



## All the Latest from Northern Community Legal Centre

July 2021

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## From the Team at NCLC

### Welcome to the July Edition of the NCLC Newsletter

As we commence a new reporting year, July is the perfect opportunity to reflect on the work that we do, the challenges we face, and opportunities to enhance our impact.

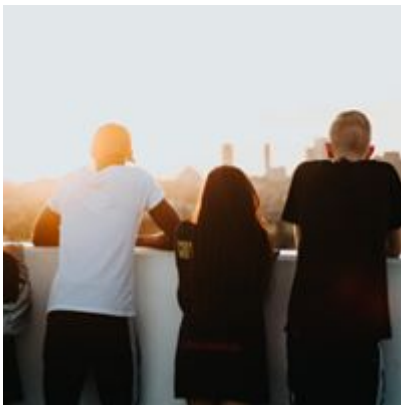
Over the past financial year, NCLC assisted 1325 clients by providing 1318 separate legal advice appointments and opening 398 cases for more complex legal assistance and advocacy. While our client numbers are slightly down compared with previous years, the complexity of the casework that we take on continues to increase as we further target our services to members of the community most in need.

Responding to family violence and assisting victims/survivors to protect themselves with family violence intervention orders, child contact orders, and associated legal issues such as debt, continue to be core functions of our work. Sadly more than half of all NCLC clients experience family violence, however, we are encouraged by the number of women who reach out to seek assistance utilising legal protections. We look forward to working with our partners over 2021 - 2022 to continue to streamline these access pathways.

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.

## Legal Update: Young People and the Law



### Group offending: What happens when a crime is committed in a group

Recently, the Youth Team at NCLC presented to a group of Year 9 students at a local school. The students asked questions about what happens when you're involved in a crime when you are in a group. Almost any offence can be committed in a group, some common examples, include fights, robbery (theft with force), or burglary (break and enter).

The law says that a group of people can break the law together/commit an offence, even when it looks like one or more people seem to do more than others. The law considers anyone **'involved'** in the crime to be liable for the offence<sup>[1]</sup>. For example, if two of your mates break into a home and steal items, but you only kept a look out, you are still **'involved'** and are likely to be charged just the same as your mates.

There are some other examples of what might count as being **'involved'** in a crime:

- Giving information to help someone commit a crime
- Cheering on – e.g., if you are watching a fight, cheering them on / filming, you are encouraging an assault (even though you didn't touch anyone)
- Holding a victim
- Stopping someone (witness) from helping the victim.

### What if you are just in the wrong place at the wrong time?

Usually, just being there without any knowledge of the crime, would not be enough for you to be **'involved'** in the crime. However, sometimes simply being present is enough. For example, you and your mate stand behind

someone who is robbing someone on the street. Your mere presence might be enough for the victim to handover their property.

### **How do I stop being 'involved' in a crime?**

The law says that to stop being **'involved'** in a crime you need to **'withdraw'** before it happens<sup>[2]</sup>. It is not enough to change your mind, the best way to **'withdraw'** is to say no and to leave the situation. This is not an easy thing to do, but it is the clearest way to show your mates that you are out.

NCLC would like to acknowledge Victoria Legal Aid for providing key information about group offending.

<sup>[1]</sup> Section 324, Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

<sup>[2]</sup> Section 323(2), Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

## **Welcome Roy Reekie, Policy and Evaluation Lead**



### **A fresh perspective on NCLC**

I've just started with NCLC – in the role of Policy and Evaluation Lead. I feel very fortunate to have inherited the legacy of previous work done in this space and to have joined NCLC.

I bring a different lens to NCLC and therefore have a fresh, unique perspective on its work.

I was once the manager of Victoria Legal Aid's CLC Funding and Development Program and, from then, remember NCLC from its earliest days, and before when it was Broadmeadows CLS and Moreland CLC.

This historical knowledge heightens my appreciation for what NCLC is and how it does its work.

My early observations are that:

- NCLC understands its community well and reflects it. It has a DNA-ingrained knowledge of the various communities that make up the cities of Moreland and Hume and Mitchell Shire.
- Client-focus and client-care lies at the heart of everything NCLC does. I have observed lawyers showing deep emotional connection and care for their clients and being willing to address non-legal issues as well as legal issues. This is holistic care provided as a natural response rather than a manufactured one.
- Innovation is always on NCLC's mind. Looking for better ways to meet clients' needs is high on NCLC's service planning agenda.

For all of these reasons, I am thrilled to be part of NCLC. I'm looking forward to working with NCLC's community partners and staff to plan how to deliver the best possible services to NCLC's clients and communities

# NAIDOC Week 2020



This month during NAIDOC week we celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

This year's theme is Heal Country, recognising that country is inherent to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity. Healing Country is more than changing a word in our national anthem – it is about the historical, political, and administrative landscapes adapting to successfully empower and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, nations, and heritage.

At NCLC, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise 5% of our casework clients. As an organisation we are keenly aware of the impact of colonisation upon Aboriginal people and the disproportionate legal need they experience as a consequence. We also acknowledge and celebrate the strong history of activism of Aboriginal people in Victoria, and stand in solidarity with our Aboriginal colleagues in their fight for justice.

*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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