

## Collaborative Service Planning

Project plan: 2017

Version 1.0 – October 2017

### 1. BACKGROUND

Under the [National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015-20](#) (the NPA), the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments are undertaking collaborative service planning with the legal assistance sector (the sector) to coordinate and maximise the reach of services and to ensure that services are directed where they are most needed. By developing shared strategies and practical actions, collaborative service planning will deliver benefits for the sector and the vulnerable people who access legal assistance services.

The [National Strategic Framework for Legal Assistance 2015-20](#) (the Framework) guides legal assistance policy development, service delivery, and sector planning. It encourages a unified and coordinated approach by governments and the sector to enhance access to justice in Australia and help focus finite resources towards areas of greatest legal need.

The [Framework](#) aligns with the findings of the latest empirical research in Australia and overseas. The findings indicate that to most efficiently and effectively assist those with the most disproportionate amount of legal need, services should be increasingly client-focused, that is:

- **targeted** to reach those with the highest legal need and lowest capability;
- **joined up** with other services to address complex life problems;
- **timely** to minimise the impact of problems and maximise the utility of services; and
- **appropriate** to the needs and capabilities of users.

Queensland's collaborative service planning is guided by these overarching principles and considerable progress was made in 2016-17. Through the 2016-17 project plan:

- sector governance has been enhanced, with the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum (QLAF) driving collaborative service planning and establishing new, and maintaining existing, working groups and forums;
- an evidence base has been established, which informed the allocation of service delivery funding to community organisations over 2017-20 and ongoing collaborative service planning initiatives; and
- a [work plan](#) was delivered, consisting of six projects considered to have the greatest impact for statewide collaborative service planning (all of which have been allocated Queensland Government project funding for their delivery).

This project plan brings together Queensland's collaborative service planning to date, and provides the next **coordinated and collaborative framework** for undertaking collaborative service planning in 2017-18.

### 2. MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Under the [NPA](#), Queensland is required to conduct collaborative service planning meetings, twice per year at minimum, with representatives from: Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ); Community Legal Centres (CLCs); Indigenous legal assistance providers; and the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments. Service planning meetings may also include representatives from other legal or non-legal service providers or organisations.

Queensland is required to report annually to the Commonwealth on collaborative service planning. Progress against this project plan will be provided as part of this reporting.

### **3. LEGAL NEED**

Legal problems are widespread in Australia and there is significant unmet legal need, which cannot be met within existing Commonwealth, state and territory funding levels. Many people experience multiple legal problems at the same time. If left unresolved, legal problems can escalate and trigger non-legal problems, such as health and social welfare issues. They can also impact adversely on a person's broader life circumstances and their ability to participate effectively in society.

Both the [NPA](#) and Queensland's legal assistance model (Queensland's model) acknowledge that there are finite resources available for legal assistance. They both include strategies designed to improve service delivery and better manage service demand. One of the key strategies is to ensure that available resources are directed in a way that addresses identified need and provides the most effective services for people who need legal help.

Commonwealth priority areas are defined in Schedule B the [NPA](#). The priority client groups (all vulnerable and disadvantaged groups) align with Queensland's model.

### **4. RESPONDING TO LEGAL NEED IN QUEENSLAND**

#### Queensland's legal assistance service system

The Queensland Government provides Queensland and Commonwealth funding to LAQ and community organisations (mostly CLCs) to deliver legal assistance services. The Commonwealth Government provides funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSILS) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) delivered in Queensland. The private sector contributes pro bono legal services and other in-kind services through partnerships with community organisations.

LAQ has a statewide service delivery infrastructure, including: offices in Brisbane and 13 regional locations; a state-wide phone line; arrangements with 300 preferred suppliers (private law firms) across Queensland; and outreach services to rural, regional, and remote communities.

A network of 36 community organisations provide generalist and specialist legal assistance services across Queensland, including through a number of statewide phone lines and outreach services to rural, regional, and remote communities. A total of \$60.4 million of Queensland and Commonwealth funding has been allocated to community organisations to deliver these services over 2017-20. ATSILS and FVPLS provide complementary services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Queensland, including in rural, regional, and remote communities.

#### Queensland's model

In 2013-14, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) implemented Queensland's model. The [NPA](#) aligns with Queensland's model. Both promote service delivery that is: targeted to identified areas of need for legal assistance services (based on evidence); maximised within available resources; efficient; effective; and complementary (not duplicating). They also have a strong focus on improving collaboration and coordination between legal services and with non-legal services to better identify legal problems and support holistic service delivery.

Community organisations have been working closely with DJAG over the past few years to implement strategies designed to improve service delivery. New collaborative arrangements, enhanced referral pathways, collocation with complementary services, and improved use of technology are being implemented where appropriate.

## 5. COLLABORATIVE SERVICE PLANNING

### 5.1 Working together

The QLAF will continue to play a central role in driving collaborative service planning under this framework (refer to **Attachment 1**). Practically, the QLAF will continue to:

- implement and oversee collaborative service planning;
- endorse updates to Queensland's evidence base;
- drive best practice in service design by:
  - establishing working groups and specialist legal assistance forums to inform best practice service delivery for priority client groups; and
  - ensuring that existing and new services are developed in a collaborative manner with other legal and non-legal services;
- drive continuous improvement by:
  - progressing current initiatives, including through assigning tasks to working groups and specialist legal assistance forums;
  - identifying new initiatives as current initiatives are implemented; and
  - supporting service providers to identify and adopt methodologies to better understand and measure the effectiveness of their services;
- oversee and enhance the roles of statewide, regional and specialist legal assistance forums in service system design; and
- provide feedback to the Queensland Government on funding strategies based on evidence and best practice in service design.

The QLAF will work effectively by:

- meeting at least four times per year;
- considering and making decisions on matters out of session, as required;
- considering regular updates from working groups and specialist legal assistance forums on the progress of initiatives; and
- providing regular updates and making information available to all organisations that are represented on the QLAF.

## 5.2 Planning for legal assistance services

Using evidence and analysis of legal need, collaborative service planning is required to consider, at minimum (Clause A9 in Schedule A of the [NPA](#)):

- the different locations of services delivered by LAQ, community organisations and Indigenous legal assistance providers in Queensland;
- the mix of legal assistance services available;
- strategies to achieve proportionate service responses – for example that, where practicable, services are proportionate to clients' legal needs and levels of capability;
- the coordination of community legal education at a state level; and
- the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery models.

It is widely recognised that providing holistic services for clients either directly or through effective referral will maximise resources. The Legal Australia-Wide Survey (LAW Survey) indicates that 10% of respondents accounted for 68% of the legal problems reported. In this context, and to progress collaborative service planning, the QLAF will focus on identified high priority vulnerable groups, with an emphasis on ensuring that all clients with multiple and clustered legal problems are assisted.

Planning for legal assistance services will draw on the evidence base (refer to section 5.3) and best practice in service design (refer to section 5.4). This macro planning process will be guided by **Attachment 2**, noting that it is not always linear.

### Developments

The private sector contributes pro bono legal services and other in-kind services through partnerships with community organisations. Through LawRight alone, it is estimated that Queensland's legal profession delivered over 25,000 hours of pro bono legal assistance services in 2016-17.

In 2016, the University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre delivered the *Pro bono mapping project*, which provided a preliminary map of the pro bono contribution of lawyers in Queensland. However, the project identified considerable gaps in information about the coordination and delivery of pro bono services in rural, regional and remote areas of Queensland.

### WORK PLAN

Commencing in 2017-18, Queensland will undertake regionalised collaborative service planning through a project led by Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ).

The project will pilot a regionalised collaborative service planning process in three regions in Queensland. Using evidence of legal need and their own expertise and experience, the project will enable local service providers to identify: services provided locally; service gaps; or opportunities to 'draw in' specialist, statewide services.

As a next step from the *Pro bono mapping project*, the process will also gather information about processes for the coordination and delivery of pro bono services in the three regions.

QLAF and its constituent members, local legal assistance services, and community services, courts and other stakeholders, will be involved in this important work.

### 5.3 Maintaining an evidence base

Under the [NPA](#), Queensland is required to use an evidence base to identify priority clients and the geographic locations in which people have the highest levels of legal need. This will enable Queensland to identify and analyse evidence of disadvantage, as a proxy for legal need, and target legal assistance services accordingly.

The Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales (LJF) *Collaborative Planning Resource – Jurisdictional Data* (CPR-JD) is intended to support the planning of legal assistance services by Australian jurisdictions. The CPR-JD brings together three sets of information relevant to making decisions about legal assistance provision:

- the geographic distribution of the Commonwealth’s priority groups for services;
- the prevalence of experiencing legal problems for each priority group; and
- the geographic distribution of those most likely to be in need of legal assistance services for financial or other reasons.

Other information will also be relevant to service planning, which may include data on existing legal assistance services and their client base, private solicitors, other social services, crime, family violence, debt, accidents, natural disasters, business closures and other external factors that may increase demand for legal assistance.

#### Developments

In 2016, CLCQ delivered a [report](#) containing updated evidence and analysis of legal need. The [report](#) built on the LJF work by overlaying data on existing legal assistance services delivered by LAQ and community organisations.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

The Best Practice and Evidence Base working group will continue to advise the QLAF on improvements to available data and resources, including those delivered by the LJF.

## 5.4 Best practice in service design

Understanding existing service provision, including service types, service accessibility, client profiles and integration with other non-legal services, informs best practice in service design.

The LJF *Collaborative Planning Resource – Service Planning (CPR-SP)* collates information that may assist collaborative service planning at jurisdictional, regional and local levels, as well as planning within individual legal assistance service organisations.

The CPR-SP provides useful information for designing appropriate legal services for specific priority demographic groups: ‘who’ priority clients are, ‘what’ types of services are appropriate to their legal needs and capabilities, and ‘how’ these services might be delivered.

Other information will also be relevant to developing best practice in service design, which may include other statistics and information relevant to the demand for legal assistance services and the best ways to address this demand.

During the term of the [NPA](#), Queensland will build on the empirical research provided by the LJF, including to assist service providers to:

- understand the best practice principles that ensure service planning focuses on evidence and collaboration so that services are targeted, timely, appropriate, integrated and holistic; and
- adopt best practice approaches in delivering legal assistance services to client groups.

This will inform: planning for legal assistance services (refer to section 5.2); and continuous improvement (refer to section 5.5).

### Developments

Across Australia, over one in five people have three or more legal needs in a given year. Many of them are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised in our community, making them hard to reach. They are also far more likely to raise their legal needs with a trusted health professional like a GP, community nurse or social worker, than with a lawyer. Since 2012, health and legal organisations have been building collaborations called health justice partnerships to improve their responsiveness and effectiveness in meeting health and legal needs in Australia (Health Justice Australia, 2017).

The Commonwealth Government funds five of these health justice partnerships across Australia. It will commence an evaluation of those services in November 2017 and it is expected to be completed in August 2018.

Further, Health Justice Australia (HJA), a national charity, has secured a \$3 million philanthropic grant from the Paul Ramsay Foundation to examine whether increased collaboration between health and justice services can give more Australians access to the support they need through an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing health justice partnerships.

A Queensland Health Justice Network coordinates occasional meetings with participants from Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns CLCs. Discussions are also occurring in Queensland about opportunities for collaborative models and partnerships. At a Health Justice Partnerships roundtable meeting in September 2017, the following key issues were identified:

- **data** – collaborating in relation to interagency data to better plan for services and ensure they are delivered where they are most needed;
- **legal needs** – understanding new and emerging legal needs arising from specific reforms, including the *Mental Health Act 2016* and National Disability Insurance Scheme; and
- **partnerships** – changing professional cultures and practices to enable professional partnerships that respond to intersecting needs.

Commencing in 2017-18, Queensland will:

- develop an Indigenous Legal Health Check and deliver collaborative, cross-sector legal service delivery in three Indigenous communities for two years;
- develop resources and training for stakeholders that encourages collaborative service delivery, information sharing and referral pathways between the criminal justice system, Queensland Health and advocacy and support services, to better assist individuals experiencing mental health issues or with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment;
- support up to five legal assistance service providers to implement Legal Health Check resources over 12 months through active collaboration with community or health service providers; and
- develop a best practice 'how to guide' for delivering outreach services.

 OPPORTUNITIES

*Strategic legal assistance research framework and priorities*

The sector has been calling for strategic direction in relation to research needs and priorities. On 1 June 2016, the national legal assistance sector held a research partnerships roundtable to identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership between CLCs and researchers in research projects. That roundtable identified the opportunity to develop a national research strategy.

In 2017-18, the sector will develop a strategic legal assistance research framework to provide guidance on how it should identify and consider research needs and priorities to support service development and planning, in alignment with the broader strategic direction of Queensland's legal assistance model. It will provide the foundation on which research needs and priorities can be proactively agreed on and presented if opportunities arise for Government funding, philanthropic funding, partnerships with universities and in-kind contributions.



## 5.5 Continuous improvement

Queensland will progressively identify and implement continuous improvement during the term of the [NPA](#). The continuous improvement process will be driven by the QLAF and informed by Schedule A of the [NPA](#) (clause A10) and current Queensland priorities.

Continuous improvement includes:

- performance measurement;
- service coordination and accessibility;
- evaluation; and
- training and workforce development.

### Developments

Following customer insight research undertaken in 2015, it has been identified that technology could be enhanced to streamline services, including through increasing accessibility of legal information and entry into the service system. Key recommendations from that research are:

- **self-help** – shifting up to 15% of service delivery to digital channels, including enhancing the provision of general information about domestic violence protection orders and victim assistance services;
- **service accessibility** – developing technologies, including an online appointment booking request form and an on-hold messaging system advising callers of expected wait times; and
- **streamlined communication** – providing updates on client matters through system generated emails or SMS notifications, and providing general information about what clients should bring to their legal advice appointments.

In July 2017, CLCQ delivered a [report](#) on cost saving opportunities, including within the legal sector and with the broader community sector. Overall the report identified limited cost saving opportunities for CLCs, however recommended four areas for future work:

- **structured volunteering** – scoping the level of non-legal support by pro bono firms through a structured volunteering process;
- **capacity building and sector sustainability** – developing an ongoing sustainability strategy for Queensland CLCs to add value to their existing operating budgets;
- **professional development and training** – CLCQ maintaining a strategic focus on providing appropriate training and development activities for CLCs for free, or at highly affordable costs; and
- **information and communication technology (ICT)** – CLCs identifying future opportunities to contribute to and leverage CLC specific ICT projects occurring in other jurisdictions.

In August 2017, CLCQ delivered the [Strategic planning toolkit](#), which is designed to provide practical support for CLCs undertaking strategic planning processes. The toolkit encourages CLCs to consider the impacts of the internal and external environment, focusing their future directions.

Also in August 2017, CLCQ delivered the Self-evaluation toolkit to contribute to building a sector culture of measuring and reporting on outcomes and impacts of community legal services. The client survey due to be undertaken by CLCs in 2017-18 is a key component in informing this important work.

### WORK PLAN

Commencing in 2017-18, CLCQ will appoint a training and development officer for the legal assistance sector to develop, deliver and/or secure: training opportunities based on need; cross-sector training and partnerships; leverage fee based training at discounted rates; coordinate mini regional conferences and develop sector specific content.

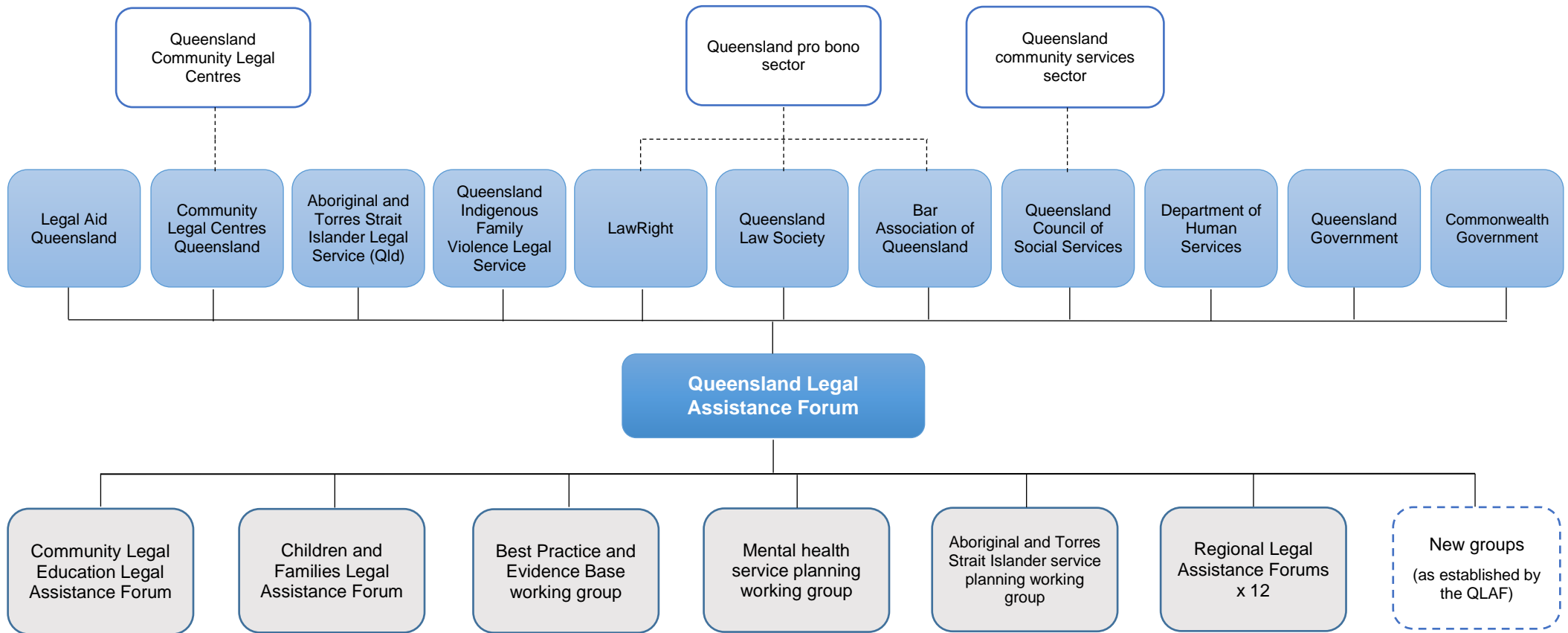


### *Strategic legal assistance evaluation framework and priorities*

Over 2017-20, the Queensland Government will engage independent evaluators to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of Queensland's models for delivering: statewide sexual assault counselling privilege legal assistance services; and statewide coronial legal assistance services. While these evaluations are timely in their respective environments, there is an identified need for strategic direction in relation to evaluation needs and priorities.

In 2017-18, the sector will develop a strategic legal assistance evaluation framework to provide guidance on how it should identify and consider evaluation needs and priorities to support service development and planning, in alignment with the broader strategic direction of Queensland's legal assistance model. It will provide the foundation on which evaluation needs and priorities can be proactively agreed on and presented if opportunities arise for Government funding, philanthropic funding, partnerships with universities and in-kind contributions.

**Attachment 1: Queensland's statewide, regional and specialist legal assistance forums**



## Attachment 2: Collaborative planning for legal assistance services (macro and micro)

Note: The process is not always linear.

