

NLAF Report Legal Assistance Services Learning and Development Group

The most recent meeting of the L&D group was held on Wednesday 10th October 2018, 2:00pm – 3:30pm at the Office of Public Prosecutions

Attendees included Laurel Draffen, CLCNSW (convenor), Jane Kenny, Law and Justice Foundation NSW, Deb Clements, Office Public Prosecutions, Melissa May, Office of Public Prosecutions, Phillipa Scarf, State library

Apologies were received from Amanda Middleton, Legal Aid NSW, Sarah Ludowici, PIAC Jaslin Sandhu, Law Access, Catherine Bryant, LIAC, and Lillian Leigh, NSW Legal Assistance Forum

1. Round up of L&D activities in the NSW Legal Assistance Sector

Community Legal Centres NSW

Laurel reported on National Community Legal Centre Conference held in Sydney on 28-30 August. Community Legal Centres NSW co hosted with the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC).

Community Legal Centres NSW has been working with the College of Law to program a Practice Management Course for community legal centres scheduled for 7th, 8th and 9th November. One course for community law is held each year, and includes presenters from the community legal centre sector as well as expert professionals in practice management issues.

Community Legal Centres NSW reported on progress towards scheduling presenters for the Quarterly on November 27th, 28th and a Management Training Day on 29th November for coordinators and directors of community legal centres.

Laurel also provided an update on the new funding application process for community legal centres in NSW due to open on Friday October 19.

Office of Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

Deb reported that the Early Appropriate Guilty Plea reforms (EAGP) has been the big focus for L&D at ODPP who have been ensuring that staff have the skills and knowledge to operate in the new world.

ODPP is currently introducing a program on Aboriginal Diversity with aim of increasing Aboriginal Cultural Awareness. The Reconciliation Action Plan has now been endorsed. An Aboriginal artwork has been commissioned. L&D engaged Felicity Ryan from Connecting Cultures to provide Introduction to Cultural Awareness sessions (a practical face to face immersive experience) which has been very successful. Director of DPP has supported this program.

L&D has had to be flexible in how PD events are provided because of the challenges of getting lawyers together. Professional development events for staff are generally when courts are closed.

L&D has also been engaged with extensive recruitment activities. This has included recruitment for the legal development program (LDP) , a one year program which takes qualified legal graduates. Now have regional LDP program.

Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC)

Phillipa provided an overview of LIAC which has now been running for 25 years, originally an initiative of LJF. The state library has an incredible Law Library – all legal publications must be held at the library and the library purchases a second copy of every law book for a browsing collection. LIAC provides a lot of training with legal staff about best resources to use, how to identify a legal problem, and referral to appropriate legal information. LIAC provides a Legal Toolkit to all public and prison libraries. Other publications include Neighbours and the Law, the Wills Guide, Law Handbook and Tenancy Rights manual. LIAC is now running partnerships with community legal centres and Legal Aid NSW to provide CLE. eg Macarthur with Campbelltown library – Legal talks. Legal Aid NSW and Senior Rights Service run Elder Abuse workshops in libraries – coordinated by LIAC. Other programs include a Drug & Alcohol service funded by NSW Health, and a program of activities for both seniors festival and youth week. LIAC has good social media – facebook and twitter and can use the publications and design team at the library.

2. Discussion Effective Evaluation strategies lead by Jane Kenny

Jane prepared tips re evaluation strategies after discussion with the Law and Justice Foundation team, who are strong proponents of evaluation. Evaluation tips included:

- View as part of the recruitment/supervision/performance cycle.
- How do you decide what professional development (PD) to make available? To whom?
- What do you want to achieve? Overall PD program, individual PD.
- How will you measure achievement of these aims?
- Do you have an expectation that staff attending conferences write up notes to share with other staff, plus links to presentations?
- What are the expectations for staff to implement what they have learned?
- (Depending on the topic) Can the person/people who participated in the training in turn train someone else on it?
- Should there be an automatic feedback form staff are required to complete following any PD attended; could this be coupled with further follow up say three or six months later (negotiated between staff member and supervisor).

Further insights from the LJF team included:

“In the UK civil service there was an anonymous/confidential annual staff survey which as well as measuring the amount/ type of development you had assessed things like staff engagement, your understanding of your role and how it fitted into organisational objectives, the extent to which you self-assessed as having the right skills for a role, perceptions of barriers to career progression, staff/manager skills (or lack of). There were also regular skills audits, again self-assessed and manager assessed. All this information was collected routinely and used to plan for

future development of staff. It doesn't really work as a one-off so well and of course it requires organisations to dedicate ongoing resources and be open to the findings (which aren't always comfortable!). Organisations also have to accept that development is about the individual and not just the immediate requirements of current managers. And it isn't a scientific approach because of course undertaking such a survey and self-reflection tends to increase demand for training in itself."

Evaluative thinking

"What is the change that you would like to see?" Consider this question early in your planning of professional development activities.

To measure the usefulness of PD activities, if you can get a baseline measure ahead of the training that's useful (which depending on the activity, could be knowledge/ confidence/ attitude/skills).

For wellbeing topics self-perception is probably the most relevant measure of learning.

Attributing changes solely to the professional development is difficult to do.

The ideal evaluation would include pre-, post- and follow up at a suitable interval (three months, six months), to measure change.

Two good questions to ask are "Would you recommend this presenter to someone else? Why or why not?" and "Will you use anything you've learned today? Why or why not?"

The organiser of the pd activity could ask the presenter for some follow-up prompt questions to send to attendees at intervals after the training, which may also assist with take-up. If you have sufficient numbers (say minimum 20) you could then run a control group and see if there is any difference between the groups in their uptake of the learning

Jane's reference to the UK civil service annual survey triggered further discussion on the annual People Matters survey for NSW public service - Legal Aid NSW had a recent article in Verbals newsletter

Other discussion included;

- How to measure effectiveness of L&D events – the response rate is often poor
- How to make evaluation process part of the performance conversation with the staff
- If there is a cost to the organisation – how do staff report back / be accountable for the investment in them?
- Spot checks – conduct a random sample of people who have attended training and send out a follow up questionnaire
- Send out collated analysis of feedback from workshops to provide a snapshot of achievements

Laurel shared a toolkit developed by Community Legal Centres Queensland - Measuring the impacts of community legal centres – with good examples and tips for data collection for measuring impact.

The toolkit is available on the Community Legal Centres Queensland website:

http://www.communitylegalimpact.org/uploads/1/3/1/0/13108841/self-evaluation_toolkit_2.03.18.pdf

Report prepared by Laurel Draffen