



Final grant report: Domestic violence and renting

Project title	Domestic violence and renting
Grant recipient	Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre
Project manager	Kellie McDonald and Gabrielle Craig
Position	Solicitors
Law and Justice Foundation awarded amount	\$10,865.00
Grant period	October 2011 – December 2012
Date of this report	November 2012

Description of the project

Describe the project in just enough detail so that anyone can understand the aim of the project, the target group and what strategies were undertaken to achieve this aim.

The aim of the project was to develop a Plain English, user-friendly resource to raise awareness and educate community members and community workers about recent changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* specifically relating to victims of domestic violence living in rental properties.

The project – what happened?

How did the project come about?

The options available to tenants experiencing domestic violence changed with the recent introduction of the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*, which replaced the old *Residential Tenancies Act 1987*.

The options available to tenants experiencing domestic violence are varied and complicated and depend on whether a person living in a rental property is a tenant, what type of agreement, if any, they have, whether they have an apprehended violence order, and whether they want to stay or leave the property.

We believed there was a need for a simple, user-friendly booklet that clearly sets out the new options available to people living in rental properties and experiencing domestic violence.

Briefly set out the project stages and what happened in each stage.

We drafted the content for the booklet. Solicitors and tenancy workers with specialised legal knowledge of this area of law initially reviewed the content for accuracy. We then provided the draft booklet to key stakeholders and were provided with feedback to improve the usability of the resource.

We decided on the artwork and format of the booklet and worked with a local graphic designer to develop a mock up of the booklet. When we were happy with the design and format, we had 15,000 copies of the booklet printed.

We launched the booklet at the NSW Community Legal Centre State Conference in May 2012 and then distributed the booklet to key stakeholders.

We have since promoted the resource during community legal education sessions and have responded to further request for the booklet.

If grant materials were produced:

How were they distributed?

We distributed the booklet by taking copies of the booklets to Community Legal Centres conferences. We hand delivered the resource to local community services. We also posted the resources to organisations. We also posted a PDF version of the booklet on our website.

What was the extent of the distribution?

We distributed the booklet to all community legal centres, refuges, tenancy services and Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services in NSW. We also distributed the resource to community and health services in the Hawkesbury Nepean area.

We have distributed the booklet to organisations that requested the booklet such as community housing providers, women's refuges, police, and providers of the *Staying Home Leaving Violence* government initiative, family support services and private solicitors.

What has been the extent of online use (if applicable), at the time of this report?

We are not sure of the extent of the online use of the booklet, however a Google search indicates that a number of other organisations, such as the Australian Institute of Family Studies, tri Community Exchange Inc, NSW Corrective Services, NSW Victims Services and the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House, have uploaded the PDF version of the booklet onto their websites, which indicates that online use may be quite high.

Now that the project has concluded, how did the implementation and/or the outcome differ from what was originally intended?

It took longer to develop, design and finalise the format and content of the booklet than we had initially anticipated.

We had a lot more interest and requests for the booklet from a wide variety of organisations than we had anticipated.

Evaluation

What questions did you ask to evaluate whether you had achieved your aim?

On advice from the Foundation, we adapted a survey template that was provided to us and distributed it to organisations such as Kempsey Women's Refuge, Sydney WDVCAS, Hunter WDVCAS, Carrier's Place SHLV, Uniting Care Burnish Coff Harbour, Elizabeth Evatt CLC, Far South CLC, Illawarra Wollongong Women's Centre, Mid North Coast CLC.

The survey asked demographic questions; how they heard about the booklet; what they would do with the booklet, whether they had read the resource; how useful and easy it was to understand the booklet; whether any action was taken as a result of reading the booklet; and suggestions for improvement.

We thought the survey questions were useful in providing data about whether the aims of the booklet, that is, to be user-friendly and informative, were achieved.

What data was gathered?

Of the surveys we distributed we received nine surveys back completed.

Those who completed the survey were:

- located in a wide variety of areas across NSW;
- aged between 30 and 69 years old;
- all spoke English very well;
- all were born in Australia, with the exception of two;
- one person identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
- no one identified as having a disability;
- most people heard about the booklet from a CLC or the internet;
- most people said they would give the booklet to someone else or keep the booklet for a very long time;
- most people said they read all of the booklet; and
- seven people said they found the booklet very useful and two people said they found the booklet fairly useful.

Those who completed the survey have given the resource to clients and their networks and have encouraged people to read the resource and get legal advice; used the resource in community legal education sessions and put links to the resource on their website.

Most of those people who completed the survey thought the resource was comprehensive and needed little to no improvement. I have attached copies of the completed surveys for your reference.

Did you achieve your aim? What did you find out?

Based on the survey results and the numerous requests for the booklet, we believe we achieved our aim of producing a user-friendly resource and raising awareness and educating clients and community workers about the issue of domestic violence and renting.

We found out that there was a real need for a resource that explains options for victims of domestic violence who are renting and community workers are appreciative of the resource.

Conclusion and recommendations

What is your conclusion?

We are very happy with the outcome of the project. We are glad that organisations are finding the booklet useful and are promoting the very important issue with their client bases.

What are your recommendations for improvements both for the intended audience of your project, and for the strategy you used to achieve your aim?

We would allocate more time to the development of the resource and seek additional funding to finance the project.