

Legal Aid Queensland – regional service collaboration

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As big as...



Queensland's size is 1.7 million square kilometres, which is:

- nearly seven times larger than the United Kingdom
- more than twice the size of Pakistan
- larger than South Africa and
- 2.5 times the size of Texas



A decentralised state...

- Brisbane to Cairns – 1396 kms
- Brisbane to Mount Isa – 1563 kms
- Brisbane to Townsville – 1115 kms
- Brisbane to Sydney – 729 kms
- Brisbane to Melbourne – 1371 kms



Resourcing a big, decentralised state

- Mount Isa office covers the North West Region, which is an area of 311,286 sq km
- That's bigger than the state of Victoria, which is 237,629 sq km
- Mount Isa LAQ office has only two LAQ in-house lawyers
- Other legal services include:
 - three preferred suppliers
 - ATSILs
 - LAQ's Western Queensland Justice Network which has one lawyer



Services in Rural & Regional Qld

- LAQ Call Centre - Free Telephone Information – 5 days per week
- LAQ First Advice Contact Team - Free Telephone Advice – 5 days per week
- 400+ Preferred Suppliers
- 13 Regional Offices spread throughout the State
- Community Access Points in 35 rural and regional locations
- Regional Legal Assistance Forums
- Regional Solicitor Program



Harnessing community partnerships and networks for improved service access

- Queensland is the most decentralised state in Australia
- Climate of limited funding - need to ensure legal services would continue to be provided to clients with the greatest needs
- Needed to establish better working relationships with our partners – Preferred Supplier Firms, Community Legal Centres, ATSILs, Family Violence Prevention Units to ensure client needs met in the future.
- Recognised that legal needs differ from region to region, depending on demographics, services available and a range of other factors, including costs associated with service provision in regional Queensland.
- Importance of understanding needs in each region and establish what services were available.



Queensland Legal Assistance Forum

- Queensland Legal Assistance Forum established February 2006
- Representatives –
 - Legal Aid Queensland
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
 - Bar Association
 - Queensland Law Society
 - Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services
 - Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House.



Regional Legal Assistance Forums

- Assist in reducing service duplication
- Identification of gaps in service delivery
- Engender partnering relationships between services, promoting cooperation and collaboration with the aim of meeting the legal needs of clients within the regions
- Information-sharing between participants about issues of mutual concern
- Provide feedback to the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum



Regional Legal Assistance Forum locations

Forums have been established in each regional area throughout Queensland where LAQ has a local regional office

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bundaberg• Cairns• Caboolture• Ipswich/Inala• Mackay• Maroochydore | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mount Isa• Rockhampton• Southport• Toowoomba• Townsville• Woodridge |
|---|--|



How Regional Legal Assistance Forums work

Main participants –

- Community Legal Centres
 - ATSILS
 - Legal Aid Queensland
 - Family Violence Prevention Units
 - Family Relationship Centres
 - Preferred suppliers (in some regions)
 - Other community organisations
- Participants depends on the region involved and agreement by participants at meeting
 - Regular meetings
 - Provides basis for mapping of legal services and identification of service delivery gaps



RLAFs – examples of collaboration (1)

- **Bundaberg**
- In October 2009 LAQ, ATSILS and the FRC conducted CLE sessions to local community workers at Wondai. Topics covered LAQ services, ATSILS services and Family Dispute Resolution.
- In April 2010, the CLC and FRC conducted CLE sessions to local community workers at Gayndah. Topics covered CLC services available and Family Dispute Resolution.
- Additional joint CLE sessions have also been undertaken by LAQ, the CLC and FRC in relation to the FRC monies provided by the Commonwealth Government.



RLAFs – examples of collaboration (2)

- **South West Queensland - Toowoomba RLAF**
- Tara & Dalby - Twice yearly visits are undertaken to conduct workshops/training sessions and provide information about services provided by LAQ and Rural Women's Outreach Legal Service;
- Cunnamulla and Roma - Joint CLE sessions to community workers focussing on child protection and domestic violence issues with LAQ and Maruma-Ii Mari, which is the Family Violence Prevention Unit in Roma.



Regional Solicitor Program – purpose

In October 2003 the Legal Aid Queensland board approved the Regional Solicitor Program to address:

- Recruitment and retention difficulties experienced by preferred suppliers in regional Queensland
- Sustainability of legal aid service provision by preferred supplier firms in regional Queensland

The aims were to:

- Stem the exodus of firms from preferred supplier panels
- Encourage newly admitted solicitors to work in regional areas
- Work in partnership with preferred supplier firms to ensure continued service provision in Queensland communities by enhancing regional service capacity
- 3 years of recurrent funding through RIPLS to expand the Regional Solicitor Program from 1 July 2008.



How does it work?

- LAQ - identification of priority areas and interested firms
- Applications sent to LAQ noting regional preference of placement
- Must be admitted before a placement can commence
- Parties enter into tripartite contract for two year period
- Placement wage is \$50,000
- Refund of Practical Legal Training fees up to \$7,000
- LAQ pays 75% of placements wage with expectation they perform 75% legal aid work. Firm pays remainder 25% (or more if they wish to top up the salary)
- RSP Incentive Scheme - \$5,000 bonus



Current situation

Current placements - 19 working in 12 rural and regional locations including:

- Malanda
- Proserpine x 2
- Mackay x 2
- Rockhampton
- Yeppoon
- Bundaberg
- Gympie x 3
- Kingaroy
- Mount Isa x 3
- Dalby
- Biloela
- Ayr

14 new placements in 2009-10 financial year

57% female - 43% male

58 since program began



Questions?


