



## NSW Legal Information and Referral Forum

### Report to NLAF

LIRF met on 11 March 2015.

Our speaker was Marissa Sandler, a lawyer with the Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS), who spoke about referral for parents with an intellectual disability in the care and protection system in NSW.

Marissa is the Solicitor at IDRS in charge of the Parents project. Her presentation (which I can forward to anyone who is interested) covered the following:

- Intellectual disability (in the mild range) per se does not preclude a person from being a loving and responsible parent. However, social disability, pessimistic attitudes and discriminatory treatment pose the greatest threat to the wellbeing of these families.
- Parents with intellectual disability can learn with appropriate educational input.
- The families that thrive are those that have a supportive network around them. To their kids they are just mum and dad.
- 1-2% of families in NSW with children between 0-17 years of age include at least one parent with intellectual disability.
- At least 9% of cases before the NSW Children's Court include parents with intellectual disability.
- Court outcomes are worst for families where a parent has intellectual disability – 56% were placed in the care of the Minister.
- The Parents Project at IDRS provides legal and non-legal assistance to parents and their supporters, including Court support and support in legal meetings.
- It also delivers capacity building and policy and law reform work.
- The Making Sense website [www.idrs.org.au/makingsense/](http://www.idrs.org.au/makingsense/) is a useful source of information and referral sources for disability advocates, lawyers and family members of parents with an intellectual disability. A section for parents themselves is in development.

#### **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.

The next meeting of LIRF will take place in July 2015.

**Jane Kenny**

**Grants and Legal Information Manager, Law and Justice Foundation**

**Convenor**

**Legal Information and Referral Forum**