

## Highlights from NLA F meeting on 28 November 2006

The fifth meeting of the **NSW Legal Assistance Forum (NLA F)** agreed to establish a Working Group to identify strategic issues relating to mental illness and access to justice. These include:

- Identifying how to improve access to social work services to enable more effective legal service delivery to people with mental illness;
- linking to related mental health initiatives and providers;
- how to resource legal assistance providers to be more effective, for example, by (training in communications and accessing mental health services).

Also for discussion was the issue of the vital service provided by **Chamber Registrars in Local Courts** and how relevant legal assistance services can be included in the consultation process towards the Court Services 2010 programme planning. NLA F decided to invite the Director of Local Courts to discuss the Forum's involvement.

NLA F heard reports from its Working Groups on:

- Legal Services to Aboriginal People
- Conflict of Interest
- Interpreting Services

*The Guide to Legal Services for Aboriginal people*, a project of NLA F and the Aboriginal Legal Services (ALS), was launched by the Attorney General of NSW on 8 November.

It provides a listing of organisations in NSW and the ACT which deliver services specifically for Aboriginal people, and services which Aboriginal people may access. This information can help the user to locate appropriate legal services, or to lobby for services where they are lacking.

All NLA F agencies will receive copies through their representative contacts. For more information contact Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) on **8824 8000**

The **Conflict Group** has continued to consult with its member organisations as to a submission to the Law Society to remove barriers to access to advice and representation and will report further in February 2007.

NLA F has invited the *Chairman of the Community Relations Council* to meet to discuss issues relating to **interpreting services** that concern public legal assistance organisations.

Reports were also received from:

- ***The Legal Information and Referral Forum*** (LIRF) highlighted the need to improve referrals from general practice to legal assistance agencies. A number of agencies, including LawAccess NSW, Legal Aid and community legal centres, have commenced a pilot program in three regions of NSW. This will involve working with local Divisions of General Practitioners to promote the availability of free legal assistance services, and evaluating the success of this strategy.
- ***The Legal Services Training Reference Group*** has a remit to improve linkages between registered training providers and legal staff trainers. Training initiatives include Community Education Training with Legal Centres and the Tenants Union and workshops on the new Industrial Relations laws.