

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION STRATEGY

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES INITIATIVE

A few examples of how Legal Aid is engaging in community education



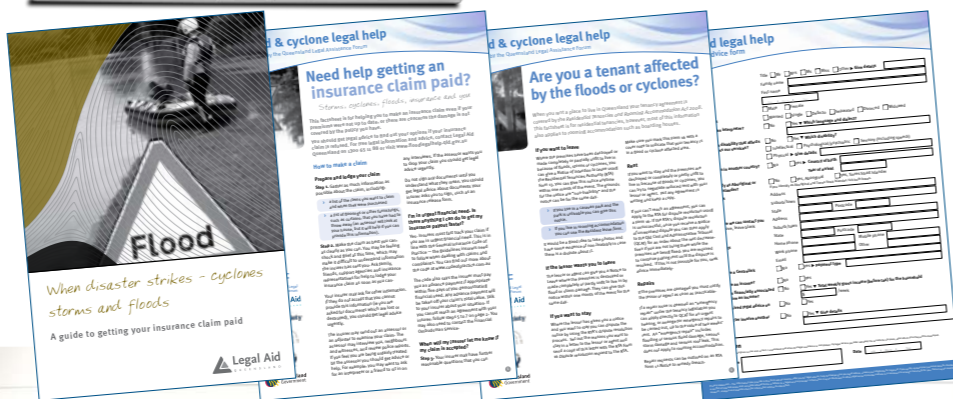
Community liaison officer May Mooka providing legal information



Judge Brendan Butler speaks at the LAQ Hypothetical



Legal Aid Queensland staff at the Queensland Multicultural Festival



Legal Aid Queensland consumer protection lawyer Catherine Uhr speaks at a community forum for victims of the Ipswich and Brisbane floods in early 2011. Photo courtesy Sarah Harvey/APN.

Legal Aid Queensland – a leader in community legal education

Legal Aid Queensland is the leading provider of legal services to financially disadvantaged Queenslanders.

Community legal education is a big part of what we do. It is a key plank of our commitment to the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services.

The Community Legal Education Strategy aims to transform our community legal education program.

Supporting government priorities

The Community Legal Education Strategy will support:

- the focus of the National Partnership Agreement on early resolution of legal problems and increasing preventative legal services like community legal education that inform and build individual and community resilience
- the Queensland Government's Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland ambition Fair – Supporting safe and caring communities.

Why it's important

- A legal system is less fair when people do not understand their legal rights and responsibilities. Community legal education aims to address this by informing and educating the community about the law.
- Litigation is costly financially and emotionally. Intervening early when legal problems first arise can help reduce costs in the justice system. Many legal problems can be resolved more easily and at less cost if they are addressed in the early stages.
- It helps people find out where they can get legal assistance when they need it. Community legal education helps to reduce barriers that stop vulnerable people from accessing legal help.

A new direction

For the first time, Legal Aid Queensland's community legal education program will be coordinated through a strategy designed to ensure that it targets priority client groups and legal problems. Our approach to community legal education will be guided by the following principles:

- community legal education is a key part of what we do
- collaborate with other service providers to reduce duplication
- leverage existing resources to achieve the greatest reach and optimal outcomes

- utilise new technologies to improve delivery of community legal education content
- responsive community legal education prioritised and guided by good practice.

New initiatives

New initiatives to support the Community Legal Education Strategy include:

- establishing a community legal education collaboration fund
- appointing a Community Legal Education coordinator
- coordinating the Flood and Cyclone Legal Help response
- developing a community legal education e-bulletin for stakeholders
- preparing standard community legal education materials and resource packages to assist delivery of legal information sessions
- leveraging and sharing national community legal education initiatives
- supporting the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum (QLAF) website – to provide a one-stop-shop for information about free legal services and resources.

Working Together

Legal Aid Queensland is only one piece of the access to justice puzzle. As part of our commitment to the National Partnership Agreement we collaborate with other agencies to help the most disadvantaged people access the justice system.

We do this by building relationships with partner agencies through service provider networks and forums across Queensland, making appropriate referrals to other service agencies, and collaborating with them on community legal education projects and policy issues. These relationships help us to reach priority clients most at risk of social exclusion, and to avoid duplication of effort and services in a sector that has limited resources.

Examples of “working together” to provide community legal education are:

- Flood and Cyclone Legal Help response
- Regional Legal Assistance Forum (RLAF) initiatives
- Queensland Legal Assistance Forum (QLAF) website.

How will we deliver community legal education?

Our Community Legal Education Strategy will be delivered through:

- web based legal information
- written publications including factsheets, information kits and legal guides
- legal information sessions for members of the community, community support and government workers

- community development projects that focus on increasing awareness within more hard-to-reach communities
- community legal education events such as the annual Law Week Hypothetical.

Achieving good practice

Our Community Legal Education coordinator will support our staff and partners to achieve good practice in community legal education. This means our activities will:

- be client focused, accessible to specific audiences and responsive to community needs
- have clearly defined goals and outcomes
- use resources wisely and be sustainable
- be collaborative
- be evaluated
- be based on adult learning principles
- be innovative and creative.

Measuring our success

Our Community Legal Education Strategy will be assessed against performance indicators based on the Commonwealth National Partnership Agreement.

We will also evaluate community legal education activities through informal feedback and formal evaluations as appropriate to determine what we have achieved with the Community Legal Education Strategy. This will inform our annual plan and guide future projects.

Community Legal Education action plan 2011-2012

Actions

- Information resources and publications**
- Develop a Legal Aid Queensland community legal education e-bulletin to promote new and updated community legal education activities to stakeholders.
 - Release new Family Law DVD “Life after Separation: Putting the pieces back together”.
 - Collaborate with National Legal Aid (NLA) to produce “What’s the law? An introduction to Australian Law for new arrivals” DVD to help newly arrived refugees and migrants understand the Australian legal system.
 - Release new and updated publications including factsheets, information kits and guides to provide valuable legal information to the community.
 - Integrate our web information to reduce duplication of legal information and improve accessibility.
 - Explore use of multi media to broaden access to DVDs and other community legal education resources.

Events

Law Week Hypothetical (May) - Each year, the Hypothetical brings together lawyers, members of the judiciary, police and community service workers to discuss and debate issues that affect the justice system. In 2011, the Law Week Hypothetical focused on people with an intellectual disability and how they interact with the criminal justice system.

Legal Aid Queensland will promote community legal education by participating in events like:

- International Women’s Day (March)
- Domestic Violence Prevention Month (May)
- Refugee Week (June)
- NAIDOC Week (July)
- “Ekka” (August)
- Child Protection Week (September)
- Multicultural Festival (October)
- White Ribbon Day (November)

Collaboration

Leading the Flood and Cyclone Legal Help response - Legal Aid Queensland is working with key legal organisations to provide free legal information and preliminary legal advice to disadvantaged Queenslanders affected by floods and cyclones.

Collaborative community legal education projects with community legal centres and RLAFs will be funded through the community legal education collaboration fund.

Legal Aid Queensland will continue to maintain and improve the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum website which provides a one-stop-shop for information about free legal services across Queensland, and access to community legal education publications.

Legal Aid Queensland is involved in a Commonwealth funded pilot to provide legal assistance services (including community legal education sessions) to clients of Family Relationship Centres in Cairns, Townsville, Bundaberg and Mackay.

Community development

Develop community networks to strengthen referral relationships, and identify opportunities for community development projects.

LAQ coordination

Legal Aid Queensland will establish a web portal to enable community and government workers to request Legal Aid Queensland speakers for community legal education sessions.

Legal Aid Queensland will develop and review standard presentation materials for in-house lawyers to use when conducting community education sessions on common topics such as family law, child protection and consumer law.

Establish National Partnership Agreement measures and other evaluation methods.

Develop strategic networks to inform community legal education activities

- participate in National Legal Aid (NLA) community legal education working group meetings
- participate in regular meetings with Queensland based community legal education workers.

Improve system for auditing and reviewing publications.

Include community legal education activities in effective hours targets for LAQ lawyers.

Improve systems and processes to enable effective delivery of community legal education.