers a message effectively to a community where English is a second language and many cannot read or write in their own language."

Utilising this video has allowed the NSCLC to better manage appointments at its offices by anticipating common issues that occur at the interview and addressing them earlier in the booking process.

Another centre has increased its service efficiency by sending SMS reminders of appointment details to its clients 24 hours ahead. Prior to implementing this practice, in July 2013, 1 in 5 of **Launceston Community Legal Centre's** clients were failing to attend scheduled appointments. The centre now checks with clients if they would like a SMS reminder when booking appointments, and the day before the appointment, the CLC sends out a text message reminder. Almost immediately clients confirm, reschedule or cancel their appointments helping the service to identify available appointments which

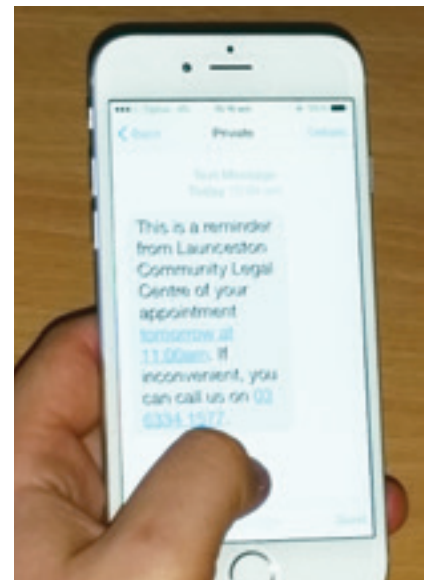


can then be used if other clients drop in. Launceston CLC CEO Nicky Snare says the system has made an "enormous difference", with no-shows down to about 5% by July 2014.

The Employment Law Centre of WA (ELCWA) is a specialist employment law CLC providing free, confidential employment law advice, education, advocacy, representation, information and referrals to vulnerable employees in Western Australia. Like many CLCs, ELCWA has difficulty meeting the demands placed on its service. Their solution was to develop an InfoGuide to improve the relevance and quality of their information resources, empowering clients to help themselves.

The InfoGuide is a user-friendly web-based system designed to help users work out what their main employment law issues are likely to be. The InfoGuide asks users questions about their employment, to work out which of ELCWA's fact sheets, information kits and other resources are best for them. It is aimed at people who have not yet called ELCWA's Advice Line or are unable to get through.

The InfoGuide is live on the ELCWA website. In addition, a set of films enhance ELCWA's training packages and are accessible on ELCWA's website and on their YouTube account, demonstrating their service, navigation of the ELCWA website and various employment issues.



The reminder text sent from Launceston Community Legal Centre to its clients

Developing elearning to share knowledge and strengthen organisations

More and more CLCs are using online sites to upload their induction for their staff and volunteers as well as other useful courses for people engaging with their service. Here are four examples of how organisations with the community legal sector are using elearning resources.

Community Legal Centres Association WA (CLCAWA) has been a leader in taking advantage of online platforms to develop an elearning site for CLC Boards, staff and volunteers.

CLCAWA developed the Community Legal Centres Access to kNowledge Delivered Online (CANDO) using a learning platform, MOODLE, to create and maintain dynamic online courses including staff and Board inductions. The platform was developed in 2011-12 and jointly funded by Lotteries West and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

Among the diverse range of CLCs currently utilising the site are the **Citizens Advice Bureau**, the **Employment Law Centre**, the **Mental Health Law Centre WA**, **Street Law** and the **Women's Law Centre of WA Inc**. Reflecting the advantage an online platform has in reaching more geographically isolated regions and services that have vast catchment and service delivery areas, its users also include the **Geraldton Resource Centre** – which has a 'branch office' 1000kms from its main office – and **Pilbara Community Legal Service**.

Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA) Inc (CCLSWA), a not-for-profit CLC that specialises in credit law and



consumer law, has developed an online Induction and Orientation kit for law student volunteers through the MOODLE learning platform that provides skills development and assessment of their volunteers. Its advantages include:

- volunteers receiving consistent and accurate information in the induction process
- increasing the retention of organisational knowledge, even with volunteer turn-over
- reducing the amount of time taken by staff and paralegals in orientating new volunteers, and
- enabling on-going training and development opportunities for existing volunteers.

In turn, these factors help CCLSWA ensure consistent quality service delivery to its clients.

The **Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services (QAILS)** uses a webinar website (www.gotowebinar.com) to deliver remote Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to CLC staff, volunteers and CLC 'friends'. These help solicitors in rural and regional areas to meet their professional development requirements with little 'time out' from service delivery and no travel costs. In 2013, QAILS delivered 16 webinars to 283 individual registrants, with a total of 562 participants, demonstrating an even broader reach.

The webinars are held every two or three weeks and have between 10-60 attendees on each occasion.

Presented by pro bono lawyers, academics, other community service providers, the webinars include topics as varied as child support, debt recovery, homelessness, insurance disputes and consumer law as well as practical sessions on topics like applying for Legal Aid grants and social media for CLCs.

The webinars are very well received, particularly in regional areas of Queensland.

James Barnes from **Cairns Community Legal Centre** regularly attends the QAILS webinars, saying "it's great to be able to access CPD straight from my desktop in my office. It saves us a lot of time and inconvenience in travelling."

Jessica Brake from **Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre** says the QAILS webinars offer an opportunity



Toni Emmanuel, Principal Solicitor of the Employment Law Centre of WA speaks about CLCs in an induction video for new CLC workers, developed by Community Legal Centres Association (WA)

to access specialised knowledge on issues they don't normally have exposure to, helping to broaden their general legal knowledge, "and the practical sessions are really helpful for our practice. We often have several people at our office participating in webinars, including some volunteers."

The Aged Rights Service (TARS) is a community legal service providing legal advice, information, community outreach and advocacy for older people across New South Wales.

Reflecting the challenge of servicing the whole state, TARS has started using Skype to offer training to workers from other organisations who work around older persons' issues. One recent training session, to Home

Care staff at Parkes, involved a 40 minute presentation by TARS staff, including case studies, followed by Q&A from the Home Care staff. The participants were sitting around a PC in Parkes linked to TARS in Sydney via Skype.

For organisations with very mobile staff, getting everyone together for formal training can be difficult, and small group training can be most efficiently and conveniently delivered via teleconferencing platforms. Skype also offers greater opportunity for a personal connection to be established between the presenter and participants.

TARS has also used Skype to provide advice and assistance in a timely manner, when resources may not stretch to a personal visit.

Providing information and tools online

A number of CLCs utilise their websites to host online toolkits, provide information, guides, and handbooks for their clients and the general public. In some cases CLCs also utilise their websites to raise awareness or 'campaign' for specific issues.

The **Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services (QAILS)** developed its *Queensland Neighbourhood Disputes* website with pro bono help from Holding Redlich Lawyers. The website was developed in response to the high proportion of client enquiries to QAILS – in 2012-13 a quarter of inquiries to QAILS were about neighbourhood disputes.

The website's objective is to assist Queenslanders who have neighbourhood problems but don't know where to go for help. It provides general legal advice regarding neighbourhood disputes over issues such as fences, trees, pets, noise, land and building use and emphasises the importance of discussing and trying to negotiate the issue first before escalating matters to the police or other authorities.

The website includes advice about how to talk face to face to neighbours about disputes, templates for writing a letter to a neighbour about different issues, and information about mediation.

The **Suncoast Community Legal Service's** online *Personal Injury Self Help Kit* is a guide to assist Queenslanders self-representing in claims for compensation in minor personal injury matters. The Self Help Kit is designed to be used in conjunction with ongoing help/support from local CLCs.

The Kit aims to explain in simple terms the legislative processes and steps required for an individual to self-represent: each section of the website advises the user of the documentation required at that stage of the process, such as medical reports, previous personal injury claims,



statements and incident reports. The Kit includes a tool to calculate the user's damages, a personalised timeline by which certain actions must be taken by the user according to the date of the injury and links to downloadable claims forms. The videos and template documents for compulsory conferences are of particular relevance and assistance for both clients and CLC lawyers with limited experience in personal injury claims.

The **Financial Rights Legal Centre NSW** received a grant to build a new *online self-help tool* for its clients. The centre is developing a letter-generating program which will enable consumers to type in their personal details and generate professional legal letters for dispute resolution purposes. The centre intends to have more than 20 letters in the program, relating to disputes consumers might have with different financial services providers such as banks, energy providers and insurance companies.

The centre was prompted to develop the online tool after identifying increased demand for information and assistance on their two specialist hotlines.

The **Hobart Community Legal Service Inc** has published the *Tasmanian Law Handbook* every decade since the 1980s. Now in its 4th edition, the Handbook is a teaching and learning resource for teachers and students as well as ordinary members of the public looking for more information about Tasmanian laws.

The Handbook is available free online from the service's website, where it is possible to print part or all of the chapters.

A number of other CLCs similarly publish and make available law handbooks online, including:

- **Fitzroy Legal Service Inc's** *Law Handbook Online*
- **Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc's** *WA Law Handbook*
- **Caxton Legal Centre's** *Queensland Law Handbook*
- **Environmental Defenders Office QLD's** *Community Litigants Handbook*

Speak Up to end violence against women is an innovative website (www.speakup.org.au) that provides a one stop referral service to help women escaping domestic or sexual violence.

An initiative of **Women's Legal Services NSW** (WLSNSW), the *Speak Up* website is an online prevention and law reform campaign platform. It encourages and provides women with a safe way to voice their experiences and the community as a whole with a way to share their views about how people can end violence against women.

Users of the website are asked to answer the question 'we could reduce violence against women by...' responses are then posted anonymously on the *Speak Up* website and contribute to WLSNSW's submissions and advocacy law reform, which includes providing practical recommendations to government on how to end violence against women.



The website is also a comprehensive Australia wide service directory where individuals and organisations can find help for women escaping violence. A person simply enters their postcode or suburb to find a comprehensive list of targeted and local services that can assist women in need.

All services are broken down into categories to prompt individuals and organisations to turn their minds to the different types of help available to women escaping violence. There are lists of services providing; accommodation, court support, domestic violence support services, financial assistance, legal advice and assistance and sexual assault counselling. There are also services for perpetrators.

Launched in March 2014 to mark International Women's Day, the *Speak Up* website had 100 responses and over 1000 likes on Facebook in its first month.

The website was designed to complement the Federal Government's *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.



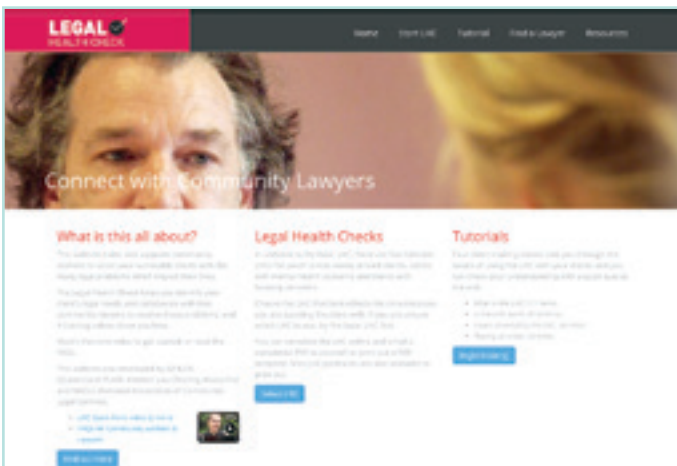
Online Legal Health Check

In 2015 the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (QPILCH) launched a new online legal screening tool – the Legal Health Check (legalhealthcheck.org.au). The tool was developed by QPILCH for the National

Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC), and funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. The online tool assists community workers, health workers and lawyers across Australia to identify and respond to the legal needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged clients.

A decade of legal needs research has shown that:

- disadvantaged people are likely to have multiple, complex and interlinked legal and non-legal needs
- many people do not recognise their problems as "legal"
- if people seek help for their legal problem, most will not go to see a lawyer, but if they are already seeing non-legal services such as welfare or health agencies, they are likely to ask these trusted workers for help
- workers within non-legal services don't know enough about the law themselves, and often don't know who the appropriate legal services are to refer their clients to.



The Legal Health Check website

The purpose of the Legal Health Check is to train and resource the community workers who support these communities to identify legal problems, and then connect people to lawyers.

The online tool contains a general Legal Health Check,

as well as four tailored Legal Health Checks for use with at-risk youth, newly arrived migrants/refugees, people with mental health concerns, and people with housing issues.

Each Legal Health Check works like a clear menu, where a community worker (or lawyer) can ask the right questions to identify and prioritise legal need. The questions in the Legal Health Checks cover the legal issues that vulnerable clients are most likely to experience, and those that will cause the most problems for the client if they are unresolved. This “diagnosis” both maximises the choice of the client to seek relevant legal assistance and enables legal service(s) to be efficient and appropriate in addressing the legal problems.

Forms, postcards and posters can also be downloaded to use with clients and community agency partners.

The website also includes a ‘tutorial console’ consisting of four video tutorials for workers about how to use the resource effectively, an online quiz testing the worker’s knowledge after completing the tutorials, and a feedback survey seeking information which will assist QPILCH to improve the tools in the future.

Online videos make learning easy

Some CLCs have utilised YouTube to upload and share legal information and how-to videos on a broad range of legal issues and processes, providing accessible legal information to everyone who can access the internet.

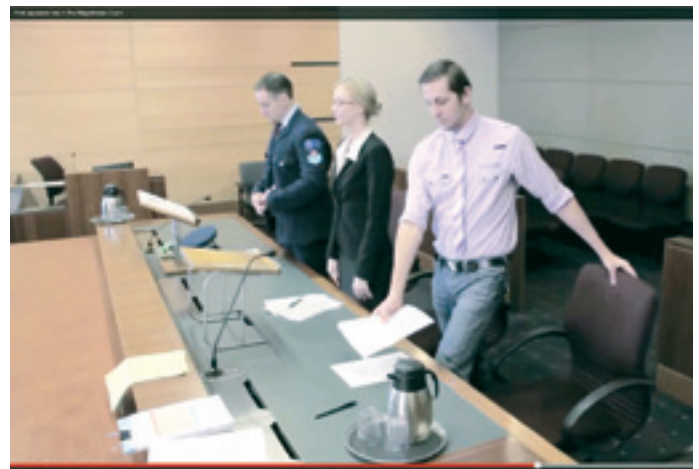
One example is the YouTube video *First appearances in the Magistrates Court* made by Caxton Legal Centre in South Brisbane.

The Caxton video was released on YouTube in May 2012 and has since then had more than 5000 views. The video is targeted at anyone charged in Queensland with a minor traffic or other offence and who must appear in the Magistrates Court. It educates people on what to expect at their first appearance in court.

The video details issues that may arise before a person goes to court, and provides information about how to access free legal services through Legal Aid or CLCs, and issues to consider if self-representing. The video outlines what to expect in the courtroom, explains protocols and options available, as well as information for what to do after the first appearance.

Another CLC that has utilised videos to provide information is **Tenants Queensland Inc**, a specialist CLC that has provided tenancy advice to Queenslanders since 1986.

Tenants Queensland has an extensive range of written fact sheets, which have recently been augmented by videos developed by the centre. A series of five online



Client and legal representatives in court in Caxton Legal Centre’s *First appearances in the Magistrates Court* YouTube clip

videos provide tenants with tips on resolving their tenancy disputes. The videos explain and provide tips on the tenancy dispute process administered by the Residential Tenancies Authority and the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, helping people to understand what to expect when attending a hearing.

Tenants Queensland has also produced three *It’s Your Right* videos, providing information about renting in Queensland for Indigenous tenants. The three videos cover Entry & Privacy, Paying Rent and Coverage & Repairs.

Using Twitter # to engage National CLC Conference participants

There have been some examples already within this brochure of how CLCs are increasingly using social media to efficiently connect with their supporters and service delivery partners. NACLCL too has been using social media, and in particular Twitter, to successfully engage with a whole range of social media users – CLCs, media, politicians, government and the general public. One example is our use of the Twitter hashtag #naclcXX (where XX is the year) to promote the National CLC Conference and engage participants throughout the conference.

NACLCL has held the National CLC Conference every year since 1979. The National Conference provides a valuable opportunity for workers from CLCs and other legal assistance services to gather together and learn from each other, hear from inspirational speakers, and recharge their batteries away from the stresses of front-line service delivery.

The use of social media brings another layer of interaction and engagement at the Conference.

The hashtag started organically – it was first used by a dozen participants of the Conference in 2011 (#naclc11). This was the year NACLCL created its first Twitter account @NACLCLBruce, established to promote the Community Legal Education and Reform Database (CLEAR), which collates community legal education and law reform projects undertaken by CLCs and other legal assistance services.

In 2012 NACLCL created its own Twitter account (@NACLCLComms) and began actively promoting the use of the hashtag in the lead-up to the National Conference (#naclc12). Use of the hashtag by Conference participants more than doubled in that year.

In 2013 the use of the hashtag doubled again from the previous year. By 2014, the use of the hashtag at the National Conference was wide spread – although some participants used the wrong hashtag (#naclc2014 instead of the correct #naclc14). The Conference hashtags were used to facilitate ‘tweet ups’ (real life meet ups), share photos, promote workshops, share information from within workshops and plenary sessions, and engage the media. In 2014 NACLCL ran a photo competition, requiring participants to fill in a form, finishing off the sentence “What CLCs mean to me” and taking a photo of it. This was an excellent way to engage participants including keynote speakers such as Mark Dreyfus, QC MP, Shadow Attorney-General.

In 2014, a CLC worker who was unable to attend the National Conference tweeted that “it was like being



South East CLC joint winner of the #naclc14 twitter competition



Ellie Ryan joint winner of the #naclc14 twitter competition

there”. During the Conference #naclc14 was trending Australia wide, reaching a rank of seven (that is, it was the seventh most popular hashtag for that time across Australia) something NACLCL hopes to beat at the 2015 National Conference.

Follow [@NACLCLComms](https://twitter.com/NACLCLComms)

For National Conference 2015, use #naclc15 (and just change the end date for future conferences).