

# NSW LEGAL ASSISTANCE FORUM

## OBJECTIVES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1 ESTABLISHMENT, OBJECTIVES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Establishment of the New South Wales Legal Assistance Forum

1. There is established a body known as the New South Wales Legal Assistance Forum (“NLAFF”).
2. NLAFF may operate in the way it determines, subject to its Terms of Reference and to any protocols that are agreed to by the members.

#### Aims of NLAFF

The aims of NLAFF are to continuously improve service delivery to socially and economically disadvantaged people through improved alignment of planning, program design and service delivery by providers of legal assistance services

#### Strategies of NLAFF

These aims will be achieved through:

- Collaboration and networking
- Identifying and incorporating the best available research
- Promotion of dialogue and debate
- Consultation
- Recognising and responding to emerging issues, policy and law reform
- Promotion of co-operative arrangements for effective service delivery

#### Principles of NLAFF

- Respect each other’s roles and acknowledge that these roles may lead to differences of opinion about particular issues
- Recognise the independence and diversity of services and their approaches to legal service delivery
- Where possible and practical, make open communication and consultation a priority, particularly where changes to policy or service delivery are considered or advocated
- Be informed by a focus on real outcomes for disadvantaged people
- Identify gaps in legal services to disadvantaged clients and devise strategies to effectively address those gaps.

- Aim to work by consensus in decision making and in promotion of NLAF activities whilst respecting the different roles of member organisations and their representatives.

## **2 STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP OF NLAF**

### **2.1 Structure**

There will be a three-tiered structure:

- a) The start up executive group will continue to operate informally, to ensure that plans and activities develop and progress between meetings of the Main Forum and to provide support and advice as required.
- b) The Main Forum will meet to develop activities relating to policy and strategic issues, which will be informed by the Working Groups.
- c) Working Groups will form on an ad hoc basis to undertake more detailed and operational activities, to consider an issue identified of interest and to provide information and resources to the Main Forum.

### **2.2 Forum Membership**

NLAF will be made up from the following:

- a) Member organisations who are appointed in accordance with paragraph 2.3,
- b) a Chair appointed from the member representatives of NLAF,
- c) a Deputy Chair appointed from the member representatives of NLAF who will act as an alternate for the Chair, and
- d) the NLAF Project Manager (for the first year of operation).

### **2.3 Appointment of member organisations**

Member organisations of NLAF are drawn from those who

- operate at a NSW-wide level;
- are drawn from the peak representative bodies of organisations delivering legal assistance in NSW; and/or
- dealing with a wide range of legal issues impacting on disadvantaged people.

NLAF may decide to invite organisations to its membership at any time.

The member organisations at November 2009 are as follows:

Legal Aid NSW  
Community Legal Centres NSW

Attorney General's Department (NSW)  
Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)  
Law Society of NSW  
Law and Justice Foundation of NSW  
NSW Bar Association  
LawAccess NSW  
Public Interest Clearing House of NSW  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre

Member organisations are generally entitled to send two representatives to NLAFF meetings, although smaller organisations such as PILCH and PIAC are generally expected to send one representative. Notice of a change of representative must be in writing addressed to the Chair and must be made within a reasonable period of time after the appointment.

## **2.4 Chair and Deputy Chair**

The Chair and Deputy Chair of NLAFF are to be elected by a decision of the members from among themselves at the first NLAFF meeting in each calendar year. The position of Chair or Deputy Chair becomes vacant when that person:

- a) resigns that position or
- b) ceases to be a representative of a member organisation of NLAFF or
- c) is removed from that position by a decision of the members of NLAFF.

## **2.5 Working Groups**

- a) Working Groups will be created from time to time to work on an issue identified by NLAFF.
- b) When a Working Group is set up a Lead representative will nominate to lead the Group and to co-ordinate activities of that Group.
- c) Working Groups will provide updates on the work undertaken and report to the Main Forum at each Forum meeting.
- d) NLAFF can also request other groups to provide information or report on their work.

## **3 MEETINGS AND GENERAL PROCEDURE**

- a) Meetings of the Main Forum of NLAFF will be held four times a year. The Forum may schedule additional meetings as necessary.
- b) Proceedings at meetings shall not be attributed to a member or representative of NLAFF unless the members resolve otherwise.

#### **4 RESOLVING DECISIONS AND PROMOTING NLAF**

Decisions will be made by consensus and by the members present at a meeting. The Chair will speak on behalf of the Forum, unless members decide otherwise

#### **5 MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

NLAF will keep full and accurate minutes of the proceedings of each of its meetings.

#### **6 NLAF FUNDS**

Funds allocated to NLAF must be disbursed in accordance with a decision of the members.

#### **7 EVALUATION**

NLAF will review its activities to determine whether its aims and objectives remain valid and whether the work of NLAF remains appropriate for securing those objectives. The review is to be undertaken as soon as practicable after one year, that is, in or after November 2006.