



Community legal education and information at Legal Aid NSW: activities, costs and a framework for planning

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About the Foundation's review of Community Legal Education and Information

A Foundation review of Legal Aid NSW's CLEI activities reveals new findings and discusses strategic directions, relevant to Legal Aid NSW and CLEI practitioners more broadly.

The review included a desktop audit of face to face community legal education (CLE), the distribution of hardcopy resources, and the use of the Legal Aid NSW website and online resources during the 12 months to 30 September 2014.

The insights here are drawn from the review findings, supported by other Foundation research and relevant literature.

Forell, S & McDonald, HM 2015, *Community legal education and information at Legal Aid NSW: activities, costs and future planning*, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney.

The report is available at www.lawfoundation.net.au/publications

Key findings

- Three quarters of all CLE events included community workers and other professionals in the audience, while half of all CLE events include community members. CLE is a tool used by Legal Aid NSW to help problem noticers and intermediaries identify legal issues faced by their vulnerable clients, and to link these clients with Legal Aid NSW services.
- Legal Aid NSW distribute most of their hardcopy information resources to organisations – including Legal Aid offices, health and community organisations, other legal services and courts – which make these resources available to the public.
- Visitors looking for legal information tend to arrive on the particular resource page of the Legal Aid NSW website directly from a search engine (often Google) and return directly to that search engine. They tend not to search within the site.
- Because many users reach information resources directly from an external search engine, and because a proportion of visitors are from other Australian and overseas jurisdictions (16% of visitors to the website are from overseas) all resource pages need to clearly indicate that the information is relevant to NSW and from a reputable source.
- More than one-third of visits to the website are made from mobile phones (28%) or tablets (8%). Time spent on each page is considerably lower on mobile devices than desktop computers.



- Hits on resources framed around a specific problem e.g. ‘What happens when your relationship ends?’ were higher than hits on the brochure ‘Do you have a legal problem?’. People looking for help are likely to be dealing with a specific problem so naming a resource as an issue-specific question may improve its visibility to external search engines.
- Website page views may tell a more direct story about the legal information needs of community members than hardcopy orders because page views are the result of searches by an individual (e.g. potential client, family member, solicitor or non-legal worker) looking for information at the point that it is required. In contrast, hardcopy orders tend to reflect legal needs as anticipated by ordering organisations.
- The costs of CLEI include its content development, design, testing, production, distribution and review. The report discusses the purpose and challenges in costing CLEI as individual resources and as an overall strategy.

A framework for planning

The final section of the report provides a framework for planning and evaluating CLEI strategies. The framework indicates how different types of CLEI resources and events assist different types of audiences and, critically, have different purposes.

The framework describes CLEI:

- To assist community members to self-help
- To assist vulnerable people to get help
- To assist community workers to give help to their vulnerable clients.

In each case, some CLEI is provided just in time – to help people step through an existing problem. Other CLEI is provided just in case – to help people recognise legal problems on the horizon, to either prevent them occurring, or to act when they do.

This framework will be discussed in greater detail in a forthcoming Justice issues paper 21, *Beyond great expectations: modest, meaningful and measurable community legal education and information*.

Identifying the purpose of CLEI: to whom, when and to what end

| Who | | Broader community | Core clients | Workers |
|-------------------|--------------|---|--|--|
| | | Higher capability | Lower capability | Problem noticers |
| To do | | Self-help | Get help | Give help |
| When | Just in time | Procedural—to outline steps to take with current problem and provide tools to do so e.g. Divorce classes, Law Assist NSW <i>Is someone chasing you for money?</i> * More scope for technology | To identify problems as legal, and introduce legal service for immediate help e.g. CLE provided by solicitors in outreach locations CLI to reinforce advice * Less scope for technology due to importance of relationship building | To educate problem noticers to recognise clients' existing legal issues and know where to refer client to legal help (including outreach) e.g. <i>Law Check-Up tool</i> , linked to outreach advice service * Mix of technology and face-to-face CLE |
| | Just in case | To encourage steps to prevent problems arising and encourage action when they occur e.g. Planning for later life decision-making, CLE on <i>Cyber bullying</i> for young people * More scope for technology | To identify problems as legal—to prevent problems and to encourage help seeking when problem arises e.g. <i>Let's talk</i> CLE package, delivered in migrant resource centres * Less scope for technology due to importance of relationship building | To build capacity to recognise issues and refer, across a range of issues, to assist current and future clients e.g. <i>Law for non-lawyers</i> , the webinar series * More scope for technology |
| Intent | | Provide alternative to legal assistance services | To connect isolated clients to legal assistance services | Provide a pathway to legal assistance services for clients |
| Types of outcomes | | Users able to progress or resolve issues | Users seek assistance | Problem noticers provide appropriate referrals |