



## All the Latest from Northern Community Legal Centre

June 2021

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## From the Team at NCLC



*Pictured: NCLC staff members at our recent planning day at CERES, Brunswick East.*

### **Welcome to the June Edition of the NCLC Newsletter**

In this month's newsletter, we report back on our Legally Minded Project Report Launch, provide some service updates and report back on a number of our projects. We also provide a legal update on developments on family violence and pets.

## **NCLC Service Updates**

Our lawyers continue to provide free and confidential legal advice by telephone.

Contact us on (03) 9310 4376 or [admin@northernclc.org.au](mailto:admin@northernclc.org.au) to book an appointment.

## Legally Minded Project Report Launch

### Report Launch: Legally Minded

Tuesday 22 June 2021  
1.00pm - 2.00pm



Victorian Legal Services  
BOARD + COMMISSIONER



**On Tuesday 22 June 2021 and in partnership with Mind Australia, NCLC proudly launched the Legally Minded Report.**

Legally Minded, funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board, ran from July 2020 to March 2021. The Project aimed to explore and understand the impact of legal intervention on the lives of people with mental health issues, and involved a collaborative partnership between Mind and NCLC for legal in-reach to Mind services in Victoria's northern suburbs.

The Report Launch was attended by over 70 participants, featuring opening remarks from NCLC's Champion Justice Rita Incerti and a panel discussion with Louise Glanville, CEO Victoria Legal Aid and Emma King, CEO Victorian Council of Social Service.

During the event, NCLC's Mental Health Support Coordinator Morgan Wright highlighted the success of the Project by providing examples from the Report

research participants, demonstrating that when legal matters are causing concern for people living with mental ill-health, legal intervention can reduce barriers to their recovery. Describing the impact of legal issues, one research participant stated, 'Because of the legal things, I am always stressed, because I don't know what will happen next.' However, after receiving support another participant stated, 'I just felt like I had a new outlook on life. Like a whole weight was lifted off my shoulders. It just felt like I had a fresh start'.

Mind CEO Gill Callister noted that 'many of the everyday problems our clients experience, such as housing or financial concerns, involve legal issues. The stress of legal problems can negatively impact on mental health. Solving legal concerns with the support of legal professionals, and in the context of ongoing mental health support, reduces psychological distress and enables people to focus on their recovery.'

NCLC CEO Jenni Smith highlighted that 'a key benefit of this project has been Mind staff and clients having a better understanding of where to access legal support. The project also highlighted the importance of lawyers understanding the extent of distress caused by legal issues, and the important role that mental health practitioners play in identifying and referring clients with legal issues. Our work has confirmed the importance of legal and mental health staff working in partnership to support clients to attain the best level of wellbeing.'

Fines, family violence and trauma, insurance claims and financial difficulties can all cause stress and negatively impact mental health. Despite this, there are too few partnerships between mental health and legal services to enable legal interventions like the kind explored in this Project.

[Read the Legally Minded Report](#)

## Meet Our New Family Violence Lawyer



**Alexandra  
Kersey**

**Family Violence Lawyer  
Early Resolution Service**



**Tell us a bit about yourself and why you chose to work in this area of law?**

As a Family Violence Lawyer at NCLC, my work focuses on giving legal advice to those affected by family violence. There are a range of legal issues which arise in the context of family violence and empowering yourself to access support, be it legal or otherwise, can be very difficult to do. I wanted to work in this area because I want to be a part of addressing the issue of family violence in Australia. The legal process can be very daunting and overwhelming and I hope to be a lawyer who can help ease those anxieties and reassure clients that they are supported.

### **Why is it important to get legal advice if you are a victim/survivor of family violence?**

If you want to apply for an intervention order yourself or if the police have taken out an intervention order on your behalf, it is important to get legal advice:

- to understand what an intervention order means for your specific circumstances;
- to understand what constitutes a breach by the Respondent;
- to get assistance in tailoring the orders to suit your needs; and
- to better understand the court system and legal process.

### **Any general advice for people applying for a family violence intervention order?**

I often see people who did not get legal advice before their hearing and consequently, they do not feel that they were heard properly and/or may be disappointed by unexpected consequences or outcomes. If you want to apply for an intervention order yourself, or if the police have taken out an intervention order on your behalf, it is important to get legal advice **early** so that you have time to understand the legal process and get some assistance on how to explain your experience and articulate what you want to happen to the Court.

*If you need legal advice regarding a family violence matter, book an appointment by calling [\(03\) 9310 4376](tel:0393104376) or emailing [admin@northerncl.org.au](mailto:admin@northerncl.org.au).*

## **Early Resolution Service**

### **NCLC has recently commenced provision of the family violence Early Resolution Service (ERS) at Broadmeadows Magistrate's Court.**

Going to court for any reason can be a stressful experience. Nowhere is this more evident than the Family Violence Intervention Order list at the Magistrates' Court when applicants are often also dealing with relationship breakdown, fears for safety, and uncertain living arrangements.

The Early Resolution Service is a best practice model designed to not only address the backlog of family violence cases that have arisen due to COVID, but also streamline the process for family violence applicants and respondents. By ensuring that cases are referred early to legal advocates, both parties are provided with opportunities for negotiation which will hopefully lead to agreed outcomes incorporating appropriate safety provisions. In this way the court hearing becomes a 'rubber-stamp' exercise, as all parties have already

reached a resolution by the time of the hearing. This process can significantly decrease the amount of time that parties spend in court, and ensures that legal representatives have plenty of time to fully assess the safety needs of their clients.

The Broadmeadows Magistrates' Court, at which NCLC provides a Family Violence Applicant Duty Lawyer Service, has now commenced the ERS. Participation is voluntary, and applicants who agree to participate will be referred by the court in the first instance to the NCLC lawyer.

*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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