**Highlights of the NSW Legal Assistance Forum (NLAF)**

**June 2011**

This report summarises the activities of NLAF during the period from March to June 2011, including the outcomes of the NLAF meeting on 15 June 2011.

The work of NLAF focuses on:

* Meeting community need
* Coordination and communication
* Policy and law reform

Further information on NLAF activities is available at [www.nlaf.org.au](http://www.nlaf.org.au)

**1. Meeting community need**

***Working group on availability of lawyers for disadvantaged people in rural, regional and remote (RRR) NSW***

The working group considered the announcement in the Federal Budget of $4 million over four years to enable National Broadband Network based delivery of legal services and to attract and retain professional staff in selected regional areas.

The working group is exploring the possibility of developing a proposal that addresses recruitment and retention of solicitors in RRR areas through the establishment of professional development initiatives.

The working group meets quarterly in 2011, approximately, one month before NLAF meetings. The next working group meeting will take place in August 2011.

***NLAF Prisoners Forum***

The NLAF Prisoners Forum last met on 19 May 2011. At that meeting, items on the agenda included mapping legal outreach to correctional centres across NSW; the authorisation process for legal and non-legal visits to prisons; psychiatric reports of inmates; contact with Corrective Services NSW Regional Training Coordinators; use of video conferencing facilities; the Corrective Services and Legal Aid NSW Homelessness and Tenancy CLE Project; and security scanning procedures in correctional centres.

***Legal Information Needs of Newly Arrived Migrants and Refugees***

The catalogue listing legal resources for newly arrived migrants and refugees and the accompanying diagram of the settlement process in Australia is being finalised.

**2. Coordination and communication**

***Domestic violence working group***

The NLAF Domestic Violence Working Group is scheduled to meet with representatives of Police on 16 June 2011 to discuss ways to work together with Police, particularly in relation to issues of training.

***Employment law services working group***

The working group has developed a table that describes the free employment law services in NSW. The working group has also developed a report to accompany the table that seeks to clarify and qualify some of the information and provide an overall analysis of the key gaps in service provision in relation to employment law services in NSW.

The working group is in the process of finalising a proposal to increase the capacity of the sector to provide assistance in employment law matters to certain disadvantaged groups in the community. The proposal will also provide an opportunity to identify systemic issues and the resources required to provide services to meet demand for employment law assistance in NSW.

The Working Group plans to meet again at the end of July 2011.

***Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program***

NLAF members discussed the issues raised in the CLSD report including:

* Domestic violence, in particular in relation to CALD women
* Young people and criminal law issues, a rise in APVOs and the link to cyber bullying
* Enhancing assistance and advice to CALD communities
* Enhancing better networking and referral across agencies including private practitioners.

***Legal Information and Referral Forum***

The LIRF meeting focused on legal responses to disasters and emergencies, highlighting the experiences of the Queensland floods and Victorian Bushfires.

**3. Other business**

***National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services* (NPA)**

NLAF members agreed that the following issues should be raised for detailed discussion at the next Jurisdictional Forum in September:

* Access to Justice Framework
* Referrals from Commonwealth service delivery agencies to legal assistance services
* Opportunities within the settlement process to provide legal information and advice to newly arrived migrants and refugees.

***Promoting public interest law careers to university students***

NLAF is working with the Australian Legal Students Association to promote public interest law careers through a workshop and panel discussion at the ALSA conference in July 2011.

***ACCAN Campaign***

NLAF members discussed the ways in which they could support the campaign of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) to encourage telecommunications companies to commit to provide 1800, 1300 and 13 numbers from mobiles at the same rates as landlines.

***New Working Groups***

NLAF members discussed the possibility of forming new working groups to address issues of:

* Traffic offences, fines and licence suspension
* Legal response to disasters and emergencies
* Policing practices.

NLAF members agreed to convene a meeting to determine whether there is the interest and capacity to form a working group around traffic law and if so, develop the terms of reference and determine membership of the group.

The other issues will remain on the NLAF agenda for future meetings.

***New website and logo***

NLAF is currently working on developing a new website and logo.

***Meeting dates***

Remaining meetings of NLAF will take place on:

* 7 September 2011 (this meeting will also serve as a Jurisdictional Forum in accordance with the NPA)
* 7 December 2011.