



National Association of
Community Legal Centres Inc

Community Legal Centres: Putting Social Inclusion into Practice

Louise Edwards
Policy & Projects Officer
National Association of Community Legal Centres
Louise_Edwards@clc.net.au
(02) 9264 9595

Overview

- CLCs' work and social exclusion principles – an axiomatic relationship for over 30 years
- How legal services enhance social inclusion
 - Advocacy for rights-based approach (currently missing from Government's Social Inclusion Principles)
 - Consultation to enhance community participation
 - CLCs adopting strategic service delivery model and measuring performance against social inclusion framework
- Barriers that exist to realisation of social inclusion
 - External (funding)
 - Internal (understanding principles and strategic service delivery)
- CLC plan of action for improving delivery of services that are socially inclusive

CLCs and Social Inclusion

- For 30 years, CLCs (and other community legal assistance services) have played an important role in improving social inclusion by:
 - Addressing client's immediate legal needs
 - Dedicating some resources to community development methodologies
 - Addressing broader issues of early intervention and prevention
- The Government's 2009 Social Inclusion Principles reflect, in language and concept, many of the principles already adopted by CLCs

How legal services enhance social inclusion (1)

- CLCs have a role in identifying better ways government can and should achieve social inclusion
 - CLCs endorse a rights-based approach to justice, which is missing from current Social Inclusion Principles
 - CLCs ensure that their communities' voice is heard in achieving social inclusion (consultation focus)
 - Social inclusion agenda provides an opportunity to show Government and other legal agencies the centrality and effectiveness of what CLCs do within a social inclusion agenda

How legal services enhance social inclusion (2)

- Social inclusion principles provide an opportunity for CLCs' own self reflection, in three ways:
 - Understand the Government's framework
 - Identifying gaps in service delivery and social inclusion focus
 - Community accessibility in CLC structures and work

Barriers that exist to CLCs' realisation of social inclusion

- External barriers
 - Insufficient and inequitable funding to individual CLCs
 - Fragmentation of government funding and services
 - Insufficient funding for capacity-building and workforce development
- Internal barriers
 - Improved understanding of SSDM and social inclusion principles in practice
 - Genuine involvement in CLCs by members of their client groups

A CLC action plan for improving social inclusion?

- Start talking about social inclusion in the CLC sector and continue to assess CLC work against social inclusion principles – the SSDM
- Seek increased funding from the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments so that all CLCs receive sufficient funding to adopt the Strategic Service Delivery Model
- Capacity Building from National and State-office levels

Community Legal Centres

- CLCs are not-for-profit, community based organisations
- Provide legal advice, information, education and referrals to their client communities, focusing on those with special needs
- CLCs also focus on early intervention and prevention through law reform and advocacy
- CLCs work towards a rights-based approach and equitable access to justice to prevent social exclusion

National Association of CLCs

- NALC is the peak national organisation representing CLCs in Australia
- Members are the state and territory associations of CLCs that together represent over 205 CLCs nationally
- NALC's purpose is to assist disadvantaged and marginalised people obtain access to legal services by:
 - Supporting and assisting CLCs to provide these services
 - Providing a national forum for CLCs
 - Developing and coordinating national CLC policy
 - Advancing the interests of CLCs with government and other key stakeholders
