



STRATEGIC PLAN

2017 – 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Community Legal Centre Inc (NCLC) was formed through the amalgamation of Broadmeadows and Moreland Community Legal Centres in January 2016 with the objective of providing free and accessible legal and related services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people. The amalgamation reduced administrative costs and strengthened the skill base of staff, thus enabling increased capacity to offer more services and over a larger area.

There is now one office in Gladstone Park with outreaches to seven locations across Hume, Moreland and Mitchell Local Government Areas. The Gladstone Park office is some distance from public transport, which will necessitate additional outreaches or relocation of the office to maximise accessibility.

The NCLC is governed by a Management Committee of between seven and twelve, comprised of experts with skills relevant to the organisation. They are appointed by the members of the organisation.

There are now nine lawyers (one being the Legal Practice Manager), two community development workers (a Community Development Manager and a Family Violence Community Coordinator), an Administration Manager with two administration workers, and the CEO; therefore 15 staff in total. Many staff have more than 15 years' experience in the Community Legal sector, some have an accredited specialisation and there is a range of legal and community education expertise across the team.

THOUGHTS FROM OUR CHAIR, Susanna Locke

Northern Community Legal Centre's journey has well and truly begun, carrying with it the rich histories of the Broadmeadows and Moreland CLCs. This document reflects the dedication of our staff to removing the impediments to a happy, healthy and productive life faced by many members of the North-West Melbourne community – impediments that are so often invisible to those who don't face them. The journey will not be without its challenges, particularly in the ever-tightening financial environment, but with a clear vision, enthusiasm and a dynamic team, there is much cause for optimism.

OUR VISION

The people of Melbourne's North West have access to justice and their rights are protected.

OUR ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

NCLC aims to integrate its organisational values in all of its work to deliver the best possible social justice outcomes for Melbourne's north west community:

- **Respect** – acting with integrity, inclusiveness and accountability
- **Innovation** – using creativity and flexibility to find the best possible solutions for our clients
- **Connection** – working with our community to achieve shared goals
- **Passion** – caring and supportive
- **Outstanding Service** – delivering beyond expectations.



OUR ORGANISATIONAL GOALS

Goals are outcome statements that guide priority focus sectors of the organisation's work – usually programs, administration, finance, governance, people etc. – in the delivery of the Mission Statement and progressing toward the Vision.

- Deliver high-quality wrap-around legal services to our priority client groups
- Deliver high-quality targeted legal education and community development services
- Provide a highly respected effective and responsive service
- Deliver financial stability at a level able to support growth both in key priority service areas and across our catchment area
- Ensure a supportive and well-managed work environment.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

NCLC provides legal services and community legal education to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Melbourne's north west, and advocates for equal access to justice for all.

PRIORITY GROUPS

NCLC seeks to make our services accessible to all the community by providing legal advice education and referrals. However, NCLC recognises that there are members of our community who suffer serious disadvantage. To this end NCLC has prioritised the following groups, which have the least resources and ability to access legal assistance.

Those experiencing or at risk of family violence

Through the work of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the work of the many advocates who went before, it is acknowledged that the effect of family violence on our community is horrendous. Our catchments, and Hume City especially, is recognised as having one of the highest rates of family violence in the Melbourne metropolitan area. NCLC and its predecessors, MCLC and BCLC, have a strong history of working with victims of family violence in a holistic manner. NCLC will build on the significant work of the previous services in assisting victims of family violence, through the creation of innovative service responses to ensure the safety and wellbeing of women and children.

Those who are newly arrived or refugees

Newly arrived residents, refugees and asylum seekers face unique barriers to the Australian legal system compared to other community members. They are also more vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in relation to housing, work and services. Around 15 per cent of our community speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English. NCLC understands that we need to provide better and more flexible service-delivery strategies to ensure that these community members can access their legal rights.



Young people aged 25 and under

Young people (12–24) make up just under a fifth of our communities and there has been a rapid growth in the number of young people whose countries of birth are other than Australia. They as a group suffer high levels of family violence, homelessness and unemployment, which leads to high levels of young people in the criminal justice system. However, they have been under-represented as users of our service. NCLC will develop a range of programs to ensure that young people have timely access to legal education, advice and representation.



Those with a mental illness

People afflicted with mental health challenges are more susceptible to issues of homelessness and social exclusion and more likely to have unresolved legal issues, particularly infringements. NCLC will take initiatives to ensure that services are delivered in such a way that they are comprehensible, flexible and compassionate and are in places that are the most accessible.

Older people experiencing abuse

It is estimated that 5 per cent of the population suffer from elder abuse, and in addition there is a growing awareness that people born overseas are likely to be more vulnerable because of language difficulties and cultural expectations. NCLC will focus on this group, particularly with settled communities where we are aware that this is an emerging issue.



3–5 YEAR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 1. Deliver high-quality legal information, advice and casework, and legal education services to our community, particularly to our priority vulnerable groups**
 - a. Maintain current services by prioritising key client groups and legal needs
 - b. Target and expand services for identified client groups and legal needs
 - c. Review and restructure night services
 - d. Deliver an effective outreach program
 - e. Make strategic use of technology to provide innovative solutions for education, advice, information and referral.

- 2. Be a bold advocate for legal and related policy reform**
 - a. Maintain systemic and public-interest casework as a core function
 - b. Draw upon casework and consultation with stakeholders to identify issues for law and policy change
 - c. Provide submissions to relevant law and policy reviews
 - d. Publish reports on emerging and public-interest issues
 - e. Develop and implement campaigning strategy
 - f. Strengthen and expand key stakeholder relationships across the broad range of community, government and commercial sectors.

- 3. Consolidate offices and programs in the most effective locations**
 - a. Integrate telephone intake with relevant service providers across the north west
 - b. Coordinate clinics and services with relevant service providers across the north west
 - c. Provide accessible services in appropriate locations.

- 4. Strengthen organisational structure and capacity**
 - a. Implement a staffing structure that supports the 5–10-year direction of the organisation
 - b. Establish and implement required policies to enable appropriate governance and management of the organisation.

- 5. Strengthen workplace environment and culture**
 - a. Strengthen workplace flexibility
 - b. Strengthen positive workplace culture
 - c. Support staff development and career path opportunities.

- 6. Maintain financial stability at a level sufficient to support delivery of these priorities**
 - a. Maintain appropriate recurrent/non-recurrent split on our flexible financial base
 - b. Continue to expand the recurrent funding base; retain existing lawyers on non-recurrent funding and retain existing non-recurrent positions
 - c. Develop and maintain relationships with current and potential funders
 - d. Develop strategies to build prudent reserve levels.