

NLAF Prisoners Forum Report to NLAF – May 2016

The NLAF Prisoners Forum met on 12 May 2016. Key issues discussed included:

First Peoples Disability Network

Damien Griffis and Scott Avery spoke to the Prisoners Forum about their work in terms of determining the extent, causes of and experiences of Aboriginal people with a disability in the justice system, particularly prisons. A strategy paper has been written with 16 recommendations on what is required to assist Aboriginal people with disabilities to stay out of the justice system.

Justice Health Aboriginal Court Diversion Program at Campbelltown Local Court

Darryl Gardiner from Justice Health spoke about this new project which is working with individuals and their family members to undertake assessments and assistance to connect with services over a 14 week period. Regular reports are provided to the Magistrate at 6 week intervals before final sentencing.

Prisoner Access to the NDIS

After listening to guest speakers and other discussions it was suggested that a joint funding submission be prepared to the NDIA for project funding to look at access to NDIS by prisoners. This project will be led by the First Peoples Disability Network.

Calls from Prisoners to Legal Services

Legal Aid reported that the new Interactive Voice System for triaging prisoner calls commences on 30 May. Meetings have been held with Corrective Services regarding communicating new system to prisoners. Law Access reported that having a separate team dealing with prisoner calls was working well and had reduced waiting time for calls from general public.

Post Release Transport Options

A survey of all prisons regarding their arrangements for assisting prisoners with transport on release has demonstrated some inconsistencies. Corrective Services are currently undertaking a review of Pre Release Planning Procedures and have agreed to include transport in the terms of reference for this review. The Forum was advised that Prisoners Aid have secured funding to establish their Mates on the Move social enterprise which will transport prisoners on release to their homes via where their possessions are stored.

WDOs in Prisons

The new guidelines are being implemented with negotiations regarding data exchanges being finalised with State Debt Recovery. WDOs now part of KPIs so should see an increase across all prisons.

Prisoners Legal Information Team (PLIT)

Law Access and Corrective Services are currently reviewing resources on the Prisoners Legal Information Portal to ensure up to date. After this review the website will be updated including the look to mirror what is available via the CS Website externally.

The next meeting of the Prisoners Forum is 18 August 2016.

Richard Funston

Director Criminal Law Legal Aid NSW
Chair NLAF Prisoners Forum, May 2016