Review of Legal Aid NSW outreach legal services

Stage 2 report:
Evolving best practice in outreach — insights from experience

LAW AND JUSTICE FOUNDATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Review of Legal Aid NSW outreach legal services

Stage 2 report: Evolving best practice in outreach – insights from experience

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Law and Justice Foundation of NSW
November 2013

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Shortened forms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ALS NSW/ACT	Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT
ATSI	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
AVL	audio visual link
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
CLACs	community legal advice centres
CLANs	community legal advice networks
CLC	community legal centre
CLSD	Cooperative Legal Service Delivery
DV	domestic violence
LASDD	Legal Assistance Services Data Digest
LGAs	Local Government Areas
Mid North Coast CLC	Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NSW	New South Wales
OH&S	occupational health and safety
ROCP	Regional Outreach Clinic Program
SEIFA	ABS Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage

Executive Summary

Legal Aid NSW uses outreach to provide legal services to disadvantaged communities in locations with high legal needs and limited access to legal services. Outreach legal services involve face-to-face legal advice and minor assistance delivered in locations other than Legal Aid NSW offices.

The Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales (NSW) was asked by Legal Aid NSW to review its outreach services. This review has been completed in two stages. Stage 1 (completed July 2013) provided a statistical overview of Legal Aid NSW outreach services between 2010 and 2012. This report on Stage 2 of the project has primarily focused on a case study undertaken in the Mid North Coast region of NSW, which involved interviews with lawyers, staff and host agencies working in the region. The project also involved interviews with a selection of outreach managers and staff in other parts of NSW. Rather than being an evaluation of existing outreach services, this report draws upon the experiences of practitioners in providing outreach legal services, particularly the challenges they have faced and the lessons they have learned, with the aim of contributing to the ongoing evolution of best practice in outreach at Legal Aid NSW.

The Stage 1 *Statistical Review of Legal Aid NSW Outreach Services* indicated that, since 2010, there was a significant expansion of Legal Aid NSW outreach legal services. The case study and analysis reported here indicates a corresponding growth in outreach practice and expertise within Legal Aid NSW.

Background: Outreach on the Mid North Coast

This report includes, as background, an analysis of the demographic profile and legal needs of residents in the Mid North Coast, together with information on legal services and legal assistance provided through outreach in the region. In January 2013, there were 19 Legal Aid NSW outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast; 15 operated by Legal Aid NSW solicitors and four operated by private solicitors under Legal Aid NSW's Regional Outreach Clinic Program (ROCP). In 2012, Legal Aid NSW solicitors delivered almost 2000 advice and minor assistance outreach assistances on the Mid North Coast. This represents a 68 per cent increase in the number of outreach services delivered by Legal Aid NSW in the region between 2010 and 2012. High rates (per head of population) of outreach assistance were provided to clients residing in particularly disadvantaged areas, including Kempsey, Grafton, Nambucca Heads and Bellingen.

In addition, in 2012, ROCP solicitors provided 253 advice services on the Mid North Coast. There was a 64 per cent increase in the numbers of ROCP advice services delivered on the Mid North Coast between 2011 and 2012.

In 2012, approximately one in five outreach assistances delivered by Legal Aid NSW solicitors (21.5%) and 8.2 per cent of ROCP advice services were to Aboriginal clients on the Mid North Coast. Furthermore, 71.2 per cent of outreach assistances delivered by Legal Aid NSW solicitors and almost four out of five ROCP advice services (79.7%) were provided to people on Centrelink benefits.

Taken together, the postcode analysis and data on client demographics indicate appropriate targeting of Legal Aid NSW outreach assistance in this region to disadvantaged clients.

Major findings

The purpose of outreach

Outreach managers and solicitors consulted in this review identified their role as addressing legal needs of disadvantaged communities who otherwise would not have access to legal assistance. This is consistent with Legal Aid NSW's purpose, to deliver legal services to socially and economically disadvantaged people (Legal Aid NSW, 2012 p.ii).

Disadvantaged clients are a priority for Legal Aid NSW generally, and for outreach specifically, because, consistent with previous research, interviewees indicated that these client groups have heightened vulnerability to legal problems and lower capability to successfully resolve their problems. Interviewees further noted that these are clients who, due to their circumstances as well as gaps in existing services, may have multiple legal issues. Interviewees indicated that the particular needs and capabilities of these client groups are central to the way that outreach services are structured and delivered.

Diversity in outreach practice

However, also evident from the analysis is the diverse range of ways that outreach is undertaken. Some variation arises from differences between the outreach histories and processes of the different practice areas within Legal Aid NSW. Equally, the differences arise in response to the diverse needs and capabilities of the clients, the geographic contexts, resourcing, opportunities for local engagement, and the local service 'scaffolding' available upon which to build outreach services in the locations.

Notwithstanding this diversity, the review revealed a coalescence of views about the purpose of outreach and the features required for outreach legal services to reach and assist the disadvantaged client groups that Legal Aid NSW seeks to serve. Features of good outreach practice suggested by the experiences of interviewees include:

- well planned and targeted services
- coordination and collaboration of outreach, within Legal Aid NSW and between Legal Aid NSW, host agencies and other local services
- services that connect and engage with clients
- services that are appropriate to clients' legal need and capability, and that are consistent and flexible
- effective referral pathways
- recognition that legal outreach may be considered as a specialist form of practice
- suitable administrative support arrangements for all stages, from intake through to referral, and
- sustained and supported services.

The findings from the interview analysis have been incorporated into revised *Best Practice Guidelines for Legal Aid Outreach Services* (Appendix 1). Proposed revisions to the previous guidelines centre on clearly articulating the purpose of outreach, identifying target client groups, a focus on connecting and engaging with clients and on resourcing all stages of outreach from intake until referral.

Planning and targeting outreach services

The interview analysis indicated the importance — from the planning stage onwards — of there being a clear idea of which client group(s) the outreach services aim to reach and assist as ideally, the needs and capabilities of the particular target group should influence the placement and style of outreach service delivered. A defined target group also enables the success of the outreach to be monitored and evaluated in terms of whether it reached and assisted particularly high needs clients.

In addition, the interview analysis indicated the importance of considering in the planning and implementation stages how the outreach services fit within broader service networks — that is, how they fit as part of the suite of Legal Aid NSW legal assistance services, as well as how they fit with the other legal and non-legal services in the locations where they are established. As interviewees observed, outreach services now represent the face of Legal Aid NSW in many locations across the state.

There are very valuable resources and forums available to Legal Aid NSW to identify legal need and gaps in services and to establish outreach clinics as part of broader service networks. While there is scope for their greater utilisation, the Legal Aid NSW Outreach Network and Legal Aid NSW Services Database could be valuable tools in facilitating coordinated efforts, particularly within Legal Aid NSW. Documentation such as the *Best Practice Principles for Outreach Legal Services* and the *Outreach Checklist* are also central.

The review noted the value of Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) partnerships, where available in local regions, not only as sources of information about need and service gaps, but in building and maintaining the relationships intrinsic to effective outreach, and in enabling outreach services to be part of a holistic client centred response to legal need. With or without a CLSD partnership, interviewees stressed that engagement with other local agencies is vital.

Coordination and collaboration

Interviewees highlighted the central importance of coordination and collaboration, both within Legal Aid NSW (among those involved in outreach) and between Legal Aid NSW with other legal and non-legal services in local communities. This is a theme that was evident throughout all of the key features of effective outreach identified in this review, from planning to engaging with clients and communities; to appropriate service provision and effective referral; and to sustaining services. In particular, the relationship between the outreach service and the host agency was identified as a pivotal element of effective outreach. Outreach solicitors described their role in building and maintaining this relationship, as well as relationships with target communities, cognisant of the 'ripple effect' of trust and reputation, particularly in rural locations. The host agencies that were consulted valued the work that outreach solicitors undertook in doing so.

Services that connect and engage with clients

Informants identified that successfully connecting and engaging with client groups was a key challenge but another critical feature of good outreach practice. Strategies used to do so included basing services at a location or host agency that was accessible and familiar to clients, and that they were comfortable to visit, and at a host agency that 'wants' and engages with the outreach service.

Equally important however, was having trust, rapport and a good reputation built within target communities, and raising awareness of the outreach service. Strategies used to build relationships with local communities included having outreach solicitors already known to communities; and new solicitors spending time building these relationships, working with Aboriginal Field Officers and working through local 'champions', host agencies and other local agencies. Community legal education was noted as a valuable strategy to build awareness of the outreach service and to 'create a buzz' about the services being offered.

Services appropriate to client need and capability: consistency and flexibility

Interviewees described effective outreach services as being appropriate for the legal needs and capabilities of target clients. Given the client profile of disadvantage, outreach solicitors described spending time listening to and 'unpacking' client needs, more commonly using minor assistance as a form of legal help, and providing assistance or referral for a range of different problem types.

Regular and consistent clinics were also suggested by interviewees as a key strategy to raise awareness and build trust in the service. Consistency was further noted as one way of overcoming the cynicism prevalent within many disadvantaged communities concerning services and 'initiatives' that 'come and go'. However, informants equally stressed the need for flexibility 'being open to different ways of doing things' when assisting clients with multiple and complex needs.

Effective referral pathways

As the needs of outreach clients may extend beyond the scope and expertise of any one outreach lawyer, or even Legal Aid NSW, interviewees noted the value of Legal Aid NSW outreach services working within a broader 'holistic' service network. Outreach solicitors receive referrals from and make referrals to services within this network. As a very large legal practice, Legal Aid NSW was also noted as having the capacity to refer clients internally, for instance, directly from outreach to casework (litigation) or to a duty service.

Lawyers reported how their ability to make appropriate referrals depended upon having general legal knowledge, a good understanding of Legal Aid NSW services, and importantly, awareness of other available and appropriate local service destinations.

Outreach as a specialist form of practice

Recognising the increase in outreach as a proportion of all Legal Aid NSW advice and minor assistance services, and the particular context of this type of work, the findings of this review suggest that legal outreach may be considered as a specialist form of practice.

It was clear from the interview analysis that outreach services make particular demands of lawyers, including the capacity to:

- work 'off site' and effectively with the host agency
- engage with disadvantaged clients with varying capability, as well as with their local communities and services
- provide on-the-spot advice, minor assistance and effective referral for a potentially broad range of legal issues.

Thus, the professional and personal qualities of outreach solicitors and managers were identified as being pivotal to establishing and sustaining outreach that connects with and meets the needs of target groups and communities, and successfully sustains host-provider relationships. These relationships were highly valued by the host agencies consulted in this review. The value of Aboriginal Field Officers in building links to their communities was also highlighted.

Suitable administrative arrangements, from intake through to referral

Depending upon the outreach provider, some client intake is managed centrally by a Legal Aid NSW office or division, some by the outreach solicitor themselves and some by host agencies. Some outreach services operate on a drop in basis. Regardless of the model, this review indicates the need for outreach to be appropriately resourced and supported from the point of intake onwards. Thus, if host agencies are booking in clients, there needs to be guidance, resourcing and support to ensure that this process (including conflict checking) is managed appropriately. Support may include developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with hosts and host agency in regards to training for staff in client bookings. If bookings are made centrally by Legal Aid NSW, then there may need to be additional resourcing required to market the service to the local communities and to build and maintain local relationships.

Sustained and supported services

The sustainability of outreach services was a key theme arising from the interviews. Central to the issue of sustainability is the 'success' of a service in reaching target clients, having sufficient resourcing (including IT resources), supporting staff and managing host-provider relationships. Additionally, consideration is needed about how the sustainability of the outreach service might be enhanced by complementary modes of service.

Outreach as an evolving practice

The interviews demonstrate diversity in current outreach models and indicate that new ways of providing outreach services are continuing to evolve. For instance, the location of outreach services at multi-agency clinics, collaborating with CLSD partners or other legal services to maintain a more frequent 'legal' presence at certain locations, developing more formalised arrangements with some host agencies, the use of Aboriginal field officers to develop strong relationships with Aboriginal communities, and integrating technology such as telephones and webcams to complement and supplement outreach, are some of the ways in which Legal Aid NSW outreach practice is evolving. Another area for further consideration is the scope for para-legal support in outreach (e.g. in assisting with documentation).

The next steps

The purpose of this stage of the review was to learn from the experiences of those involved in outreach on a day-to-day basis. The lessons learned will contribute to the ongoing evolution of best practice in outreach at Legal Aid NSW. Together with the Stage 1 report, it will also be used to inform a framework for the ongoing planning, monitoring and evaluation of outreach legal services. The framework (reported separately) covers planning to evaluation, in recognition that these activities are part of an ongoing cycle of program management that encourages further development and evolves through reflective practice. As this review has demonstrated, there are valuable lessons which continue to be learned about service delivery to disadvantaged clients. The primary aim of the framework is to foster and apply that learning.

Introduction

Outreach legal services are a key strategy of Legal Aid NSW to 'improve access to justice' and 'to expand advice and minor assistance services, especially in regional and remote areas' (Legal Aid NSW 2011; Legal Aid NSW 2013a p8). Through outreach legal services, Legal Aid NSW aims to:

- provide legal assistance for relevant issues in target locations/communities where such services are not available or readily accessible
- deliver legal assistance in a format that is appropriate to the needs of the target clients
- link clients to ongoing legal assistance as required (grants of aid)
- assist target clients to address and resolve their legal problems.

In 2012, the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW was asked by Legal Aid NSW to:

- provide a statistical overview of Legal Aid NSW outreach services between 2010 and 2012 (Stage 1)
- draw upon the experiences of outreach service providers and partner agencies to inform a planning, monitoring and evaluation framework for outreach legal services and the ongoing development of best practice for outreach (Stage 2).

The review is reported in two stages. The report on the first stage (completed July 2013) provided a statistical overview of existing services, describing:

1. the number, type and location of Legal Aid NSW outreach clinics across the State
2. the advice and minor assistance provided by Legal Aid NSW through outreach and in-office[1] services between 2010 and 2012
3. client groups assisted through outreach services compared to in-office services during this period.

Summary of Stage 1

The purpose of the Stage 1 report was not only to provide a record to Legal Aid NSW of their outreach services and activities, but also to explore how this information may be most useful in ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

The Stage 1 report indicated how outreach services at Legal Aid NSW can take many forms. The nearly 160 outreach clinics are placed in a diverse range of geographical locations (80% of which were in rural areas) and serve a variety of different client groups. They are found in homeless shelters, court houses, neighbourhood centres, Family Relationship Centres, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT (ALS NSW/ACT) offices and medical services. Most clinics are staffed by Legal Aid NSW lawyers but some in more remote areas are staffed by private lawyers through the Regional Outreach Clinic Program (ROCP). Most clinics are provided fortnightly or monthly, though there are some which are more frequent and others which are less frequent. Most of the outreach clinics focus primarily on civil or family law matters, though some provide criminal law assistance.

[1] Services provided from Legal Aid NSW offices, face-to-face, by audio-visual link (AVL) or by telephone.

The Stage 1 report also described the volume and types of assistance provided through outreach between 2010 and 2012, and offered statistics on services provided from Legal Aid NSW offices as a point of comparison. The report illustrated a sharp increase in the amount of advice and, in particular, in minor assistance provided through outreach during this period (nearly 21 000 assistances provided through outreach in 2012). By 2012, over one in five advice and minor assistance services provided by Legal Aid NSW were provided through outreach.

Outreach is a strategy used to reach more socially and economically isolated clients. The Stage 1 report indicated that a higher proportion of outreach assistances than in-office assistances were provided to clients on Centrelink benefits and to Aboriginal clients. Indeed, more than one-third (35.6%) of all advice and minor assistance services provided to Aboriginal people in NSW were provided through outreach (excluding ROCP[2]).

Thus, the Stage 1 report was able to provide a valuable picture of the profile of outreach services provided by Legal Aid NSW, the assistance provided through outreach and information on client groups assisted. It compared outreach to in-office services and provided information on different outreach services by area of law, geographical distribution and the type of host agency in which the clinic was based.

However, as the Stage 1 report noted, outreach clinics vary in subtle ways that a statistical overview cannot explore. There are differences in how the services link to clients, in their booking arrangements and in the relationships outreach clinics have with their host agencies and other partner organisations. These issues in turn may reflect local circumstances: legal needs, clients, opportunities and barriers. To take account of the diversity of factors that may facilitate effective outreach or alternatively challenge the implementation of these services, we need to look deeper.

Together, the Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports of this review will inform suggested amendments to the Legal Aid NSW best practice guidelines for outreach legal services and a proposed planning, monitoring and evaluation framework for outreach. The framework will include discussion of the data recording/collection issues that may need to be addressed to facilitate the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of Legal Aid NSW's outreach legal services.

[2] ROCP count services differently. Twenty-one per cent of ROCP clients were Aboriginal people.

Methodology

This second stage of the review draws primarily upon interviews and information from a range of stakeholders, with particular focus on a case study region, the Mid North Coast of NSW. A single region was chosen to enable an in-depth analysis of outreach *in situ*. The selection of the region is discussed in the methodology below.

This report explores:

- lessons learned from the experiences of existing periodic face-to-face outreach services
- challenges and barriers to running outreach services
- opportunities and options for Legal Aid NSW to monitor and assess how well outreach legal services are operating and whether they operating as expected.

Definition of outreach

For the purpose of this review, 'outreach' refers to all face-to-face legal advice and minor assistance delivered by or on behalf of Legal Aid NSW, in locations other than Legal Aid NSW offices. Some outreach may also be provided as a combination of face-to-face and telephone services, or by audio visual link (AVL)/webcam technology.

However, assistances provided by telephone or by AVL from a Legal Aid NSW office are ***not*** counted as outreach on the Legal Aid NSW administrative data system (CASES) and therefore not counted as outreach in this review.[3] Also excluded are 'duty[4]' services provided at courts, casework/representation, outreach assistances provided at a Legal Aid NSW office by another section of Legal Aid NSW and community legal education. Services which are not 'outreach' are described in this report as 'in-office services'.

Case study approach

To supplement the statewide statistical analysis conducted in the first report, a case study of outreach service delivery was undertaken in the Mid North Coast region of NSW, which encompasses Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Kempsey, Bowraville and Nambucca. The region covers areas within two statistical divisions[5]: Coffs-Grafton and the Mid North Coast. Maps and more details about the region are provided in the Background section of this report. Taree and Forster are also within these statistical divisions but consultations were not undertaken in these locations.

The Mid North Coast was selected for the case study as it has outreach services that vary in terms of provider, client group, area of law and host agency. These include ROCP clinics, services staffed from the regional Legal Aid NSW office (Coffs Harbour) and services staffed by fly-in fly-out solicitors from Sydney. There is a CLSD regional coalition in the area (Kempsey/Nambucca CLSD) and a CLSD partnership in Taree/Forster.[6] The region also has an Aboriginal Field Officer based at the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT who links clients to Legal Aid NSW civil and family law services.

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[3] Some outreach services will provide assistance by telephone in conjunction with periodic face-to-face services. Assistance by AVL/webcam is included in the outreach data if the assistance is provided from a location other than a Legal Aid NSW office.

[4] A duty service is legal advice and legal representation provided at a court or tribunal where a court or tribunal event is imminent.

[5] Note that these have recently changed and our maps use the new boundaries.

[6] ROCP data from Taree/Foster are included in the background statistics in this report.

It is important to note that the experience of outreach legal clinics in this region will not necessarily be representative of the experience of Legal Aid NSW outreach legal clinics in other locations and regions. For this reason, we have supplemented the regional interviews with interviews conducted with Sydney based outreach coordinators and solicitors who provide or coordinate services across a range of regions.

Finally, this review is a starting point not an endpoint —the in-depth analysis in this region will help inform what questions to ask to ascertain when to set up outreach, how to tell if it is operating as expected, whether it is meeting the need identified and what the options might be if it is not. It will also inform ongoing improvement to outreach practice.

Interviews

In-depth interviews relevant to the Mid North Coast were conducted with:

- Legal Aid NSW solicitors based in the Coffs Harbour office, including family and civil law outreach solicitors
- the Aboriginal Field Officer working from the Grafton and Coffs Harbour offices of the ALS NSW/ACT
- ALS NSW/ACT and Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre (CLC) staff
- coordinators and staff from two agencies that host outreach services in the Mid North Coast
- Sydney based Legal Aid NSW staff that coordinate or provide outreach for child support services to the Mid North Coast area.

The researchers also attended a CLSD meeting in Kempsey, which included representatives from a range of legal and non-legal services (e.g. tenancy services, financial counsellors, ROCP host services) in the region.

Interviews were also conducted with Legal Aid NSW's:

- Family Law Early Intervention Unit
- Civil Law Outreach staff (including homeless outreach)
- Mental Health Advocacy Service
- Outreach Network Coordinator
- CLSD/ROCP Project Manager
- Child Support Service
- Strategic Policy and Planning

Interviews were not conducted with outreach service clients as the focus of this review is on models and styles of outreach legal services rather than the quality of legal assistance provided to clients by any individual lawyers.

The agency that interviewees represent is indicated by the following in-text attributions: Host Agency (i.e. agencies hosting outreach legal services), Legal Aid (i.e. Legal Aid NSW), Other Legal Service (i.e. ALS office or community legal centre).

Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using the NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software package.

Additional data

Four data sets also inform the Mid North Coast case study.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011 Census of Population and Housing

The Census of Population and Housing (the Census) is a descriptive count of everyone who is in Australia on one night, and of their dwellings. The most recent Census of Population and Housing (2011 Census) was conducted on 9 August 2011.

The ABS Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (SEIFA) is derived from Census information and is updated every five years. SEIFA measures a range of socio-economic variables associated with advantage, such as high incomes and professional occupations, and disadvantage, such as low incomes and unskilled occupations (ABS 2011b).

CASES data

All advice and assistance provided by Legal Aid NSW solicitors is recorded on an administrative data system called CASES. A subset of the CASES data provided by Legal Aid NSW for the Stage 1 report of this review (described fully in the Stage 1 report) which is specific to the Mid North Coast case study is provided in this report. CASES data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 19 (SPSS) and Excel.

ROCP data

Some summary data concerning ROCP outreach is also included in this report. As ROCP outreach is provided by private practitioners, ROCP activity is largely recorded as work on Legal Aid NSW's grants management system, ATLAS. To supplement the information recorded on ATLAS, ROCP solicitors also collect some additional information about their clients on the Legal Aid Advice Form. This is not entered into CASES but is collated by the ROCP Support Unit within Legal Aid NSW).

Law and Justice Foundation of NSW's Legal Assistance Services Data Digest

Service provision data presented in this report is extracted from the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW's Legal Assistance Services Data Digest (LASDD). The LASDD brings together standardised data from NSW public legal assistance agencies, including LawAccess NSW, Legal Aid NSW and NSW community legal centres. As such, the dataset presents a picture of service provision, rather than underlying demand. The aim of the LASDD is to provide a snapshot of the expressed legal need experienced by the general community, with a particular focus on the expressed needs of socially and economically disadvantaged groups in NSW. LASDD data outline patterns of use rather than volume. Data provided in the LASDD can be used to answers questions about:

- the use of public legal services by residents of a particular region
- trends in enquiries for a particular region over time
- the geographic distribution of enquiries across a particular region
- the types of legal issues enquired about by residents of a particular region
- the proportion of enquiries from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in a particular region.

Review of relevant literature

In recent years there has been increasing discussion in the literature on the use of outreach services to reach isolated and disadvantaged clients, in part reflecting evaluative work in this increasing area of practice. The major pieces of work are described below and their findings are integrated into the results and discussion in the following chapters.

In 2009, the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW published a systematic review of outreach legal services, *Outreach legal services to people with complex needs: what works?* (Forell & Gray, 2009), which analysed the best available literature at the time on the effectiveness of outreach legal services and identified the features of good outreach services to inform best practice. The review indicated that to effectively reach and assist hard-to-reach clients, outreach legal services needed to form and maintain strong links with target communities and the agencies that support them. It also noted that while outreach services are best located in places that are frequented and trusted by the target groups, the reach of the service is increased by appropriate marketing of the service to the target group and supporting agencies and by building relationships with these groups. The review listed features of outreach services that are appropriate to the needs of these target groups (consistent service provision, timeliness of assistance, confidentiality, flexibility, solicitors skilled in communicating with disadvantaged clients) and their associated resource and staffing implications.

An earlier exploratory study by Dewson, Davis & Casebourne (2006)[7] aimed to identify the role of outreach in maximising client engagement by employment services seeking to help clients move from welfare into work. The study included a literature review and 27 telephone interviews with service providers, and explored definitions of outreach and the context in which it is used, the scope of outreach and modes of delivery, outreach service providers, staffing and skill requirements, an assessment of the effectiveness of the outreach services and identifying what factors assist or act as barriers to the provision of outreach.

Since the publication of Forell & Gray's (2009) systematic review, there have been a number of new studies that further contribute to our understanding of outreach. In particular, Porteous (2012) described and assessed the effectiveness of the legal component of each of the two homelessness projects (Rural Interagency Homelessness Project for People with Complex Needs in the Riverina and Reaching Home in Newcastle), and identified good practice principles to inform the future development of integrated legal services. Two Legal Aid NSW Homeless Outreach Solicitors were involved in the projects. The review included the collation and analysis of data from Legal Aid NSW's CASES database as well as qualitative interviews, observations and file and policy reviews. The review found that the services were very effective in improving outcomes for the clients of the homelessness projects, as well as increasing the access of legal services to the broader homeless and disadvantaged community in the Riverina and Newcastle regions. Features identified as important to integrated service delivery projects (which may involve legal outreach services) include collaboration and strong relationships with other agencies and 'warm' referral practices to help ensure a smooth transition for clients. Also identified as important to the success of the service were pre planning and needs analyses, the marketing which occurred through word of mouth, reputation in the community, flexibility in service provision and the ability of solicitors to assist with broad range of legal issues. Porteous (2012) also noted that some of the tasks clients needed assistance with (such as completing documentation) could be dealt with by non-legal staff.

A recent review by Legal Aid NSW of its Regional Solicitor Outreach Program (ROCP) (Cipants, 2013) provided valuable insights into the placement of outreach services in regional and remote locations. ROCP involves a local private or community legal centre solicitor, funded by Legal Aid NSW providing outreach clinics in locations of high legal need. The review involved interviews with Legal Aid NSW managers, ROCP solicitors and host agencies.

[7] Dewson, Davis & Casebourne was identified but not included in the Forell & Gray (2009) paper as the outreach services provided were not legal services.

In a process evaluation of the establishment of Community Legal Advice Centres and Networks (CLACs and CLANS) in the UK, Fox, Moorhead, Sefton & Wong (2011) examine outreach as an essential part of the advice centre and network service provision. The report notes how delivering services to hard-to-reach target client groups is affected by the administrative arrangements in place across different outreach services (e.g. hours per week, venues and booking processes), the level of responsibility taken on by host agencies, and the nature of the communication between service providers and hosts. Fox et al. (2011) particularly highlighted different demands involved in setting up an outreach service, including determining policy priorities, choosing a suitable location, allocating resources and staff, and allowing time for the service to become established.

Two additional studies provide insight into the value of outreach in assisting Aboriginal clients. Cunneen & Schwartz (2008) examined the civil and family law needs of Aboriginal people in NSW, and how Legal Aid NSW could improve the services being provided to Aboriginal clients in the areas of civil and family law.

The research was based on consultation with Aboriginal communities and the service providers in eight focus sites representative of communities across remote, rural, regional and urban areas. Additionally, quantitative data from Legal Aid NSW was used to provide information on the usage of the services and the types of matters that involved Aboriginal clients. Recommendations made in the report to better connect Aboriginal people with Legal Aid NSW services included improved and appropriate training for staff and services, establishing links to the community through outreach, employment of Aboriginal field officers, better use of technology such as AVL, ensuring Aboriginal people have a greater understanding of both civil and family law, and establishing Aboriginal reference groups.

A similar study in the Northern Territory was more recently completed by Allison, Cunneen, Schwartz & Behrendt (2012) as part of the Indigenous Legal Needs Project. This project aimed to identify and analyse the legal needs of Indigenous communities in non-criminal areas of law, and provide an understanding of how legal service delivery might work more effectively to address identified civil and family law needs of Indigenous communities. The research was based on 16 focus groups with Indigenous community members and over 60 interviews with legal and related stakeholders across eight communities in Northern Territory who were classed from accessible to very remote. Key observations made about service delivery covered issues such as client-practitioner communication (based on trust, respect and understanding), interactions between legal service providers (referral pathways), flexibility in service delivery (e.g. drop-in appointments), resourcing limitations (funding) and agency policies, which were all identified as impacting on effective service delivery to Indigenous clients in the Northern Territory.

Background: the Mid North Coast — a case study

This section describes:

- the geography and population of the Mid North Coast region
- data on disadvantage in the region
- data on expressed legal need
- data drawn from the statistical overview of Legal Aid NSW outreach services and assistances (Stage 1 of this review) which are relevant to this region.

This information is presented as a background and context to the interviews reported in the results section following. It also indicates the types of information that are available to assist in planning, monitoring and evaluating legal services, including outreach.

Geography

The Mid North Coast is a region in North East NSW. This report considers the Mid North Coast to stretch from Seal Rocks (275 km north of Sydney) and Bulahdelah (237 km north of Sydney), and as far north as Yamba (673 km north of Sydney). The Mid North Coast includes the statistical areas of the Mid North Coast and Coffs Harbour-Grafton (ABS 2011a). The local government areas (LGAs) in the Mid North Coast include: Great Lakes, Greater Taree, Gloucester, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey and Clarence Valley.

From south to north, the region's main towns include the twin towns of Forster and Tuncurry, Taree, Port Macquarie, Kempsey, South West Rocks, Nambucca Heads, Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Yamba. Of these, Taree, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Grafton are the major commercial centres, all with large shopping centres, public facilities and attractions. Kempsey, Forster-Tuncurry, Yamba and Woolgoolga are considered semi-major commercial centres. Smaller towns that are popular tourist spots are North Haven, South West Rocks, Urunga, Bellingen and Pacific Palms.

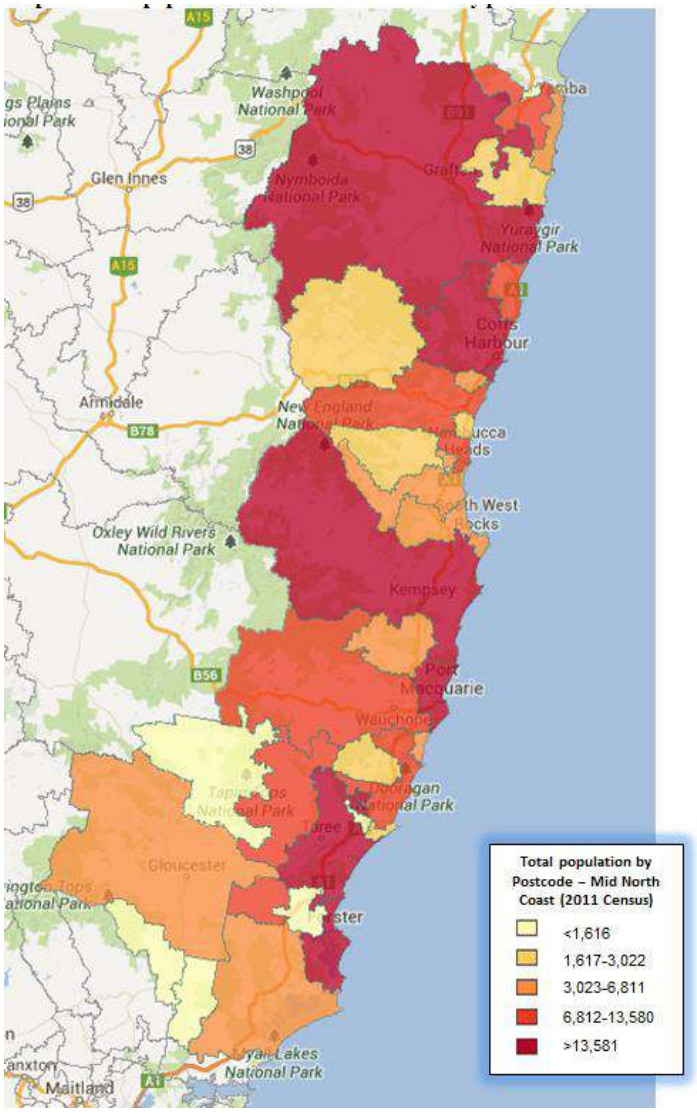
Population

The Mid North Coast has been one of the fastest growing regions of NSW. According to figures derived from the NSW State and Regional Population Projections 2006–2036, it is predicted that there will be a 30% increase in the Mid North Coast population by 2036 (NSW Department of Planning, 2010). The percentage of the population over the age of 65 is expected to rise from 19.1% in 2006 to 34.2% in 2036. Nearly all of the population growth on the Mid North Coast will be driven by net migration, rather than natural increases (Table 1). Map 1 shows the population density across the Mid North Coast.

Table 1: Population predictions by Local Government Area (LGA)

LGA	Area (km^2)	2011 Census population	Projected population 2036	Estimated population growth
Bellingen	1600.4 km^2	12,518	14,200	Moderate growth
Clarence Valley	10428.8 km^2	49,665	57,300	Moderate growth
Coffs Harbour	1173.7 km^2	68,413	101,800	High growth
Gloucester	2950.2 km^2	4,877	5,100	Moderate growth
Greater Taree	3729.1 km^2	46,541	53,200	Moderate growth
Great Lakes	3373.3 km^2	34,430	50,400	High growth
Kempsey	3375.7 km^2	28,134	31,900	Moderate growth
Nambucca	1491.4 km^2	16,644	20,800	Moderate growth
Port Macquarie-Hastings	3683 km^2	72,696	107,600	High growth

Map 1: Total population of the Mid North Coast by postcode



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2011d).

Disadvantage in the Mid North Coast

The demographic profile and levels of disadvantage in regions and communities are relevant to planning public legal services generally, and outreach specifically, because of the association between high levels of disadvantage and legal need (Coumarelos, Macourt, People, McDonald, Wei, Iriana & Ramsey 2012a; McDonald & Wei, 2013).

Index of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage

Based on 2011 SEIFA[8] scores, two of the nine LGAs on the Mid North Coast, Nambucca and Kempsey, rank in the ten most disadvantaged areas in NSW. Greater Taree, Clarence Valley (Grafton) and Great Lakes are also classified as relatively disadvantaged, ranking in the top thirty most disadvantaged areas in NSW (see Table 2 and Map 2).

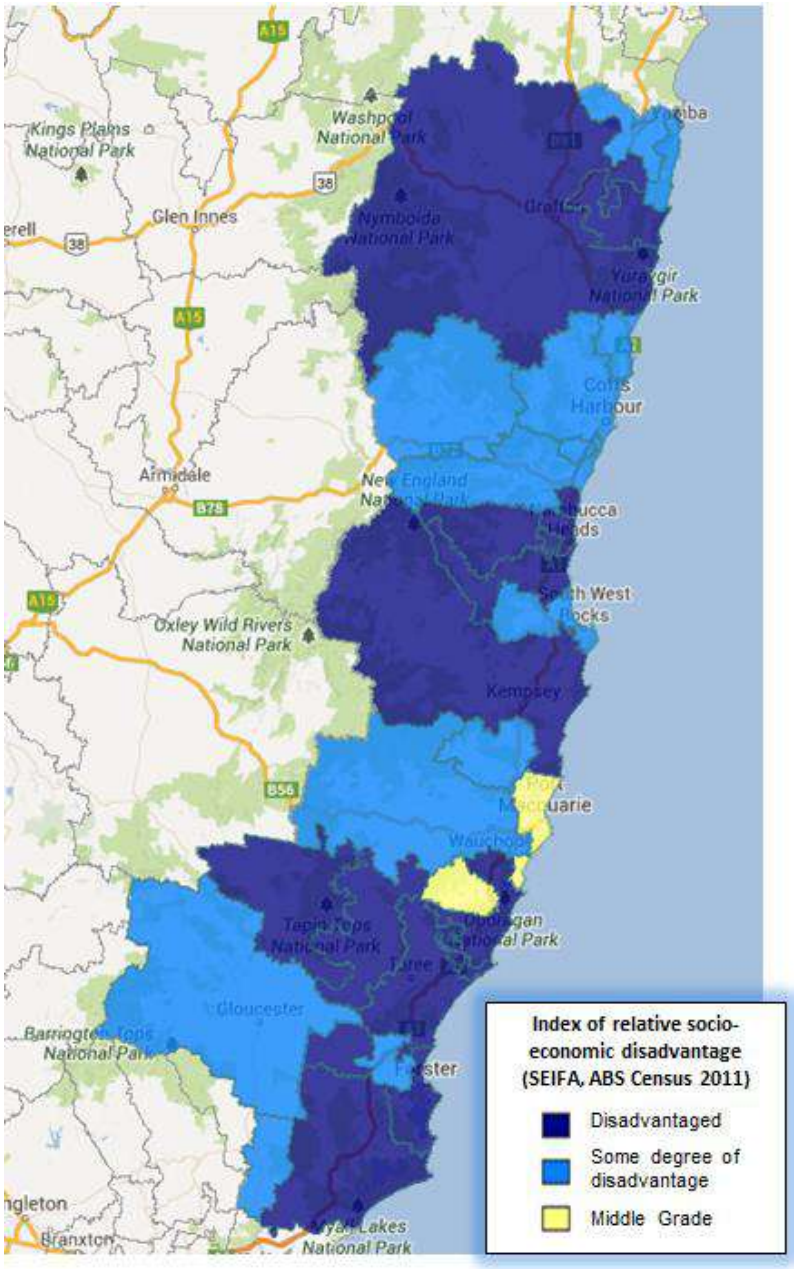
Table 2: Index of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage for the Mid North Coast region

LGA	*SEIFA Description*	*SEIFA rank within NSW**
Bellingen	Some degree of disadvantage	55th
Clarence Valley	Disadvantaged	13th
Coffs Harbour	Middle grade	70th
Gloucester	Some degree of disadvantage	47th
Greater Taree	Disadvantaged	12th
Great Lakes	Disadvantaged	26th
Kempsey	Disadvantaged	4th
Nambucca	Disadvantaged	9th
Port Macquarie-Hastings	Middle grade	75th

* LGAs are ranked in order of their SEIFA Index score, from lowest to highest, with rank 1 representing the most disadvantaged area. The LGAs are ranked compared to all NSW LGAs (there are a total of 153 LGAs in NSW).

[8] See Methodology for description. The index summarises information collected from the census that indicates either relative advantage or disadvantage. It ranks areas on a continuum from most disadvantaged to most advantaged (ABS 2011b).

Map 2: Mid North Coast — index of relative socio-economic disadvantage, by postcode



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2011b).

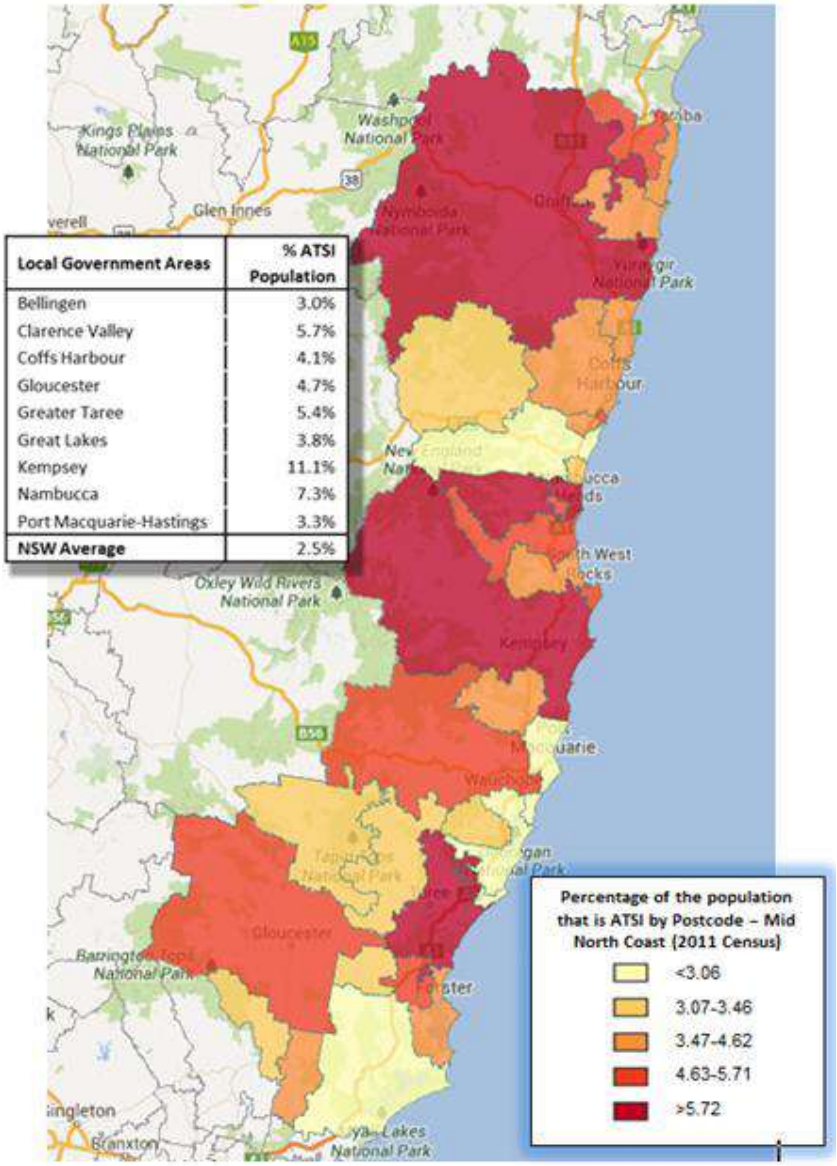
Demographic profile

Data collected as part of the Census is a key source of demographic information about a particular area, including indicators relevant to disadvantage (ABS 2011c).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

According to the 2011 Census, an estimated 4.6 per cent of people living on the Mid North Coast and 5.4 per cent of people living in Coffs Harbour-Grafton are of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background. This is approximately twice the NSW state average (2.5%). Map 3 shows that the largest population concentrations of ATSI people on the Mid North Coast are in Kempsey (11.1% of the Kempsey population), Nambucca (7.3%), Clarence Valley (Grafton, 5.7%) and Greater Taree (5.4%).

Map 3: ATSI population of the Mid North Coast by postcode



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2011d).

Disability

ABS Census data indicates that 7.1 per cent of people on the Mid North Coast require assistance with core activities due to a profound or severe disability[9], higher than the NSW average of almost five per cent (4.9%). In particular, there is a higher proportion of people living in Kempsey (8.3%) and Nambucca (8.3%) with a profound or severe disability requiring assistance. This was noted in the interviews undertaken for this review by local service providers, who observed:

> *… when you look at the research that's been done, clearly there's a massive need there but it's finding [people with disability] and being accessible to them that I think is hard to work. At the moment, we've scratched the surface and there's a whole lot more. (Other Legal Service)*

Unemployment

According to the 2011 Census, the unemployment rate on the Mid North Coast is approximately 8.3 per cent. This is considerably higher than the NSW average unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent. The highest rates of unemployment are found in Nambucca (10.7%), Greater Taree (9.3%), Clarence Valley (8.9%) and Kempsey (8.9%). The high unemployment level in Kempsey was cited in the interviews:

> *I think Kempsey as a whole has an extremely high level of unemployment so no matter where you placed yourself in Kempsey, you're going to come across a high level of unemployment. (Legal Aid)*

Centrelink benefits

The proportion of residents on the Mid North Coast who were in receipt of Centrelink benefits is significantly higher than the NSW average of 23.6 per cent. In particular, the LGA of Great Lakes is ranked first in NSW in terms of the proportion of residents on benefits, with 54.2% in receipt of a government benefit, more than double the NSW average. More than forty per cent of residents in Nambucca (45.0%) and Kempsey (41.7%) were also in receipt of some type of Centrelink benefit.

Around 20 to 25 per cent of Centrelink benefits received on the Mid North Coast were Disability Support Pensions (DSP). The LGAs with the highest proportions of residents receiving DSP were: Great Lakes (10.2%), Kempsey (10.0%) and Nambucca (8.6%).

Public housing

According to the Census, approximately 5.1 per cent of dwellings in NSW are public or community housing. A smaller proportion of dwellings on the Mid North Coast are tenured in this way (4.1%). The LGAs with the highest proportions of public or community housing were: Nambucca (5.4%), Coffs Harbour (5.3%) and Kempsey (5.2%).

Single parents

The 2011 Census reveals that 18.2 per cent of families on the Mid North Coast were single parent families. As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of LGAs on the Mid North Coast had a higher than average percentage of single parent families (16.3%). The LGAs with the highest proportions of single parent families were: Kempsey (22.5%), Bellingen (19.7%), Nambucca (19.4%) and Coffs Harbour (19.0%).

[9] People with a profound or severe disability are defined as those people needing help or assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication, because of a disability, long-term health condition (lasting six months or more) or old age.

Table 3: Demographic profile of people residing on the Mid North Coast by LGA

LGAs	Disability	Unemployment	Centrelink benefits	Public/ community housing	Single parents
Bellingen	5.3%	8.0%	34.7%	2.6%	19.7%
Clarence Valley	7.6%	8.9%	37.7%	3.1%	17.9%
Coffs Harbour	5.9%	8.3%	33.8%	5.3%	19.0%
Gloucester	6.7%	5.3%	31.9%	2.6%	11.9%
Greater Taree	7.7%	9.3%	30.8%	4.3%	18.4%
Great Lakes	7.7%	8.3%	54.2%	2.5%	16.1%
Kempsey	8.3%	8.9%	41.7%	5.2%	22.5%
Nambucca	8.3%	10.7%	45.0%	5.4%	19.4%
Port Macquarie-Hastings	6.6%	6.9%	36.7%	3.7%	16.3%
NSW Average	4.9%	5.9%	23.6%	5.1%	16.3%

Source: ABS 2011d and Judith Stubbs & Associates 2012.

Transport

An environmental factor relevant to the need for outreach legal services is the availability of transport, both private and public. As is commonly reported in regional and rural areas in NSW, lack of transport was identified in this review as a key barrier to accessing legal assistance services:

> *The transport is one huge issue and they would never get to Coffs Harbour. If the people have cars a lot of the time they don't have petrol … The bus services are limited and they have to get up there and spend all day to wait for a bus to come back. (Host agency)*

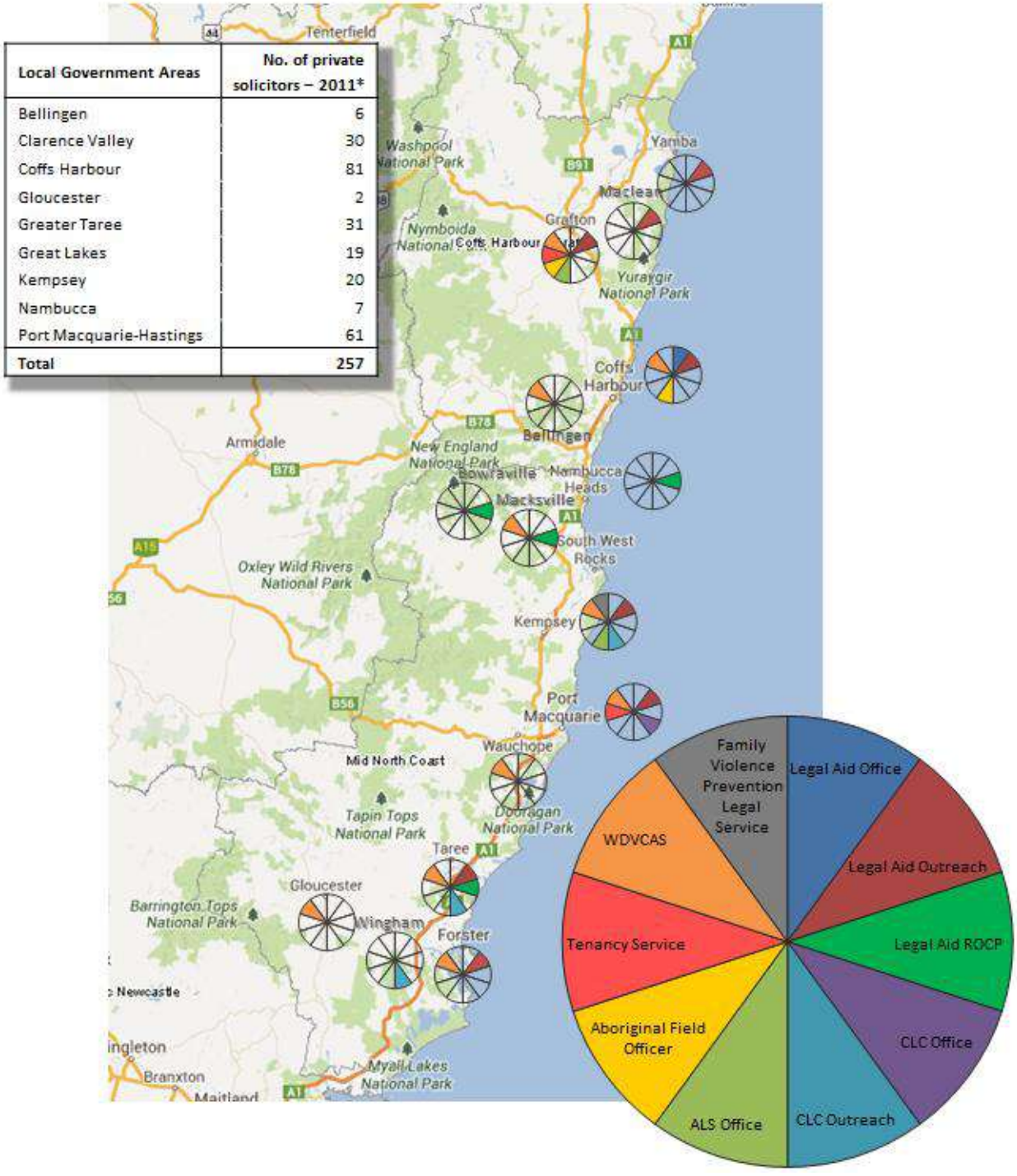
> *They will walk because there is no other way for them to get there because public transport down there is crap… (Legal Aid)*

According to the 2011 Census, residents on the Mid North Coast had higher rates of car ownership and lower rates of using public transport to get to work compared to the NSW average.

Public legal services on the Mid North Coast

When planning outreach it is important to know what services already exist in a location. As indicated on Map 4 (over the page), public legal services in the Mid North Coast include a regional Legal Aid NSW office in Coffs Harbour, ALS offices in Grafton and Kempsey, and the Mid North Coast CLC in Port Macquarie.

Map 4: Location of public legal service offices on the Mid North Coast



* Data on the number of registered solicitors was obtained from the Law Society of NSW. The online directory includes all registered NSW solicitors who currently hold practising certificates. This data is correct as at 30 June 2011.

Outreach services are run from the Coffs Harbour Legal Aid NSW office, by the Legal Aid NSW Child Support Service based in Sydney, by a private solicitor based in Kempsey as part of the ROCP and by the Mid North Coast CLC. An Aboriginal Field Officer provides warm referrals to Legal Aid NSW from the ALS offices in the region.

The Mid North Coast CLC runs outreach services in Taree, Kempsey and Wingham.

Cooperative Legal Service Delivery partnerships

Legal Aid NSW is a member of two CLSD partnerships in the Mid North Coast, one in Kempsey-Nambucca and one covering Taree and Forster. The CLSD Program is a regionally based approach to legal service delivery that aims to improve outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged people by building cooperative and strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations (see Legal Aid NSW 2013a).

CLSD partnerships aim to enhance the efficient and effective use of scarce resources and improve access to justice for disadvantaged people in regional areas. Through shared analysis of data to identify legal need and the available services in the region, opportunity for planning and delivery of legal services in a coordinated and cooperative manner is created.[10]

Both CLSD partnerships in the Mid North Coast comprise representatives from legal services (Legal Aid NSW, Mid North Coast CLC and ALS offices, tenancy, financial counselling and family services, community and neighbourhood centres, welfare services, Aboriginal community organisations and government organisations. The CLSD partnerships in the Mid North Coast reported recent outcomes as follows:

> *Through working together, CLSD partners have attracted additional resources, enabling agencies to extend services to meet emerging legal needs. Partners have developed targeted community legal education sessions, improved client referrals between agencies, developed new resources, provided training and capacity-building initiatives. CLSD partners are working together on cooperative projects such as legal advice and information 'road-shows' and joint outreach advice clinics to less well-serviced regional areas. CLSD is also well-placed to report on unmet needs in regional NSW and identify systemic legal issues for consideration at a peak level. (Legal Aid NSW 2013b)*

A key strategy of CLSD partnerships is to undertake an analysis of legal need and gaps in service delivery in the region when the CLSD partnership commences, and biannually thereafter. The needs analyses draw upon the types of data reported above (SEIFA and Census data) together with data on expressed legal need made available through the LASDD (reported in the following section). With relevant services attending, CLSD partnerships are well placed to identify gaps in legal service delivery. The needs and gap analyses undertaken by CLSD partnerships in turn informs legal service delivery within the region.

As will be discussed later in this report, CLSD partnerships are a valuable resource for planning and implementing outreach services in local areas. The type of needs and gap analyses undertaken by the CLSD partnerships mirrors the benefits obtained through needs and gap analyses in planning outreach services.

[10] While each CLSD partnership is largely autonomous and responsive to local needs, they are all supported by a central CLSD Program Unit at Legal Aid NSW. The CLSD Program Unit works closely with LawAccess NSW and the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW to analyse data on service usage and explore and implement service planning and delivery strategies, and use this information to inform regional CLSDs.

Service provision on the Mid North Coast

There are a several sources of information that can be used by CLSD partnerships and others, to indicate the level of expressed legal need in a region. One source is the LASDD which brings together standardised data from NSW public legal assistance agencies, including LawAccess NSW, Legal Aid NSW (advice services only, not minor assistance) and NSW community legal centres. This data is useful in building a picture of who is accessing public legal assistance, what their needs are and the pathways they follow to resolve their legal issues.

While the LASDD includes data from Law Access, CLCs and Legal Aid NSW information and advice services, it does not include Legal Aid NSW casework, duty work or minor assistance data, nor does it include services provided by the ALS NSW/ACT.

The use of public legal services in the Mid North Coast

In 2012, residents on the Mid North Coast enquired about roughly 15,000 matters to the three public legal services in NSW. This equates to approximately 47 matters per 1000 residents, slightly higher than the NSW average of 46 matters.[11]

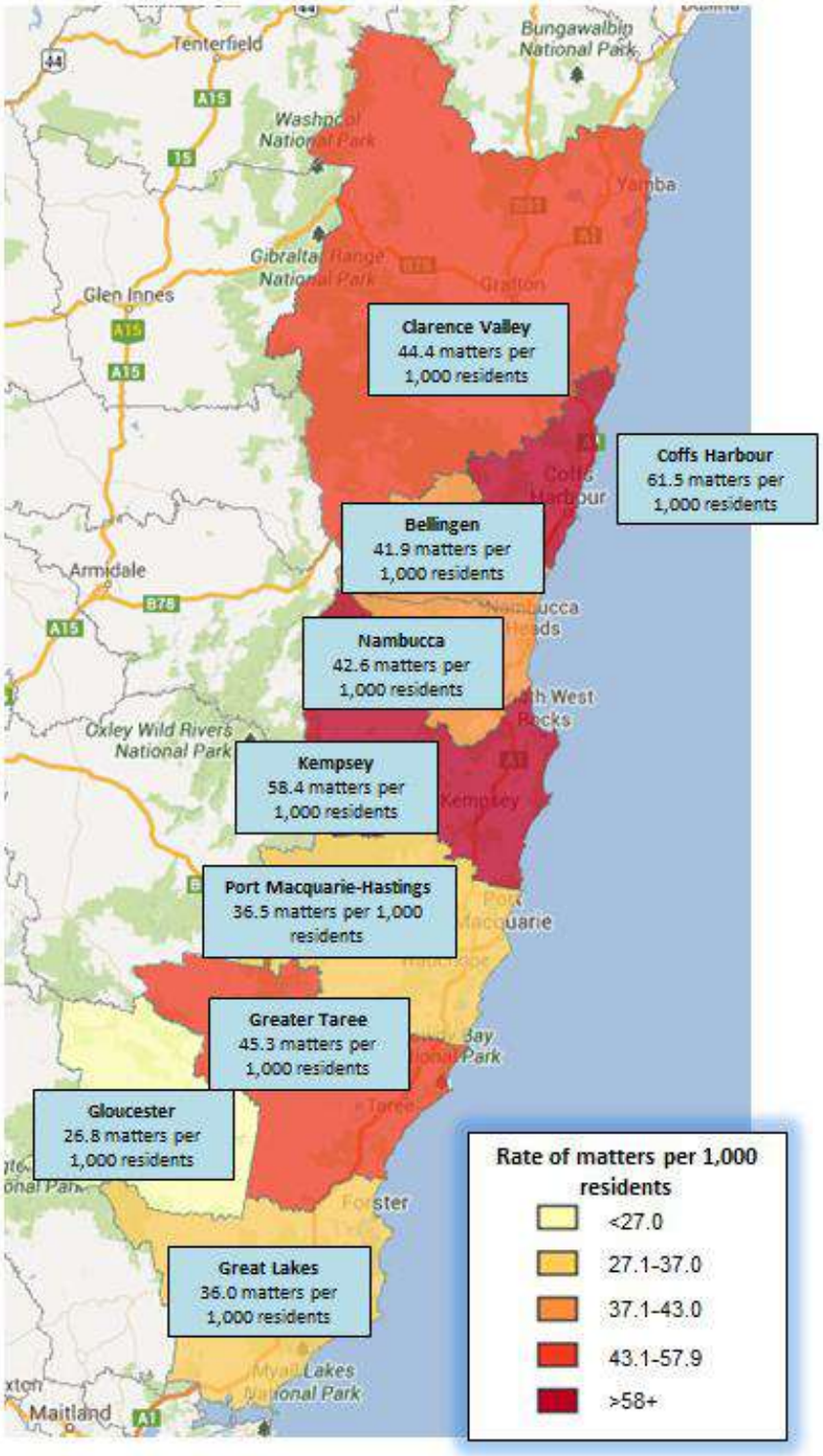
The geographic distribution of enquiries across the region

On the Mid North Coast, the highest rates of enquiries in 2012 were from residents in Coffs Harbour and Kempsey (61.5 and 58.4 matters per 1,000 residents, respectively). The rate of enquiries recorded for these two areas was substantially higher than both the NSW average and also the average for the Mid North Coast. The Legal Aid office is located in Coffs Harbour and three outreach services are in Kempsey.

The lowest rates of enquiries were recorded by residents in Gloucester, Great Lakes and Port Macquarie-Hastings (26.8, 36.0 and 36.5 matters per 1000 residents, respectively). The rates of enquiries recorded for these areas was considerably lower than both the NSW average and the average for the Mid North Coast region.

[11] Rates are calculated by dividing the number of matters enquired about in a region by the population of that region, and then multiplying the result by 1000 to obtain a rate per 1000 residents.

Map 5: Rate of matters enquired about by residents on the Mid North Coast by LGA



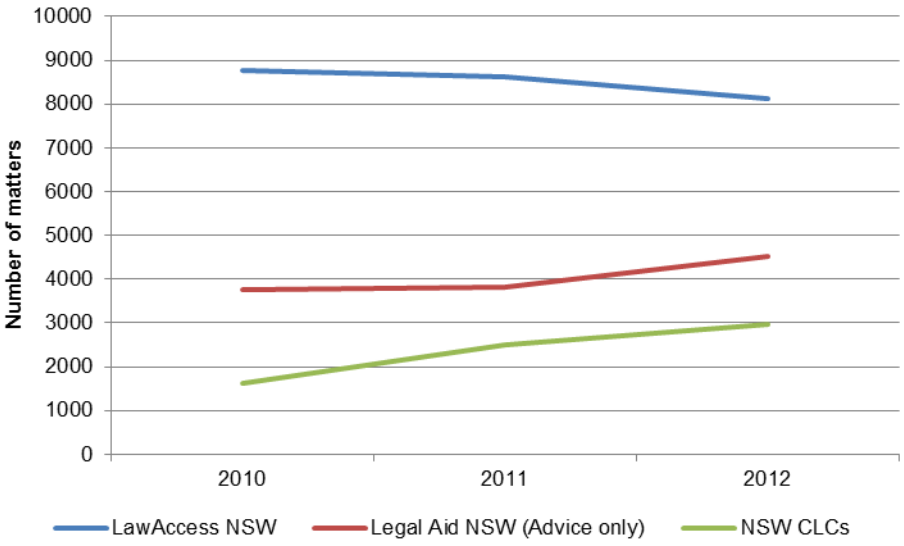
Source: Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Legal Assistance Services Data Digest

Trends in the number of enquiries reported in the Mid North Coast since 2010

Overall, the numbers of matters enquired about by residents on the Mid North Coast increased between 2010 and 2012, rising by just over ten per cent or 1443 matters (see Figure 1).

As the Mid North Coast CLC opened in early 2011, the number of matters enquired about to all NSW CLCs by Mid North Coast residents almost doubled between 2010 and 2012.

Figure 1: Number of matters enquired about by residents on the Mid North Coast by agency, 2010–2012



Source: Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Legal Assistance Services Data Digest, N = 44,707 matters.

The types of legal matters residents in the region frequently enquired about

More than 50 per cent of matters enquired about by residents on the Mid North Coast in 2012 related to civil law issues (52.4%). The main types of civil law enquiries were debts, wills, neighbourhood disputes and consumer issues.

Approximately one quarter of matters enquired about on the Mid North Coast involved family law issues (26.6%), such as parenting arrangements and property settlements following a separation or divorce.

Finally, around one in five matters enquired by residents on the Mid North Coast in 2012 were criminal law issues (21.0%). The main criminal law issues enquired about related to traffic and driving offences and domestic violence.[12]

[12] Note that most criminal law assistance provided by Legal Aid NSW is in the form of duty work and representation, and is therefore not included in these data.

The proportion of enquiries made by ATSI residents

Approximately one in ten matters (9.2%) enquired about by residents on the Mid North Coast were from ATSI people. According to the 2011 Census, approximately five per cent of the Mid North Coast population was ATSI, indicating that a relatively higher proportion of assistance from public legal sector agencies is sought by ATSI people.

Legal Aid NSW outreach services on the Mid North Coast

The Stage 1 report of this review provided a statistical overview of outreach services in NSW, primarily based on two data sources: Legal Aid NSW's database of outreach clinics and the Legal Aid NSW administrative data system CASES (see Forell, McDonald, Ramsey & Williams 2013). This section looks specifically at the Mid North Coast, giving a detailed picture of outreach services delivered in this region between 2010 and 2012. These figures for the Mid North Coast can be compared to the NSW figures provided in the Stage 1 statistical overview report.

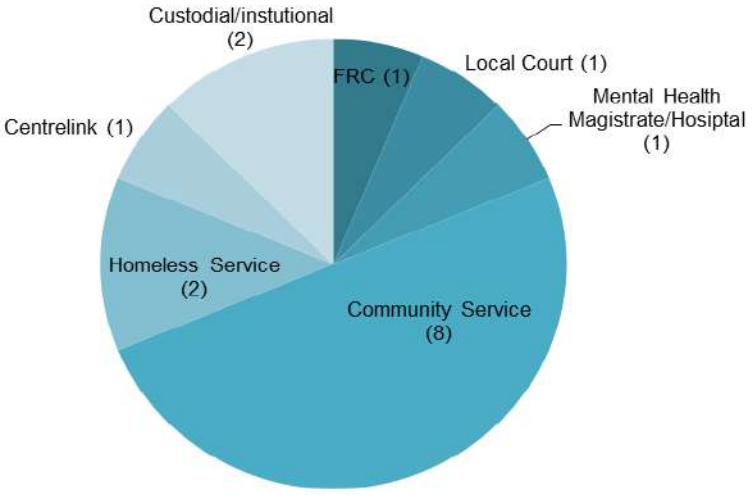
These figures provide an overview of the assistance provided by Legal Aid NSW through outreach on the Mid North Coast. This information can be used to plan, monitor and evaluate outreach services.

In January 2013, there were 19 Legal Aid NSW outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast (see Map 4) — 15 were operated by Legal Aid NSW solicitors and four were operated by private solicitors under Legal Aid NSW's ROCP.

Type of host agency

Outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast are based in a variety of different types of host agency locations. As at January 2013, half of the outreach clinics in the region were based in community services, such as community or neighbourhood centres (see Figure 2). Two outreaches were located in homelessness specific services, including Wesley Mission and a soup kitchen, and two were located in prisons.

Figure 2: Host agency types for Legal Aid NSW outreach services on the Mid North Coast, January 2013



Source: Legal Aid NSW, Outreach database, January 2013. N = 19 host agencies.

There was also one outreach clinic located at each of the following host agencies: a Centrelink office, a Family Relationship Centre, a local court and a hospital.

Frequency of outreach visits

The overall frequency of outreach clinics provided on the Mid North Coast varied from weekly to monthly. Excluding outreach to prisons or hospitals[13], six (38%) were provided weekly, six (38%) were delivered monthly and four (25%) were provided fortnightly or twice a month. Outreach clinics targeting people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness were more likely to be provided weekly, while family and child support outreach services were more likely to be provided monthly.

Assistance provided through outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast

In this section we use CASES data to count the assistances (advice *and* minor assistance)[14] provided by Legal Aid NSW at outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast staffed by Legal Aid NSW solicitors. As ROCP data is recorded on a different data system (ATLAS), advice and minor assistance provided by ROCP solicitors are not included in the figures below, but are reported separately at the end of this section.

Number of assistances delivered

In 2012, Legal Aid NSW delivered almost 2000 outreach assistances on the Mid North Coast of NSW (1958 assistances).[15] In the same year, Legal Aid NSW delivered approximately 3400 in-office assistances from the Coffs Harbour office (3411).

There has been a 68.2 per cent increase in the numbers of advice and minor assistance services delivered by Legal Aid NSW through outreach on the Mid North Coast, increasing from 1164 assistances in 2010 to 1958 assistances in 2012. The overall increase in outreach assistances provided by Legal Aid NSW across the state during the same period was 84.2 per cent.

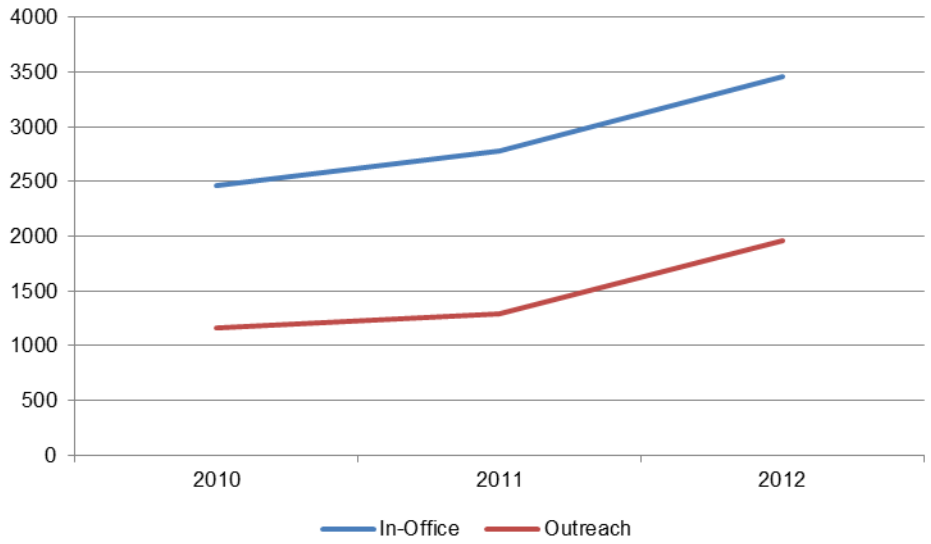
Notably, during the same period, Figure 3 shows that there has also been a clear increase in the numbers of 'in-office' advice and minor assistance services delivered by Legal Aid Coffs Harbour, increasing from 2466 assistances in 2010 to 3458 assistances in 2012.

[13] Outreach to prisons on the Mid North Coast is not timetabled. Outreach sessions are organised by prisoners who can arrange appointments through the wing officer, area manager or welfare officer of the prison who will enter it in the Legal Aid Book. Outreach to hospital is scheduled around the sitting dates of the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

[14] Note, the LASDD data reported above only counts advices, while CASES records advices and minor assistances.

[15] The outreach figures reported here do not include the 19 outreach assistances provided at prisons or the 32 outreach assistances provided at police stations. Also, this figure does not include outreach services provided under the ROCP.

Figure 3: Number of assistances delivered on the Mid North Coast, outreach and non-outreach, 2010−2012



Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012. N = 8706 in-office and N = 4414 outreach.

Advice compared to minor assistance

Legal advice has been, and remains, the more prevalent form of assistance compared to minor assistance, for both outreach and in-office services on the Mid North Coast. However, the gap between the two narrowed between 2010 and 2012 (see Table 4). In 2010, minor assistance made up 12.0 per cent of all outreach assistances provided on the Mid North Coast. In 2012, minor assistance increased to almost one-quarter of the outreach assistances delivered (24.2%).

Table 4: Type of assistance delivered on the Mid North Coast, outreach and in-office, 2010−2012

Type of assistance	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*
Advice			
In-office	1777	1792	2050
Outreach	1024	1061	1484
Total advices	2801	2853	3534
% advice as outreach	36.6%	37.2%	41.2%
Minor assistance			
In-office	672	975	1361
Outreach	140	231	474
Total minor assistances	812	1206	1835
% minor assistance as outreach	17.2%	19.2%	25.8%

Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012.

Overall, there has been a 45 per cent increase in the number of advice services delivered through outreach on the Mid North Coast between 2010 and 2012. In-office advices increased 15 per cent over the same period.

While starting from a much lower base, the number of minor assistances delivered through outreach on the Mid North Coast more than tripled between 2010 and 2012. Interestingly, this increase is less than the eight-fold increase observed statewide (see Forell et al. 2013).

Assistance by outreach clinic

As described above, there are 19 outreach clinics operating on the Mid North Coast. Table 5 shows a breakdown of the number of assistances provided at each of these clinics in 2012.

Not surprisingly, the clinics providing the highest number of outreach assistances were delivered more frequently, i.e. weekly, while the clinics delivering the lowest number of outreach assistances were the services delivered less frequently, that is, monthly.

Overall, four outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast, all delivered weekly, accounted for almost two-thirds of outreach assistances delivered in the region (65.2%). These are Kempsey Civil Law Aboriginal Advice Service/Kempsey Homeless Legal Advice Service (28.2%), Grafton Homeless and Youth Legal Advice Service (24.7%) and Coffs Harbour Family Law Advice Service (12.3%).

Table 5: Number of outreach assistances by outreach clinic, Mid North Coast, 2012

Outreach Clinic	*Provider*	*Assistances provided*	*Frequency*
Legal Aid Solicitors			
Coffs Harbour Family Law Advice Service	Family Law Early Intervention Service	240	Weekly
Coffs Harbour Homeless Legal Advice Service	Homeless Outreach Legal Service	186	Weekly
Coffs Harbour Hospital	Mental Health Advocacy Service	18	n/a
Forster Family Law and Child Support Advice Service	Newcastle Legal Aid Office, Child Support Service	37	Monthly
Grafton Family Law Advice Service	Family Law Early Intervention Service	77	Fortnightly/ Twice a month
Grafton Homeless and Youth Legal Advice Service	Coffs Harbour Legal Aid Office	484	Weekly
Kempsey Civil Law Aboriginal Advice Service and Kempsey Homeless Legal Advice Service*	Coffs Harbour Legal Aid Office	553	Weekly
Kempsey Family Law and Child Support Advice Service	Child Support Service	14	Monthly
Maclean Family Law Advice Service	Lismore Legal Aid Office	19	Monthly
Port Macquarie Family Law and Child Support Advice Service	Child Support Service	17	Monthly
Taree Family Law and Child Support Advice Service	Child Support Service, Family Law Division	36	Monthly
Taree Mortgage Advice Service	Civil Law Division	59	Fortnightly/ Twice a month
Yamba Family Law and Child Support Advice Service	Lismore Legal Aid Office	13	Monthly
Other Outreach Location − Mid North Coast		205	
Total Legal Aid assistances		**1958**	
ROCP		***'Advice services'[1]***	
Bowraville Legal Advice Service (MiiMi House)	Regional Outreach Clinic Program	73	Fortnightly/ Twice a month
Macksville Legal Advice Service	Regional Outreach Clinic Program	97	Fortnightly/ Twice a month
Nambucca Heads Legal Advice Service	Regional Outreach Clinic Program	51	Monthly
Taree Legal Advice Service	Regional Outreach Clinic Program, CLSD Program	32#	Weekly
Total ROCP		**253**	

Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012. A count of 'assistances' (N = 1958); ROCP data.

[1] ROCP data counts the number of advice services recorded on ATLAS. An 'advice service' is a broader category of service than an 'assistance' as recorded on CASES and is therefore not directly comparable (see Forell et al, 2013 pp.9-10)

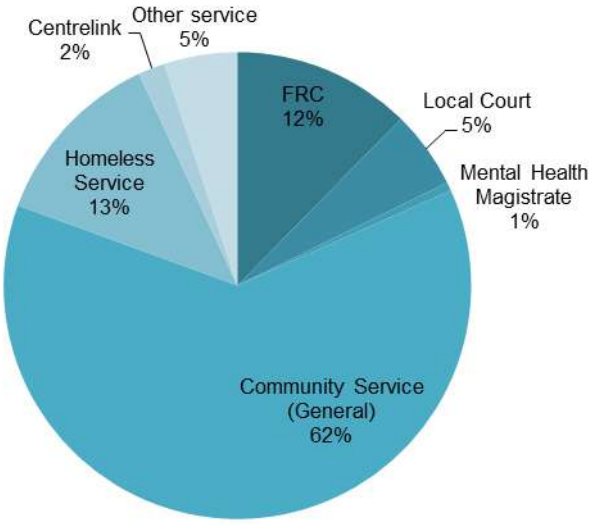
* Due to the way data is recorded on CASES, assistances provided at these two outreach clinics cannot be individually identified. This issue is discussed in the monitoring and evaluation framework.

The Taree Service is delivered once a fortnight by the ROCP solicitor and by the Mid North Coast CLC in the alternate fortnight. Only advice services provided by the ROCP solicitor are included in Table 5.

Assistance by host agency

While half of the outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast are located at community services (see Figure 2), community services hosted more than 60 per cent of outreach assistances delivered in 2012 (62%) (see Figure 4). Also, while only one outreach clinic was located at a Family Relationship Centre, more than 10 per cent of the outreach delivered on the Mid North Coast in 2012 was provided at this location.

Figure 4: Proportion of outreach assistance by host agency type, Mid North Coast, 2012



Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012. N = 1958

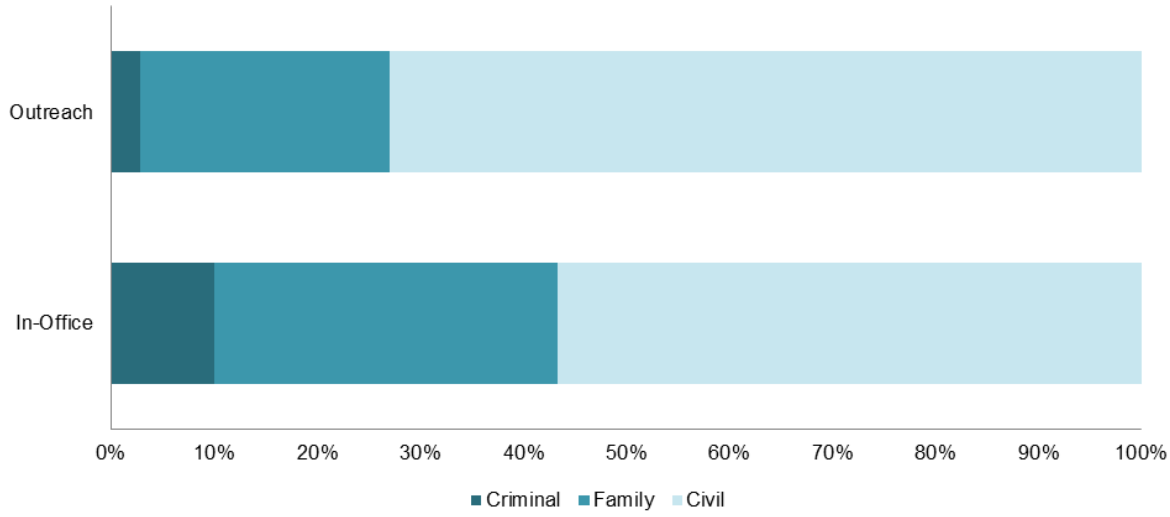
Assistance by area of law

Almost three-quarters of outreach assistances delivered by Legal Aid NSW on the Mid North Coast were for civil law issues (72.9%) (see Figure 5). A higher proportion of civil law assistances were delivered through outreach than in-office at the Coffs Harbour office (72.9% compared to 56.7%).

One-quarter of outreach assistances on the Mid North Coast were provided for family law matters (24.2%). A slightly higher proportion of family law assistances were provided in-office than through outreach (33.3%).

Finally, taking into account the fact that advice and minor assistance form a relatively small part of Legal Aid NSW's criminal practice (compared to duty work and casework), one in ten assistances delivered in-office were for criminal law matters (10.0%). Only three per cent of outreach assistances on the Mid North Coast related to criminal law (2.9%).

Figure 5: Proportion of assistance by broad area of law, in-office and outreach, Mid North Coast, 2012



Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012. N = 3458 in-office and N = 1958 outreach.

Assistance by matter group

Table 6 shows the top five matters at both outreach and in-office locations on the Mid North Coast. More than twice the proportion of debt assistances was provided through outreach than at the Coffs Harbour Legal Aid NSW office (21.3% compared to 10.5%).

Table 6: Top five matters, in-office and outreach, Mid North Coast, 2012

In-Office	*Outreach*
Children – 22.2%	Debts – 21.3%
Consumer – 16.0%	Children – 14.3%
Debt – 10.5%	Consumer – 9.6%
Property and maintenance (family) – 5.2%	Personal injury/Accidents – 5.6%
Driving and traffic offences – 4.2%	Civil Other – Commonwealth – 5.5%

Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012. N = 8,706 in-office and N = 4414

By comparison, a higher proportion of assistances relating to family law issues, such as children, property settlement, spousal maintenance, and also consumer issues, were delivered in-office than through outreach.

Clients assisted through outreach on the Mid North Coast

Age and gender

In 2012, 56.6 per cent of outreach assistances on the Mid North Coast were provided to women and 43.4 per cent to men. This is slightly higher than the proportion of women assisted at the Legal Aid NSW Coffs Harbour (in-office: 53.2% women and 46.8% men).

Reflecting the demographics of the region, the profile of Legal Aid NSW clients in the Mid North Coast (both in-office and outreach) is generally older than the average for the state. As the following informant noted:

> *It's an ageing community as well so there is a lot of older people, certainly Port Macquarie and Taree areas where people retire to and they might be elderly and not wealthy. There are wealthy retirees of course, but in terms of the legal needs … planning ahead and doing guardianship and things like that … (Other Legal Service)*

Almost 30 per cent of outreach assistances on the Mid North Coast were provided to people over the age of 55 years (28.2%), substantially higher than the proportion of outreach clients aged 55 years and over who were assisted statewide (17.6%) (see Forell et al. 2013). More than a quarter (27.0%) of in-office assistances at the Coffs Harbour office were provided to clients aged 55 years and over (compared to 16.5% statewide).[16]

Aboriginal status

In 2012, 21.5 per cent of outreach services delivered by Legal Aid NSW on the Mid North Coast were to Aboriginal clients. This compares to 11.1 per cent of all in-office assistances provided at the Coffs Harbour office.

The proportion of Aboriginal clients receiving outreach on the Mid North Coast is considerably higher than the proportion of Aboriginal clients using outreach services statewide (21.5% compared to 13.3%).

> *The most significant group of people would be Aboriginal communities and people who have been pretty disempowered and disconnected from traditional systems or from western systems, so certainly there is a lot of Aboriginal people, a lot of social problems that are exhibited in their communities. (Other Legal Service)*

Centrelink benefits

In 2012, almost three-quarters of outreach assistances provided on the Mid North Coast were to clients receiving some form of government benefit (71.2%). A similar percentage of in-office assistances were to clients receiving government benefits (71.1%). Both these proportions were substantially higher than the proportion of the Mid North Coast population receiving benefits (see Table 3).

The proportion of outreach assistance provided to clients on government benefits was considerably higher in the Mid North Coast than statewide (71.2% compared to 53.4%).

Employment status

Almost 60 per cent of outreach assistances delivered by Legal Aid NSW on the Mid North Coast were provided to people who were not in employment (59.2%).[17] This proportion was slightly higher than the proportion of people who were not in employment who received outreach services statewide (55.3%).

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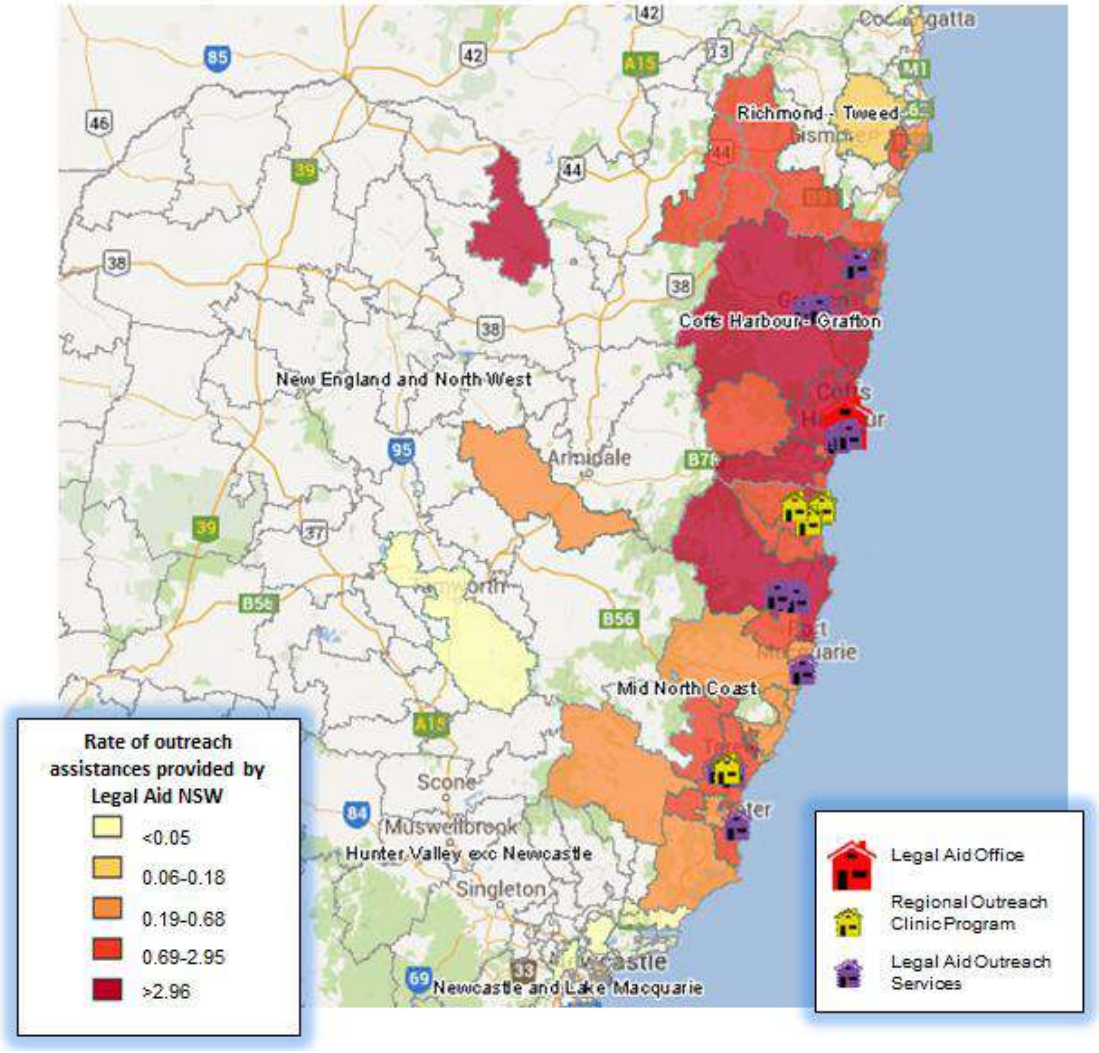
[16] At 24.2%, the Mid North Coast has one of the highest proportions of people aged 65 years and over. The NSW average is 14.7% (ABS 2011d).

[17] A high proportion for data on employment status was missing for the Mid North Coast (not stated or not recorded), with 21.3% missing for outreach assistances and 18.4% missing for in-office assistances. Although the proportion of data missing is similar in both outreach and in-office, there is no way to tell whether there are any systematic differences between the two groups, such as more unemployed people 'missing' in one category or the other (outreach or in-office).

Residential postcode of clients

Outreach assistances by client residential postcode

Map 6: Rate of outreach assistances provided by Legal Aid NSW, by client postcode (per 1000 head of population), Mid North Coast, 2012*



Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2012 – 31 December 2012.

* ROCP assistances not included

Map 6 shows that a higher rate of outreach assistance per head of population was provided to clients residing in Kempsey, Nambucca Heads, Bellingen, Coffs Harbour, Woolgoolga, Maclean and Grafton compared to other Mid North Coast locations.[18] Comparison of these areas with SEIFA data (see Map 2) reveals that a higher level of outreach assistance is delivered by Legal Aid NSW to clients in particularly disadvantaged areas, including Kempsey, Grafton, Nambucca Heads and Bellingen. This indicates the appropriate targeting of Legal Aid NSW outreach assistance.

Map 6 also shows a number of areas where there are lower rates of outreach assistance, these include, Port Macquarie, Wauchope, Bulahdelah and Gloucester. Three important factors to consider when interpreting the lower levels of outreach to clients in some areas include:

- there are relatively lower levels of disadvantage is some areas, such as Port Macquarie, and therefore given limited resources these areas may not be priority targets for outreach services
- the relative proximity of some towns on the Mid North Coast to services provided in the Newcastle region
- services provided by the Mid North Coast CLC based in Port Macquarie, including outreach to Kempsey, Taree and Wingham as part of the CLSD.

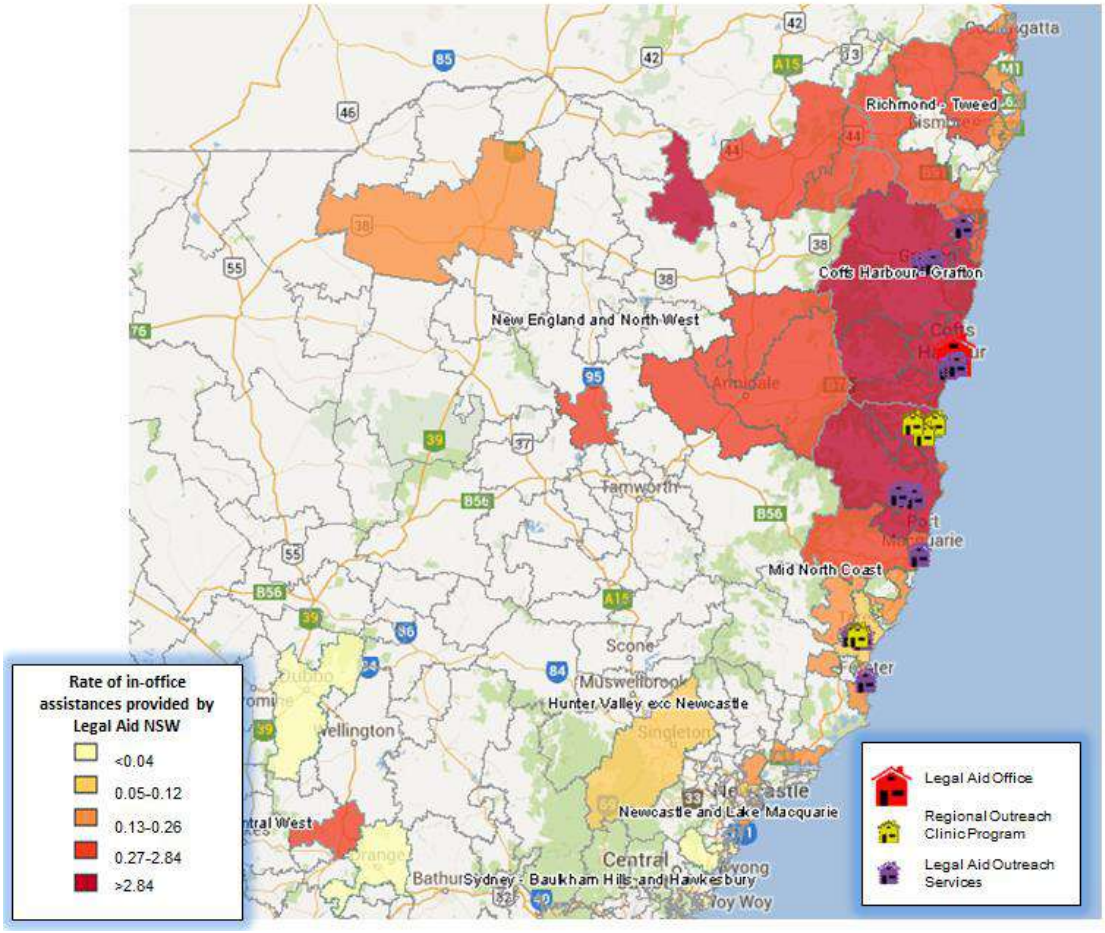
In-office assistances by client residential postcode

By comparison, Map 7 shows the rate of assistance per head of population provided through Legal Aid NSW Coffs Harbour office (either by telephone or in-person), by client postcode. Not surprisingly, the highest rates of assistances provided by the Coffs Harbour Legal Aid NSW office were clustered in areas closer to that office. The areas with the highest rates of assistance were Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads, Grafton, Woolgoolga, Dorrigo, Sawtell, Urunga, Macksville, Kempsey and West Kempsey.

Areas with lower rates of assistance provided by the Coffs Harbour Legal Aid NSW office include Taree, Forster, Nabiac and Harrington. Again, one explanation for the lower levels of assistances to clients in a number of these areas might be their proximity to services in Newcastle and the Hunter compared to Coffs Harbour. The Mid North Coast CLC is located in Port Macquarie and provides outreach to Kempsey, Taree and Wingham and the Hunter CLC is based in Newcastle.

[18] When comparing postcodes it is important to note that the map is showing rates of outreach assistances per 1000 people, not the number of clients assisted.

Map 7: Rate of in-office assistances provided by Legal Aid NSW Coffs Harbour, by client postcode (per 1000 head of population), Mid North Coast, 2012*



Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2012 – 31 December 2012.

* ROCP assistances not included

Total Legal Aid NSW assistances by client residential postcode

Map 8 combines the data displayed on the two previous maps and shows the total rate of assistance per head of population provided by Legal Aid NSW through outreach and in-office services on the Mid North Coast. Overall, Map 8 provides an indication of the total provision of advice and minor assistance by Legal Aid NSW on the Mid North Coast in 2012, with the exception of assistance provided through the ROCP. Map 8 indicates that clients of Legal Aid NSW services in the Mid North Coast reside in a broad range of postcode locations.

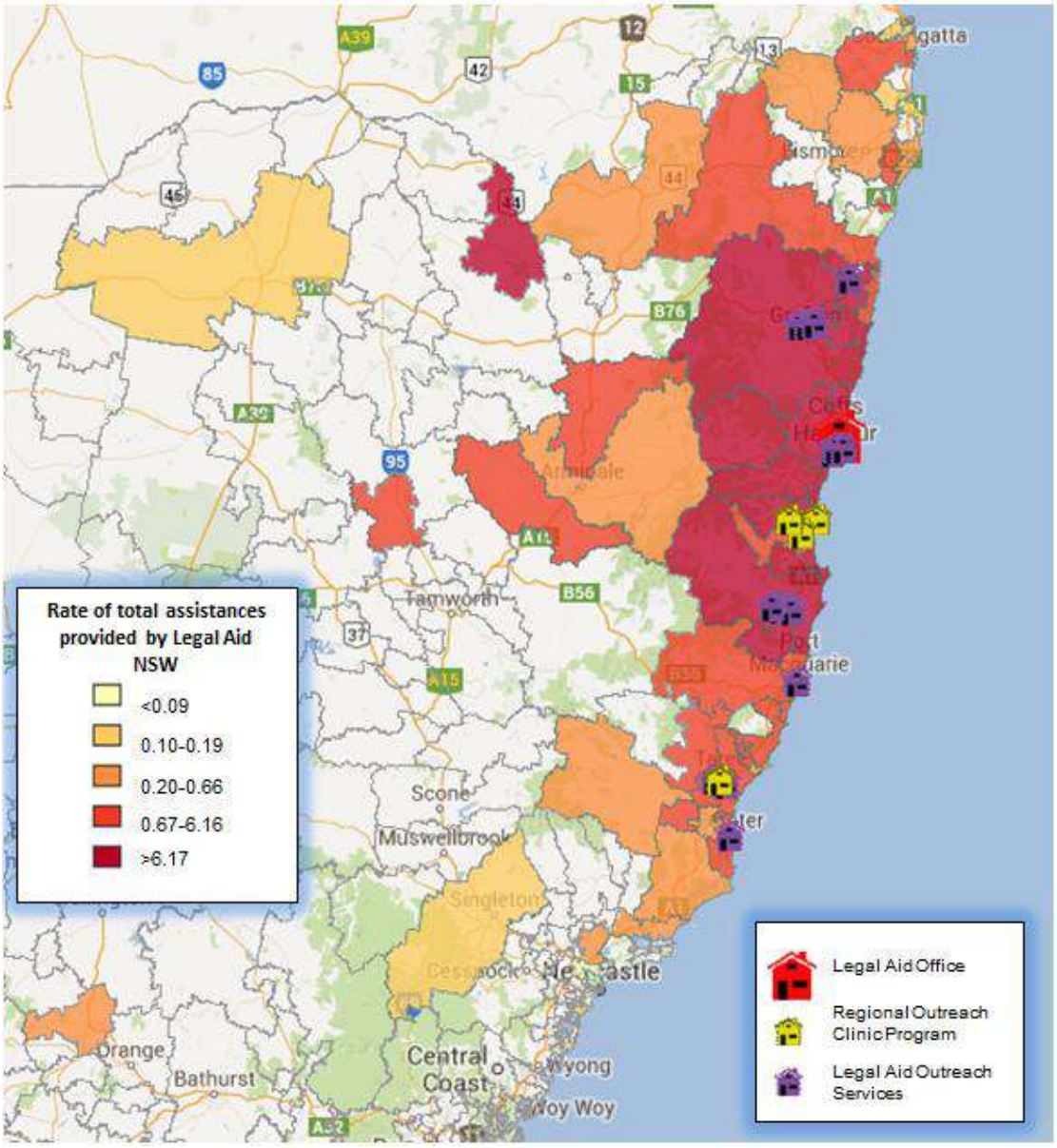
The areas displaying the highest rates of overall assistance include:

- Coffs Harbour – 48 assistances per 1000 residents
- Sawtell – 33 assistances per 1000 residents
- Kempsey and Crescent Head – 28 assistances per 1000 residents
- Woolgoolga – 25 assistances per 1000 residents
- Bellingen – 21 assistances per 1000 residents.

The areas displaying the lowest rates of overall assistance include:

- southern parts of the Mid North Coast, particularly around Forster and Taree – less than three assistances per 1000 residents.[19]

Map 8: Rate of total assistances provided by Legal Aid NSW, by client postcode (per 1000 head of population), Mid North Coast, 2012*



Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2012 – 31 December 2012.* ROCP assistances not included

[19] Taree is covered by outreach services provided by the Mid North Coast CLC and ROCP as part of CLSD.

Multiple disadvantage — limitations in the data

As will be discussed in more detail in the Results section, the interviews conducted for this review indicate that Legal Aid NSW outreach services were reaching and assisting clients facing multiple disadvantage with complex needs:

> *Complex needs, although they're all complex needs really. … I would say 99.9% of mine are on a Centrelink payment and at least half of those would be on DSP. (Legal Aid)*

Indeed, both the Census and SEIFA indicate there are clients in the region who are disadvantaged on dimensions (e.g. disability, being a single parent, unemployment) that research indicates are relevant to legal need (see Coumarelos, Pleasence & Wei 2013; Coumarelos et al. 2012a; McDonald & Wei 2013). However, while CASES provides some broad demographic information about clients, it is limited in the profile it can provide of clients actually assisted through outreach.

For instance, while CASES provides more reliable information about the age, gender, postcode and Aboriginal status of clients, it does not provide information about disability or whether or not the client is a single parent. This makes it more difficult to identify from CASES statistics whether or not Legal Aid NSW is reaching the most vulnerable clients. While there are significant challenges to accurately recording this information, this is an issue for further consideration by Legal Aid NSW.

The challenge for evaluation in the absence of administrative data about the types of clients assisted is dependence on more anecdotal information to suggest that target client groups are being reached.

Referrals to and from Legal Aid NSW

Legal Aid NSW collects data on where a client was referred from (i.e. what services refer clients to Legal Aid NSW) and where a client is referred to (i.e. where Legal Aid NSW refers clients for further assistance).

Referrals to Legal Aid NSW

A higher proportion of clients on the Mid North Coast who were reached through outreach, compared to in-office at Coffs Harbour, were referred to Legal Aid NSW by a community organisation (10.6% compared to 2.2%), a court or tribunal (3.1% compared to 0.6%) or family and friends (7.0% compared to 3.7%).

Notably, Table 7 shows that a higher rate of outreach clients than in-office clients did not already know about Legal Aid NSW, and were referred by a community organisation or family and friends. This provides some indication that outreach services are successfully connecting with target clients who are more isolated from legal assistance and establishing awareness and referral networks within the local community (e.g. community and neighbourhood centres hosting outreach making inward referral).

Overall, there was a much higher rate of awareness of Legal Aid NSW's services amongst clients on the Mid North Coast than statewide. For instance, in 62.1 per cent of outreach matters, clients on the Mid North Coast indicated that they were already aware of the services offered by Legal Aid NSW (see Table 7). Statewide, in only 42.5 per cent of outreach matters, clients indicated that they already knew about Legal Aid NSW. Similarly, in almost 85 per cent of matters dealt with at Legal Aid Coffs Harbour, clients reported that they already knew about Legal Aid NSW (82.8%), compared to

64.2 per cent assisted at Legal Aid NSW offices statewide (see Forell et al. 2013). One reason for people being aware of Legal Aid NSW is that they are repeat clients.

On the Mid North Coast a considerably lower proportion of referrals were recorded as 'not stated' (i.e. missing) than statewide. In 2012, the source of referral to Legal Aid NSW was 'not stated' in almost one in five outreach matters recorded in NSW (19.1%). By comparison, the rate for the Mid North Coast was only 7.2 per cent. Similarly, while in 7.5 per cent of in-office matters statewide the source of referral was 'not stated', less than one per cent of in-office matters on the Mid North Coast were similarly missing (0.9%). This low rate of missing data are examples of quality data recording and of increased data utility, as a low rate of missing data makes it possible to make more meaningful comparisons.

Table 7: Legal matters by source of referral, outreach and in-office, Mid North Coast, 2012

Source of referral	*In-office*		*Outreach*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Already knew about Legal Aid NSW	1591	82.8	841	62.1
Aboriginal Legal Service	24	1.2	21	1.5
Another Legal Aid office	29	1.5	1	0.1
Community legal centre	17	0.9	1	0.1
LawAccess NSW	18	0.9	13	1.0
Private practitioner	7	0.4	5	0.4
Court/tribunal	11	0.6	42	3.1
Community organisation	43	2.2	143	10.6
Police	7	0.4	3	0.2
Family/friends	71	3.7	95	7.0
Doctor/health professional	9	0.5	12	0.9
Family Relationship Centre	18	0.9	23	1.7
Dispute resolution/mediation	4	0.2	5	0.4
Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy	2	0.1	7	0.5
Government department	15	0.8	17	1.3
Internet	14	0.7	7	0.5
Publication	6	0.3	7	0.5
Telephone book	10	0.5	3	0.2
Not applicable	8	0.4	1	0.1
Total matters where 'referral to' recorded	**1904**	**99.1**	**1247**	**92.0**
Not stated (missing)	18	0.9	98	7.2

Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012.
Outreach matters N = 1355 and in-office matters N = 1922. Only one referral source can be recorded per matter.
Shaded cells indicate that there is a significant difference between the numbers of matters recorded in-office and outreach ($p<0.05$).

Referrals from Legal Aid NSW

If a client requires additional assistance, the solicitor may refer the client to another legal or non-legal service. Table 8 reports the destination of referrals made in-office and at outreach in the Mid North Coast in 2012.

Overall, a similar pattern of referrals were evident for most matters dealt with at the Legal Aid Coffs Harbour office and in outreach clinics on the Mid North Coast. Table 8 also shows that a slightly higher proportion of clients on the Mid North Coast who were assisted in-office rather than though outreach were referred to either a court or tribunal (8.6% compared to 6.2%) or a dispute resolution or mediation service (4.9% compared to 2.6%) for further assistance.

Table 8: Legal matters by referral destination, outreach and in-office, Mid North Coast, 2012

Referral destination	*In-office*		*Outreach*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Legal Aid NSW	180	9.4	131	9.7
Aboriginal Legal Service	4	0.2	4	0.3
Community legal centre	17	0.9	11	1.1
Law Society/private practitioner	277	14.4	219	16.2
LawAccess NSW	11	0.6	4	0.3
Pro bono	1	0.1	2	0.1
Court/tribunal	166	8.6	84	6.2
Dispute resolution/mediation	95	4.9	35	2.6
Community organisation	29	1.5	39	2.9
Doctor/health professional	15	0.8	13	1.0
Family Relationship Centre	45	2.3	46	3.4
Financial counsellor	2	0.1	3	0.2
Women's' Domestic Violence Court Advocacy	1	0.1	1	0.1
Government department	90	4.7	78	5.8
Ombudsman	12	0.6	12	0.9
Police	17	0.9	19	1.4
No referral necessary	943	49.1	630	46.5
Nowhere to refer client to	17	0.9	24	1.8
Total	**1922**	**100**	**1355**	**100**

Source: Legal Aid NSW, CASES data, 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2012.
Outreach matters N = 1355 and in-office matters N = 1922. Only one referral source can be recorded per matter.
Shaded cells indicate that there is a significant difference between the numbers of matters recorded in-office and outreach ($p<0.05$).

Interestingly, compared to the statewide figures, a higher proportion of outreach matters on the Mid North Coast were referred to either the Law Society or a private solicitor (16.2% compared to 10.7%). In the interviews, the Coffs Harbour office of Legal Aid NSW indicated that they kept a referral list of private solicitors in the region who would provide free first interviews for clients.

In addition, a much lower proportion of outreach matters on the Mid North Coast were recorded as not requiring a referral for future assistance ('no referral necessary') compared to outreach delivered statewide (46.5% compared to 61.8%). This finding provides some indication that outreach services in the Mid North Coast may have a higher rate of meeting client needs than do outreach services statewide.

Assistance provided through ROCP clinics

Under the ROCP, Legal Aid NSW funds private and CLC solicitors to provide legal services to communities that have little or no access to public legal services, and particularly at locations where it would not be feasible or efficient for Legal Aid NSW to provide an outreach service. There are two parallel modes of data collection for the ROCP data: data collected by ROCP solicitors and ATLAS.

This section examines the types of data available to assist in planning, monitoring and evaluating ROCP outreach services. There are four ROCP clinics currently operating on the Mid North Coast:

- Bowraville Legal Advice Service (MiiMi House)
- Macksville Legal Advice Service
- Nambucca Heads Legal Advice Service
- Taree Legal Advice Service.[20]

ROCP advice services by area of law

When reading the comparisons below, note that the unit of measure used for ROCP data is 'an advice service'. An 'advice service' is not the same as 'an assistance', which is the unit of measure for advice and minor assistance services provided by Legal Aid NSW (i.e. an advice service may involve more than one assistance).

The types of matters dealt with at ROCP clinics differed to outreach clinics provided by Legal Aid NSW solicitors on the Mid North Coast. In particular, while only one-quarter (24.2%) of assistances provided by Legal Aid outreach clinics were for family law, almost sixty per cent of advice services provided through ROCP on the Mid North Coast in 2012 related to family law (59%).

By comparison, while 36 per cent of ROCP advice services delivered in 2012 on the Mid North Coast related to civil law, almost three-quarters (72.9%) of assistance delivered by Legal Aid NSW clinics were for civil law issues. Five per cent of ROCP advice services on the Mid North Coast for this period were for crime.

The number of civil law advice services delivered through ROCP on the Mid North Coast increased sixfold from 2011 to 2012 (see Table 9). Family law advice services have increased by 23 per cent, while criminal law ROCP services, though starting from a low base, declined by 35 per cent.

[20] The Taree Legal Advice Service is delivered once a fortnight by the ROCP solicitor. On the alternate fortnight the service is provided by the Mid North Coast CLC. Only advice services provided by the ROCP solicitor are included in ATLAS, thus this report only analyses services provided by ROCP solicitors.

Table 9: Number of ROCP advice services by area of law, Mid North Coast, 2011−2012

Year	All ROCP Advice Services (Mid North Coast)	Civil	Family	Crime
2011	154	13	121	20
2012	253	92	148	13
Total	**407**	**105**	**269**	**33**

Source: Legal Aid NSW, ATLAS data

ROCP client characteristics

Because data on individual client characteristics is currently not supported in ATLAS, ROCP practitioners record this information manually and per client (not per advice service). If solicitors do not complete these manual forms, the information reported here may be undercounted.

Approximately eight per cent of ROCP advice services delivered on the Mid North Coast in 2012 were to Aboriginal clients (8.2%). By comparison (though bearing in mind that one client may receive more than one assistance), more than one in five outreach *assistances* delivered by Legal Aid NSW on the Mid North Coast were to Aboriginal clients (21.5%). Almost four out of five ROCP advice services were provided to people on Centrelink benefits (79.7%) with nearly 20 per cent of ROCP advice services provided to people on a Disability Support Pension (19.0%). Over 70 per cent of assistances provided by Legal Aid NSW solicitors on the Mid North Coast through outreach were to clients on Centrelink (71.2%).[21]

The next section reports the analysis of the interviews undertaken for this review.

[21] The proportion of residents in NSW on Centrelink payments was 23.3%.

Results: analysis of interviews

The review of CASES data reported in the Stage 1 report of this project (Forell et al. 2013) provided a clear indication that Legal Aid NSW's outreach services are reaching socially and economically disadvantaged clients across New South Wales. The interviews reported below provide insights into the various ways that outreach legal services reach and assist disadvantaged clients otherwise isolated from legal help and some of the challenges in doing so. Interviewees reflect upon what has worked well and what could work better.

Key themes identified in the interview analysis are presented here in conjunction with findings from previous research and the review of literature. The major themes identified relate to:

- the purpose of outreach services
- who outreach aims to assist
- the diverse models of outreach used by Legal Aid NSW
- key features of effective outreach.

The purpose of outreach

Central to the role of Legal Aid NSW is the delivery of legal services to socially and economically disadvantaged people (Legal Aid NSW, 2012 p.ii). As one interviewee observed 'we are set up to assist disadvantaged people' (Legal Aid).

Outreach is a key strategy employed by Legal Aid NSW to deliver legal services to these communities, and, in particular, an important way to bridge the distance for people living in regional, rural and remote areas where it is not feasible to maintain a permanent office (see Legal Aid NSW 2012).

Reflecting this corporate intent, Legal Aid NSW outreach lawyers described outreach services in explicit access to justice terms:

> *… at the end of the day we're here to serve the community and understanding what that means is important … understanding where the most disadvantaged clients are and why they might not be able to access us so easily is important to us. And understanding that we need to service all the demographics that are facing disadvantage, not just the ones that for whatever reason can get in here [to an office]. (Legal Aid)*

Informants characterised the purpose of outreach as providing greater access to legal services for disadvantaged people who are isolated from, or are otherwise unable to access, other legal assistance services:

> *… we're all trying to kind of do the same thing, which is reach people in difficult locations with complex needs … Reaching people in difficult locations where we don't have a full-time presence … (Legal Aid)*

Outreach was characterised as a 'success' when it connected with target client groups:

> *… success means connecting with the community that we're out there to serve … connecting with those clients, the clients that we've set out to connect with … (Legal Aid)*

This practitioner went on to note that expanded outreach meant that Legal Aid NSW is:

> *… [now] connecting with a different part of the community that we perhaps weren't before … (Legal Aid)*

Outreach services were also described as connecting isolated clients with more timely services. Having outreach services 'on the ground' in communities vulnerable to legal need or in places where this need is expressed (e.g. family law courts, see Forell & Cain, 2012) was seen to enable the timely provision of legal services to help prevent legal problems from escalating and having more serious adverse consequences:

> *I think by being the service on the ground, along with the other services in place, we get a lot to sift through, and get a lot of the damage that can be prevented, and a lot of cases can be saved before they end up being intractable. (Legal Aid)*

Outreach services also target legal issues particularly affecting the lives of target client groups, such as family law issues and fines.

Central to the purpose of outreach as a mode of service delivery is an appreciation of the client groups that outreach is designed to reach and assist. This is because it is the needs and characteristics of these groups that determine the model of service delivery required to reach and assist these clients.

Who outreach services aim to assist

Interviewees in this review clearly identified the types of client groups that they aim to assist through outreach. In particular, interviewees spoke about clients who:

- had more limited personal capability
- through geography or personal capacity, were isolated from legal help
- had multiple legal issues.

Clients with limited personal capability

Clients reached through outreach were identified as more likely to experience disadvantage and have limited personal capability and resources, affecting both the nature of the legal problems experienced, and forms of assistance required:

> *… it's little steps in getting them to learn how to do things for themselves, and showing them where to go. Sometimes it's because they're just too frightened and they don't want to. (Host Agency)*

> *… a lot of pensioners and retired people … [they] may not be eligible for legal aid but [they] don't have a lot of resources and possibly have less capacity than a lot of other people to be able to follow things up for themselves …. (Legal Aid)*

Interviewees noted clients as having difficulty dealing with the types of everyday problems that many other people are able to resolve:

> *They often turn up without anything, even though they're coming for an appointment, and then we need to get documents from the child support agency and stuff from Centrelink … (Legal Aid)*

> *As [with] a lot of this stuff, you see matters where people just need some guidance… A lot of it to me seems to be: how do you navigate bureaucracy? … how do you negotiate dealing with Housing, with Centrelink, with utilities companies? They're the kinds of things you see: "I don't know how to do. I don't know what to do. I've got this – I don't know where to begin". (Legal Aid)*

Low literacy was similarly identified by informants:

> *Literacy is a big issue, I've got to say, particularly with the disadvantaged — literacy is huge. (Legal Aid)*

This is consistent with other research which has identified low literacy as a fundamental access to justice barrier, particularly in Aboriginal communities, (see Allison et al 2012; Coumarelos et al. 2012a; Nheu & McDonald 2010).

One Mid North Coast outreach solicitor described how she had observed an increasing number of people with a disability attending outreach with their caseworkers:

> *I'm seeing a lot of disabled people, persons with a disability, who are Aboriginal as well … I'm really starting to see a lot more of them … where their caseworkers are bringing them in to see me … (Legal Aid)*

Research also indicates a number of other features of the types of disadvantaged clients that outreach services seek to assist. For instance, this client group commonly have lower levels of trust and confidence in government and public services than other people, and are often fearful of being shamed, embarrassed and stigmatised in 'reaching out' for help (see Coumarelos et al. 2012a; Nheu & McDonald 2010; Pleasence 2006; Sandefur 2007). Consequently, they may ignore or 'lump' legal problems rather than seek assistance from mainstream services or other places that they are not familiar with or do not trust.

Certain communities, particularly the Aboriginal community, are also marked by historical marginalisation, including marginalisation from mainstream public services (Allison et al. 2012; Coumarelos et al. 2012a; Cunneen & Schwartz 2008; Hunter 2009; Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit 2005; Schetzer & Henderson 2003).

Returning to the case study for this review, informants noted how some Aboriginal people are shy in dealing with public institutions and seeking assistance, and may be 'too shy' to express their needs to legal services until trust has been established (Legal Aid).

Clients who are isolated from legal assistance

Clients reached through outreach were also identified by interviewees as those who, for a variety of reasons, are unlikely or unable to visit an in-office service:

> *…[we see] the stuff you won't get someone walking into an office [for] … [matters] where you have to be in the community. (Legal Aid)*

A cross-section of informants specifically highlighted the difficulty that many clients of outreach services in the Mid North Coast were likely to experience trying to access and apply telephone assistance:

> *I know we offer telephone advice but a) if you've got no credit on your phone, b) you've got documentation – I can't see that through the phone, [then] c) wouldn't you rather [face-to-face] advice? (Legal Aid)*

> *You need the outreach — you need to be there because [for] those people who can't make the phone call the referral roundabout is just too crazy for them — if you're not there they're not going to engage. (Other legal service)*

Lack of mobility and access to affordable transport was raised as a 'huge' barrier to people accessing assistance in the Mid North Coast, with issues arising from lack of public transport, lack of private transport and lack of funds to use private transport:

> *… they would never get to Coffs Harbour. [Even] if the people have cars, a lot of the time they don't have petrol … (Host Agency)*

Previous research has also noted transport issues as an access barrier, particularly in more remote areas where loss of driver's licence due to fines is also a relevant factor (NSW Department of Attorney General & Justice 2011, p.13; Clarke, Forell & McCarron, 2008; NSW Sentencing Council, 2006).

Clients with multiple needs

Interviewees finally noted that clients seen in outreach services are more likely to have multiple and complex legal and non-legal needs that exacerbate access to justice barriers and affect the nature of the legal assistance they require.

Recent analysis of the Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey (Coumarelos et al. 2012a) has shown that the number of legal problems experienced increases, on average, with the level of disadvantage. Each additional indicator of disadvantage has an 'additive effect' that increases the number and severity of legal problems experienced (McDonald & Wei 2013).

A cross-section of informants described how clients assisted through outreach commonly had 'clustered' legal problems:

> *… when they come and see her, that's one issue to address, but there's another dozen waiting in the wings. (Host Agency)*

> *… a lot of times people have a multitude of issues and a lot of their issues will all be connected. (Other Legal Service)*

Disadvantaged people are also likely to have lower personal and legal capability than many other members of the community, meaning that although they have multiple and complex needs, they experience greater difficulty utilising mainstream legal services. Disadvantaged clients with low capability are also likely to have clusters of intertwined legal and non-legal problems (Coumarelos et al. 2012a; Pleasence 2006). Analyses of the LAW Survey has found that the following disadvantaged groups are likely to benefit from targeted and tailored legal assistance such as outreach services, due to heightened vulnerability to legal problems because they are more likely to ignore their legal problems, or because they are less likely to finalise them:

- people with a long-term illness/disability, especially those with a mental illness
- people living in disadvantaged housing, especially homeless people
- single parents
- people who are unemployed or whose main source of income is government payments
- Indigenous people
- people with a non-English main language
- people living in more remote areas
- people with multiple disadvantage (Coumarelos & People 2013; Coumarelos et al. 2012a; Coumarelos, Pleasence & Wei 2013; Iriana, Pleasence & Coumarelos 2013a, 2013b; McDonald & Wei 2013; People forthcoming; Wei & McDonald forthcoming).

In our interviews, family and civil outreach solicitors described how it was common for clients with clustered problems to also have some legal problems that did not 'fit' within the legal practice area of the outreach, resulting in their additional referral to other Legal Aid NSW or legal assistance services. Some clients also needed referral to non-legal assistance.

Thus, the experience of outreach managers and lawyers is consistent with legal needs research which has consistently demonstrated that legal need is disproportionately experienced by the most disadvantaged, and that it is this group who, for the reasons articulated above, also tend to be the most isolated from legal help (see Coumarelos et al. 2012a, 2012b).

The diverse models of outreach used by Legal Aid NSW

The case study of the Mid North Coast, coupled with the experiences of other interviewees, revealed a wide variety of outreach models and practices within Legal Aid NSW. This was also reflected in the data collected in the first stage of this project.

Outreach is provided by solicitors based at regional offices, the Sydney head office, and via CLSD and the ROCP, on a drop-in or appointment basis, and at a range of different types of host agencies. There are civil, family, child support and more generalist clinics.

Outreach services also vary by target clients and frequency, and in their staffing, client booking and administration systems. Bearing in mind that whatever the model, the aim of outreach is to assist disadvantaged clients with high unmet legal need, the interview analysis suggests that effective outreach involves balancing factors such as the 'right' location or host agency, frequency, and administrative procedures to appropriately connect with target clients and meet their needs.

Thus, a key observation drawn from the review is that there is no one-size-fits-all model or particular ways to do outreach that will suit all target client groups, legal practice areas, geographic locations and broader service environments.

Features of 'good' outreach

While outreach services manifest in different ways, the interviews in this review support previously identified characteristics of outreach (whatever the model) that appear to be critical to the success of these services in reaching and assisting high needs disadvantaged clients.

Features identified by interviewees as contributing to successful outreach included:

- planned and targeted services
- coordination and collaboration
- services which connect and engage target clients
- services appropriate to legal need and client capability
- suitable administrative arrangements, from intake through to referral
- effective referral pathways, and
- sustainable, resourced and supported services.

It is important to note that these features of good outreach practice are not sequential, nor distinct. Rather, given that effective outreach practice depends upon the particular needs and circumstances of the target client group, a number of the features of good practice are necessarily interrelated.

Notably, the features identified by interviewees as important to good outreach are broadly consistent with the existing *Best Practice Principles for Legal Aid NSW Outreach Services* document, which itself is based on research evidence and practitioner experience. However, the extensive experience within Legal Aid NSW evidenced in these interviews, suggest some further refinement.

Planned and targeted services

Outreach managers and lawyers typically explained why outreach services were provided in particular geographic locations in terms of the level of legal need and how disadvantaged and isolated from services the community was.

Some interviewees described planning outreach using a combination of data and information, such as LASDD information supplied by the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW overlaying legal assistance data and SEIFA measures, to help identify pockets of socioeconomic disadvantage. ROCP and outreach arising out of the CLSD partnerships were particularly informed by local legal needs analyses undertaken as part of the CLSD process. These needs analyses provide information such as that provided in the background section of this report.

Informants noted how duplication of services could arise when different service providers prioritise service provision to a geographic area widely regarded as having high disadvantage and high needs. For example informants cited the North West of NSW as such an area:

> *Everybody wants to focus on the North West, in Brewarrina you're tripping over lawyers. It's [a] very high need population, and everyone knows they have to go there. But no, they don't [have to go there]... (Legal Aid)*

In the Mid North Coast we noted geographic areas where different legal services had understandably identified the same areas as a priority for outreach services due to the relative high disadvantage, legal needs and isolation of the community:

> *[That other service is located] across the road from me ... I haven't really seen my numbers drop ... [they] wanted to go where we were going, just on a different day. (Legal Aid)*

Given that services available in a particular area often change, duplication can also arise over time.

The need to identify existing legal services in a location prior to establishing an outreach service was also identified by informants as being important to increase coordination and reduce duplication between services run by different Legal Aid NSW practice areas and/or other legal services. One informant characterised this planning challenge in terms of avoiding people 'acting like they're lone rangers' (Legal Aid).

The value of needs and service gap analyses to make the best use of resources and reduce duplication was similarly stressed in previous research including Forell and Gray's (2009) systematic review of outreach legal services, and the Porteous (2012) review of the legal service component of two rural homelessness services.

Interviewees also described how the planning of outreach services involved assessing the *feasibility* of outreach services in a location. For instance, while a location may be identified as having high legal need and a gap in available legal services, it may not be a viable location without sufficient supporting infrastructure (e.g. suitable host agency, local services to build a client referral network). Thus, multiple factors are weighed and balanced in order to determine feasibility:

> *We looked at SEIFA data and other data and stuff … had a good think about where the gaps [are], where is it practical for us to get to, how can we be strategic about this so that we're not going out to a really remote location and not doing anything else while we're out there. There's a bunch of factors we have to bear in mind … (Legal Aid)*

As indicated above, population and service data can be used to assess legal need and gaps in services. However, interviewees also indicated that local community knowledge and understanding was 'like gold' for identifying legal needs within particular communities and the most appropriate location to target services. For example, local 'on-the-ground' knowledge can provide the interpretation of regional population and service data that is necessary to effectively target services:

> *… we puzzle over [the maps] beforehand, trying to work out what's happening on different maps, and then you present it to a local audience and immediately they know straight away what's happening and can tell you who's in that community, what housing estates are where, where the transport hubs are, that's why the fines are in that line because that's where the train line is, all that kind of stuff. … it's like a piece of gold, local knowledge is like gold. (Legal Aid)*

Liaison with local communities (through CLSD partnerships or otherwise) and awareness of their needs also helps to identify where to target services:

> *… I went to one of the community development conferences that were run by the Council, and spoke to a lot of people and got an idea about what their needs were and what the services available were and tried to network from there. Then also it was something that one of the managers here had an opinion of, she thought it was another area of unmet need, and from there we kind of started the process of finding [a suitable location]… (Legal Aid)*

Informants identified CLSD partnerships as a key source of information and distribution of both legal need and services in their regions[22]. CLSD members specifically meet to discuss population and service data, and to identify local community needs and service gaps. Various socioeconomic measures are examined — such as the proportion of people who are single parents, unemployed, low income and live in public housing — at postcode or LGA level within a CLSD region. CLSD members have nuanced local knowledge and understanding that not only significantly adds information to socioeconomic indicators and service data, but helps identify explanations and service implications.

Legal Aid informants indicated that a number of outreach initiatives, including joint initiatives, tailored to local need and service gaps have arisen from CLSD planning:

> *… I [asked] who'd be interested in participating [and I had] lots of hands up. So we've got the workings of the clinic ready to happen there … So the mix of the clinic depends [not only] on what the need is, but also who is available. (Legal Aid)*

Informants also identified CLSD partnerships as an efficient means of learning about legal services provided by other providers, including the wide range of Legal Aid NSW outreach services that may be provided from local offices and operating out of Sydney (Legal Aid).

[22] See Background for a description of CLSD partnerships in the Mid North Coast.

Local knowledge was also characterised as assisting to develop a 'local place based solution as opposed to a Sydney based solution', and of engendering the type of local community support vital for a flourishing outreach service (Legal Aid).

The value of considering how services may appear from the client's point of view was also raised in planning and targeting outreach. Effective outreach was commonly characterised by informants in terms of being 'client focussed' (Legal Aid). One practitioner described this in the following way:

> *… let's turn it around from where we think we should be and let's base it on (1) need, (2) client focus and (3) who's there, who can provide [it], and if they're not there, who else can we get in. (Legal Aid)*

Coordination and collaboration

Previous research has consistently stressed the central importance of collaboration with other legal and non-legal services in outreach to local communities (Porteous, 2012, Forell & Gray, 2009, Dewson, Davis & Casebourne 2006). This is a theme that carries through all key features of effective outreach identified in this review, from planning to engaging with clients and communities, to appropriate service provision, effective referral and sustainable services.

One informant noted that from the public's point of view, there may be little or no meaningful distinction between Legal Aid NSW, CLCs and the ALS NSW/ACT because it is common for public legal services to be conflated, 'you're all legal aid … the whole lot of you' (Legal Aid).

Legal Aid informants also noted how in a number of communities, outreach services are often the 'face of Legal Aid NSW' and of public legal services conceived more widely:

> *… if child support is going somewhere and civil law is going somewhere and [the] early intervention unit is going somewhere — it's one service, seen as one service, as 'One Legal Aid'. (Legal Aid)*

The relationship between public legal service providers is an important aspect of the broader service environment. Informants noted how the MOU between Legal Aid NSW and the ALS NSW/ACT, and also the availability of the Aboriginal Field Officers, had significantly improved the nature of the working relationship between the organisations:

> *I think it is good … that those solicitors do have that good relationship with the Aboriginal Legal Service because as I said, even though it's not our core business, with our Memorandum of Understanding [between] ALS and Legal Aid, we always make our Aboriginal staff available. … Where he can [he] at least drops in, in conjunction with the Legal Aid [staff] on all their outreaches at various times , and they ask him to come and sit in on the outreach with the solicitor with permission of the client obviously, and that is really complementary because I wish we had more of those positions (Other Legal Service)*

Outreach lawyers described how they worked to foster good relationships with host agencies and other service providers in order to develop more 'integrated' services:

> *… we've really tried hard to do that and sometimes that's not as easy as we would like it to be … They're very busy. I'm optimistic that we'll get there. That we'll change the culture and [that] people will start to see us more as an integrated part of the overall solution … (Legal Aid)*

> *I'm on a campaign to try and get people regular and working together. It's very hard, it's really hard work. (Legal Aid)*

Efforts ranged from the very informal — having cups of tea with host agencies, chatting to other service providers at host locations to the more formal. As an example of more formal arrangements, in some ROCP clinics host agencies are paid to book in clients, undertake conflict checks, follow-up clients and collect data.

Agencies hosting some outreach clinics were characterised by informants as 'partners' in a mutually beneficial relationship:

> *… our general mode with our outreach — [its] seen as us getting into a mutually beneficial relationship with, I suppose, the partner organisations. (Legal Aid)*

Informants cited benefits for both the service provider and host agency. On the one hand, the outreach service benefits from use of the host agency's facilities, local community knowledge and networks; and on the other, the host agency benefits from being able to offer clients a wider range of services. For instance, a cross-section of informants highlighted how wider relationships and reputation across the broader service environment is critical for effective outreach services — affecting host agencies, referral pathways, service awareness and, perhaps most importantly of all, the 'word of mouth' underpinning positive reputation, rapport and relationships with target clients and their communities.

In practical terms, how outreach services are integrated or 'fit' with broader Legal Aid NSW services and with broader legal and human services — as well as the nature of relationships with host agencies — have consequences for effective outreach practice.

Services that connect and engage target clients

Informants identified successfully connecting and engaging the identified target client group as a key challenge but a critical feature of good outreach practice. The interviews revealed multiple strategies for successfully connecting with clients. Informants not only highlighted the value of having the 'right' location and host agency, but also the vital importance of building trust, reputation and rapport within target communities, and raising awareness of the outreach service.

Getting the 'right' location and host agency

Outreach managers and lawyers described how a primary strategy to reach target clients is to pick the right location or host agency:

> *When we set up, one of the reasons we would pick a location [and] a service to work with, is that we think they are seeing the clients we're trying to reach … we think they're seeing the most disadvantaged clients in that location we're trying to reach as well …. (Legal Aid)*

Clearly, the 'right' location varies depending upon a range of factors, not least of which is the clients that the service aims to reach:

> *… finding the [right] agency that understands the client base … (Legal Aid)*

Informants draw a distinction between 'location' and 'host agency' based on the nature of the relationships that an outreach service has with where it is housed:

> *… the difference between an agency just providing a room and an agency hosting a clinic. (Legal Aid)*

For example, a 'host agency' will generally provide *something more* than merely housing an outreach service, such as also promoting the service, providing access to office facilities, or managing client appointments. In contrast, other outreach services may be housed in locations where there is little or no relationship other than renting a room in a building.

Informants reported that a wide range of locations and host agencies were used for outreach services: community and neighbourhood centres or other community service 'hubs' with co-located services, Centrelink offices, court houses, prisons and juvenile justice facilities, TAFE colleges, Aboriginal Medical Services, soup kitchens, ALS offices, alcohol and drug rehabilitation centres, libraries, churches, hospitals, women's centres, cultural centres and other types of community organisations. Advantages and disadvantages of various types of locations or host agencies were cited.

'Good' or 'better' locations and host agencies were identified as those where the service is 'wanted' rather than 'not wanted' (Legal Aid). The right location was characterised by one outreach manager as:

> *A location that's going to be safe for our solicitors; where they're going to get some support from the organisation itself. (Legal Aid)*

Support from the host organisation is also discussed below under administrative arrangements and sustaining and supporting outreach services.

One suggested indicator of a having the right location was the level of 'self-referral' to the outreach from the host agency, as indicative of 'buy-in', 'ownership' and commitment to supporting the clinic:

> *For me the beauty is when it is self-referred, because it means the agency is owning the clinic. For me that's really important. (Legal Aid)*

Another issue identified by civil outreach lawyers was identifying locations which may be more suitable because they are more likely to reach people at a point in their lives when they are ready to act on their legal problems:

> *I think that's another reason to pick a location … because if you can get people where they're at that point in their lives. I've been interested in rehabs and health services for that reason, you might get people where they're at that point where they're actually a bit stable, and juvenile justice as well, and they're at a point where they're willing to do something, they're a captive audience, their heads maybe a little bit clearer than it has been for a while and we might be able to make a bit of a difference, clearing up some of the issues and really help them to kind of sort things out. (Legal Aid)*

A good location was also characterised as one that has an appropriate 'cultural fit' for the target client group, particularly where the reception staff is welcoming and clients feel comfortable:

> *In terms of having a good host agency, our first one … didn't work because it wasn't a cultural fit, and some of that was about what kind of face the person at the desk presented to the client when they came in and how well were they able to cope with people who didn't fit the norm. So I guess the host agency also has to have employees that are flexible and are happy, more positive. (Other Legal Service)*

> *… it's local for a start, I think it's easy to walk into. It's comfortable for Indigenous and non-Indigenous, you'll see black faces, white faces here, whatever. I think it's a comfortable, easy place to walk into generally. (Host Agency)*

Location was also discussed in terms of the broader needs of the client. Bearing in mind that legal issues are generally only a subset of outreach clients' broader needs, co-locating services with other human services can enable legal services to be part of a holistic response to client needs. Some locations and host agencies afford more opportunity to connect and engage with broader human services than do others:

> *… when I look to start outreach clinics I usually like places like community centres where they're a hub for various different services. (Legal Aid)*

> *… the people who come in for legal, same as they come in for any other service actually, they'll start to look at other things around the place. They'll start to know we're here if they didn't know beforehand, they'll come in and go, 'Oh what else do you do?' … I think it seems like a sensible or logical place to have it. (Host Agency)*

Host agencies noted how in such locations, the legal service becomes part of a broader network:

> *I'll refer them without even thinking about it, we're all referrers here… There can be legal issues, separations, DV, mental health, drugs, addiction … I can then refer them off to Legal Aid to get something done with that or the women's refuge for DV or family services, things like that. (Host Agency)*

Community or neighbourhood 'hubs' were cited by outreach lawyers as having some clear advantages, but also disadvantages, as outreach hosts. For example, some interviewees cited a range of problems that they had experienced providing outreach at some host agencies around NSW, such as poorly managed client intake and appointments, and issues with client confidentiality and privacy. These issues are examined further in later sections.

Although community or neighbourhood 'hubs' can have disadvantages, practitioners generally indicated that they were outweighed by the benefits in reaching target clients, and particularly so where there is a strong and host-provider relationship.

There were mixed views expressed in the interviews about the appropriateness of courts as locations for outreach. On one hand, courts were seen as places where some clients may feel particularly uncomfortable to visit:

> *So the more disadvantaged the community, the less likely a court's going to be a great place. I mean courts are really intimidating, people who have actually gone to court know that court is a very traumatic experience. (Legal Aid)*

Another interviewee valued its anonymity, relative to a community location:

> *Some people don't like the court house [but] having said that, the court house at Kempsey is a great facility because you don't go through their registry to get to the interview rooms, they're kind of on the side and it is quite anonymous, you can duck in and out. There are also lots of reasons why people go to the court house … (Legal Aid)*

We note that courts may be an appropriate location to link with certain clients for certain issues. For instance, the Family Law Early Intervention Unit provides an extended duty service to people seeking assistance in the family court (Forell & Cain 2012) as well as providing family law support on domestic violence list days at the point in time when such assistance would be timely, and therefore courts may be an appropriate location.

A final feature noted of a 'good' location or host agency is its accessibility to transport. Transport is also a factor to be considered in scheduling outreach. For example, holding outreach services at times when target clients are more likely to be travelling into town, such as on the day Centrelink benefits are paid, can facilitate access for clients. One host agency noted however that 'For Legal Aid there are certain things they'll travel in to do'. (Host Agency)

Building trust, reputation and rapport with clients and host agencies

It was notable in the Mid North Coast case study that there were some strong positive relationships between Legal Aid NSW and host agencies:

> *I just think it's incredible because it enhances what we do. Our community members are getting a service that I can't provide. (Host Agency)*

While appropriately locating an outreach service was identified as important by informants, building trust, reputation and rapport was also seen as critical to successfully engaging hard-to-reach target communities. Again, this observation is consistent with previous research (Forell & Gray, 2009; Porteous 2012; Dewson, Davis & Casebourne 2006).

Effective outreach services were characterised as having built a 'bridge' to the client group, either directly or via other organisations or people who are 'local community champions' and 'leaders' with reach into the target group:

> *… there's a lady … who was running the Migrant Resource Centre there and she was very keen. She knew everyone in the community, she could speak five different languages, and she would herself initiate articles in the newspaper to promote the service. So those people who are real community champions are the ones that make all the difference with outreach. (Legal Aid)*

A primary strategy to build trust and reputation relates to continuity, to 'turn up' and to do 'good work':

> *… when one person queues up others do too. It's about being there and being available. (Legal Aid)*

> *… it's going really well now… I've started getting good results for a lot of them, they talk about it … (Legal Aid)*

Both outreach providers and host agencies noted that developing trust and rapport with clients with complex needs may take time and involve more than one appointment. At first clients may 'check out' the service:

> *So you might get a client that comes in and then they'll come in again two months later as the trust builds up. Then more issues kind of unfold … (Legal Aid)*

Importantly, informants described how trust and reputation has a 'ripple effect', particularly in smaller communities in regional and rural areas where reputation, both good and bad, 'ripples out' (Other Legal Service). Building reputation also takes time and involves being patient enough to persist with the service while 'word of mouth' builds (Legal Aid):

> *… you get your first few clients and the goodwill word of mouth moves along. Like starting any other business [here]… word of mouth doesn't take as long to travel [in rural areas] and [it] doesn't take as long for the goodwill — or bad will — to grow, which, either way, it's going to go. And that's why building that trust [is important]. (Legal Aid)*

> *… definitely word of mouth works in [this town], it really does … (Host Agency)*

Word of mouth — whether a service is being 'talked up' or 'talked down' — is one key indicator of the reputation and standing of the outreach clinic within the target community.

One challenge faced by outreach operating on a 'fly in, fly out' basis, particularly solicitors travelling from Sydney, was identified as making time to build relationships with target clients and the local community:

> *...if someone is setting up a new clinic in an area that they're not familiar with, you need to allow them a fair bit of time to get known, and also to get to know the area as well, and to try and get a handle on the sort of legal issues they're going to encounter. Particularly if they're coming from Sydney because [the legal issues] will be different. (Legal Aid)*

Part of developing trust and connecting with target clients involves 'being approachable', and 'not sitting behind a desk', and actively seeking and engaging the support of key respected people in the local community, such as Aboriginal elders, to demonstrate the type of assistance that can be provided:

> *... they're elders that are highly regarded and they'll bring people in. So a lot of it has been a matter of developing their trust through helping them with things ... (Legal Aid)*

Lawyers described how establishing trust and building relationships may require a lot of 'hard yards' particularly in circumstances where the target group are cynical and sceptical about the motives and longevity of the service, such as in Aboriginal communities that have seen many services come and go. For example, a cross-section of informants highlighted the importance of building trust and 'credibility' for effective relationships in many local Aboriginal communities:

> *What I've learnt is you have to spend a lot of time getting to know an Aboriginal community [and] building trust with that community. You've got to be patient anyway. You've just got to be patient [until] you get the wins [and then the] word of mouth moves on ... (Legal Aid)*

> *...it took a long while to break into [the Aboriginal] community and be trusted, and for them to come to me. (Legal Aid)*

In particular, Aboriginal Field Officers were characterised as having a vital role in establishing trust and connecting with Aboriginal clients. Informants stated that Field Officers were also particularly valuable when clients are distressed or have difficulty understanding what to do:

> *... if someone's just not understanding the matter as such, or the outcomes, or what has to happen ... usually you'll find, probably 8 [times] out of 10, [that they] will be happy if the Aboriginal Field Officer talks to them ... (Other Legal Service)*

In summary, the interviews revealed several ways in which practitioners sought to build trust and rapport to connect with target clients, including:

- demonstrating that the service can sometimes lead to more than just providing advice, such as providing assistance in court
- providing a consistent and predictable service
- fostering local referral pathways
- establishing a presence and a profile by liaising with the community through local social events and activities
- being flexible in working with the community
- choosing a host agency that clients already trust and are comfortable going to, where the reception staff is welcoming.

A number of these strategies are examined below in the context of other features of effective outreach. The particular challenges in building and sustaining relationships with host agencies is discussed in the section on 'sustainable, supported and resourced outreach services'.

Raising awareness of the outreach service

The interviews indicate that intrinsic to engaging clients, is ensuring that clients and referral agencies know that the outreach service exists. This involves letting people know when, where and how outreach services can be accessed, as well as what types of legal matters it can assist with:

> *… you can create the service and have not one person come through the doors. You need to promote the service at the same time … people need to know that it exists … (Legal Aid)*

> *Letting people know you're there, but also alerting people to legal issues we can help with. (Legal Aid)*

Engaging the community through community legal education was identified as a vital awareness raising strategy:

> *CLE is just absolutely vital as a way of promoting the clinics and raising the profile of the service … That's another strategy we use to try and maintain the profile, build the profile, develop a little bit of enthusiasm, little bit of buzz in the community. (Legal Aid)*

Community legal education strategies are explored further below in the context of fostering effective referral networks.

The range of other strategies used by outreach services and host agencies to raise awareness of outreach services amongst potential clients included:

- mail outs to other service providers
- interagency meetings
- contact databases
- advertising
- media releases
- flyers, posters
- community expos.

In summary, there is a range of ways for outreach services to engage client groups. The strategy used is likely to vary from context to context. What is vital, is recognition and resourcing for this critical aspect of outreach practice.

Services appropriate to legal need and client capability

Informants described effective outreach services as being appropriate for the legal needs and capabilities of target clients. Client needs affect both the placement of outreach services and the type of services provided.

A cross-section of informants highlighted the importance of appropriate communication with clients. Previous research has also indicated that effective communication assists client engagement and improves clients' ability to understand and address their legal issues (Forell & Gray, 2009, Allison et al. 2012).

In practical terms, informants explained how providing assistance to appropriately meet client needs involves making assessment of their capability:

> *… we do assess whether they're employed, whether they're in receipt of a Centrelink benefit, [and we] also assess what their capacity is in terms of being able to do things for themselves. So for example, you'll get some people [where] it becomes fairly obvious that they're going to really struggle with doing their own follow-up, and other people that maybe they are on Newstart allowance or something but they're quite educated and quite capable. (Legal Aid)*

This aspect of client 'triage' in turn affects the type and nature of legal assistance provided:

> *… if someone comes through that is not really a Legal Aid client, then I'd be far less likely to spend time on minor assistance and follow up, it would normally be a matter of giving them some advice, some information and telling them how they can help themselves. Whereas [with] more disadvantaged clients I'd follow up a lot more, there'd be more minor assistance involved as well. (Legal Aid)*

> *There's lots of cases … you could take on that you've got to refer out or give people direction, if they've got the capacity to do it. Often you point them in the right direction and they get a good outcome themselves. (Legal Aid)*

Providing a 'lighter' form of assistance to some clients with higher legal capability appeared to be one way in which outreach solicitors sought to conserve resources for target clients.

Reflecting on this, solicitors stated that outreach clients often require multiple forms of minor assistance as well as help for multiple problems:

> *… minor assistance is a big part of my job … because of the nature of the position I take on a lot more minor assistance and I think that's a more effective way of me to assist and help more people … (Legal Aid)*

> *I saw 9 clients last Wednesday, but out of [those appointments came] 27 advices, because every single one of them had more than one issue … (Legal Aid)*

Informants from host agencies similarly noted that it might take multiple appointments before some clients will open up and provide a fuller picture of their personal circumstances and legal problems:

> *… you may not get the whole story the first time, so you make another appointment for them because, you know, maybe there's more there than what they're saying. (Host Agency)*

Outreach solicitors suggested that it is normal after seeing clients to have considerable follow-up work to do. For example, a 20 to 40 minute client appointment might require at least the same amount of time later in-office doing minor assistances and follow-up work (Legal Aid).

This can also mean that there is less time available for client casework:

> *… I take on a lot less casework just because I don't have time, it's difficult … (Legal Aid)*

The observation that the types of clients targeted by outreach were more likely to receive minor assistance was reflected in the findings of the Stage 1 report, with a higher proportion of outreach compared to in-office services being provided as minor assistance (41.3% compared to 28.9%). Further, in the three years prior to December 2012, there had been an eight-fold increase in the use of minor assistance in outreach (see Forell et al. 2013, p.16).

An approach where services reflect the varying needs of the clients is well supported by the literature. In their landmark legal needs research, Pleasence and colleagues suggested that dedicated legal advice services should 'mirror' the needs and behaviour of those who wish to use them (Pleasence, Buck, Balmer, O'Grady, Genn & Smith 2004; see also McDonald & People [forthcoming]).

This is because as research demonstrates, legal capability has an important influence on legal problem solving and is affected by knowledge, skill, personal and systemic factors (Balmer, Buck, Patel, Denvir & Pleasence 2010; Buck, Pleasence & Balmer 2008; Coumarelos et al. 2012a; McDonald & People forthcoming; Pleasence, Balmer & Reimers 2011; Pleasence & Balmer 2012). Thus, doing nothing about legal problems is common and some people, particularly disadvantaged people with low legal capability, may require targeted and tailored services to better meet their legal needs (Coumarelos et al. 2012a).

Other elements of providing appropriate services to meet the needs of outreach clients that were identified by the informants included having a service that:

- was consistent and predictable
- was flexible
- maintained client confidentiality and privacy
- had professional and capable outreach staff.

These elements are discussed below.

Consistent and predictable service

Regular and consistent clinics were suggested by interviewees as a key strategy to raise service awareness and build trust in the service, and consequently, build positive word of mouth:

> *… our clients… are not necessarily sophisticated — [they need to] just know that every week, on one particular day, they'll have access to this service. (Legal Aid)*

> *[The] client would like to know that every Tuesday [they] can go and visit and get a service. (Legal Aid)*

Consistent and predictable services — particularly over a longer period of time — were said to demonstrate that service providers are prepared to 'walk the walk' and that they had a genuine concern and commitment to the local community. Providing a consistent service is one way of overcoming the cynicism prevalent within many disadvantaged communities concerning government services, programs and 'new initiatives' which appear to 'do little' and frequently 'come and go':

> *… people think, 'We get a service and as soon as the next budget or election or what not, the service is gone or changed' or something like that. So a program [is] put in place, but it never really stays very long. (Legal Aid)*

Informants noted how consistent services were easier to advertise and promote, and helped to foster local referral pathways and sustain positive relationships with host agencies and target clients.

Several outreach lawyers identified an inherent tension between having sufficient frequency to demonstrate commitment and raise community awareness, and, in turn, obtaining sufficient client numbers to sustain the frequency of service.

There was some conjecture among interviewees concerning appropriate outreach frequency. Like a number of other features, what frequency is appropriate appears to depend upon several factors, such as demand, legal practice area, location etc.

> *… these trips can't simply be too frequent, at the same time they can't be too far apart, because you don't have that continuity and you're no longer seen as a 'real' service, and we found that just the experience, the feel that we get (and I hope I'm speaking for the whole service here) [is] that every 6 weeks or so would be the sort of minimum frequency. Two months is starting to be a bit of a stretch, if people know you won't be back for two months it's almost like 'it's not going to happen'. (Legal Aid)*

Some Mid North Coast host agencies expressed desire for either more frequent or longer outreach clinics:

> *… once a week. I think that works well … I don't know, if you have it a whole day a week, that would be full too. (Host Agency)*

Consistency also means that 'as advertised, the show must go on' even if there is a lack of client bookings:

> *… it's important to be there even if the daily list is not overflowing with appointments. [It] might have been a quiet month, but the visit is still there and the word still gets around [that you'll turn up]. (Legal Aid)*

Such occasions were seen to provide an opportunity to build the local 'presence' of the outreach service, and foster relationships with host agencies and local service providers.

Consistency of service appears central to establishing a local presence that facilitates outreach services operating more like an *outpost* service embedded into and part of the fabric of the local community, and avoids being dismissed as a 'fly-by-night' service:

> *… we go there so frequently that we're just recognised as being part of that infrastructure there. (Legal Aid)*

> *They need that continuity of care, that consistency of service and the same face — I am the face. (Legal Aid)*

Harder-to-reach communities may especially require a consistent and regular service before they begin to trust the outreach service. Existing research particularly highlights Aboriginal communities among these communities (Cunneen & Schwartz 2008; Allison et al. 2012).

Flexible service

While the need for consistent outreach was stressed, informants also identified flexibility in how a service operates as being important, particularly for providing appropriate services to clients with multiple and complex needs.

Flexibility was described as 'always being open to different ways of doing things' (Legal Aid). As a rule of thumb, one practitioner suggested that the more isolated a place, the greater the diversity in the range of legal issues that clients tended to have and the greater the challenges faced by outreach solicitors:

> *… I think if you've broken down in the bush any mechanic is better than none … it's a start. And by having us in the Child Support Service — having the resources, the ability and the systems for working in the regional areas — we can open up a lot of other services within Legal Aid to those people, or within the legal sector. (Legal Aid)*

Complex issues and client circumstances can also complicate service provision, and may involve assessing and weighing options, seeking information, researching, liaising with other service providers and determining appropriate referral (Legal Aid).

Providing services to people with mental health issues was cited by several outreach solicitors as a situation where flexibility is needed. For instance, additional time may be required to build rapport so 'that they know you're there' for them (Legal Aid). For other client groups, the way services are provided may have to be adjusted to take account of cultural factors.

The nature of outreach itself was also noted to require a degree of flexibility:

> *… at an outreach you're less able to go 'I'll talk to you tomorrow about this', so you've really got to be able to address the issue as best you can then and there. And that's always been the model, we do as much as we can on the spot, or as close to on the spot as possible, and really try be resourceful about how we sort things out … (Legal Aid)*

Outreach solicitors may have to see clients at a subsequent outreach, or do client follow-up over the telephone:

> *Sometimes, it will be either consecutive visits or sometimes after an initial visit I'll just correspond with them over the telephone, [whatever is] required. Some people you really need to see face-to-face again, other people with a bit more capacity to assist themselves, you can just talk to them on the phone. (Legal Aid)*

Host agencies also characterised outreach solicitors as doing a 'good job' when they 'roll with it' and 'juggle appointments', in order to (for example) fit in an urgent matter or see other clients when someone has not turned up. One host agency described how they sometimes tell prospective clients to turn up 'just in case' someone misses their appointment or the outreach solicitor is able to see them:

> *The usual wait is about a week for an appointment, and sometimes we might squeeze [them] in [as] somebody might not turn up. [We tell other clients] 'just come between these hours and we'll push you in there' … particularly when it's urgent. It seems to work well. (Host Agency)*

Although flexibility and willingness to 'squeeze in' additional clients may be positively regarded, it is an aspect of the host-provider relationship that needs to be managed by the outreach solicitor to maintain a sustainable service.

Turning to the literature, Forell & Gray (2009) found several studies stressing the need for flexibility in outreach services. Dewson, Davis & Casebourne (2006), Alison et al. (2012) and Porteous (2012) also noted the value of flexible outreach provision and that clients found services more approachable and accessible as a result. For example, Allison et al. noted suggestions contending that to work effectively with Indigenous clients, legal services needed to be 'time-flexible'. Porteous (2012) similarly found that a hallmark of outreach solicitors' services for homeless people was the flexibility in how they worked.

Client confidentiality and privacy

Informants noted that client confidentiality and privacy presented an ongoing challenge to providing effective outreach services, particularly in smaller towns where 'everyone knows everyone's business'. Challenges include basic concerns such as a client within a small community fearing others gossiping or learning that they have a 'legal' problem, particularly where a problem may concern or affect others in the community.

Some solicitors stated that this is more of an issue for some legal practice areas than others. For example, family and child support issues are much more likely to involve matters that may be sensitive and affect others in small communities:

> *… it's how we're booked in, how we're advertised, so it's pretty open why we're there. [It's] how we get people to come in and see us, and obviously we promote giving child support advice. Whereas if there's a general Legal Aid visit to an area … the people queuing up would come in with a whole gamut of problems and you know everyone has some kind of a problem, so that was much more sort of ok I think, whereas [with child support everyone will] know why you're there. (Legal Aid)*

Outreach solicitors and managers noted that some locations or host agencies can pose client confidentiality and privacy challenges, in terms of having a confidential and private interview space, keeping client appointments confidential, and sending/receiving personal or confidential documents through host agency office equipment:

> *… we were in this tiny little place … the rooms were all just open so everybody could hear. But everyone knows everybody so you just have to be really careful of those things, privacy things, and confidentiality. (Legal Aid)*

In particular, interviewees noted that community and neighbourhood centres can pose privacy and confidentiality challenges as they are often staffed on a volunteer basis and are typically a focal point of the community:

> *… she's a volunteer so you've got to give little reminders a lot, [for example] when they give you the sheet back, turn it over, keep it private. Just little things. (Legal Aid)*

> *… the neighbourhood centre is somewhere we've used for a long time and they are extremely helpful and accommodating… it's a great place … but it's a central community focal point, [a] local meeting place and so that has, in my view, an uncomfortable co-existence with the confidentiality requirements that we have to adhere to. (Legal Aid)*

It appeared from the interviews that because outreach solicitors work in varied environments, proactively managing issues affecting client confidentiality and privacy generally fall to them.

Professional and capable outreach staff

Outreach managers, solicitors and host agencies stressed the critical difference made by having appropriately skilled and experienced outreach solicitors. Effective outreach solicitors were characterised in terms of their professional expertise, local knowledge, personality, warmth, empathy, approachability and friendliness.

To begin with, effective outreach solicitors were described as having 'generalist' legal skills that are not limited to their specific civil, family and criminal practice areas, particularly in more remote areas where there may not be other outreach or legal services available:

> *… if you're the one person that turns up at say the Aboriginal Medical Service or a remote location … then I think we should be a bit more general. (Legal Aid)*

The importance of rapport and reputation amongst target clients, host agency and local community, puts a premium on the professional and personal qualities of outreach solicitors. In particular, host agencies and other legal service providers highlighted the importance of outreach solicitors' personal qualities:

> *I think the most important thing would probably be your staff, really I do. (Host Agency)*

> *… have that open manner, and empathy with people, and that real respect … sure let's all hope they've got great knowledge, but it's also their own being … I don't mean this nastily … but in these areas it's important to have that personable quality and empathy etc. (Other Legal Service)*

As discussed in 'stakeholder relationships' below, another 'subset of skills' noted as important to outreach lawyers relates to the management of stakeholder relationships.

Some outreach managers and lawyers observed that for certain client groups, outreach solicitors either need to be 'older' and 'experienced' or otherwise appropriately supported and resourced:

> *In regional areas, generally speaking, you're better off with someone older. Country people aren't going to sit with a 25 year old lawyer who looks like they've bought their first car to talk to them about splitting up their family farm, or whatever, [it's] not going to work. Also, CALD people don't like young people… gross generalisations [I know, but…]. (Legal Aid)*

> *… [outreach solicitors] just need to be able to … have a means of answering [diverse questions] … They've got their mentors they call up which is what I did in the beginning. I had my senior solicitor [I'd] call up and he'd resourced me well or I'd have a resource, something to read to look up, or [the] internet. (Legal Aid)*

Through our interviews with host agencies and other service providers we found that Legal Aid NSW has well regarded, warm and professional outreach solicitors on the Mid North Coast — qualities that were also identified as important for good outreach:

> *… there is a warmth about both of them and I think an honesty, and that's what works here with all the staff I think. They're professional, they're doing their job, they're not stupid, they're not going to be nasty or not follow through – it's like everybody here: 'yes, we're going to be really nice, we're going to listen, and yes, we're going to deliver what we say we're going to'. (Host Agency)*

> *… it's good the outreach services are there … Legal Aid, they run their clinics at all levels of your civil, family … early intervention team … if you're having issues with children, they have all that sort of service … (Other Legal Service)*

Legal Aid NSW's cultural awareness training was also reported to be well regarded:

> *I think it's really important that they have a real cultural understanding, and I know that Legal Aid go through a whole process with the solicitors that they're putting out there … (Other Legal Service)*

Suitable administrative arrangements

A strong theme in the interviews related to the importance for effective outreach, of having good administrative arrangements, particularly around client intake.

Interviewees identified the client booking system as a critical feature of outreach effectiveness, because if the 'system breaks down', then the outreach is also likely to break down:

> *… where we've had very poor support staff that couldn't cope with it all, the whole thing crashes. It's really hard. … Some [host agencies] won't let us book any external clients, they want to book them completely. We've then got some services that are very linked to our regional offices, so they book the appointments … then we've got other ones where we're booking centrally from here into community based organisations. Some of those work really well, some of them we've stretched the friendship a few times. (Legal Aid)*

Outreach managers and solicitors described a range of problems they had experienced as a consequence of various client booking systems, and highlighted how outreach services depend on the staff managing the bookings, either support staff within Legal Aid NSW or staff within community based host agencies.

They also noted how good outreach practice has to begin at the first point of contact, such as when a client rings up to make an appointment, or has been referred to an outreach clinic. In particular, the issue of training and support for host agencies managing client intake and appointments was raised by a number of informants:

> *I think the question is who's going to make the booking … what about privacy, what about training, what about support, those kind of things. …The more we do multi-service clinics [the more I worry] that we are asking non-legal, often volunteer, reception, not to identify there is a legal problem but to work out which week to book them in, so [in effect, to identify] what kind of legal problem is … (Legal Aid)*

Four main approaches to client booking and intake were identified through the interviews:

1. Clinics that operate on a drop-in basis.
2. Client intake and appointments booked and managed by Legal Aid NSW.
3. Client intake and appointments booked and managed by local host agencies.
4. Mixed approaches.

Each of these approaches may be suited to particular service environments and client groups, and their advantages and disadvantages are discussed in the following section.

Table 10 summarises benefits, challenges and resources identified for each of these approaches.

Table 10: Summary of different approaches to client booking and intake

Approach	*Benefits*	*Challenges/risks*	*Particular resourcing*
Drop-in basis	• More appropriate for most transient and socially excluded • Clients come when they are ready for/need assistance • Opportunity for agency liaison if few clients	• Less guaranteed numbers of clients • Managing conflict checking • Need to manage and support ongoing relationship with host	• Resourcing to market service • Need to provide service consistently, even when no/few clients
Central booking	• Can conflict check • More appropriate referrals to clinic • Can advise on documentation to bring and send reminders • More consistent and central data collection	• Less or weaker links with community and potentially less client numbers	• Resourcing to market service and to create and maintain close links with community and community agencies
Host agency booking	• Strong links to community and scope for awareness raising and established community trust • Host agency have 'buy in' to the clinic • Scope for more seamless referral between clinic and other agency services	• Bookings only as good as ongoing training and support • Scope for inconsistency in quality of booking procedure and appropriateness of clients, particularly if volunteer staff • Need to manage and support ongoing relationship	• Training for host agencies in intake procedures. • Ongoing as staff change, including volunteer staff
Mixed approaches	• See above		

Drop-in clinics

Informants suggested that drop-in clinics are more suited and effective for some types of clients. For example, more transient client groups, such as homeless people, are better suited to drop-in services at places they frequent because they are less capable of making and keeping appointments:

> *… some of them just don't even have that capacity. They've got other stuff going on and they're just not capable …The phone call is difficult, that's too difficult. (Other Legal Service)*

A cross-section of informants identified drop-in systems as also better suited to Aboriginal communities:

> *The Aboriginal community doesn't work on bookings, they just don't and if it's really going to mean something, they will come down and see me. (Legal Aid)*

One informant characterised the type of client who will ring up and make an appointment as being 'more middle class':

> *The more middle class people in Taree … will ring, make an appointment, book in, plan their day and turn up. Whereas people in Kempsey are much more transient, they might drop in. (Other Legal Service)*

The downside of drop-in outreach clinics is that sometimes there may not be many clients:

> *… you might be there sometimes with nobody there… (Other Legal Service)*

Legal Aid NSW book centrally or at regional offices

Some outreach managers noted how Legal Aid NSW management of client intake affords an opportunity to engage with clients and tell them 'what papers to bring' so that they turn up to appointments with the correct documents (Legal Aid).

Legal Aid NSW's Legal Support Officers were characterised as 'the front line', and as performing an important client intake and communication role:

> *… their role is so absolutely critical because it sets the tone of the service for the clients and the connection that is made through that first call can make all the difference … (Legal Aid)*

Another identified advantage of Legal Aid NSW staff managing client bookings was that staff service rosters, client advice sheets and conflict checking can be done in advance of the solicitor seeing the client:

> *We take all the details of the client and we make up the advice sheet beforehand, we do all the conflict check and everything when we've got them on the phone … (Legal Aid)*

Managing client bookings centrally also allows for systems to remind clients of their appointment:

> *We also text. We send out a letter once we make the appointment to remind them straight away, a letter with the appointment details of where it is and the time because people forget, and also two days before we text message them to remind them … People don't often pick up a private [telephone] number, our clients don't anyway, so we send a text message reminder 'Your appointment is tomorrow at 2pm', or it might prompt them to ring us and say 'Sorry, I forgot about it totally', so that has helped a lot. (Legal Aid)*

Centralised booking of client appointments, such as in the Child Support Service, allows for clients to choose where they will have their appointment with an outreach solicitor, for example, where multiple venues are available within a town:

> *… we have that choice that we can offer to the client and we book both places. The local court offers us the accommodation there free of charge for the room and the neighbourhood centre charges a pittance. (Legal Aid)*

Some outreach lawyers expressed a preference for a centralised client booking system, but also noted that this may not be feasible given available resources:

> *… I think there's a lot to be said for the centralised booking … I think it's better done if it's done here … (Legal Aid)*

> *… but you need to actually have the staff that can do that … (Legal Aid)*

Lawyers also speculated on whether information technology systems could improve the management of client appointments:

> *… a more effective computer based appointment making process that could be used at different sites would be extraordinarily helpful in improving efficiency… (Legal Aid)*

Host agency book and manage

Interviewees reported one advantage of host agencies managing client appointments was that their local knowledge supports a greater depth of client engagement (Legal Aid):

> *… [if the host] makes the appointment for the client and sends in the email, the client is much more likely to remain engaged and come to the appointment than if they [had] just rung up Legal Aid … (Legal Aid)*

> *… I just think the local aspect is helpful as well, that the local champion … can round people up, make appointments, chase them up as well. Just confirming that people are coming … that is an important thing with outreach because otherwise you might miss your spot for a month. (Legal Aid)*

However, informants also noted greater variability in the quality of client intake undertaken by the host agency. For instance, some outreach solicitors in the civil practice area explained how host agencies who manage client intake may lack in-depth understanding of what constitutes 'civil law' issues, and consequently may refer clients that the clinic cannot directly assist. That noted, lawyers reported being able to refer these clients on to appropriate assistance:

> *I've had people with some criminal law issues, and family law issues have been referred through to me … but that doesn't bother me … I would rather they were referred to me so then I could assist them as far as I could and then make a referral for them, rather than get really strict and just kick them out and say 'Sorry, it's not a civil issue', or just tell people 'Don't refer them' … they're not lawyers and a lot of people don't know the difference between different areas of law … it's good to have those people through and help them anyway. (Legal Aid)*

Informants reported that in some host agencies, client bookings may be made by volunteer staff, and that this can contribute to the variability in the level of understanding and training received by those booking in clients. Consequently, lawyers reported sometimes having clients with legal problems ill-suited to the outreach legal practice area:

> *It works ok [with volunteers booking] and I don't push too hard, so I will get family and crime questions coming in … it's not an issue because at least I can point them in the right direction and I can tell them the procedural stuff about what is likely to happen … (Legal Aid)*

One host agency managing client intake explained how the reception desk was often staffed by volunteers and how new people learnt about what legal problems the outreach service dealt with 'on the job':

> *Well they need to know what is 'legal' I suppose. Because we have volunteers at the front desk … they'll learn from the other person that is sitting there, so they'll learn from a more experienced front desk person. (Host Agency)*

Another host agency reported that how they managed client bookings depended upon what the client asked for:

> *I guess it depends on what the person actually asks for at reception because sometimes people come in and ask for legal aid when it could be a financial counselling thing … (Host Agency)*

Other problems cited by outreach managers working across NSW included experiences where host agencies had insisted on controlling the client bookings, but had then done a poor job. Examples of the problems experienced included: no clients being booked, double-booked, and booked on the wrong day, and client information not being forwarded to allow conflict checking (Legal Aid).

These problems highlight the importance of the host-provider relationship, discussed in further detail below.

A concern reported by some outreach solicitors about host agencies managing client bookings, involved issues of client confidentiality and privacy, particularly in smaller communities. Concerns related to people being identified as either being a client of Legal Aid NSW, or having a particular type of legal problem (Legal Aid).

Outreach managers and solicitors noted the importance of agencies having adequate resources and support to cope with the additional burden of managing client bookings:

> *In all honestly it depends on each host agency. Some host agencies I think would rather have a central system here … because … they're less resourced so they're not doing it as efficiently … (Legal Aid)*

> *I suppose it also puts an extra burden on the centre as well. (Legal Aid)*

Addressing this issue, under the ROCP, some host agencies are paid to manage intake, conflict checks, reminders and data collection.

Interviewees suggested that Legal Aid NSW had an important role in providing assistance and training to the host agency in order to establish and maintain appropriate client booking practices:

> *… we need to train and support them. We need to have somebody available on the phone, we need to go out and provide some initial training and resources – DVD, all that kind of stuff. There are some good resources out there. Put them on law for community workers, they're the kinds of courses that will help them to do the referrals. (Legal Aid)*

> *I had lots of phone calls with the host agency … who was going to be taking the bookings, so we kind of did telephone intake training. (Legal Aid)*

Mixed client booking systems

Some outreach clinics operate using a mixed client booking system, such as a mix of appointments and drop-ins:

> *They book in, but I also take walk ins as well, so someone will be booked in … and then I'll squeeze whoever I can in as well and I'll usually have … walk ins every week. Which is good but it's fairly hectic. (Legal Aid)*

Other outreach clinics have developed practices where clients can be booked centrally from Legal Aid NSW into a community based host agency, with space on the appointment schedule reserved for the host to also book in clients:

> *… we have a booking sheet and we have [clients] booked in for half hour appointments, the booking agency takes the clients details, the other side, phone numbers, what not. (Legal Aid)*

Some services used a mix of telephone and outreach advice:

> *… we had to introduce a little bit of telephone advice because people weren't going to those small towns anymore. …everyone is assigned to their region, the solicitors, and they're responsible for the calls that come in for that area … they can't just ring and be put straight through, it doesn't work that way … so we seem to have fine-tuned it a bit better so that everything is booked in … and that way the client's there when they know you're going to be there. (Legal Aid)*

In summary, the client intake and booking procedure is a key part of effective outreach practice. Whether client appointments are managed by Legal Aid NSW or by host agencies, client intake must be considered, formalised and resourced. In particular, if client intake is to be managed by host agencies, more clearly articulated or formalised processes, training and support for host agencies is necessary to maintain good outreach practice.

Effective referral pathways

A cross-section of informants raised effective referral pathways as an important feature of a good outreach service. Referral pathways are bi-directional — that is, pathways both 'in' and 'out' of outreach. Effective referral pathways help to connect and engage with target clients, and also help to obtain assistance for other associated legal and non-legal needs common to these client groups.

Outreach practitioners reported how their ability to make appropriate referrals depended on having general legal knowledge, a good understanding of Legal Aid NSW services, and importantly, awareness of available and appropriate local service destinations:

> *Knowing where to refer someone and whether they need a referral, that's a big thing as well. (Legal Aid)*

They described how it was vital to do 'leg work' and engage with other legal services, community workers, and other organisations located in an outreach area to build effective referral pathways, both 'in' and 'out':

> *We know the people in the court, we get lots of referrals from the court staff … mental health workers, you know, it's just that leg work. (Legal Aid)*

Informants reported that fostering personal connections with 'problem noticers' was a key strategy for building two-way referral relationships and pathways between services. The problem noticers identified included community workers, mental health workers, council community workers, youth workers, ageing and disability workers and tenancy workers.

Making personal connections with community services and workers in local areas was highlighted as particularly important given that they typically have extensive personal connections throughout the local community:

> *… for them it's their passion, you've got to really connect with them … Then they invite you to their interagency meetings and things like that, and they'll often say… we've got a little group, have you got 15–20 minutes to talk to that group? (Legal Aid)*

One reported strategy to build a referral network to support an outreach clinic was enlisting 'problem spotters' within local community organisations:

> *She's probably the best problem spotter I've come across. I think she really owns the clinic as well, I think she feels embarrassed if we don't have a full booking … so she makes sure that she finds people to come down that need it. She's fantastic … she really wants us there. (Legal Aid)*

> *… if there's someone in there who is a bit of a champion as well, that is an absolute bonus and that makes a huge difference and you can see it … having someone that is there on the ground, that has a profile that we can work with, that gets what we do, and will champion [it]. (Legal Aid)*

Interagency meetings also provide opportunities to build referral networks and a forum to 'keep engaged' and up-to-date with change within the local service environment:

> *… it's keeping engaged with them too … like if you've got a new youth worker … it's about developing that relationship with them … It's tooling them up so they can make the right call for their client. (Legal Aid)*

A cross-section of informants noted that a 'personal approach' was particularly important with service providers in regional areas:

> *If you don't go to them quite often and keep reminding them … who we can help and who they can refer to us, they just forget … we just fit them into their staff meetings … It just prompts them to remember that they can refer them to us and who not to refer to us as well. (Legal Aid)*

Another feature identified as important to building and sustaining effective referral networks is engendering 'trust' and 'faith'. Several lawyers cautioned that people needed to have 'faith' in the solicitor before they are likely to make a referral:

> *… particularly in regional areas, they're only going to refer to solicitors who they actually have faith will be able to deliver the service to their clients … they're not going to send clients to us if they don't have faith in the solicitor delivering the service … (Legal Aid)*

In practical terms, part of engendering trust within referral networks is about demonstrating how outreach services can assist clients:

> *… we're able to help in ways that possibly people hadn't considered … really help people in all the different ways we do… (Legal Aid)*

Outreach lawyers suggested that this was easier to do when you are well known in the community, have a long track record or can otherwise demonstrate expertise.

Interviews for this review are consistent with previous literature in observing that knowledge of local service environments, such as available services to refer clients, is a key challenge and feature of effective outreach services. Key people in local communities, such as respected Aboriginal elders and other local community leaders, are potential 'legal problem spotters' who can not only raise awareness of an outreach service and refer the clients, but also provide strong local support for the service as well as positive 'word-of-mouth' support (see Coumarelos et al. 2012a; Pleasence 2006).

Sustainable, resourced and supported outreach services

Several issues were raised in the interviews concerning the sustainability and resourcing of outreach services. Central to the issue of sustainability is the 'success' of a service in reaching clients, having sufficient resourcing and managing host-provider relationships, and how outreach service sustainability might be enhanced by complementary modes of service.

Interviewees identified a number of challenges for sustaining and supporting outreach services, including:

- having sustainable client numbers
- maintaining host agency and stakeholder relationships
- staffing and resources
- provision and use of information technology.

Sustainable client numbers

Informants discussed outreach sustainability in terms of client numbers:

> *When people say, it's not just about the numbers — it actually is. And it's not just about your total numbers, it's about your total numbers of your target group which goes right back to the [purpose] … (Legal Aid)*

Solicitors noted, however, that it can take time for client numbers to build:

> *Whether you've got people coming. Even when it's slow I've always got people there but I guess, conversely to that, when I first started doing the Aboriginal clinic … there was no one coming and I thought, I'm wasting my time, and it was just when I was starting to think that, that people started coming. (Legal Aid)*

> *… when we started Taree we were only seeing two or three people per clinic and by the end we were seeing six or seven per clinic. So it just took time for that to build up and that trust to build up. (Legal Aid)*

Informants also highlighted the importance of having a greater number of the right type of clients, ones that the outreach service can assist by making a positive difference in their lives:

> *It's always good, I think, to have more clients, but it's also having the right clients and being able to make an impact. Numbers are important in terms of statistics and funding and what not, but in terms of a reason for being there, I'd rather have less clients but clients I feel that I can help … (Legal Aid)*

> *… we have much lower numbers over at the soup kitchen but everyone that you see is just really disadvantaged, so I suppose that's another measure … every client there is right up there. (Legal Aid)*

The number of clients — or having 'no clients' attending an outreach clinic — was suggested as an obvious sustainability indicator: an outreach clinic with insufficient clients is simply not viable, particularly given other competing demands for limited public resources. A good, successful and sustainable service was described as being 'completely chockas all the time' with 'masses of people who fit right into Legal Aid's demographic' (Legal Aid).

A suggestion was made that the degree of complexity and difficulty of reaching and assisting more disadvantaged clients should be appropriately weighted or otherwise recognised when examining client figures (Legal Aid):

> *I'd like to see us weight our clients, if someone's Aboriginal and has a drug addiction or mental health issue, that should be worth two clients … Let's weight complexity … if we're serious about what we say about reaching disadvantage … (Legal Aid)*

Interviewees also discussed low client numbers in the context of 'unsustainability', and the challenge of knowing when and what to try to do to and 'fix' an outreach clinic:

> *… the challenge of what do you do with the clinic where it's just not working, at what point do you decide that it's just not working and then what do you do? … the implications of admitting defeat and those kinds of issues are things that concern me a bit. (Legal Aid)*

Practitioners explained how sustainability was of ongoing concern and how regular meetings are convened to review how outreach services are going:

> *We have regular meetings about how things are going, and I meet with all of them in a supervisory capacity and ask them about their clinics and how they're going. We have a team meeting every month where we talk about clinics — how they're going and what we might be able to do to tweak them, and get them going. (Legal Aid)*

Overall, we found that client numbers are one indicator of outreach sustainability. While client numbers may well take time to build up, there will be a point at which certain numbers of target clients would be needed to make the clinic worthwhile. The actual number of clients, however, is context specific and depends upon the accessibility, capabilities and needs of the clients reached; the availability of other services; and the resourcing required to maintain that outreach service.

Sustainable host agency and stakeholder relationships

Managing stakeholder relationships was noted as a fundamental aspect of sustaining outreach:

> *… relationships and then after that, is relationships, and then after that, is relationships. (Legal Aid)*

Given the importance of trust and relationships to effective outreach, the nature of the host-provider relationship is crucial. Some practitioners drew a marked distinction between outreach practice and 'totally different' litigation practice, and of providing services in a 'controlled Legal Aid office'. A fundamental difference is that outreach occurs on 'other people's turf' (Legal Aid).

Consequently, outreach lawyers face additional challenges:

> *You've actually got your management and your bosses and hierarchy within Legal Aid. But when you're out at another agency, in their premises, guess who you're answerable to? … there's a whole stack of things that you are needed to be responsive to them for, rather than internally within Legal Aid or OH&S … (Legal Aid)*

Many elements of outreach effectiveness are affected by the nature of the host-provider relationship and the extent of 'partnership', 'collaboration' and 'buy-in': reaching target clients; trust and reputation in the community; promotion of the outreach; being in the right location; client booking and management.

Any impairment to this relationship can therefore have considerable consequences for an outreach service. Practitioners described examples of situations where this relationship had become difficult. With much at stake, some interviewees reported feeling in a vulnerable and dependent situation when difficulties or conflict arose:

> *… we're working in partnership and collaboration — and we talk about partnership and collaboration — but unless you're a visitor in another service and you know what that feels like, where they can tell you to f*** off at any moment, people have no idea what that's actually like … (Legal Aid)*

This lawyer further reported nervousness surrounding relationships with some host agencies:

> *I have felt a degree of anxiety and nervousness all the way through … There's a level of nervousness that is just always there … at any one time there might be 10 problems that could explode and you don't know whether that's going to explode and whether you're going to be able to fix it … or whether it's going to explode and you end up with a complaint [being made to] the CEO. (Legal Aid)*

In fact, the host-provider relationship is one where a host agency can withdraw from hosting or otherwise terminate an outreach clinic:

> *… that agency had a change of management … that went really bad and basically they withdrew. They didn't want it anymore, they didn't like the look of the clients, they didn't like the fact that it was noisy, [that] it was taking too much time. (Legal Aid)*

Outreach managers and lawyers identified that further assistance to better manage stakeholder relationships was one important 'subset of skills' where they would benefit from having further support:

> *I don't think management up the chain have an appreciation for what you're doing on outreach … there's lots of stakeholder engagement issues that can be massive problems … (Legal Aid)*

> *The bottom line is so much of what you're doing is problem solving and avoidance of ongoing issues with the organisation and I suppose that's a whole subset of skills … (Legal Aid)*

They also expressed concern with the practicality of successfully implementing 'management directions' about how outreach should operate given that they often have to negotiate how outreach occurs operates with the host agency:

> *… they think you can have management directions that say, 'Do this, this and this', and you just think, 'How am I going to negotiate that?' (Legal Aid)*

Outreach solicitors also described other types of problems that they had encountered with host agencies, such as the host agency wanting more of 'their clients' to have access to the outreach, or wanting legal assistance to be provided for particular types of legal issues. Solicitors facing these types of issues indicated that they way in which the dealt with them was to be 'upfront' and 'explain the reasons' for what the service does:

> *I just have to be upfront about it, just say I'm really sorry but we've been directed not to advise on this issue. There's not much more you can really do. Maybe explain the reasons why and help to give [them] some sort of insight … (Legal Aid)*

Implementing good outreach practice is a particular challenge when other agencies, such as host or other service partners, make unilateral decisions and changes that in turn affect the outreach service:

> *… the idea is we work together, we don't work unilaterally… [you] don't make decisions by yourself [because you have to realise that] what you do affects this, this and this. (Legal Aid)*

Interviewees also associated sustainable outreach services with the local support of wider stakeholders. As 'place based solutions', outreach services can identify problems and local support is critical to them, but, again, at times fraught:

> *The more I work in this job, the more I see the solutions [as] place based and location based and [that] solutions need to be locally driven. Supported from the outside, but locally driven. (Legal Aid)*

> *… these people are advocates for their community, and they will support us, they will help us deliver our services, but the minute that we are seen not to deliver to their clients, they will not be happy. (Legal Aid)*

In addition to CLSD partnerships, lawyers identified interagency meetings as another useful forum in which to broker relationships and foster wider relationships with service providers that help to sustain outreach (Legal Aid).

Staffing and resources

Informants reported staffing and resourcing challenges to outreach sustainability. Of paramount concern was staff occupational health and safety (OH&S):

> *… there are occupational health and safety risks. I think we've got to be really careful about those – that we're not putting solicitors at risk — when people are driving in remote locations or setting up clinics in remote locations. All those kind of things, they're things that have worried me a little bit over the time that we've been working and I think we're still working through those issues. (Legal Aid)*

Also of paramount concern to a cross-section of informants was the ongoing issue of staff training and retention of outreach staff:

> *… I'm absolutely tired of training staff and having three or four people turnover all at once … (Legal Aid)*

> *New solicitors come in — that's what we really have to touch on — educate them — this is the way you have to approach it, it's not going to happen overnight, you have to build that trust up. (Legal Aid)*

It was reported that some solicitors were reluctant to do outreach work because of a perception that due to its focus on advice and minor assistance, there was less opportunity for ongoing casework and that as a consequence there was less opportunity to develop or use certain legal skills, such as litigation skill (Legal Aid). Informants also raised the issue of the demands of ongoing travel associated with outreach:

> *… there's been a bit of turnover with staff that may not want to do the travel that's involved, so there's that as well. (Legal Aid)*

A related issue is avoiding staff burnout, which was reported to be an ongoing challenge with frequent travel:

> *The people who are doing it day in, day out, will say the challenge [is that] you get burnout — for those people who are driving 6 hours or flying or what not, that's a problem. (Legal Aid)*

The time demands that outreach work makes can also present other challenges. For example, operating multiple outreach clinics on a single day to maximise the number of clients assisted relative to time spent travelling can make substantial time demands in terms of follow-up client work:

> *… some days when I get back to the office I am in the foulest, filthiest mood which is not good but it's just because you don't breathe that whole day. And my concern is there's then not the time to do the advices and the minor assistance and the follow up … (Legal Aid)*

Information technology resources

Improved access to technology — for example to a photocopier, printer and the internet — was identified as important to improving the ability of outreach solicitors to provide more effective outreach. Lack of access to computers and other information technology can severely limit and affect how outreach solicitors have to work, for example, it can limit the practicality of providing on-the-spot minor assistance:

> *… I work without a laptop … In the morning, I haven't got a computer … I've got such a breadth of legislation to cover that I either have to go out of the room into an open area and look it up on a computer to find it out, which I'm not particularly keen on doing, or I have to say, 'Look, I'll get back to you on this'… I'm getting, apparently, a laptop which will circumvent that, but for the last five years I haven't had a laptop. (Legal Aid)*

> *I take my iPad with me for access [and use] my personal iPad to access legislation. (Legal Aid)*

Relying on mobile and wireless technology can be fraught in some outreach locations where network connect speeds are slow or non-existent:

> *… it's only in the last 12 months maybe or six months that [the internet has] actually been useful because at the outreach locations [the connection is] just so slow that if you had a client and you want to look up something to show them it just wasn't practical … you would waste 15 minutes trying to access Austlii. So really, and even now some days, it's so deathly slow it's just not practically useful … (Legal Aid)*

Thus, the sustainability of outreach was a key theme in the review: building and maintaining client numbers, developing and maintaining strong stakeholder relationships and ensuring appropriate administrative arrangements, staffing, resourcing and technology. The challenges of maintaining effective and affordable outreach services are also addressed in the literature (see Access to Justice Taskforce 2009; Buckley 2010; Forell & Gray 2009; Long & Beveridge 2004). Such questions loom large in jurisdictions such as New South Wales that have geographically dispersed disadvantaged populations across metropolitan, regional and remote areas, and unequally distributed legal assistance services.

Emerging service delivery models for outreach

A final theme raised in the review concerned outreach relative to or working together with other modes of service delivery, such as telephone, webcams and AVL modes of assistance:

> *[We're] struggling with technology and trying to work out how we can supplement what we're doing with technology … (Legal Aid)*

Informants evidenced the inherent tension between face-to-face services for more disadvantaged clients with low legal capability, the use of telephone and other internet based modes of assistance, and the viability of providing any form of assistance at all to certain locations. For example, one practitioner noted that:

> *… there seems to be always this underlying compulsion – let's try do things electronically, let's try and do mobile clinics by phone and what not. I'm not convinced [that] in disadvantaged communities that's the way to go. It may be in the future, but right now I think we're still trying to get people to walk through the door. (Legal Aid)*

Legal Aid informants also reported exploring ways of complementing outreach with telephone and webcam services between outreach visits, and of running web based clinics out of the Sydney and other Legal Aid NSW offices to more remote areas (Legal Aid). For example, neither in-office nor outreach services are viable in some geographic locations where there is not sufficient demand relative to the cost of establishing such a service:

> *… there's no way we would ever go there face-to-face. We're only doing it [web cam] in the areas where we're not going to go face-to-face. (Legal Aid)*

One host agency queried the appropriateness and utility of telephone advice services for their disadvantaged clients with low capabilities. Compared to the service provided by an outreach solicitor who was well known to and highly regarded by the community, the host agency questioned whether or not telephone assistance could really help clients to 'fix' their problems.

Similarly, another informant indicated that he had stopped referring some Aboriginal clients to a phone referral service because the assistance obtained had been too difficult for clients to action and that 'in the end you have to refer them back to Legal Aid anyway …' (Legal Aid).

For many of the types of clients targeted by outreach services, legal needs research and the experience of outreach staff suggest that the substitution of *only* telephone or internet based advice services may not be suited to their legal needs and capability, though there is scope, as described above, to provide more mixed models of service.

A particular model being developed out of collaboration between CLSD partnerships is the multi-agency clinic. Multi-agency clinics involve a single service (from the clients perspective) being provided by a number of legal service providers. For example, a clinic may be provided at a location every Tuesday, with up to four agencies (e.g. Legal Aid NSW, a CLC, a tenancy service and an ROCP solicitor) alternating attendance. Multi-agency clinics allow more frequent and consistent outreach service at an outreach location than may otherwise be feasible by having different service agencies attending the outreach clinics, as well as providing options for clients who cannot be served by one agency due to conflict.

Another form of multi-agency service is the joint outreach advice clinic. Joint outreach advice clinics are often one-off or periodic events involving multiple agencies attending an outreach location at the same time. One example is the 'road show', where a group of agencies together visit regional areas, commonly in relation to particular legal issues, such as fines or Work and Development Orders. The importance of connecting with target clients, providing appropriate services and operating as part of broader network of services applies equally to these models.

Finally, the emerging role of Aboriginal Field Officers as part of the outreach landscape also raises the possibilities of further exploring the potential role of para-legal workers more broadly. This could potentially go beyond the specialist role of Aboriginal Field Officers in engaging with client communities to the provision of para-legal support, such as completing documentation or providing legal information.

Discussion

The statistical review of Legal Aid NSW Outreach Services (Stage 1 of this review) indicated that, between 2010 and 2012, there had been significant expansion of Legal Aid NSW outreach legal services. The case study and analysis reported here indicates a similar scale of evolution in outreach practice, thought and learning.

The interviews first indicate the range of different ways that outreach services have been planned, structured and delivered. Informants report both experiences of very effective processes in establishing and maintaining outreach, as well as challenges in setting up and sustaining services and reaching clients. All of these experiences inform this review and the recommended changes to the *Best Practice Principles for Legal Aid NSW Outreach Services* (see Appendix 1).

Findings relevant to particular aspects of outreach are detailed in the executive summary. Following are themes and observations arising from this stage of the review which have implications for future practice.

Outreach as central to the role of Legal Aid NSW

A central role of Legal Aid NSW is to deliver legal services to socially and economically disadvantaged people (Legal Aid NSW 2012 p.ii). Outreach is a key strategy employed by Legal Aid NSW to address the unmet legal needs of these client groups. Among these client groups are Aboriginal people, people in rural, regional and remote areas, and homeless people (see Legal Aid NSW 2012). Outreach may also target particular legal issues relevant to these client groups, such as family law issues and fines.

Disadvantaged clients are a priority because, as research has indicated, this group have heightened vulnerability to legal problems and substantial legal problems (Coumarelos et al. 2012a, 2012b; McDonald & Wei 2013). Their lower legal capability and resources have also been found to present heightened barriers to successfully obtaining assistance and resolving their problems (Balmer et al. 2010; Coumarelos et al. 2012a).

Thus the purpose of outreach — to reach and assist disadvantaged clients who have limited access to legal assistance — directly aligns to broader Legal Aid NSW objectives. Outreach managers and solicitors have a clear focus on this purpose.

Identifying successful outreach

As success for outreach involves the provision of legal assistance to priority client groups, measuring success involves identifying target client groups when outreach services are established, and then assessing whether and what assistance is provided to these groups. As indicated in the case study of the Mid North Coast, sound information is available to identify disadvantage and legal need in the community. However, the administrative data available to Legal Aid NSW to identify relevant characteristics of who is actually reached in outreach is more limited. This and other data issues are discussed in detail as part of the *Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation framework for Outreach Legal Services* which is being developed as part of this project.

It is also important to clarify who outreach services seek to assist, because the needs and characteristics of these client groups are central to the model of service delivery required to successfully reach and assist these clients.

However, equally critical to a focus on assisting disadvantaged clients is the role of outreach in filling gaps in service delivery — to reach disadvantaged clients who otherwise have limited access to legal assistance.

For this reason, we draw attention to the importance of determining how individual outreach services fit within broader service networks: as part of the suite of Legal Aid NSW legal assistance services, as well as part of a network of other legal and non-legal services in the locations where they are established.

The importance of coordination and collaboration

Central to outreach operating as part of a broader network of services is coordination and collaboration. Coordination of outreach services between Legal Aid NSW legal practice areas, as well as ROCP, CLSD initiatives and other legal assistance services, was noted in the interviews as a key challenge. For instance, while the various outreach programs and clinics run by Legal Aid NSW were very effective at identifying need and placing their own services accordingly, we noted the greater scope for more coordination across different divisions of Legal Aid NSW (and tangible interest in doing so).

Collaboration and coordination underpin all aspects of effective outreach, from the planning stage, to engaging with clients and communities, to appropriate service provision, effective referral and sustainable services.

To begin with, planning involves understanding the local environment to:

- identify pockets of high legal need and gaps in services that an outreach clinic may fill
- fit the outreach with existing frontline legal and other human services (and avoid or reduce duplication of services)
- connect and engage with target clients
- identify the most suitable locations or host agency; to create opportunities for holistic service delivery
- build effective referral pathways.

There are very valuable resources and forums available to Legal Aid NSW to identify legal need and gaps in services. Data sources include the Legal Aid NSW Legal Services Database, CASES data, the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW's LASDD, SEIFA measures and Census data.

Importantly however, CLSD partnerships were identified as a key information resource for planning, especially as CLSD regions commonly undertake periodic legal needs analysis and service planning. Particularly, in regions without CLSD, other ways of acquiring local knowledge will be necessary for informed decisions about legal need and gaps in services. At its most basic level, this will require talking and liaising with other legal and human service providers in the area. Importantly, interviewees indicated that local community knowledge and understanding was 'like gold' for identifying legal needs within particular communities and the most appropriate location to target services.

Local relationships are also critical for Legal Aid NSW to operate as part of a holistic response to high needs clients. This is an issue because the broad needs of an outreach client may extend beyond the scope and expertise of any one outreach lawyer, or even Legal Aid NSW. Holistic practice therefore involves providing clients with effective referrals to other relevant services to address these additional needs. We further note that, as a large legal agency with a range of specialist services, Legal Aid NSW

has the capacity to efficiently refer clients internally, for instance from outreach directly to other specialist assistance, casework (litigation) as required, or to a duty service.

Another critical site of coordination and collaboration is with the host location or agency where the outreach service is situated. Outreach services may be based in a variety of locations and have differing relationships with the host location or agency. The stronger the host-provider relationship, the more it is like a partnership, and the greater the scope for integration and collaboration that firstly, leads to a higher number of target clients and secondly, better meets the needs of those clients.

Maintaining functional host-provider relationships is, however, more than a coordination and collaboration challenge. Given how trust and reputation, and good and bad 'ripple out', particularly in smaller communities in regional and rural areas, managing the host-provider relationship is vital for effective outreach practice.

Diversity of models but common elements of good practice

This review has highlighted a range of different models of outreach practiced by Legal Aid NSW. Outreach services target different clients, are located in a range of host agencies and geographic locations, have varying legal specialties and administrative arrangements, and seek to engage with communities in a variety of ways.

Although outreach services manifest in different ways, the interviews in this review support previous research in identifying characteristics of outreach (whatever the model) that appear to be critical to the success of these services in reaching and assisting high needs disadvantaged clients.

Notably, the features identified in this review are broadly consistent with the existing *Best Practice Principles for Legal Aid NSW Outreach Services* developed by Legal Aid NSW, which are in turn based on research evidence and practitioner experience. Key revisions to the previous guidelines centre on clearly articulating the purpose of outreach, identifying target client groups, a focus on connecting and engaging with clients and on resourcing all stage of outreach from intake through to referral.

Features of good outreach practice suggested by the interview analysis included:

- planned and targeted services, which have a clear focus on who outreach services are intended to reach as well as gaps in existing services
- coordination and collaboration, within Legal Aid NSW, as well as between Legal Aid NSW and other legal and non-legal services in local areas
- services which connect and engage target clients, through appropriate location, strong and sustainable relationships with the host agencies and local champions, and through consistent service delivery and time spent building trust, rapport and reputation with the local community, and through raising awareness of the service
- 'client-centred' services, appropriate to the legal need and capability of the client group the outreach service seeks to assist
- services which are consistent and yet flexible enough to cater for clients with multiple and complex needs
- strong referral relationships within Legal Aid NSW and between Legal Aid NSW and other services, in recognition that clients may have needs which are beyond the scope of the outreach service
- skilled outreach solicitors (discussed below)
- services which are resourced and supported from intake through to referral (discussed below)

Support and resourcing from client intake onwards

A key observation drawn from the interviews concerns the need to support and resource outreach services from the intake process through to referral, noting that the type of support or resourcing required will vary between different outreach models. This is because, relative to the key features listed above, different models have different strengths and weaknesses. Thus, while a regular outreach service provided by the same local solicitor at a host agency known to the target client group may require less additional resources to market the service, it may require more resources to train and support the host agency if it is responsible for client bookings. Conversely, an outreach service with a central booking system may not need to resource host agency training, but it may need to focus more on building a relationship with the local communities and referring agencies. Thus, while the types of support required may vary, resourcing is needed to develop outreach services that reflect best practice. This will include resourcing and supporting planning, community engagement and client intake, appropriate services, quality staff, administrative support and, as outlined below, host agency relationships.

Host-provider relationships

There is an increasing interest within Legal Aid NSW and more broadly, in more integrated forms of legal service delivery focused on meeting the complex needs of disadvantaged clients. Outreach services placed within human service 'hubs', such as community or neighbourhood centres are such an example. Locating outreach in community service hubs appear to be one way to quickly establish an outreach clinic, raise awareness amongst target clients, and build referral networks amongst local service providers. Where a functional host-provider relationship exists — that is, where the legal service is wanted and supported by the host, has buy-in and ownership, is actively promoted, and has inward referral and positive word-of-mouth reputation — the community service 'hub' outreach model appears to have a number of advantages.

However, locating services with host services also requires additional support to manage and sustain that relationship and to collaborate with other service providers. Where the relationship with a 'hub' breaks down, and where client intake and appointments are poorly managed, service difficulties arise. In short, a consequence of placing outreach services in host agencies is that the host agency relationship becomes another element of service delivery to be managed.

Outreach services hosted by other agencies (as compared to those simply located in a rented space) have to work to within the parameters of the host agency. As a 'guest', a degree of autonomy or control is lost for instance over the office space, use of photocopiers and in some cases, over the range of clients seen.

The more that Legal Aid NSW uses host agencies to actively support the operation of an outreach clinic (e.g. client intake, appointments, promotion), the more important it becomes to support and manage the host agency relationship so as to maintain the quality and consistency of outreach practice.

In particular, given that reception is commonly staffed by volunteers in many community and neighbourhood centres, Legal Aid NSW has a role in determining how to appropriately support those host agencies to manage client intake and appointments. This role may include providing periodic training about everyday legal problems, ways to answer inquiries, managing client intake, making

appointments and confidentiality. Individual practitioners may also need organisational support to sustain the host-provider relationship and successfully resolve difficulties as they arise.

Outreach as a specialist form of practice

Outreach services have expanded as a proportion of all Legal Aid NSW advice and minor assistance services, becoming increasingly prominent as a tool to reach and assist more socially disadvantaged people.

In recognition of this, together with the particular needs and challenges of assisting outreach clients, and the challenges of working in an out-of-office but 'in location' service environment, legal outreach needs to be supported as a specialist form of practice.

Capacity to provide on-the-spot minor assistance and appropriate legal and non-legal referral depends upon broad generalist legal knowledge, as well as awareness of Legal Aid NSW services and available local other legal and human services to call upon when the issue is beyond the solicitors' core expertise. Some informants indicated that outreach practitioners required a level of maturity and experience, others that they needed to be supported by supervisors or mentors, and to develop strategies to meet client needs.

In particular, the professional and personal qualities of outreach solicitors are pivotal to establishing and sustaining outreach that connects with and meets the needs of target groups and communities, as well as successfully maintaining host-provider relationships. Some aspects of outreach practice go beyond the skills and professional conduct more common in mainstream legal service. Among these are skills in maintaining the web of relationships that are characteristic of good practice and flexibility in delivering responsive services. Further consideration of how outreach can be appropriately supported in this regard is likely to be of benefit to the evolution of Legal Aid NSW outreach practice.

The role of Aboriginal Field Officers as part of outreach was also highlighted. While not fully explored in this review, interviewees stressed the value of Aboriginal Field Officers in linking Aboriginal clients to Legal Aid services and in forging stronger relationships between the ALS NSW/ACT and Legal Aid NSW in the case study region. Aboriginal Field Officers also assisted clients with tasks such as providing legal information and completing applications for legal aid.

This raises a question about whether there may be greater scope for para-legal support in outreach.

Evolving models of practice

The interviews demonstrate diversity in current outreach models, and they also indicate that new ways of providing outreach service are continuing to evolve. For instance, the location of outreach services at multi-agency clinics, collaborating with CLSD partners or other legal services to maintain a more frequent 'legal' presence at certain locations, developing more formalised arrangements with some host agencies, the use of Aboriginal Field Officers to develop strong relationships with Aboriginal communities, medico-legal partnerships, and integrating the use of communicative technology to complement and supplement outreach, are some of ways in which Legal Aid NSW outreach practice is evolving. Undoubtedly, further learning can be expected. The *Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Outreach Legal Services* will help capture that learning.

Planning, monitoring and evaluation

One purpose of this review has been to inform a planning, monitoring and evaluation framework for outreach legal services. This is a framework to support the growing practice in outreach legal services, to monitor and assess its development and to learn from the experience. The first stage of the review explored the administrative data available to inform planning, monitoring and evaluation. This stage has examined outreach in context, to see what is important to monitor and measure, and what are the opportunities and challenges in doing so. These issues are dealt with in the *Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Outreach Legal Services*

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Appendix 1

Draft Revised Best Practice Principles for Legal Aid NSW Outreach Services

Purpose of outreach
The purpose of outreach is to provide legal services to disadvantaged communities in locations with high legal needs and limited access to legal services.

Outreach clients may lack access to legal assistance through geography and distance, limited personal capabilities and resources, cultural barriers and through barriers to local services arising from service scope and legal conflict.

Best practice Legal Aid NSW outreach services are

- **Planned and targeted,** addressing unmet legal need in a defined client group, community or place, and gaps in available services
- **Engaged with** target client groups and with local services that assist those groups
- **Coordinated** across Legal Aid NSW practice areas and with external agencies
- **Client centred,** recognising that clients often have complex and interrelated legal and non-legal issues and face significant barriers in accessing legal assistance
- **Consistent** in service delivery, with options for assistance between visits
- **Resourced and sustainable** within a broader service framework, with options available should an outreach not continue
- **Evaluated** to ensure the outreach is achieving its aims and complying with best practice.

Planned and targeted
Legal Aid NSW outreach services are planned in response to evidence of legal need in an identified client group, community or place that lacks access to appropriate legal services. The services are provided in a manner and location appropriate to the needs of that group. The selection of an outreach location will also take account of the opportunities to engage with client groups and communities, and partner with agencies as part of a broader service network.

CLSD Program partnerships may be a key source of information in planning and establishing outreach in some regional locations, as may be other local services.

Engaged with target clients
Outreach services need to be accessible to and connected with clients and the local services that assist those clients. Critical elements of engaging with target clients include:

- **Physical accessibility** in a place which is convenient to clients and where they are comfortable to visit and/or available at a time and place of high need
- **Trust and connectedness**, which can be developed through: existing relationship (e.g. local solicitors); collaboration with intermediaries trusted by clients (e.g. local agencies, local 'champions', Aboriginal Field Officers) and/or time spent providing quality services and building the relationship.

Coordinated and collaborative
In the planning of outreach services Legal Aid NSW needs to coordinate and collaborate with other legal services (internal and external to Legal Aid NSW) and community partners. Legal Aid NSW internal coordination is enhanced by communication through the Outreach Network, which has a page on the Legal Aid NSW intranet. Collaboration with other legal services in the region may be through the local CLSD Program partnership, if available and includes regional Legal Aid NSW offices.

This is vital to reach hard to reach clients, to reduce duplication of services and to enhance solicitor referral capacity.

Client centred/holistic
Outreach clients are a group for whom the presenting legal issue(s) may well be part of broader range of other legal and non-legal issues, and who may have limited capability to handle the legal issue alone. For these reasons, Legal Aid NSW solicitors providing outreach services:

- have a broad general knowledge across practice areas of the key civil, family and crime issues affecting the outreach target group, and can provide basic information outside of their usual area of practice and know beforehand how and who to warm refer clients to where appropriate
- are skilled in working with very disadvantaged clients, identifying limitations in personal and legal capability and providing advice or minor assistance services appropriate to those needs
- connect with local agencies to both receive referrals and to provide well-targeted referrals for legal and non-legal issues beyond their expertise
- may also provide community legal education to build the capacity of clients and local services.

Outreach solicitors are part of holistic service delivery to clients.

Consistent
Outreach involves connecting with a community and it may take time to build up the clinic. Once Legal Aid NSW commits to the operation of an outreach service, the service is provided consistently on the day, time and location as advertised, preferably using the same legal officer. A decision to cease or change an outreach service is only taken after review and consultation with internal and external partners and stakeholders.

Recognising that people experience legal problems between outreach visits, Legal Aid NSW is committed to engaging with key local agencies and providing them with practical and reliable referral and follow-up options for clients when they are not on the ground.

Resourced and Sustainable
Outreach services are resourced and supported from the point of client intake on. Host agencies involved in client booking are appropriately trained and supported. Because short term services can damage relationships with local communities, the sustainability of a service is considered from the outset. Legal Aid NSW plans for what will be left when a project finishes (e.g. capacity building, a relationship that may sustain a different mode of service delivery longer term). Legal Aid NSW also considers alternative forms of providing outreach where a face-to-face presence may not be possible, for example partnering with a host agency in the community to facilitate a "virtual" clinic by webcam.

Evaluated
Outreach services are monitored and reviewed as part of the regular planning cycle of Legal Aid NSW services. The Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring Framework lists useful questions to ask when planning, establishing, monitoring and reviewing outreach and provides sources of information to answer these questions. A key evaluation question is “Does the outreach clinic fill a gap in services to the identified target group?”