

## Quarterly Highlights Report April to June 2021

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*This Quarterly Highlights Report provides a summary of the work of the New South Wales Legal Assistance Forum (NLAF) from April to June 2021.*

*The NLAF Plenary Group Meeting was held on 16 June 2021. It was chaired by Karly Warner, Chief Executive Officer of Aboriginal Legal Service NSW / ACT and was attended by representatives of the NLAF Plenary Group.*

### Guest Speaker at the June 2021 Plenary Group meeting

*Geoff Mulherin from the Law and Justice Foundation*

Geoff presented an update on the work LJF has completed, outlining the current planning tools and those that are to be released in the coming weeks. These include the National Legal Needs Dashboard, a 15-minute video on how to estimate legal needs, the NSW Criminal Finalisations Dashboard, and a legal assistance Knowledge Hub. He also touched on the consultations and work towards the Service to Need Ratio Dashboard. Geoff noted LJF's past and ongoing commitment to collect and use data to develop appropriate planning tools for the Legal Assistance Sector and the relevance of this within the NLAF context.

Geoff demonstrated how the tools can be utilised for Local Level Planning for CLSD and CSPs, with a comparison of localities within a Region, relating these to state data and identifying areas where trends differed and may indicate a hotspot or potential target area. Geoff then spoke to the introduction of the knowledge hub in the next few months, which will provide further information and resources on planning and delivering of Legal Assistance Services. Geoff emphasised that the LJF continues to engage with the sector for feedback to support further development and to ensure that the data is relevant to the sector's needs.

### Snapshot of the work of groups reporting to NLAF

The NLAF quarterly working group reports tabled at the December Plenary Group meeting are posted on our website, so please visit [nlaf.org.au](http://nlaf.org.au) and visit the [Our Work](#) page, to read in detail about the work of these groups from April to June 2021. The following is a snapshot of some of the issues raised and work done by the NLAF working groups in this quarter:

The [Doli incapax Working Group](#) is progressing the information hub for legal practitioners with a checklist that will summarise the key Doli principles and evidentiary matters in the process. The group is also looking at other practical resources that could be accessible on the hub and are exploring the establishment of generic psychological reports. Resources for lawyers and children are also being considered, along with research projects on best practice in early intervention. The working group continues to monitor the outcome of the review of the *Young Offenders Act 1997* (NSW) and consideration of raising the age of criminal responsibility by state and territory governments.

The [Fines & Traffic Law Working Group](#) invited Isabella Wallington (Revenue NSW) to provide an update on the cross-agency program of work under the Hardship Support Program, led by Revenue NSW. The program aims to break the cycle of disadvantage for First Nations people and vulnerable young people who are disproportionately impacted by fines. Revenue NSW has worked with government, NGOs and communities to identify six core work streams to effect change including education, diversion, identification and connection, community partnerships, WDOs and reducing the impacts of enforcement. The working group has identified this program as a Focus area for 2021-22 with an interest in a number of the initiatives to be progressed. Revenue NSW also provided a progress report on the amendments to the *Fines Act* 1996 confirming the results of a recent survey in which 84% surveyed (75 people) acknowledged the improvement in services implemented through the legislation changes.

The [Prisoners Forum](#) invited Gia Frino from ITV to present on the SBS Documentary Project “Life on the Outside”. Gia outlined the production processes which aim to show how having secure accommodation can alleviate the difficulties, barriers and discrimination endured by inmates on their release. The overview provided the group with a greater understanding of the work and addressed concerns highlighted by those who regularly work with prisoners. Updates provided on the Inmate Early Assessment Scheme and Free Birth Certificate for Prisoners Initiative, highlighted the importance of inmate support on release and ongoing Government Department collaboration. An update was also provided by PLIT on the InCell Tablets project with the tablets currently available in John Morony and Dillwynia Correctional Centres with a further 10 centres to be rolled out in June 2021. Legal Aid has raised concerns about the call volumes resulting from the rollout and highlighted further discussions around the implementation of a direct inmate to lawyer conversation through messaging applications to alleviate the impact.

The [Cooperative Legal Services Delivery Program \(CLSD\) Unit](#) also reports to NLAF and highlighted issues concerning the access to housing. The CLSD reported that at the Regional Co-ordinators meeting this issue was highlighted as a focus area for the coming 12-month period. The group will concentrate on elements that they can draw on from community and government partnerships, working collaboratively to improve outcomes. The CLSD has also been involved in a number of collaborative projects across the regions in the quarter, including Legal Help days at Forbes, Taree, and Foster Local Courts. Further outreach to the Local Court circuit in Collarenebri, Goodooga, and Coonamble will provide an opportunity to provide legal assistance to an area of the Central West not regularly serviced.

The [NSW Legal Information and Referral Forum \(LIRF\)](#) met online 9 March 2021 and is to convene again on 13 July 2021. The Forum has no further updates to those provided in the March quarter.

A new [Closing the Gap Working Group](#) was agreed to be established to develop strategies and policies (within the capacity of NLAF and its members) around the four relevant socio-economic targets.

*The next Plenary Group meeting is on 15 September 2021 and remote participation will be available.*  
If you have any questions about this Quarterly Highlights Report, or the work of NLAF, please email: [nlaf@lawfoundation.net.au](mailto:nlaf@lawfoundation.net.au)

**NLAF, July 2021**

## Meeting attendees

### NLAF Plenary Group Meeting 16 June 2021

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Bethany Rowlands	Commonwealth Attorney General's Department
Shaun Mellick	Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department
 <b><i>Members of the Plenary Group</i></b>	
Anastasia Krivenkova	Legal Aid NSW (Manager Strategic Law Reform Unit, Chair Doli incapax Working Group)
Arlia Fleming	Community Legal Centres NSW (Chair CLCsNSW)
Delphine Bellerose	Law and Justice Foundation of NSW
Geoff Mulherin	Law and Justice Foundation of NSW (Director)
Gerry Menere	Justice Connect (Head of Not for Profit Law on behalf of Chris Povey CEO)
Jane Cipants	Legal Aid NSW (Director Client Services, Chair of CSP Working Group)
Janet Wagstaff	LawAccess NSW (Director)
Jonathon Hunyor	Public Interest Advocacy Centre (CEO)
Juliana Warner	President NSW Law Society
Karly Warner	Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT (Chief Executive Officer, NLAF Chair)
Katie Green	NSW Bar Association (Legal Assistance Manager)
Meredith Osborne	Legal Aid NSW (Director, Civil & Chair of Fines & Traffic Law Working Group)
Nadine Miles	Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT (Principal Legal Officer & Chair, Prisoners Forum)
Nicole Stack	NLAF Project Manager
Philippa Scarf	Legal Information Access Centre, State Library of NSW
Phillipa Hetherton	NSW Department of Communities & Justice (Director, Courts, Access to Justice & Regulatory)
Richard Wood	Law and Justice Foundation NSW
Sarah Dobinson	NSW DCJ (A/Policy Manager Courts, Access to Justice & Regulatory)
Sean Robertson*	NSW Attorney-General's Department (Policy & Media Advisor)
Tim Leach	Community Legal Centres NSW (Executive Director)
Winnecke Baker	Cooperative Legal Service Delivery, Legal Aid NSW, (for Kate Halliday)