

# Community Legal Education Strategy

## A few examples of how Legal Aid Queensland is engaging in community legal education



Toby Davidson at Law Week 2014

Anneliese Seymour at the Civil law QCOSS forum



Bridget Burton and Loretta Kreet at the 2014 Logan Finance fair.



Kate McMahon (far right) at Law Week 2014.

## Legal Aid Queensland: a leader in community legal education

Legal Aid Queensland is the leading provider of legal services to financially disadvantaged Queenslanders.

Community legal education is an integral part of what we do. It supports Commonwealth and state government legal assistance priorities which focus on:

- the early resolution of legal problems
- increasing preventative legal services like community legal education that inform and build individual and community resilience.

This strategy aims to guide our community legal education program into the future.

## Why it's important

- A legal system is less fair when people do not understand their legal rights and responsibilities. Community legal education aims to address this by informing and educating the community about the law.
- Litigation is costly financially and emotionally. Intervening early when legal problems first arise can help reduce costs in the justice system.

Many legal problems can be resolved more easily and at less cost if they are addressed in the early stages.

- It helps people find out where they can get legal assistance when they need it. Community legal education helps to reduce barriers that stop vulnerable people from accessing legal help.

## Our approach

Legal Aid Queensland's community legal education strategy targets priority client groups and legal problems.

Our approach is guided by the following principles:

- Community legal education is a key part of what we do.
- We collaborate with other service providers to reduce duplication.
- We leverage existing resources to achieve the greatest reach and optimal outcomes.
- We use new technologies to improve community legal education content delivery and enhance communication.
- Our community legal education activities are responsive, focus on priority client groups and are guided by good practice.

## Our commitment

Actions that support the strategy's implementation include:

- resourcing and administering the Community Legal Education Collaboration Fund
- resourcing the community legal education team positions
- producing the community legal education e-bulletin for stakeholders
- preparing standard community legal education materials and resource packages to assist legal information session delivery
- leveraging and sharing national community legal education initiatives
- supporting the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum website, which provides a one-stop-shop for information about legal services and resources
- providing legal information sessions and other CLE activities, delivered by Legal Aid Queensland lawyers and other LAQ staff.

## Working together

Legal Aid Queensland is only one piece of the access to justice puzzle. We recognise lawyers and non-legal professionals such as support workers play a crucial role in helping the most disadvantaged access the justice system. This is why we collaborate with other agencies to deliver coordinated joined up services, community development projects and community legal education.

We do this by:

- building relationships with partner agencies through service provider networks and forums across Queensland
- making appropriate referrals to other service agencies
- collaborating with other agencies and networks on community legal education projects and policy issues.

These relationships help us to reach priority clients whose vulnerabilities can prevent them accessing legal help, and avoid duplication of effort and services in a sector that has limited resources.

Examples of working together to provide community legal education include:

- the Flood and Cyclone Legal Help response
- Regional Legal Assistance Forum initiatives
- the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum website
- coordinating the Community Legal Education Legal Assistance Forum
- partnering with the Queensland Council for Social Service to hold information forums for community workers.

## Delivering community legal education

Our Community Legal Education Strategy will be delivered through:

- web based legal information
- written publications including factsheets, kits and legal information guides
- legal information sessions for community members and community support workers
- community development projects that focus on increasing awareness of the law and our services within more hard-to-reach communities
- participation in community events such as Homeless Connect.

## Achieving good practice

Our community legal education team will support our staff to achieve good practice in community legal education. This means our activities will:

- be client focused, accessible to specific audiences and responsive to community needs
- have clearly defined goals and outcomes
- use resources wisely and be sustainable
- be collaborative
- be evaluated
- be based on adult learning principles
- be innovative and creative.

## Measuring our success

Our strategy will be assessed against performance indicators in Legal Aid Queensland's operational plan.

We will also evaluate community legal education activities through informal feedback and formal evaluations as appropriate to determine achievements. The information gathered will inform our annual plan and guide future projects.

## Community legal education action plan 2015

### Actions

#### Information resources and publications

- Continue to publish and distribute Legal Aid Queensland's community legal education e-bulletin to promote new and updated community legal education activities and resources to stakeholders.
- Release new and updated publications including factsheets, information kits and guides to provide valuable legal information to the community.
- Develop a cyber bullying and sexting booklet in partnership with The Advocacy and Support Centre to educate young people about safe online behaviour and mobile phone use.
- Integrate our web information with our legal information publications to reduce duplication of legal information and improve accessibility.
- Continue to explore use of multimedia to broaden public access to information videos and other CLE resources.
- Maintain Legal Aid Queensland's YouTube channel and increase availability of online video resources.

#### Information sessions and awareness raising

- Continue to provide CLE and information sessions for community workers and other community organisations.
- Resource and support LAQ staff presenting or attending community legal education and information sessions face-to-face and via webinar.
- Coordinate community legal education information forums with the Queensland Council of Social Service for community workers.
- Continue our participation in events including:
  - Homeless Connect
  - NAIDOC Week
  - Law Week.
- Continue to support awareness campaigns including:
  - World Consumer Rights Day
  - Domestic Violence Prevention Month
  - National Youth Week
  - National Homeless Persons Week
  - Child Protection Week
  - Seniors Week.
- Coordinate and resource staff participation in information sessions for the annual Justices of the Peace training program.

#### Collaboration

- Explore the delivery of domestic violence community legal education to migrant communities in partnership with the legal assistance and community sectors.
- In the event of future natural disasters, we will facilitate a coordinated legal response in collaboration with other legal service providers, similar to the Flood and Cyclone Legal Help response (2011).
- Maintain and improve the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum website, which provides a one-stop-shop for information about free legal services across Queensland, and access to community legal education resources and publications.
- Coordinate with the National Legal Aid community legal education working group to progress and localise projects where appropriate.
- Educate staff from key stakeholder agencies and networks about Legal Aid Queensland services and resources like *What's the law? Australian law for new arrivals*.
- Encourage collaboration across the legal assistance sector via the Community Legal Education Legal Assistance Forum and the CLE Collaboration Fund.

#### Community development

- Develop and maintain community networks to strengthen referral relationships and identify opportunities for community development projects.

#### LAQ coordination

- Maintain and sustain strategic networks to inform community legal education activities, including:
  - participating in National Legal Aid community legal education working group meetings
  - resourcing Community Legal Education Legal Assistance Forum meetings.
- Maintain and improve systems for reviewing and updating legal information publications.
- Review and maintain community legal education policies and procedures, systems and processes as needed to support effective community legal education delivery.
- Continue to evaluate and report on community legal education programs and resources.
- Administer the annual Community Legal Education Collaboration Fund round and evaluate and report on projects funded in 2014–15.
- Implement webinar technology for community legal education.
- Develop and maintain standard presentation materials for in-house lawyers to use when conducting community education sessions on common topics such as family law, child protection and consumer law.