



## NSW Legal Needs Survey in Disadvantaged Areas: Nambucca

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*Justice made to measure: NSW legal needs survey in disadvantaged areas (2006) is the report of a large-scale quantitative study of the legal needs of disadvantaged people in six local government areas of New South Wales. More than 2400 residents across the regions were interviewed about their legal needs. This report was preceded by an initial study Quantitative legal needs survey: Bega Valley (pilot) (2003). There now follows a series of papers in the Justice Issues imprint. Six individual papers will describe how disadvantaged people deal with legal problems, detailing the responses from one of the regions surveyed: Campbelltown, Fairfield, Nambucca, Newcastle, South Sydney and Walgett.*

### INTRODUCTION

The broad aim of the research reported here was to provide a quantitative assessment of the legal needs of disadvantaged communities in New South Wales. This study was the most comprehensive quantitative investigation of legal needs undertaken in Australia for 30 years. The survey questioned a sample of residents in six disadvantaged local government areas (LGAs) across New South Wales, including urban, regional and rural/remote areas. Within these disadvantaged communities, the study examined the incidence and type of legal events people experienced as well as their approaches to such events, including the use of legal and non-legal assistance, and the outcomes achieved.

A full report of the overall findings of the survey across the six LGAs has been published previously (Coumarelos, Wei & Zhou 2006). The present document aims to provide detailed descriptive information on the main indices for the Nambucca LGA. The objective is to give service providers an overview of the findings within this LGA to assist them with planning local services and formulating policy. Where appropriate, contrasts with the overall group are provided to demonstrate how the Nambucca LGA fares in comparison to the sample overall. However, it should be noted that the overall sample is not representative of New South Wales but consists of people living in a selected number of geographically diverse regions that rated highly on indicators of socioeconomic disadvantage. Although this limits the degree to which the results can be generalised to other areas of New South Wales, the data elucidate the issues facing people living in these areas and perhaps point to barriers to accessing justice among disadvantaged populations more generally.

## STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This report will give a brief overview of the study methods and a profile of the six LGAs sampled for the survey. This will be followed by background information regarding levels and types of expressed legal need in Nambucca LGA, as shown by calls to LawAccess and contact with the Legal Aid service. The report will then provide details of the findings from the survey for Nambucca LGA with respect to:

- the incidence of legal events
- the distribution of the events across the broad areas of law (civil, criminal and family)
- major legal events type (e.g. business, accident/injury or housing)
- what the survey participants did about their legal issues
- type of help sought
- problems encountered when seeking assistance
- satisfaction with help received.

## SURVEY METHOD

### Sampling

The six LGAs included in the survey were selected based on the following considerations:

1. socioeconomic disadvantage
2. cultural and linguistic diversity
3. geographic diversity.<sup>1</sup>

For details of how these considerations shaped the selection of the final six LGAs, see Appendix 1. The sample included three suburban LGAs within Sydney (South Sydney, Fairfield and Campbelltown), a major regional centre (Newcastle) and rural/remote (Nambucca and Walgett) LGAs in New South Wales. Together, these LGAs exhibit relatively high socioeconomic disadvantage, include an area that is culturally and linguistically diverse (Fairfield) and an area with a relatively high Indigenous population (Walgett). They also reflect geographic diversity in terms of urbanisation as well as in terms of inland versus coastal regions of New South Wales.

### Sample size

Table 1 shows the size of the population in each LGA and the proportion of the population surveyed.

The total sample size was 2431, with approximately 400 residents drawn from each LGA. On average,

the sample drawn from each LGA represented approximately 0.5 per cent of the LGA population aged 15 years or over. However, the samples from Nambucca and Walgett LGAs represented somewhat larger proportions of their total populations (2.8% and 6.2% respectively) as these are less populous areas when compared with the other LGAs.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE AND POPULATION SIZE OF EACH LGA, 2003

STATISTICAL DIVISION	LGA	POPULATION (15+ YEARS) <sup>a</sup>	SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLE AS % OF POPULATION OF LGA
Sydney	South Sydney	55 840	406	0.7
Sydney	Fairfield	147 960	401	0.3
Sydney	Campbelltown	113 459	402	0.4
Hunter	Newcastle	119 481	408	0.3
Mid-North Coast	Nambucca	14 529	414	2.8
North Western	Walgett	6 477	400	6.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>457 746</b>	<b>2431</b>	<b>0.5</b>

<sup>a</sup> Source: Coumarelos et al. (2006). Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated resident population data at 30 June 2003.

### Procedure

The survey was administered via telephone interviews in the six selected areas during September and October 2003 to 2431 residents aged 15 years or over. Random sampling from the electronic *White Pages* was used to draw a pool of potential participants from the six areas. Quota controls were employed to achieve a gender and age profile that reflected the population profile in these areas. The estimated survey response rate ranged between 23.9 and 34.1 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

### Survey instrument

A copy of the survey instrument can be found in the full report of the study (Coumarelos et al. 2006). Briefly, the survey examined the sample's experience of a total of 101 different events that have *the potential for legal resolution*. These events are detailed in Appendix 1, Table A1. They include:

- 76 civil law events categorised into 11 groups — accident/injury, business, consumer, credit/debt, education, employment, government, health, housing, human rights and wills/estates
- 16 criminal law events categorised into three groups — domestic violence, general crime and traffic offences
- one group of nine family law events (e.g. residence/contact arrangements for children, child support, divorce/separation).

The survey measured:

- the incidence of different types of legal events during the 12 months prior to the survey
- participants' responses to legal events, including the use of legal services
- satisfaction with the assistance received for legal events
- the resolution of legal events
- satisfaction with the outcome of legal events.

The following findings represent a small subset of the overall set of analyses undertaken on the entire sample. As mentioned above, the results presented here are designed to inform service providers about expressed and unexpressed local legal need across a broad range of legal issues. Further, people's responses to their legal issues are also explored. It is hoped that such indices may contribute to more informed planning by local legal and non-legal service providers that come into contact with people who have legal needs.

## Analysis

The main statistical tests undertaken for this report involved standard and mixed-effects logistic regression (for further detail on these techniques see Appendix 2). The  $p$ -value for statistical significance was set at  $p = .05$ . Deviation contrasts were used for comparisons between Nambucca and the overall sample. That is, the rate observed in the Nambucca sub-sample was compared to the average rate across all regions.

## SELECTED INDICES FROM THE OVERALL SAMPLE

### Demographic profile

The demographic characteristics of the survey sample in each LGA are shown in Table 2.

Note that for each LGA, the gender and age profile in the sample was proportionate to that in the population.<sup>3</sup> As Table 2 shows, there are quite

**TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF OVERALL SAMPLE BY LGA, 2003**

VARIABLE	SOUTH SYDNEY %	FAIRFIELD %	CAMPBELLTOWN %	NEWCASTLE %	NAMBUCCA %	WALGETT %
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	54.4	48.1	47.0	48.3	48.8	56.0
Female	45.6	51.9	53.0	51.7	51.2	44.0
<b>Age (years)</b>						
15–24	15.6	20.8	21.9	18.4	11.6	11.5
25–34	31.4	18.8	19.5	17.9	9.9	17.3
35–44	21.5	21.8	20.4	18.9	16.9	19.5
45–54	13.6	17.8	20.2	18.4	21.3	20.0
55–64	9.1	10.8	9.7	11.8	15.5	17.0
65+	8.9	10.3	8.2	14.7	24.9	14.8
<b>Indigenous status</b>	0.6	0.3	1.7	2.1	3.6	13.2
<b>Country of birth</b>	16.5	45.8	18.0	2.9	3.4	4.5
<b>Disability</b>	18.3	16.2	20.0	19.9	27.5	23.7
<b>Personal income (\$/week)</b>						
\$0–199	11.7	28.8	22.5	19.4	23.3	25.7
\$200–499	22.8	34.6	34.5	36.6	47.6	43.2
\$500–999	38.9	30.5	31.8	34.2	25.4	23.8
\$1000+	26.6	6.0	11.1	9.8	3.7	7.3
<b>Education level</b>						
Didn't finish/at school	2.5	13.6	10.0	8.7	15.0	17.3
Year 10/equivalent	8.0	24.7	32.9	26.2	35.0	38.3
Year 12/equivalent	19.9	28.7	21.9	17.1	17.2	20.8
Certificate/diploma	15.9	17.6	20.7	18.3	18.4	10.5
University degree	53.7	15.4	14.5	29.7	14.3	13.0

**Notes:** All regions,  $n = 2431$  participants. Not all percentages add to 100 per cent within strata due to rounding.

Indigenous status shows proportion of sample identifying as Indigenous.

Country of birth shows proportion born outside Australia. Disability status shows proportion with a disability, including physical disabilities, mental illness and chronic disease.

striking differences between the regions in their demographic make-up.<sup>4</sup> For example, Nambucca LGA had the highest proportion for the oldest age group (approximately 25% compared with 8–15% in the other areas), and the lowest proportion aged 44 years or younger (approximately 39% compared with 49–69% in the remaining areas). Nambucca LGA also had the highest proportion reporting a disability (27.5%) which may partly reflect the greater proportion of older citizens. On the other hand, nearly 70 per cent of the South Sydney LGA sample was aged younger than 44 years, only 8.9 per cent aged 65 and over, and 18.3 per cent reporting some kind of disability. Such differences between LGAs are significant in terms of planning for legal services, as age and disability are important factors in determining which and how many legal problems people experience (Coumarelos et al. 2006).

The Sydney LGAs of Fairfield, Campbelltown and South Sydney showed a greater number of participants born in a non-English speaking country (approximately 17–46% compared with 3–5% for non-Sydney LGAs). The finding for Fairfield is not surprising given that one reason for including this LGA in the sample was that it is an area culturally and linguistically diverse, and that quota sampling of Vietnamese, Chinese (Cantonese) and Spanish cultural/linguistic groups was used to yield numbers proportionate to population for these groups. Walgett LGA had the highest proportion of Indigenous residents (25.1% in 2001) compared with the other LGAs (South Sydney 2.5%, Fairfield 0.7%, Campbelltown 2.7%, Newcastle 1.7% and Nambucca 5.9%) (ABS 2006). The sampling technique also accounts for this higher proportion of Indigenous participants in Walgett LGA (13.2%) compared with the other LGAs (0.3–3.6%). Another notable difference among the six LGAs is that South Sydney appears to be relatively more advantaged in terms of income and education. Over half of the respondents

from South Sydney LGA reported having a university degree (compared with approximately 29% or less in the other LGAs) and almost 27 per cent reported a weekly income of \$1000 or more (compared with approximately 11% or less from the other LGAs). For further details comparing the population and sample demographic profiles for each LGA, see Coumarelos et al. (2006).

## Incidence of legal events

Table 3 shows the distribution of reported legal events by broad area of law (civil, criminal and family). Note that the spread of legal events between these areas of law is likely to partly reflect the survey's focus on civil law events rather than criminal or family law events. Thus, the large proportion of civil events reported is consistent with the high number of questions contained in the survey pertaining to these types of legal events.

Table 3 shows that there was variation across the regions in the incidence of at least one legal event. South Sydney LGA had a significantly higher proportion of people saying they had experienced at least one legal event in the past 12 months (76.4%),<sup>5</sup> while Fairfield LGA had a significantly lower proportion (61.3%),<sup>6</sup> compared with the average rate overall. These results are likely driven by the reporting patterns for civil events where South Sydney LGA had the highest (71.2%)<sup>7</sup> and Fairfield LGA had the lowest (56.1%)<sup>8</sup> proportions of people reporting these types of legal events. Reporting of criminal events was also higher than average in the South Sydney (36.5%) and Walgett LGAs (35.5%) and lower than average in Nambucca LGA (23.4%).<sup>9</sup> Nambucca LGA registered a marginally higher than average rate for family events (12.6%).<sup>10</sup>

These findings indicate that the LGAs that constitute the sample for this survey are not homogeneous, either demographically or in terms of legal need.

**TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION ACROSS RESPONDENTS OF REPORTING AT LEAST ONE LEGAL EVENT UNDER THE BROAD AREAS OF LAW FOR SIX LGAs, 2003 — % of LGA (number)**

Broad area of law	SOUTH SYDNEY		FAIRFIELD		CAMPBELLTOWN		NEWCASTLE		NAMBUCCA		WALGETT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Civil Law	289	71.2*	225	56.1*	253	62.9	151	63.0	253	61.1	241	60.3
Criminal Law	148	36.5*	104	25.9	123	30.6	119	29.2	97	23.4*	142	35.5*
Family Law	25	6.2	27	6.7	40	10.0	34	8.3	52	12.6*	28	7.0
All areas of law		76.4*		61.3*		69.6		65.9		71.9		69.2

\* Statistically significantly different from average over all regions at .01 level.

**Notes:** South Sydney  $n = 406$  participants (data missing for one participant on family events), Fairfield  $n = 401$ , Campbelltown  $n = 402$ , Newcastle  $n = 408$ , Nambucca  $n = 414$ , Walgett  $n = 400$ . Note that respondents could report more than one type of event.

The differences suggest that it would be helpful to practitioners working in these (and perhaps demographically similar) areas to be able to access the results of the survey at the local level. This report is one of a series of six that considers a selection of the main indices from the survey on legal need, separately for each LGA. This particular report describes the results for the LGA of Nambucca. Where appropriate, the results for Nambucca LGA will be displayed along with the corresponding result from the total sample such that comparisons may be facilitated.

## NAMBUCCA LGA

Nambucca LGA is a 1490.5 square kilometres area, located in the Mid-North Coast region of New South Wales, 510 kilometres north of Sydney. It stretches from Bellingen in the north to Kempsey in the south (ABS 2006a). In 2003, the ABS estimated the population in the Nambucca LGA to be 18 128, approximately a 1 per cent increase on the 2000 estimate. The population density as of June 2004 was 12.4 per square kilometre, compared with 8.4 persons per square kilometre for New South Wales.<sup>11</sup> The unemployment rate in 2003 was 13.5 per cent, compared with 6 percent for New South Wales, and 7627 people were receiving income support<sup>12</sup> (42% of total population), compared with 22.2 per cent for New South Wales (ABS 2006a). Of the six regions surveyed, Nambucca LGA had the highest unemployment rate (range 6–12% for other regions). The average taxable income in this area in 2003 was \$31 179, much lower than the state average of \$43 649. In combination, these figures indicate that Nambucca LGA was, in 2003, an area of relative disadvantage.

## EXPRESSED LEGAL NEED IN NAMBUCCA

The Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales collects data annually from a number of legal service providers to provide an indication of the level of expressed legal need in New South Wales. ‘Expressed legal need’ refers to those legal needs which are ‘expressed’ through accessing a legal service by requesting information or advice, seeking a legal referral or gaining legal representation. The number of inquiries for the 12 months to September 2003 (the period covered in the survey) for LawAccess<sup>13</sup> and three different service types provided by Legal Aid in the Nambucca LGA are shown in Table 4.

**TABLE 4: INQUIRIES TO LAWACCESS AND LEGAL AID SERVICES BY BROAD AREA OF LAW, NAMBUCCA, OCTOBER 2002 TO SEPTEMBER 2003**

SERVICE	CIVIL	CRIMINAL	FAMILY	TOTAL
LawAccess	124	26	56	206
Legal Aid				
– advice	65	17	54	136
– info/referral	91	79	154	324
– duty solicitor	54	235	17	306

Table 4 shows that most of the inquiries coming into LawAccess from the Nambucca area concerned civil issues, but for Legal Aid, the pattern of inquiries across broad areas of law differed according to the type of service provided. For example, the majority of duty solicitor services, as one might expect, come under criminal law, because duty solicitor services are most commonly provided for criminal matters. Most inquiries to the Advice Service concerned civil and family law areas, while most inquiries to the Information and Referral Service concerned the family law area. However, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the distribution across services as there is no information regarding the independence of inquiries to each service in these data. For example, a person may approach a service a number of times in relation to the same issue, or may make inquiries that fall under different areas of law in relation to a complex issue. Equally, people may seek assistance from other legal services, such as private lawyers or community legal centres. Inquiry data can, however, provide a broad brush picture of the level of legal service usage in an area. In the Nambucca LGA, there was approximately 5 per cent rate of use of these services for the population size (approximately 972 service events for a population around 18 128 people). The survey results will help clarify the picture of legal need in the area by giving an indication of not only expressed legal need, but also unexpressed legal need where no assistance is obtained.

## SURVEY RESULTS<sup>14</sup>

### Incidence of legal events

For the Law and Justice Foundation’s 2003 survey, 414 participants were drawn from the Nambucca LGA who reported a total of 925 legal events. Table 5 displays the number of legal events reported per participant. The corresponding proportions for all regions are also shown.

**TABLE 5: NUMBER OF LEGAL EVENTS PER PARTICIPANT, FOR NAMBUCCA AND ALL REGIONS, 2003**

NUMBER OF LEGAL EVENTS	Nambucca		All regions
	No.	%	%
0	141	34.1	30.9
1	86	20.8	22.3
2	54	13.0	13.9
3 or more	133	32.1	32.9

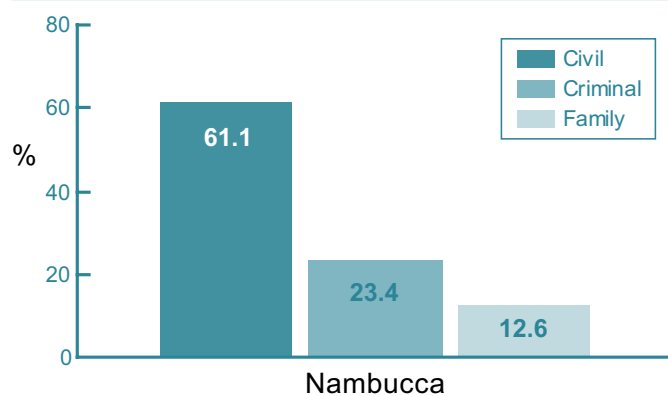
**Note:** All regions,  $n = 2431$ , and for Nambucca,  $n = 414$  participants.

Table 5 shows that approximately 34 per cent of Nambucca participants reported that they did not experience any legal events in the past 12 months. The remaining 66 per cent reported experiencing at least one legal event. This proportion was not significantly different to the total sample (69.1%). Further, it appears that the Nambucca subgroup had a similar distribution in the frequency of legal events reported during the reference period. In detail, Nambucca LGA had similar rates for reporting one or two events (33.8% vs 36.2% respectively), and three or more events (32.1% vs 32.9% respectively) compared with the average over all regions.<sup>15</sup>

## Areas of law

Figure 1 displays the broad areas of law in which respondents reported legal issues. The bars show the proportion of respondents who reported at least one of these types of issues (civil, criminal, or family) in the last 12 months.

**FIGURE 1: INCIDENCE OF LEGAL EVENTS BY BROAD AREA OF LAW, NAMBUCCA, 2003**



**Note:** Nambucca,  $n = 414$  participants (of which 273 participants reported 1 or more legal events).

As Figure 1 shows, the most commonly reported area of law in the past 12 months among participants in Nambucca LGA was civil law (61.1%). This

**TABLE 6: INCIDENCE OF LEGAL EVENTS BY BROAD AREA OF LAW AND LEGAL EVENT GROUP, FOR NAMBUCCA AND ALL REGIONS, 2003**

AREA OF LAW	EVENT GROUP	Nambucca		All regions
		NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	% OF PARTICIPANTS	% OF PARTICIPANTS
<b>Civil</b>	Accident/injury	67	16.2	19.2
	Business <sup>a</sup>	25	6.0	5.0
	Consumer	81	19.6	22.0
	Credit/debt	40	9.7	12.0
	Education <sup>b</sup>	36	8.7	7.4
	Employment <sup>c</sup>	36	8.7	12.1
	Government	82	19.8	19.5
	Health <sup>d</sup>	17	4.1	3.2
	Housing	89	21.5	22.6
	Human rights	24	5.8	5.8
<b>Criminal</b>	Wills/estates	73	17.6	14.6
	Domestic violence	20	4.8	3.9
	General crime	84	20.3	26.6
<b>Family</b>	Traffic offences	8	1.9	3.2
	Family	52	12.6	8.5

<sup>a</sup> 99 Nambucca participants and 562 overall owned a small business. Of these, 25 (25.3%) and 122 (21.7%) respectively reported at least one business event.

<sup>b</sup> 170 Nambucca (16.8%) respectively reported at least one education event.

<sup>c</sup> 175 Nambucca participants (20.7%) respectively reported at least one employment event.

<sup>d</sup> 157 Nambucca participants or an elderly person. Of these, 17 (10.8%) and 77 (10.0%) respectively reported at least one health event.

**Notes:** All regions,  $n = 2431$ , and for Nambucca,  $n = 414$  participants. Some participants reported multiple legal events (within or across legal event groups). As a result, proportions reporting each event will not total 100 per cent.

was not surprising given the survey questionnaire predominantly covered civil legal issues. The proportion of the Nambucca sub-sample reporting a civil issue was not significantly different to the sample overall (62.4%).<sup>16</sup> However, the proportion reporting criminal matters (domestic violence, general crime and traffic offences) was significantly lower among Nambucca participants (23.4%) compared with all regions (30.2%), which may be related to the greater proportion of respondents aged over 65 years in the Nambucca sub-sample compared with the other regions noted earlier.<sup>17</sup> Further, almost 13 per cent of Nambucca respondents reported at least one family law issue, which was significantly higher than the percentage for all regions (8.5%).<sup>18</sup> Thus, although the previous section (Incidence of Legal Events) showed that Nambucca participants reported experiencing one or more legal events of any type at a similar rate to the overall sample, when broken down by areas of law, of the six LGAs surveyed, Nambucca LGA had the highest proportion reporting family matters (range 6–10% for other regions) and the lowest proportion of participants reporting criminal matters (range 26–36% for other regions). With respect to the latter finding, compared with other regions, Nambucca had the lowest proportion of people aged 25–34 in the sample (9.9%, range 17–31% for other regions). This lower reporting rate for criminal matters in Nambucca is consistent with data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) (2004) that people aged 25–34 were more likely to be found guilty of criminal offences such as theft and robbery than other age groups.

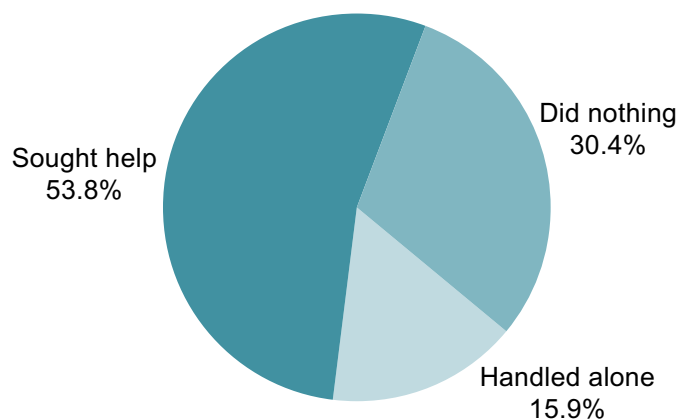
Details of the incidence of the different event types under each of these broad areas of law (civil, criminal and family) for Nambucca LGA and all regions are shown in Table 6. Civil matters include: accident/injury, business, consumer, credit/debt, education, employment, government, health, housing, human rights, and wills and estates. Within civil law, the legal events reported most often by Nambucca participants were housing (21.5%), government (19.8%) and consumer (19.6%). In general, the Nambucca sub-sample reported experiencing events within civil law event groups at a similar rate to the general sample.<sup>19</sup> Only wills/estates events within civil law were reported at a higher rate than the overall sample (17.6% vs 14.6% respectively).<sup>20</sup> For criminal law, following from the result in the previous section (Areas of Law) that Nambucca participants reported experiencing criminal law

events at lower rates compared to the overall sample, Table 6 suggests that it is events under the general crime group that were significantly lower than the overall sample (20.3% vs 26.6% respectively).<sup>21</sup> This is consistent with data from BOCSAR (2007a) that theft and robbery offences in Nambucca in 2003 were lower than the average for New South Wales. As mentioned previously, the Nambucca sub-sample reported experiencing family legal events at significantly higher rates than the overall sample.<sup>22</sup>

## Response to legal problems

As noted earlier, respondents in Nambucca reported a total of 925 legal events (range 1 to 18, median = 1 event). Further details about how participants responded to the most recent events (up to a maximum of three) were obtained. The following data are based on the 518 most recent events for the Nambucca sub-sample.

**FIGURE 2: ACTION TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO LEGAL EVENTS, NAMBUCCA, 2003**

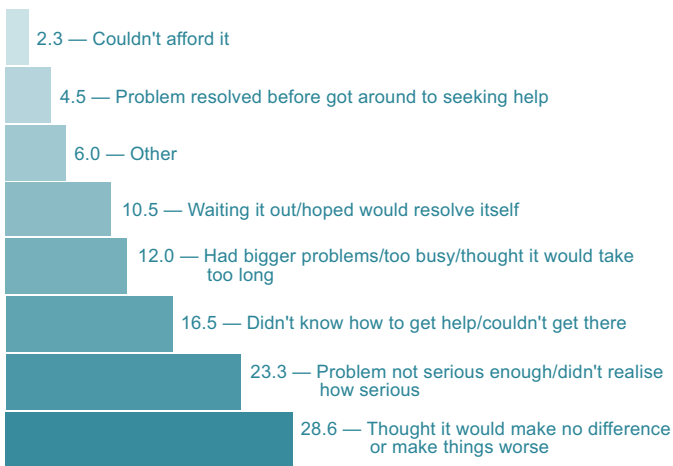


**Note:**  $n = 504$  events, data missing for 14 events.

Figure 2 shows that help was sought for almost 54 per cent of ‘most recent’ legal events experienced. In almost 16 per cent of legal events, the respondents dealt with the issue themselves. A sizeable minority, however, did not take any action (30.4%). These rates were not statistically different from those for the overall sample (51.2%, 16.0% and 32.8% respectively).<sup>23</sup>

When the reasons for ‘doing nothing’ in response to their legal problems among the Nambucca sub-sample were further examined (see Figure 3), two main explanations emerged. In almost 29 per cent of legal events where the respondent did nothing about their legal problems, it was because the respondent felt that action either would not make any difference or would make things worse.

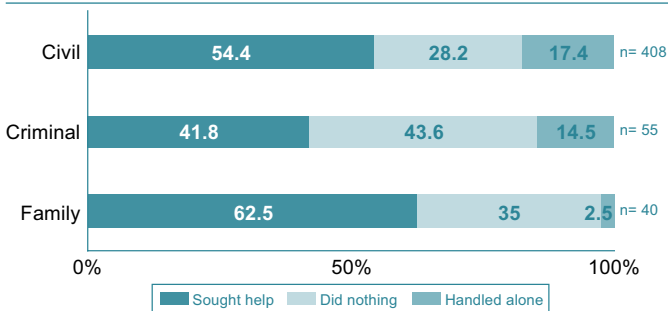
**FIGURE 3: MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR DOING NOTHING IN RESPONSE TO LEGAL EVENTS, NAMBUCCA, 2003**



**Notes:** Nambucca,  $n = 138$  events, data missing for 15 events. Those grouped into the 'other' category ( $n = 6$ ) did not seek help because they were too embarrassed or did not trust anyone, thought the problem was their fault or had no internet access.

In approximately 23 per cent of legal events, the respondent felt the issue was not serious or did not know how serious the event was. These were also the two most common reasons for taking no action over all regions. The other main reasons for Nambucca respondents taking no action were: the respondent did not know how to seek help, was not easily able to get there (in 16.5% of legal events), the respondent had bigger problems, was too busy, or thought the issue would take too long to address (in 12.0% of legal events). Only a very small proportion mentioned cost as a reason for not seeking help (2.3%).<sup>24</sup>

**FIGURE 4: ACTION TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO LEGAL EVENTS BY BROAD AREA OF LAW, NAMBUCCA, 2003**



**Notes:** Nambucca,  $n = 503$  events, data missing for 15 events. Totals for each broad area of law are total events for which information was provided on action taken in response.

Figure 4 displays what the Nambucca sub-sample did in response to their three most recent legal events, broken down by broad area of law. Looking at the results overall, a greater proportion of those who did not seek help about their criminal matters did nothing rather than dealing with it themselves, compared with civil matters<sup>25</sup> but not family matters.<sup>26</sup> Help was sought in approximately 54 per cent of civil

legal events, similar to the average over all regions (51.4%).<sup>27</sup> Help was sought in almost 42 per cent of criminal legal events, slightly lower than for all regions (46.7%).<sup>28</sup> In contrast, a greater proportion of Nambucca respondents reported they sought help for family matters, compared with respondents over all regions (62.5% vs 55.4% respectively).<sup>29</sup>

## Type of adviser

Although it appears that there are considerable differences in the types of advisers people go to for different types of events (Coumarelos et al. 2006), it is still useful to look at overall patterns in help seeking.

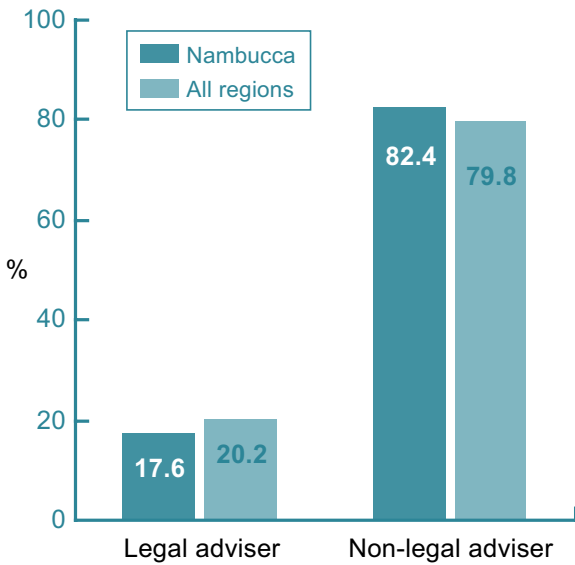
As previously indicated in Figure 2, help with a legal issue was sought in response to approximately half of the most recent events experienced by the Nambucca sub-sample. In 80 per cent of the cases where help was sought, only one source was approached for help. This figure was similar to the 78 per cent for all regions (Coumarelos et al. 2006). The following data relate to the first (or only) adviser consulted for each event.

The types of advisers from whom Nambucca participants sought help could be roughly divided into two groups: legal and non-legal. Legal advisers included traditional legal advisers (i.e. a private solicitor or barrister, local court, Legal Aid NSW, LawAccess, NSW Aboriginal legal services, a community legal centre) as well as less formal legal advisers, such as a friend or relative who is a lawyer, and published sources (i.e. the internet and self-help sources). Non-legal advisers included a friend or relative who was not a lawyer, a member of parliament, local council, non-legal community group or organisation, library, trade union/professional body, employer, school/school counsellor/teacher, insurance company/broker, industry complaint handling body, police, or other professional (such as doctor) or private agency/organisation. Figure 5 displays the types of adviser approached by the Nambucca LGA sample and across all regions.

For the Nambucca sub-sample, the first (or sole) source of advice was more likely to be to a non-legal source rather than a legal source (82.4% vs 17.6% respectively). The rates at which respondents sought help from non-legal and legal advisers were consistent with the overall sample (79.8% and 20.2% respectively).<sup>30</sup>



**FIGURE 5: TYPE OF (FIRST OR SOLE) ADVISER USED, FOR NAMBUCCA AND ALL REGIONS, 2003**



**Note:** All regions,  $n = 1455$  events, data missing for 41 events and for Nambucca,  $n = 261$ , data missing on 10 events.

Respondents who sought help from more than one adviser for the same event were asked to nominate the adviser they found most useful. The following section relates to the adviser judged to be the most useful (if more than one adviser was used) or their sole adviser if the respondent used only one source.

### Pathways to advisers

It is important for practitioners to be aware of the pathways through which people find assistance for their legal problems. Table 7 displays the channels through which people found their sole or most useful adviser (legal or non-legal), for both the Nambucca sub-sample and the overall sample.

Table 7 shows that Nambucca participants were generally similar to all participants in terms of the channels they used to source their advisers.<sup>31</sup> Firstly, similar to all participants, those from Nambucca frequently found their adviser by using their own personal knowledge and personal networks (e.g. 27.9% used their general knowledge, 18.3% had used the adviser before, in 17.2% of cases the adviser was a friend/relative and in 7.3% of cases the adviser was referred from a friend/relative). Secondly, as with the overall sample, Nambucca participants were also often referred to their adviser by another agency or someone other than a friend/relative (17.2%). Also similar to the overall sample, Nambucca participants used sources such as the telephone book, a pamphlet/poster, the media and the internet relatively infrequently to source their advisers (1.1% to 5.0%).

**TABLE 7: SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SOLE OR MOST USEFUL ADVISER, FOR NAMBUCCA AND ALL REGIONS, 2003**

SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ADVISER	Nambucca		All regions
	No.	%	%
General knowledge	73	27.9	30.2
Used the service before	48	18.3	17.7
Adviser was a friend or relative	45	17.2	16.7
Referral by another agency/person <sup>a</sup>	45	17.2	14.5
Referral from a friend or relative	19	7.3	8.7
Telephone book	13	5.0	3.0
Pamphlet/Poster	5	1.9	2.3
Media	4	1.5	1.8
Community Legal Centre referral	4	1.5	1.1
Internet	3	1.1	2.1
Walked in off the street	2	< 1.0	1.1
Adviser approached them	1	< 1.0	< 1.0
Other	0	-	< 1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> Referral from another person or agency includes, but is not limited to, referrals by private business, mental health agencies, insurance companies, local council, police, Workcover, Skillshare, doctor, accountant, psychologist, counsellor, financial counsellor, financial adviser, or loan broker.

**Note:** All regions,  $n = 1447$ , data missing for 49 events, and for Nambucca,  $n = 262$ , data missing for 9 events for which help was sought.

### Barriers to assistance

When considering the issue of access to legal assistance, it is important to elucidate what may hinder somebody receiving that assistance once they have decided to get help. Table 8 shows the barriers experienced by Nambucca participants when they sought help for their legal problems.

According to Table 8, Nambucca participants experienced barriers to receiving assistance in approximately 36 per cent of legal events where help was sought, similar to the percentage for the overall sample (38.2%). Further, the most common types of barriers experienced by the Nambucca participants appear similar to those for the overall sample, despite the differences in the type of adviser used noted in Figure 5. The main barriers reported were: difficulty getting through to an adviser on the telephone (19.1%) and delay in getting a response back from an adviser (13.9%) — the two most common barriers to obtaining assistance over all regions. In only a small proportion of legal events did people report not being able to afford an adviser (7.8%). In light of this information, services may need to reflect on their communication means and the procedures

they have in place from when clients make initial contact to when they receive a response to their inquiry. There is evidence that people, especially vulnerable or marginalised groups, may abandon pursuit of legal assistance if such aspects of a legal service break down (Forell, McCarron & Schetzer 2005). In the majority of legal events reported in the current study, however, no problems were reported with the assistance sought.

**TABLE 8: BARRIERS TO OBTAINING ASSISTANCE FROM ANY ADVISERS, FOR NAMBUCCA AND ALL REGIONS, 2003**

TYPE OF BARRIERS	Nambucca		All regions
	No.	%	%
No problem	147	63.9	61.8
Telephone engaged/on hold too long	44	19.1	18.4
Delay in getting response	32	13.9	17.0
Difficulty getting an appointment	27	11.7	11.0
Lack of local services/ couldn't get there	25	10.9	8.1
Difficulty in affording it	18	7.8	6.0
Problem with opening hours	14	6.1	7.6
Difficulty understanding advice/information	12	5.2	4.7
Other problem	8	3.5	4.8
No ability to access the Internet	6	2.6	2.4
Embarrassed to be seen using services	2	< 1.0	1.8
English language problems	1	< 1.0	1.5

**Notes:** All regions,  $n = 1246$ , data missing for 250 events, and for Nambucca,  $n = 230$ , data missing for 41 events where help was sought.

Percentages do not add to 100 per cent because multiple barriers were sometimes reported for the same event.

The category of 'Other problems' included issues such as receiving inadequate or incorrect advice, refusing to assist or the problem was beyond the area covered by the service contacted.

## Distance travelled for assistance

The distance a person has to travel to obtain help may affect their willingness to access legal help. Table 9 shows the distance Nambucca participants travelled to obtain help from the sole or most useful adviser.

**TABLE 9: DISTANCE TRAVELLED TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE FROM SOLE OR MOST USEFUL ADVISER, FOR NAMBUCCA AND ALL REGIONS, 2003**

DISTANCE TRAVELLED (KILOMETRES)	Nambucca		All regions
	No.	%	%
Didn't need to travel	102	43.4	44.0
< 3	33	14.0	19.6
4–10	24	10.2	15.8
11–20	32	13.6	8.2
21–40	19	8.1	4.5
41+	25	10.6	8.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Note:** All regions,  $n = 1249$ , missing data on 247 events, and for Nambucca,  $n = 235$ , data missing for 36 events.

Among the Nambucca sub-sample of most recent events, approximately 43 per cent of legal events where help was sought involved no travel to access assistance. In general, Nambucca participants had to travel slightly further to obtain assistance than did participants overall. Indeed, as one might expect for a rural area, Nambucca participants reported travelling over 20 kilometres to obtain help for legal events, a significant difference compared to other regions (18.7 % vs 12.5% respectively).<sup>32</sup> Not surprisingly, those interviewed for this study who resided in metropolitan areas had, in general, closer access to advice than those in regional and rural or remote areas (Coumarelos et al. 2006).

**TABLE 10: TYPE OF HELP FROM SOLE OR MOST USEFUL ADVISER FOR THREE MOST RECENT EVENTS, FOR NAMBUCCA AND ALL REGIONS, 2003**

TYPE OF ADVICE	Nambucca				All regions	
	LEGAL ADVISER		NON-LEGAL ADVISER		LEGAL ADVISER	NON-LEGAL ADVISER
	No.	%	No.	%	%	%
No help received	1	2.7	10	5.2	5.5	9.1
Legal	24	64.9	29	15.2	63.9	15.0
Non-legal	0	-	71	37.2	5.8	34.1
Legal vs non-legal help not specified	13	35.1	83	43.5	29.2	42.2

**Notes:** All regions,  $n = 1243$ , data missing for 253 events, and for Nambucca,  $n = 228$ , data missing for 43 events.

The percentages represent and/or non-specific help was received for sole or most useful adviser.

Multiple types of help could be reported, therefore percentages do not total 100.

## Type of assistance

It would be reasonable to assume that when people are asked whether they sought assistance for their legal problems, they were seeking legal help. However, it appears that legal advice, information or referral may not be the sole type of assistance they receive for events that have legal implications. Table 10 displays the type of assistance the participants in the current survey said they received as help for their legal events.

In Table 10, it is worth noting how advisers are actually used by people experiencing legal problems. Examples of legal help include assistance with legal documents, preparation for court proceedings or advice about the legal implications of a course of action. Examples of non-legal advice include medical advice, advice about financial options and counselling and support. Unsurprisingly, in the majority of legal events where assistance was sought from a legal source, the help received was legal in nature (64.9%). Interestingly, help of a legal nature was also received from a non-legal adviser in 15.2 per cent of events. In 37.2 per cent of cases, the help was non-legal. This seems to indicate that people's needs when experiencing a legal event are multiple and include non-legal matters. In some cases, these needs may constitute supporting evidence or assistance with the original problem that gave rise to the legal event (e.g. a medical condition). However, there are also other roles played by advisers such as moral support, housing or financial support (Coumarelos et al. 2006). It is unfortunate that there was also a sizeable minority for whom the type of help was not specified and therefore the issue of type of help received needs to be further clarified in future research.

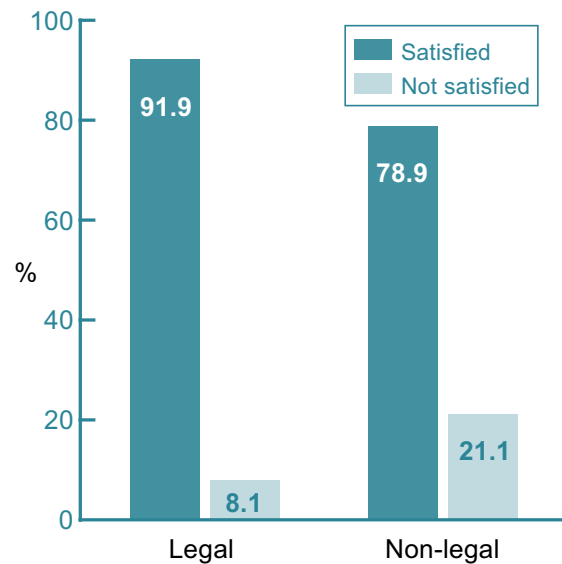
## Satisfaction with assistance

The moderate rate at which barriers were encountered when obtaining assistance described in Table 8 may have contributed to the high levels of satisfaction that Nambucca respondents felt with their sole or most useful adviser. Figure 6 shows the rate of satisfaction, broken down by type of adviser.

It appears from Figure 6 that in the majority of legal events, respondents were satisfied with the assistance they received from their sole or most useful adviser, with satisfaction expressed in greater than 75 per cent of legal events. It appears that the level of satisfaction is higher for the help received from legal than non-legal advisers (91.9% vs 78.9% respectively). However, this difference did not reach statistical significance.<sup>33</sup> Similar levels of satisfaction

to the overall sample were also reported for legal advisers (91.9% vs 85.8% respectively)<sup>34</sup> and non-legal advisers (78.9% vs 76.3% respectively).<sup>35</sup>

**FIGURE 6: SATISFACTION WITH ASSISTANCE FROM SOLE OR MOST USEFUL ADVISER BY TYPE OF ADVISER, NAMBUCCA, 2003**



**Notes:** Nambucca,  $n = 227$  events, missing data for 44 events for which help was sought.

The 'not satisfied' category includes those who reported being dissatisfied with help received as well as those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with help received.

## SUMMARY

In summary, although Nambucca LGA is a rural area, its sub-sample was similar in many ways to the overall sample interviewed for this survey on legal need, with only few points of difference between the sub-sample and all regions.

Nambucca LGA is an area where people experienced a reasonably high incidence of legal needs over a one-year period. Approximately 66 per cent of Nambucca participants reported experiencing one or more legal events in the previous 12 months, and approximately 32 per cent reported experiencing three or more legal events. The incidence of legal events for Nambucca LGA was statistically comparable to that reported for the other regions.

The legal events experienced among the Nambucca sub-sample related to a broad range of civil, criminal and family law issues. As with the overall sample, by far the majority of the legal events reported by Nambucca participants fell under the broad heading of civil law, although this was somewhat a function of the structure of the questionnaire. However, the Nambucca participants reported criminal matters at a significantly lower rate than the overall sample.

In fact, of the six regions surveyed, Nambucca LGA had the lowest proportion of participants reporting criminal matters. By way of explanation, it may be that the age distribution in this LGA at least in part accounts for the lower rates reported for these type of legal events as people are generally involved in fewer criminal matters as they age past 35 years either as victim (ABS, 2006b) or perpetrator (BOCSAR, 2007b). By contrast, the Nambucca participants reported family matters at a significantly higher rate than the overall sample, the highest proportion reported for all regions. The most commonly reported legal events for the Nambucca LGA were in the 'housing' and 'general crime' legal events groups.

When respondents did take action for their legal problems, help from an adviser was sought for approximately half of the most recent legal events reported, generally only from one source. Similar to other regions, Nambucca participants most often source their help through their own personal knowledge and personal networks. In the majority of cases, help was sought from non-legal advisers such as friends, relatives or non-legal professionals. Further, for a large proportion it was non-legal advice that was provided. Among the Nambucca respondents who did not take action about their legal problems, the most important reason provided was 'seeking help would make no difference or make things worse'.

In general, the majority of Nambucca participants experienced no difficulties with getting assistance for their legal problems. However, although in the minority, a number Nambucca residents participating in the current survey reported experiencing some difficulty in getting through to an adviser on the telephone, the most common barrier for all regions. Further, it appears that the majority of Nambucca participants had to travel slightly further for their legal assistance than participants from the metropolitan or regional LGAs included in the survey: in approximately 19 per cent of events they reported travelling over 20 kilometres for assistance. Despite these, satisfaction was high for the sole or most useful adviser, with over 80 per cent of Nambucca participants were satisfied with the help they received.

The above findings and those from the overall report (Coumarelos et al. 2006) suggest that different strategies may be required to promote justice through legal services. The substantial rates of people doing

nothing for their legal problems, because of a view that seeking help would make no difference or make things worse, show the importance of enhancing the general knowledge about how legal processes could assist them to resolve issues. This could be achieved through proactive information and education to increase public awareness about their legal needs and the available pathways for legal resolution. The observation that people go to non-legal advisers when they have legal problems suggests there may be benefit in raising the general level of legal literacy among the community at large, to enable the use of non-legal professionals as effective gateways to available legal services (Coumarelos et al. 2006). Finally, difficulty getting through to an adviser on the telephone may indicate the need to improve the accessibility of legal services through more resources, extended availability of services and additional legal services to ensure that legal services can react quickly and effectively to resolve legal problems in rural areas. Communication and information technologies (hotlines, video conferencing facility and internet website) may also reduce the barriers of distance to restore access to legal services in regional and rural areas.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Details of sample selection

To identify LGAs with relatively high rates of socioeconomic disadvantage, we used the risk score for cumulative socioeconomic disadvantage provided by Vinson (1999). This score is based on a range of socioeconomic indicators including proportions of unemployed persons, low income households, confirmed incidences of child abuse, people who left school before 15 years of age, households receiving emergency assistance, convicted persons, child injuries, long-term unemployment and unskilled workers.<sup>36</sup> Among the three Sydney LGAs used in the survey, South Sydney and Campbelltown were chosen because they were the only two of the 45 LGAs in the Sydney area that featured postcodes among the 50 most disadvantaged postcodes for the New South Wales area. Fairfield LGA was also chosen as it too had a relatively high cumulative disadvantage risk score, but also, because it has a highly culturally and linguistically diverse population. According to the census, a language other than English is spoken in 70.9 per cent of households, with Vietnamese (15.5%), Chinese languages (10.2%) and Spanish (4.9%) being the most common non-English languages. Accordingly, the survey instrument was translated into Vietnamese, Cantonese and Spanish and interviewers speaking these languages were made available for people who preferred to be interviewed in one of these languages (ABS 2001).

The three non-Sydney LGAs (Newcastle, Nambucca and Walgett) selected all featured at least three postcodes among the 50 most disadvantaged postcodes in New South Wales according to the cumulative disadvantage risk score. Further, Walgett and Nambucca LGAs also had relatively high Indigenous populations (21.5% and 5.4% respectively) compared with the New South Wales average (1.9%) and at such population levels, Indigenous people generally have poor outcomes on measures of social justice (ABS 1995; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commission 2002). For further details about the methodology and the survey see Coumarelos et al. (2006).

**TABLE A1: CLASSIFICATION OF LEGAL EVENTS IN SURVEY OF LEGAL NEED, 2003**

AREA OF LAW (NO. OF ITEMS)	SURVEY QUESTION NO.	LEGAL EVENT GROUP (NO. OF ITEMS) LEGAL EVENT	AREA OF LAW (NO. OF ITEMS)	SURVEY QUESTION NO.	LEGAL EVENT GROUP (NO. OF ITEMS) LEGAL EVENT
<b>CIVIL (76)</b>		<b>Accident/injury (4)</b>	<b>CIVIL cont. (76)</b>		<b>Housing (11)</b>
	19	Car accident – property damage		10A	Bought/sold home
	39A	Car accident – personal injury		10B	Dispute with neighbour
	39B	Injury at work		10C	Homelessness
	39C	Other personal injury		12	Tenancy problem
		<b>Business (2)</b>		14	Home ownership problem
	7	Problem as landlord		16A	Strata title problem
	9	Problem re own business		16B	Problem re caravan/home estate
		<b>Consumer (5)</b>		16C	Problem re boarding house/hostel
	20F	Problem re superannuation		16D	Problem re retirement home/village
	21	Problem re goods/services		31A	Nursing home problem – carer of disabled/elderly
	22	Dispute with financial institution		43C	Nursing home problem as disabled person
	23	Problem re insurance			<b>Human rights<sup>a</sup> (8)</b>
	56	Complaint about lawyer		24A	Discrimination – marital status
		<b>Credit/debt (5)</b>		24B	Discrimination – age
	20A	Problem paying bill/debt		24C	Discrimination – gender
	20B	Dispute re credit rating		24D	Discrimination – religion
	20C	Problem re money owed to you		24E	Discrimination – sexuality
	20D	Problem as guarantor		24F	Discrimination – ethnicity
	20E	Bankruptcy		24G	Discrimination – disability
		<b>Education (6)</b>		31H*	Discrimination – carer of disabled/elderly
	35A	Unfair exclusion from education			<b>Wills/estates (4)</b>
	35B	HECS issue		32A	Make/alter will
	35C	School bullying/harassment		32B	Executor of estate
	37A	Unfair exclusion from education – parent		32C	Dispute over will/estate
	37B	HECS issue – parent		32D	Power of attorney
	37C	School bullying/harassment – parent			<b>CRIMINAL (16)</b>
		<b>Employment (5)</b>			<b>Domestic violence (3)</b>
	2A	Dispute re employment conditions		47A	Victim of domestic violence by family member
	2B	Unfair termination of employment		47B	Victim of domestic violence by household member
	2C	Workplace harassment/mistreatment		48	Domestic violence allegation against you
	2D	Workplace discrimination			<b>General crime (11)</b>
	2E*	Other problem re employment		46A	Unfair treatment by police
		<b>Government (15)</b>		46B	Criminal charge
	5	Problem re pension/benefit		46C	Problem re bail/remand
	31C	Problem re services – carer of disabled/elderly		46D	Police failing to investigate crime
	43A	Problem re disability/community services		47C	Assault victim
	44A	Dispute re taxation/debt		49	Property stolen/vandalised
	43E*	Other problem re gov. services as disabled person		53A	Problem re medical treatment – prison/juvenile detention
	44B	Problem re freedom of information request		53B	Problem re legal advice – prison/juvenile detention
	44C	Immigration problem		53C	Safety threats – prison/juvenile detention
	44D	Local council problem		53D	Harassment/abuse by staff – prison/juvenile detention
	51	Non-traffic fines you challenged		53E	Problem re release – prison/juvenile detention
	53A	Problem re medical treatment – immigration detention			<b>Traffic offences (2)</b>
	53B	Problem re legal advice – immigration detention		50A	Loss of driver's licence
	53C	Safety threats – immigration detention		50B	Other traffic fine/offence you challenged
	53D	Harassment/abuse by staff – immigration detention			<b>FAMILY (9)</b>
53E	Problem re release – immigration detention		<b>Family (9)</b>		
57B*	Problem re legal system	25A	Problem re residence/contact for child		
	<b>Health (11)</b>	25B	Problem re residence/contact for grandchild		
31B	Involuntary psychiatric hospitalisation – carer	27A	Problem re child support payments		
31F*	Problem re quality of medical treatment – carer	27B	Child protection issue		
31G*	Problem re disability facilities – carer	27C	Fostering/adoption/guardianship issue		
42A/52	Involuntary psychiatric hospitalisation	29A	Divorce/separation		
42B	Other mental health care issue	29B	Dispute re matrimonial property		
43B	Problem re non-government disability services	31D	Guardianship problem – carer of disabled/elderly		
53A	Problem re medical treatment – psychiatric ward	57A*	Other family law problem		
53B	Problem re legal advice – psychiatric ward		<b>Unclassified (3)</b>		
53C	Safety threats – psychiatric ward	31E	Other problem – carer of disabled/elderly		
53D	Harassment/abuse by staff – psychiatric ward	43D	Other problem re disability		
53E	Problem re release – psychiatric ward	57	Other problem		

a Human rights events are not related to employment.

\* Legal events marked by an asterisk were not specifically asked about in the survey, but were identified by post-coding.

While the question number listed for each of these events in the table does not appear on the survey, it indicates the survey question from which the event was post-coded. For example, the legal event numbered '43E' was post-coded from question 43.

## Appendix 2

The main statistical technique used to test differences among regions was logistic regression. Logistic regression is an appropriate form of multivariate analysis when the outcome variable is discrete rather than continuous. Like other forms of regression, it examines the relationship of an outcome variable (e.g. whether someone has experienced a legal event or not) to one or more potential predictor variables (e.g. geographical region). In the regressions performed for this report, deviation contrasts were used to determine whether this region was different from the average of all regions to a statistically significant degree. Standard logistic regressions were used for all data where respondent was the unit of analysis (up to Figure 2 in the main body of the report). For the analyses where legal event was the unit of analysis (Figure 2 onwards in the main body of the report), mixed effects binary logistic regression was used (Hedeker 1999). While standard logistic regression assumes the independence of observations, mixed effects logistics regression allows for observations to be correlated. In detail, in the current study, where participants were the unit of analysis, there was only one observation per participant. However, where legal event was the unit of analysis, legal events were clustered within participants. That is, the one participant could have multiple legal events and therefore legal events were not independent of each other. The mixed effects logistic regression technique adjusts the statistical analyses appropriately for this clustering effect.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Only LGAs with a population of 5000 or greater were considered for this study.
- <sup>2</sup> The estimated survey response rate gave rise to this range because the rate quoted is dependent upon the assumptions underlying which elements denote the potential population from which the sample is drawn and constitute the denominator. For further details on the calculation methods, please see Coumarelos et al. (2006).
- <sup>3</sup> Although there were significant 'age by gender' interactions in the tests examining sample distribution versus population distribution, suggesting that there were some departures from proportionality of age groups within each gender group.
- <sup>4</sup> Note that none of these differences were formally statistically tested and are only discussed here for descriptive purposes.
- <sup>5</sup> OR = 1.43,  $p = .001$ .
- <sup>6</sup> OR = 0.70,  $p < .001$ .
- <sup>7</sup> OR = 1.48,  $p < .001$ .
- <sup>8</sup> OR = 0.77,  $p < .01$ .
- <sup>9</sup> OR = 1.34,  $p = .002$ ; OR = 1.29,  $p = .009$ ; OR = 0.72,  $p = .001$  respectively.
- <sup>10</sup> OR = 1.60,  $p = .001$ .
- <sup>11</sup> 2003 data were not available.
- <sup>12</sup> This figure is based on the selected income streams comprising: the Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, Newstart Allowance, Parent Payment (single), Youth Allowance, Other pensions and allowances (ABS 2006).

- <sup>13</sup> LawAccess is a free telephone information advice service that operates under the auspices of the NSW Attorney General's Department.
- <sup>14</sup> All statistical comparisons between individual LGAs and the overall sample were performed by logistic regression using deviation contrast (see Appendix 2).
- <sup>15</sup> No comparisons are statistically significant at  $p = .05$ .
- <sup>16</sup> Not statistically significant at  $p = .05$ .
- <sup>17</sup> OR = 0.71,  $p = .001$ .
- <sup>18</sup> OR = 1.60,  $p = .001$ .
- <sup>19</sup>  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>20</sup> OR = 1.31,  $p < .05$ .
- <sup>21</sup> OR = 0.71,  $p < .01$ .
- <sup>22</sup> OR = 1.60,  $p = .001$ .
- <sup>23</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering: sought help vs did nothing/handled alone,  $p > .05$ , did nothing vs handled alone/sought help,  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>24</sup> Note that it is possible that those who dealt with the problem themselves could have done so because of cost (or level of seriousness, or they did not know where to go for help). However, data was only collected on why respondents chose not to seek any help, not why they chose to deal with it themselves.
- <sup>25</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering, OR = 2.22,  $p < .05$ .
- <sup>26</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering,  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>27</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering,  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>28</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering,  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>29</sup> The number of family events ( $n = 40$ ) was too small for mixed effects analysis.
- <sup>30</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering,  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>31</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering,  $p > .05$  for all comparisons.
- <sup>32</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering, OR = 2.51,  $p < .01$ .
- <sup>33</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering,  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>34</sup> The sample size was too small to conduct a logistic regression adjusted for clustering. However, standard logistic regression showed region not to be a significant predictor.
- <sup>35</sup> Logistic regression adjusted for clustering,  $p > .05$ .
- <sup>36</sup> Partial use was also made of mortality rates in the risk scores for New South Wales postcodes.

# The Access to Justice and Legal Needs Program

The Law and Justice Foundation of NSW has undertaken the Access to Justice and Legal Needs (A2JLN) Research Program to identify the access to justice and legal needs of disadvantaged people in NSW. The objectives of the program are to examine the ability of disadvantaged people to:

- obtain legal assistance (including legal information, advice, assistance and representation),
- participate effectively in the legal system,
- obtain assistance from non-legal advocacy and support,
- participate effectively in law reform processes.

The program employs three methodological streams to address these objectives:

- the analysis of legal service usage data, giving particular insight into expressed legal need;
- original quantitative legal need surveys, giving insight into expressed and unexpressed/unmet legal need;
- in-depth qualitative research into the needs of particular disadvantaged groups.

Specific research published as part of this program to date includes:

**Public consultations:** a summary of the submissions received from organisations and individuals as part of the initial consultation process for the A2JLN Research Program.

**The Data Digest:** The Data Digest is a database for examining expressed legal need as identified through inquiries handled by public legal services. It currently includes legal inquiries to the Legal Aid Commission of NSW, LawAccess NSW, and community legal centres in NSW. The inaugural Data Digest report, published in 2004, presents service usage data from 1999–2002. A number of reports produced using the Data Digest are available on the Foundation's website [www.lawfoundation.net.au](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au). It is planned for public legal services to have secure access to a number of interactive online Data Digest tools.

**Justice made to measure: NSW legal needs survey in disadvantaged areas:** a quantitative survey of legal needs in six 'disadvantaged' regions of NSW, measuring a wide range of legal events, including those where help is sought from legal or non-legal advisers (expressed legal need), those handled without outside help and events where no action is taken (unmet legal need).

**The Bega Valley pilot survey:** a quantitative survey of the legal needs of 306 people conducted via telephone in Bega Valley. This was the pilot survey undertaken for the survey reported in *Justice Made to Measure*.

**The legal needs of older people in NSW:** a qualitative study into the legal issues commonly experienced by older people in NSW and the barriers faced by older people in accessing services to resolve legal issues.

**No home, no justice? The legal needs of homeless people in NSW:** a qualitative study into the capacity of homeless people in NSW to obtain legal assistance, participate effectively in the legal system and obtain assistance from non-legal advocacy and support agencies. The study also details the legal issues commonly experienced by homeless people.

**On the edge of justice: The legal needs of people with a mental illness in NSW:** a qualitative study into the legal issues faced by people with a mental illness in NSW, their capacity to obtain legal assistance, participate effectively in the legal system and obtain assistance from non-legal advocacy and support agencies.

**Taking justice into custody: the legal needs of prisoners:** a qualitative study of the legal and access to justice needs of prisoners and ex-prisoners. The study identifies the range of criminal, civil and family law issues prisoners face at different stages of incarceration, and the opportunities and barriers they face to addressing these issues.



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