



NSW Legal Information and Referral Forum Report to NLAF

LIRF met on 8 March 2017.

NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit (EAHRU)

<http://www.elderabusehelpline.com.au/>

“Ageism is the biggest obstacle to the detection and recognition of elder abuse.”

Kerry Marshall, Senior Coordinator at EAHRU, spoke about elder abuse, the work of the Unit and how they assist the mix of callers to the Helpline. Her presentation was interspersed with clips from a video in which a caller to the Helpline was interviewed. He spoke about his motivation for calling the Helpline on several occasions over a period of time because of his concern for an elderly neighbor.

- EAHRU’S definition of what constitutes elder abuse references the expectation of trust in the relationship.
- EAHRU takes call from anyone – family members, professionals, frontline workers, neighbours, shop-keepers – all sorts of people who are in contact with older people, notice a problem and are sufficiently concerned to seek advice and/or assistance for that person.
- EAHRU provides information, help and referral for callers. They cannot do casework, but are willing to work with callers to find someone who can take on the matter.
- They can work as “a virtual colleague” for service providers (including lawyers and health professionals) who call because they are concerned about a client.
- EAHRU does a lot of problem solving, or links callers to other problem solvers.
- EAHRU staff can help callers to frame a conversation that can help an older person to disclose abuse.
- You are welcome to contact EAHRU to order copies of service brochures. EAHRU also provides training, and has an e-learning package, which can be accessed via the website.
- In closing, Kerry made the point that no one agency in NSW has responsibility for elder abuse anymore – it is everyone’s role now and requires organisations/departments/agencies to work together.

Update on Civil Justice Project, Department of Justice

<http://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/civil-justice-consultation>

Kellie Blakemore, Senior Policy Officer, updated members of LIRF on the Civil Justice Project.

- The Department, under the previous Attorney General, ran a consultation between November 2016 and February 2017.
- There was a good response, with the top three civil justice issues identified as consumer, housing and debt (consistent with the findings of the LAW Survey).
- Submissions from civil justice agencies indicated a high level of support for more Ombudsmen schemes, plain language information and court forms, technology for clients who can help themselves and more legal assistance for those who can’t.
- The Department is now developing a civil justice strategy for NSW. The Department has identified a number of priority projects, and some longer term projects which require funding.



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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:

Courts NSW

- Courts are currently implementing the new plain English AVOs.

LawAccess NSW

- LawAccess has updated their information on the new AVOs.
- Their service times are continuing to improve with the average call wait down to three minutes.

Justice Connect

- Justice Connect has placed a lawyer one day a week at the Elder Abuse Helpline, to assist with taking legal referrals.
- They are also in a new partnership with the Women's Justice Network (formerly WIPAN).

Australian Pro Bono Centre

- The national pro bono access to justice conference will be held in Adelaide on 23 and 24 March. Registrations are still open. More information can be found here: <http://www.lawsocietysa.asn.au/NA2JPB2017/Home/NATJ/Home.aspx?hkey=f4783b22-b989-4c9a-9843-1d851c06d830>.
- The Centre will launch the results of the latest national law firm pro bono survey at the conference.
- The Centre is currently recruiting for three positions. More information can be found here: <http://probonocentre.org.au/about-the-centre/staff/positions-available/>.

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

- The CLSD unit continues its work with the 12 regions around the state.
- They are currently reviewing proposals for a number of projects from the regional partnerships.

Tenants Union of NSW

- The Tenants Union launched a new website <http://www.tenants.org.au/tu> last year as part of its fortieth anniversary celebrations. TU staff did extensive user testing as part of the development and they are still doing minor tweaks. A further round of user testing is anticipated later this year.
- TU is developing factsheets for older renters and reviewing their information for CALD clients.

Community Legal Education (CLE) unit, Legal Aid NSW

- Currently reviewing Legal Aid's legal information publications.
- They are also planning to re-establish the Law for community workers webinars.
- The CLE unit is partnering with many public libraries, via LIAC, to run seminars for the community during Law Week 2017 (15-21 May).
- They are also working with the newly established refugee unit at Legal Aid.



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NSW Legal Assistance Forum (NLAf)

- The NLAf Plenary will have its first meeting of the year in March.
- At the recent Prisoners Forum there was a focus on older people in prisons.
- The reports from the various working groups to NLAf can be accessed from the NLAf website at www.nlaf.org.au.

Law and Justice Foundation

- The Foundation will host a research symposium on 20 June. Ticketing information will be available on the Foundation's website in April. The keynote speaker will be Dame Hazel Genn DBE. You can find out more about Dame Hazel here: <https://www.laws.ucl.ac.uk/people/hazel-genn/>.
- Jane noted that the Financial Rights Legal Centre has launched its automatic letter generator (Julia Davis from the Centre presented to LIRF about this tool at the March 2016 meeting). The tool is suitable for capable people and for those providing services who can step clients through the tool. You can access the letter generator from here: <http://financialrights.org.au/sample-letters/>.

Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC), State Library of NSW

- The Find Legal Answers website has been re-designed to mirror the design of the State Library's new website. You can still access it from the same address: <http://legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/>.
- The newest version of The Law Handbook can be downloaded from this website. The Law Handbook is also available in hard copy in most public libraries, via the Toolkit.
- A new version of Neighbours And The Law (a Tool Kit book: <http://legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/books-online>) will be available soon.

Ashurst

- In their pro bono practice Ashurst is seeing an increasing demand for employment, IP and incorporation and governance matters.
- They are also doing work with the Royal Commission into Juvenile Detention.
- Garth is coordinating a meeting of law firms and CLCs who are working or are interested in working in the area of wills for vulnerable people. The aim is to expand capacity as there is so much demand for this work pro bono, and to maximise the available resources.

CLCNSW

- CLCNSW is shortly moving to Holt Street in Surry Hills.
- They are still working on their new website and the CLC Directory. A new edition of the Directory is due to be published this year.

The next meeting of LIRF will take place in July 2017.

Jane Kenny

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Convenor
Legal Information and Referral Forum