



All the Latest from Northern Community Legal Centre

December 2022

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It's a wrap!

After several years of COVID slumber, this year has raced past at warp speed as we have re-engaged with our community and returned to face-to-face activities.

For NCLC, this year has provided the opportunity to pilot some innovative new programs. Our TEALS (Technology-Enhanced Access to Legal Services) Project piloted an electronic tool as a way of enhancing access to legal assistance. As a direct result of this project, NCLC gained valuable insights as to how we can improve our first contact with community members whilst ensuring that we prioritise assistance to those with the greatest legal need. Our pilot Safe Landing Project, which provides migration and family violence legal support to women on temporary visas, was extended with funding for a further four years. And we received additional funding to extend and enhance our family violence health justice partnerships with Maternal Child Health Centres across our catchments.

The additional funding has allowed us to adapt our model to employ a Family Violence Integration Worker to provide support to some of our most vulnerable family violence clients, and we have managed to expand our team of lawyers as well as our community development team through project grants. Most recently, our Take the First Step Peer Education Program was nominated as a Finalist for the Melbourne Women's Fund.

On behalf of the team at NCLC, we would like to thank all our program partners who have contributed to an energetic year as we have worked together to harness our community strengths and continually advance access to justice for the people of Merri-bek, Hume and Mitchell.



Launch of the Safe Landing Extension Project in October 2022

From left: Hon Andrew Giles MP, Executive Director of South-East Monash Legal Service Kristen Wallwork, Hon. Ros Spence MP, Fiona Patten MP, NCLC CEO Jenni Smith and Leader of the Victorian Greens Samantha Ratnam.

International Parental Child Abduction

NCLC recognises that many of our clients may be worried about their children being removed – without their permission – from Australia by the other parent after a separation. While the thought of this is distressing, there are steps that can be taken to stop this.

Parents can request a 12-month ‘child passport alert’, which triggers the Australian Passports Office to notice if a passport application is made for a particular child. It does not, however, prevent a passport from being issued or a child from being removed from Australia if they already have a valid passport.

Parents can also apply for an Airport Watch List Order with the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA) to prevent a child from travelling outside Australia. Once a child is on the Watchlist, you will also be stopped from travelling overseas with them (unless you have a court order that allows this).

If your child is taken from Australia without your permission, you may be able to apply to the FCFCOA for an order requiring their return to Australia. This process is only possible with some countries. If your child has already been removed from Australia, we recommend seeking urgent legal advice.

For further information on international parent child abduction, please see the [Factsheet on our website](#) or [make an appointment with an NCLC Lawyer](#) for legal advice.

The TEALS Project Report



Technology-Enhanced Access to Legal Services

Funded by the Victorian Law Foundation, the TEALS Project aimed to explore whether an interactive online tool, which we named the Legal Connector, could streamline the triage process in a way that is comfortable and safe for service users and at the same time providing

further referral information. We also aimed to learn more about the many people accessing our service for assistance, as every year we turn away more than a third of people seeking legal support due to limited capacity based on funding limitations. With better user information obtained via the tool, we hoped to ensure that our services targeted the right people, i.e. those in our community with the most legal need.

After piloting the tool over a six-month period we found that there are some benefits to using an online tool, including the ability to provide automated referrals to ineligible clients and enhanced targeted service delivery based upon the additional client information obtained.

However, we also found that the resourcing required was far greater than anticipated and that the administrative burden of managing the tool outweighed many of the benefits.

What this project did confirm was that there is significant unmet legal need in our catchment, which NCLC currently does not have the resources to address. Accordingly, NCLC will continue to advocate for enhanced access to justice for people in our catchments across Melbourne's North-West.

The TEALS Project report can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

North-West Enhanced Pathways Project

This project aims to intervene early to prevent vulnerable women and children in our regions from experiencing family violence and family separation through enhanced safety pathways within an integrated legal health model.



Maternal Child Health Services (MCHS), when working with families with complex issues, consistently identify a need for child protection, family violence and family law legal support.

This project enables NCLC to extend and strengthen our collaborative partnerships with MCHS teams across our catchments, providing an integrated response to address health, wellbeing and legal need. Project funding has enabled NCLC to employ a Child Protection Lawyer and Family Violence Lawyer to conduct capacity building activities and implement co-case-management structures.

This project supports early identification and referral for legal assistance, leading to improved safety outcomes for women and their young children exposed to violence.

For further information, please contact NCLC Partnerships and Community Development Manager Tania McKenna at tmckenna@northernclc.org.au.

Wishing our partners, clients and community a safe and happy festive season 2022!



Please note our office will be closing on Friday 23rd December 2022 and reopening on Tuesday 3rd January 2023

Northern Community Legal Centre acknowledges and respects the traditional custodians whose lands we are fortunate to live and work on, and we pay our respects to all Elders past, present, and future.

Northern Community Legal Centre

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