



NSW Legal Information and Referral Forum

Report to NLA

LIRF met on 9 March 2016.

Financial rights online self-help tool: Julia Davis, Policy and Communications Officer, Financial Rights Legal Centre

<http://financialrights.org.au/sample-letters/>

Julia gave an overview of the project she has led, which has developed, tested and produced a sample letter generator for consumers experiencing disputes with financial service providers.

The initiative to develop this tool came from frustration with the Centre's hotlines being overrun. However, many of these callers are capable of self-advocating, or doing so with assistance from a financial counsellor or other community worker, using the information on the Centre's website. Staff at the Centre came up with the idea of a letter generating program where consumers can type in their personal details and print out accurate and professional legal letters for dispute resolution purposes.

Julia noted that the user testing stage in this project was crucial and provided very useful feedback on what worked and didn't work so well. User testing was undertaken with a mix of community lawyers, financial counsellors, Legal Aid lawyers, LawAccess customer service staff and consumers (including some recruited directly from the Centre's helpline). Julia shared with us a number of useful "lessons learned" from running the project.

Currently there are eight live letters on the Centre's website, with another six to be added. They will be launched shortly and promoted widely.

Julia's powerpoint presentation is available from Jane if anyone would like it.

Using social media to get out your legal information: Cathy Hammer, Communications and Editorial Officer, Media & Communications, and Philippa Scarf, Manager, LIAC, State Library of NSW

<http://legalanswersnsw.tumblr.com/>
<https://twitter.com/legalanswersnsw>
<https://twitter.com/hottopicseitor>
<https://www.pinterest.com/legalanswersnsw/>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/findlegalanswers>

Cathy told us about several social media platforms that LIAC uses to reach different audiences with legal information. These include:

- Tumblr, to promote content from its website Find Legal Answers. Tumblr skews to a younger audience, and activists. It is template based, so easy to use, and searchable from Google. It is quite visual so works well with posts that use video, photos and infographics. One of the advantages of Tumblr is that content stays there, so it can be amended, have new information added by the owner of the site, or deleted.



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- LIAC also has two Twitter accounts, one for Find Legal Answers which is aimed at the general public, and the other for Hot Topics which is aimed more at the legal sector and HSC legal studies students.
- Their Pinterest account is particularly useful for collating information from public libraries about their Law Week activities.
- LIAC's YouTube site contains the popular *How Laws Are Made* videos.

Philippa advised that she is very happy to provide advice to justice sector agencies on the best strategy for distributing legal information to the public via public libraries in NSW, both in hard copy and electronic formats. It's usually best to target information to libraries in particular areas. Images are very welcome inclusions in online material. For any inquiries about distributing plain language legal information either via LIAC's online platforms or in hard copy via the public library network, email Philippa on philippa.scarf@sl.nsw.gov.au.

New work in legal information and referral

The various agencies attending provided information about newly produced legal information resources and initiatives for enhancing legal referral:

Australian Pro Bono Centre (Sue Hunt)

- Sue demonstrated the Centre's new website, which can be found at <http://probonocentre.org.au/>.
- The link to legal assistance services contains a national guide. The intention is to provide a starting point and a pathway for those seeking legal assistance.
- There is also a page that links to self-help legal information resources.
- You can find the Centre's publications, including the *The Australian Pro Bono Manual*, *Pro Bono Partnerships and Models: A Practical Guide to What Works* and the *National Law Firm Pro Bono Survey Reports* in the publications section.
- Sue thanked members of LIRF for participating in user testing of the site. She invited feedback, particularly if you find anything on the site that is inaccurate or missing. Feedback can be provided to info@probonocentre.org.au.

LIAC (Philippa Scarf)

- The Hot Topics issues of *You And Your Lawyer* and *Drugs And The Law* have been updated and can be downloaded from the Find Legal Answers website: http://www.legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/hot_topics/index.html.

Diversity Services, NSW Department of Justice (Deidre)

- Deidre reported that *The Capacity Toolkit* is still current. You can download or order hard copies of it here: http://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/diversityservices/Pages/divserv/ds_capacity_tool/ds_capacity_tool.aspx.



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Law and Justice Foundation (Jane Kenny)

- Jane reported on two grants recently approved by the Foundation's Board:
 1. Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services will develop and implement an information referral and court peer support program for people with mental health problems. The program will link these clients to appropriate legal and mental health services and support them as they navigate the criminal justice system and housing tribunal systems at Taree Court. It is a partnership project of the Taree/Forster region of the Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Program.
 2. Community Media CHY, a community broadcaster in Coffs Harbour, will educate and improve the knowledge of young people with a disability, their parents and the general public about their legal rights, disability advocacy, disability discrimination and the law. It will also highlight support programs available, including the NDIS. This will be achieved by training local young people with a disability to conduct interviews with people with disabilities and practitioners, and produce radio programs for community radio which will be available via podcast.
- Jane also reported that the financial hardship working group, which was initiated as a working group of LIRF, is in the process of converting to being a working group of NLAf, as it has turned out to have more of an advocacy role than legal information and referral.

Cooperative Legal Services Delivery (CLSD) program, Legal Aid NSW (Kim Gabler)

- Kim reported that the CLSD unit has had productive discussions with Gilbert+Tobin and the Law Society about providing training to lawyers in private law firms on preparing wills for Aboriginal people in regional and remote areas of NSW.
- CLSD is also collaborating with Legal Aid's Children's service to roll out CLE on sexting for young people in the regions.
- The annual outreach to Bourke and Brewarrina in Law Week is on again and currently in the planning stage.
- Members of LIRF are very welcome at regional CLSD meetings. They are an excellent way of sharing information about your service, and gathering information about what's happening in the regions. You can read more about the CLSD program here:
<http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/community-partnerships/cooperative-legal-services-delivery-clsd-program>.

Women's Legal Service NSW (Rebecca Ebel)

- Rebecca reported that WLS has recently changed its name, from "Services" to "Service", in recognition of the fact that over the years a number of services have combined under the one umbrella and the organisation is one, unified service. They are also changing their branding and logo (although the popular "band of women" logo will be retained for some purposes). The web address <http://www.wlsnsw.org.au/> and contact details have not changed.
- Rebecca advised that an updated edition of "Our Dream...Stopping The Violence" has now been published, and is available to order from here: <http://www.wlsnsw.org.au/our-dream-stopping-the-violence/>.
- Alex Davis, who used to manage the Ask Lois <http://www.asklois.org.au/> has left and her replacement is due to start soon. All members of LIRF are welcome to join Ask Lois and make use of the fortnightly webinars. You can find the webinar calendar on the Ask Lois home page.



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- WLS has been distributing flyers in South West Sydney to encourage clients at risk of entering the care and protection system to get advice early, before they are drawn into the process. The flyers promote a range of legal assistance services which can help clients.

Justice Connect (Tori Edwards)

- Tori reported that MOSAIC <http://www.justiceconnect.org.au/our-programs/mosaic> has developed a CLE program with Navitas, which provides training on legal problem spotting and referral at their services in Campsie, Fairfield and Liverpool.
- Justice Connect will shortly be commencing a telephone advice service for MOSAIC clients.
- The Not-for-profit law service <http://www.justiceconnect.org.au/our-programs/not-for-profit-law> is running a masterclass on 13 April for not-for-profit organisations. They will offer 20 minute advice sessions in concert with this. You are welcome to send information about this training to any not-for-profit organisations with whom you work. More information can be found here: <http://www.justiceconnect.org.au/our-programs/not-for-profit-law/training/nfp-seminar-series-new-south-wales/nsw-nfp-law-masterclass-2016>.
- Justice Connect's Information Hub continues to expand and is a useful resource for community organisations: <http://www.nfplaw.org.au/>.

The next meeting of LIRF will take place on 13 July 2016.

Jane Kenny

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Convenor

Legal Information and Referral Forum

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