



All the Latest from Northern Community Legal Centre

January/February 2022

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From the team at NCLC



As we progress towards International Women's Day 2022, NCLC would like to reflect and acknowledge the advocacy of Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame. Their courage in speaking publicly of personal experiences of sexual assault has shone a light on the violence that women experience at home, in the workplace, and in our community. In speaking out they have come up against the most masculinist of institutions, the Australian Government, and their commitment has never wavered despite negative backlash in the print and electronic media.

In 2022 we hope to continue to see reforms that enable women to participate safely and without the threat of violence in their personal and work lives. At NCLC we continue to see the impacts of violence against women and children everyday in our work. Our data for the six months from July - December 2021 demonstrated that a staggering 68% of NCLC clients were victims/survivors of family violence, and our numbers continue to grow each year.

International Women's Day 2022 will be a special day to not only reflect upon the young women who have led this conversation, but also to celebrate the women in our community as NCLC and DNH launch the Take the First Step video (information provided below). Our newsletter also includes an update of changes to visa working conditions, and some insights from our Mental Health Program Lead on the linkages between mental health and legal concerns.

NCLC Service Delivery

A note that NCLC is continuing to operate remotely and to provide legal advice to our clients via telephone. Legal appointments can be made by phoning our reception staff on [\(03\) 9310 4376](tel:0393104376) or sending an email to admin@northernclc.org.au.

Launch of Take the First Step Family Violence Campaign

In 2021, NCLC, in partnerships with Dallas Neighbourhood House, conducted the Hume Family Violence Peer Education Project. This project responds to the high rates of family violence in Hume local government area, the second-highest in the Metropolitan Melbourne region. The Project also recognises the important role of women in our community who provide emotional and social support to other women in their networks.



The project brought together 12 women from diverse cultural backgrounds – all residents of Hume – to participate in a series of educational sessions about family violence, covering topics such as how to recognise and respond to family violence, and the services and safety pathways that are available to women, particularly women who are newly arrived. Now, as qualified Peer Educators themselves, the 12 participants are able to support, educate and empower other women in their community.

On completion of the course, the participants worked with local filmmakers, Fringe Dweller Films, to script and produce a short, powerful video encouraging other women in abusive relationships to seek help. The video will be officially launched on Tuesday 8 March on International Women's Day and shared throughout our networks. We are very proud of the group's hard work.

The video forms part of a broader campaign by NCLC to 'Take the First Step', which encourages newly arrived migrant women experiencing family violence to seek help by visiting our website, where they can learn about their rights in Australia and make an appointment to see a lawyer. Resources in English and Arabic are now available [here](#).

Changes to Temporary Visa Conditions

The Australian Government has temporarily lifted the existing work restrictions for international students (a limit of 40 hours of work per fortnight) and

working holiday makers (a limit of six months of work per employer) to assist with COVID-19 recovery and workforce shortage.

This means that working holiday makers can now continue to work for the same employer or organisation for longer than six months without requesting an extension, and international students (including dependent family members) can work for more than 40 hours a fortnight.

People should be aware these arrangements are temporary and will be reviewed by the Government later in the year (April 2022 for Student Visas and December 2022 for Working Holiday Visas). Visa holders should regularly check for updates.

Mental Illness and Legal Support

20% of Australia's adult population experience mental illness. They are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community – often found to have lower levels of education and employment, with less stable living conditions and higher levels of poverty.

How mental illness and legal problems can intersect

People with a mental illness experience particular legal problems disproportionately to other members of the community. These often include tenancy issues, Centrelink issues, credit and debt issues, fines and family law matters. If left unaddressed, these legal problems can have significant financial and personal consequences and can further exacerbate mental ill-health.

For instance, say a client who is experiencing a period of mental ill-health has accrued a number of fines and debts. This client goes to hospital, during which time the fines and debts grow to the enforcement stage. Upon release from hospital, the stress of finding this out exacerbates the mental health issue the client just recovered from.

As evidenced in NCLC's [Legally Minded Report](#), a lack of trust in and understanding of the legal system often prevents people from realising the legal dimension of their problems – and thus, potential remedy.

NCLC's integrated approach

NCLC is committed to improving access to legal assistance for people with a mental illness. We do this by:

- Employing a dedicated Mental Health Program Lead;



- Bringing our lawyers directly to clients in need through outreach clinics with mental health partner organisations; and
- Training our legal team on best practices when working with clients experiencing mental ill-health.

For legal support, contact NCLC on **(03) 9310 4376**.

For mental health support, contact Head to Help on **1800 595 212**.

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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