

## CENTRAL COAST Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program Partnership

### What is the Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program?

The Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Program is a regionally-based approach to legal service delivery in the Central Coast that aims to improve outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged people by building cooperative and strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations. The CLSD Program is funded by Legal Aid NSW as part of its commitment to provide better services to regional communities in NSW.

The CLSD Program is based on the idea that better coordination and cooperation in the planning and delivery of legal services will enhance the efficient and effective use of scarce resources and improve access to justice for disadvantaged people in regional areas.

### CLSD Program objectives

The CLSD Program aims for continuous improvements to service delivery through better alignment of planning, program design and service delivery within and across the various legal and related sectors covered by the Program.

The Program's three main objectives are to ensure that:

- economically and socially disadvantaged people are able to efficiently and effectively access legal services which can help them to understand, protect and enforce their legal rights and interests;
- consideration is given to legal need and equity in the provision of legal services and resources; and
- planning and delivery of legal services is approached in a coordinated and cooperative manner between service providers.

### Features of the Central Coast CLSD

The CLSD Program is centred around the following elements:



#### 1. Regional partnerships of legal service providers and community organisations in the Central Coast

The Central Coast CLSD Program partnership is made up of representatives from key legal services and community organisations from our region—see Participants panel on back page.

Our regional partners meet face-to-face quarterly to exchange information, identify service delivery priorities for their region and to develop and implement strategic plans and projects including outreach clinics, community legal education and training to address priorities and unmet need.

While the CLSD Program Unit at Legal Aid in Sydney provides central coordination, our Central Coast CLSD Program partnership is largely autonomous and the work of the CLSD Program partners is responsive to locally identified issues. The Central Coast CLSD Program has a part-time Regional Coordinator based at Wyong whose job is to facilitate local coordination.

#### 2. Mechanisms to improve referrals to and between key legal service providers

One of the CLSD Program's aims is to get disadvantaged people off the "referral merry-go-round". It does this by increasing awareness and exchange of information about services and by developing mechanisms and strategies to improve referrals.

CLSD Program partners also work with other justice agencies to improve referrals from non-legal service providers to the most appropriate legal service provider.

#### 3. Improved access to pro bono legal services

One of the aims of the CLSD Program is to facilitate better access to pro bono assistance — through local or Sydney-based firms with established pro bono practices, better coordination with pro bono referral schemes or harnessing closer relationships with local law firms and regional law societies. Apart from taking referrals, firms may also provide

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administrative support, training and community legal education.

### 4. The use of evidence-based planning of legal services

CLSD Program partners adopt an evidence-based approach to developing projects and services that meet local emerging legal needs. Partners aim to coordinate more effective and collaborative outreach services, improve client referrals between agencies, develop new client resources and community legal education based on the identified needs of their communities.

The CLSD Program Unit works closely with LawAccess NSW and the Law & Justice Foundation of NSW to analyse data on service usage and explore and implement service planning and delivery strategies.

### 5. Central coordination through Legal Aid NSW

The CLSD Program is centrally managed and coordinated by the CLSD Program Unit. The Unit assists regional coalitions to develop and monitor projects and strategic plans. Through the partnerships, the Unit is able to give a voice to local regional issues by raising them at a broader level: information on identified gaps in services and emerging and systemic issues is fed back to Legal Aid NSW Head Office, the NSW Legal Assistance Forum, the Law & Justice Foundation and LawAccess NSW. The CLSD Program Unit also manages funding for CLSD Program projects and liaises with justice agencies to facilitate more coordinated outreach to CLSD Program regions.

The CLSD Program is also well-placed to report on unmet needs in regional NSW and identify systemic legal issues for consideration at a peak level. Further, government agencies such as ombudsman and complaints services are increasingly leveraging the CLSD Program networks to promote awareness of and access to their services across regional NSW.

### Outcomes from our CLSD Program Partnership on the Central Coast

Through working together, CLSD Program partners have attracted additional resources, enabling agencies to extend services to meet emerging legal needs.

Partners have developed targeted community legal education sessions, improved client referrals between agencies, developed new resources, provided training and capacity-building initiatives.

CLSD partners are working together on cooperative projects such as legal advice and information "road-shows" and joint outreach advice clinics to less well-served regional areas.

Projects and initiatives undertaken with the Central Coast CLSD Program Partnership include:

- AVERT Family Violence Cross Disciplinary Training workshop to strengthen working relationship between Police, Legal services & Family Violence Support Services on the Central Coast
- A series of fines days to assist with fines, debts and other legal problems
- Legal education sessions to TAFE students
- Will to Live Day - Wills and planning ahead issues for Aboriginal people

### Participants

- Benevolent Society
- Breakthru
- CatholicCare
- Burnside
- Central Coast Aboriginal Tenancy and Advice Service
- Central Coast Children's Court Assistance Service
- Central Coast Community Council
- Central Coast Community Legal Centre
- Central Coast Community Women's Health Centre
- Central Coast Law Society
- Central Coast Tenant's Advice and Advocacy Service

- Central Coast WDVCS
- Centrelink Gosford
- Coast Shelter
- Community Justice Centres NSW
- Department of Fair Trading
- Family Inclusion Network
- Family Law Pathways Network
- Family Relationships Centres
- Intellectual Disability Rights Service
- Interrelate
- Justice Health
- Legal Aid NSW – Gosford
- Lifecare
- Lifeline Central Coast
- Local Courts
- Northern Aboriginal Tenants Advice Service
- Northern Settlement Services
- The Glen Centre
- UnitingCare Burnside
- Women's Legal Services
- Wyoming Community Centre
- Wyong Neighbourhood Centre

### Contact

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