



All the latest from Northern Community Legal Centre

February 2021

Please share by distributing through your networks

From the Team at NCLC



Welcome to our February edition of the NCLC newsletter.

In this month's newsletter, we invite you to our upcoming forum as part of our Indian Women's Family Violence Project, we provide an update on our Legally Minded Project addressing the interdependencies between mental ill-health and legal concerns, and we share findings from our Kangan TAFE Program, which operated between December 2018 - December 2020. We also interview

our COVID Response Lawyer Cassandra Meade, and in case you missed it - we provide links to Episode 1 of our new podcast.

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

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

Upcoming Forum: Indian Women's Family Violence Project

The Indian Women's Family Violence Project: Findings and Next Steps

Friday 26 March 2021
10.00am - 12.00pm
via Zoom



Our Indian Women's Family Violence Project is concluding in April 2021. Join us as we share findings and recommendations from the project and discuss next steps to advocate for change.

DATE: Friday 26 March 2021

TIME: 10.00am - 12.00pm

WHERE: Online - register on [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com) for Zoom link.

The Indian Women's Family Violence Project, supported by the Victorian Legal Services Board, commenced in early 2019 and has supported over 150 Indian women. The Project includes provision of legal services by our Immigration

Lawyer who works alongside our team of Family Violence Lawyers to provide a wrap-around service model.

The Project was developed in response to concerns regarding the complex issues, lack of supports, and isolation experienced by Indian women presenting at our legal service. It was noted that Indian women who were recently arrived and separated experienced multiple forms of abuse including those related to their immigration status and were often unable to access services.

The Project has led to greater referrals to other services for non-legal supports, such as financial, housing, counselling and family violence case management to provide clients with a holistic response.

In addition to enhancing our wrap-around service model, the Project includes a research component to build understanding of the complex cultural issues that contribute to family violence experiences, and the adequacy of Australian laws to provide legal protection. This innovative model is currently being evaluated for its scalability to all newly arrived women who are victims of family violence on temporary visas, and as a model across the community legal sector.

During this webinar, we will draw on findings from our legal practice and the experiences of Indian women in Australia, to present key themes, discuss the adequacy of our legal system to provide sufficient protections and highlight areas for systemic reform.

After project findings and key issues are discussed, participants will brainstorm advocacy priority areas for women on temporary visas experiencing family violence.

An expected outcome for the forum will be the formation of a local advocacy alliance to continue the advocacy for victims of family violence with non-permanent status.

[Register here](#)

Legally Minded Project Update

Legally Minded is our Mental Health Justice Partnership with Mind Australia.

Commenced in 2020, Legally Minded develops better pathways for people with mental illness accessing legal services and blending legal advice with social support to address the underlying causes of legal escalation, acknowledging the interdependencies between experiences of mental ill-health and legal concerns.

As well as providing additional lawyer support, this project enabled us to recruit a Mental Health Support Coordinator who has significantly enhanced our capacity to address the legal and non-legal needs of our clients, providing direct mental health support and referral. This has also enhanced the capacity of our legal team and community development team to respond to the

mental health needs of clients, by providing training and support on how best to work with clients with complex needs.

Over the six months from July – December 2020, 38% of all NCLC clients experienced mental illness. This was around 10% higher than previous years, and whilst influenced by the impact of COVID it was also indicative of our efforts to consolidate and strengthen our Health Justice Partnership with Mind Australia.

The Legally Minded project has enhanced our referral process by integrating legal health checks into mental health intake processes, as well as providing direct advice, support and advocacy to NCLC clients with disclosed mental health condition.

As part of Legally Minded, a research component has also been developed to explore the impact of legal intervention on the lives of people with mental health issues, and to understand how legal intervention impacts on the well-being and quality of life of people with mental ill-health. The Project findings will be released in April 2021.

Our Legally Minded project is funded until mid-2021, and we are hopeful to progress the considerable increase in well-being of those with mental ill-health in the North West.

Findings from our Kangan TAFE Project

We are pleased to share our findings from our Kangan TAFE Program, which concluded in December 2020.

The Program commenced in December 2018 and with support from Hume City Council, enabled us to implement a legal clinic at Kangan Institute Broadmeadows for Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) students, supported by an NCLC Arabic-speaking Community Paralegal who worked directly with newly arrived students, identified their legal needs, and provided legal education regarding the Australian Legal System and legal rights.

Hume has the second highest number of newly arrived Syrian and Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, 900 of whom are AMEP students at the Broadmeadows campus. Many newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers articulate a high level of suspicion toward the legal system, which stems from experiences of war, persecution and displacement in their country of origin. Without intervention, such systemic barriers were likely to further entrench newly arrived communities in disadvantage.

The Program comprised of:

- NCLC legal education presentations to Kangan staff to improve Kangan staff members' ability to identify legal needs and undertake legal needs assessments;
- Weekly outreach legal clinics based at Kangan to improve students' access to legal services;

- NCLC legal education presentations to Kangan students to improve students' legal knowledge; and
- Law Week activities, including excursions to Broadmeadows Magistrate's Court and the undertaking of Legal Health Checks at a barbecue, to increase students' awareness of NCLC legal services and reduce barriers to accessing legal services.

Some of our Program findings include:

1. Kangan teachers were more aware of NCLC services as a result of the staff presentations, and teachers were more confident in helping students as a result of their increased awareness of NCLC legal services.
2. Clinic numbers fluctuated between 0 to 8 clients per month, depending on term time. Although the number of legal services provided through the Kangan clinic overall was not as high as expected, the success of the Project was not compromised in light of the low referral numbers, as the main aim of the Program was to build student and staff awareness of the law and NCLC services if legal intervention is required. Students reportedly felt less legal stress while the clinic was operating at Kangan, and it was reported students would probably not have been aware of NCLC services without the outreach clinic.
3. Students' capacity to self-help significantly improved through increased legal knowledge, obtained during in-class NCLC presentations to Kangan students. During these sessions, the content would first be delivered by an English-speaking NCLC Community Lawyer and subsequently translated by the NCLC Community Paralegal into Arabic. An excursion to Broadmeadows Magistrate's Court occurred in 2018 and 2019, providing students the opportunity to learn about the court system and significantly reduced students' fear of the Australian legal system.
4. The profile of NCLC's services was primarily raised through NCLC presentations to staff and students, and also by the NCLC Community Paralegal's strong relationship with students.
5. Students were inspired to pursue careers in the legal field after meeting a law clerk at Broadmeadows Magistrate's Court and NCLC's Community Paralegal, both of whom were once newly arrived.

Overall, the Kangan TAFE Program has led to an increase in access to justice, whereby community legal education activities have enhanced the capacity of students to identify when they have a legal issue, act early before the issue escalates, and self-help in the resolution of legal issues. Where legal assistance was required, students were referred to the onsite legal clinic.

For more information, read our Evaluation Report [here](#).

Our Podcast



The Northern Community Legal Centre Podcast



Episode 1: Community and COVID



Hosted by Morgan Wright
NCLC Mental Health Support
Coordinator

in conversation with



Professor Roger Wilkins
Economist
University of Melbourne

&



Cassandra Meade
NCLC COVID
Response Lawyer

In case you missed it - we recently launched our podcast!

Episode 1 of the Northern Community Legal Centre Podcast is now available to stream on Acast, Spotify and iTunes.

In our first episode, we examine the impact of COVID-19 on the economic well-being of Victorians and explore themes and findings from our COVID-19 Legal Clinic.

Our podcast is hosted by our Mental Health Support Coordinator, Morgan Wright, who is joined by Professor Roger Wilkins, Economist at the University of Melbourne, and our Community Lawyer Cassandra Meade, who runs the NCLC COVID-19 Legal Clinic - read more about Cassandra below.

[Listen to Episode 1](#)

Meet Cassandra Meade - NCLC's COVID Response Lawyer



Tell us a bit about yourself

I previously worked in private practice, primarily in estate planning but also employment, disputes and general commercial matters. I also volunteered in the CLC space and knew that I wanted to be a part of community legal work. I have always had a personal and academic focus on justice and rights, so wanted to contribute and be a part of the amazing work done by NCLC. My position at NCLC is in response to legal issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why are you passionate about community law?

I believe that access to justice for all, especially those most vulnerable, is essential. Community legal work ensures that there is a place for people to go for advice, support, referrals, casework and community. Without community legal work there would be a horrific inequality justice gap. I am also passionate about community law because it connects in and works with other organisations and services to link in clients with other supports. This means all people and groups in the community can work together to make sure that people are supported.

What are some of the key themes emerging from the NCLC COVID-19 Legal Clinic?

The COVID clinic was created because there was an anticipation that there would be more legal needs arising from the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic. We have seen COVID-19 fines, tenancy and employment issues predominantly. The biggest theme has certainly been around mental health. The pandemic and multiple Victorian lockdowns have exacerbated mental ill health or created new mental health issues for people.

If you are experiencing legal issues arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, call [03 9310 4376](tel:0393104376) or email admin@northernclc.org.au to book a COVID-19 Legal Clinic appointment.

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

Level 3, Building 2, 1100 Pascoe Vale Road,
Broadmeadows
Australia

You received this email because you signed up on our website or made a purchase from us.

[Unsubscribe](#)



mailer lite