

35th Annual Report 2012-13

Legal Services Commission of South Australia

# Access Services Program

057

# Access Services Program 2012-13

058

*The Legal Services Commission provides free resources to enable each member of the South Australian public to gain easy access to information and advice about his or her legal rights.*



*Christopher Boundy, Manager Access Services Program*

The Access Services Program delivers free legal education, information and advice to all South Australians. Legal queries from individuals are responded to by qualified lawyers and experienced para legal staff either through the Commission's telephone advice hot line or through interviews by appointment. General legal education sessions are run for the community by the Commission's community legal education staff.

## **Legal information and advice**

Between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2013 Commission staff responded to legal questions from more than 92 000 individuals. Nearly 65 000 of these questions came from calls to the Legal Help Line. This free advice service is accessed through 1300 366 424 for the cost of a local call (excluding mobile phones) and is the first point of contact for many Commission clients. Calls are answered from 9am to 4.30pm each business day and callers receive immediate legal information and advice or are referred to an appropriate specialist agency.

For the consideration of more complex matters, more than 27 500 booked advice appointments were provided by Commission staff, most of which were conducted face to face. An increasing number of booked appointments were provided by telephone so as not to disadvantage regional or remote clients or those with mobility issues. Personal appointments are available at each of the Commission's offices and at the regular outreach service provided at Murray Bridge.

Advice staff provide general legal advice, as well as more specialist advice in areas such as migration law, domestic violence and Centrelink matters. Advisers regularly visit metropolitan prisons to provide information and advice to inmates on family law and child support matters.

## Access Services Program 2012-13

### Specialist services

#### Migration

Advice and assistance is provided in certain migration matters. Each application for assistance is assessed on its merits to ensure appropriate allocation of Commission resources. Migration lawyers at the Commission are mainly involved in assisting clients with onshore protection visa applications but also assist with such matters as permanent spouse visa applications for disadvantaged clients.

Through a regular process of tender and contract, the Commonwealth government provides the framework and financial support for the Legal Services Commission to provide migration advice and assistance to eligible visa applicants who are living in the community. This is known as the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS). In response to increased demand, the initial funding of \$40 000 under IAAAS in 2009-10 has increased to \$120 000 in 2012-13. Many of the beneficiaries of this specially funded legal service have been the victims of domestic violence and are in need of urgent advice and assistance.

#### Administrative Appeals Tribunal

Specialist legal advice about Centrelink entitlements is provided at the Commission's Adelaide office, and at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), for clients involved in litigation with Centrelink. A legal adviser is also available to provide pre-hearing advice to unrepresented applicants who are due to appear at the AAT in Commonwealth workplace injury compensation matters.

#### Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is experienced by people in many sectors of the community. Experienced legal and para legal advisers provide expert assistance and referral support for victims who find themselves in such circumstances.

#### Family law and child support advice in prisons

Commission staff attend for interviews at the Adelaide Remand Centre, Yatala Labour Prison, the Adelaide Women's Prison and the Mobilong Detention Centre. A booked telephone advice service is available for prisoners located in rural and regional prisons. Many prisoners need specialist advice about a particular family situation as a result of incarceration, and appreciate the advice received from Commission staff.

#### Public Service Association Legal Services Scheme

The legal advisory service provided by the Commission to members of the Public Service Association (PSA) has been in operation for more than 20 years. This advisory service has a dedicated telephone advice line, and covers all financial members of the PSA, including members of the Community and Public Sector Union/State Public Services Federation (SA Branch) which is the principal trade union representing the workers who provide community services to South Australians.

## Access Services Program 2012-13

060

### Community Legal Education

Community legal education is an important component of the Commission's work and is specifically referred to in the *Legal Services Commission Act 1977*, requiring the Commission and its staff–

*...to promote an understanding by the public (and especially those sections of the public who may have special needs) of their rights, powers, privileges and duties under the laws of the Commonwealth or the State."*

Additionally, the National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments has, as one of its desired outcomes, the targeted delivery of preventative legal services such as community legal education and information and appropriate referrals.

In 2012-13 Commission legal information and education sessions involved more than 11 000 participants. Sessions are designed to provide legal and civic education to groups of people who are identified as being at risk of experiencing social exclusion. Priority groups are new migrants, young people, people with a disability, older persons, Aboriginal people, prisoners, and people living with chronic health issues. In order to access marginalised groups such as these, sessions are also provided to community sector workers.



CLE session delivered by cultural development officer, John Mugabushaka

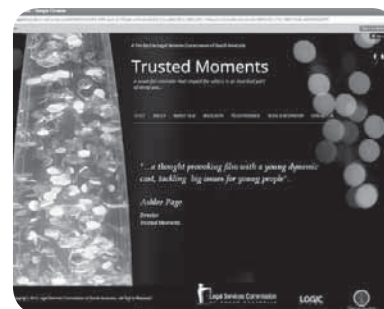
Information and education sessions are held on a variety of subjects including juvenile justice, wills, child support and family law. During the last financial year a number of these sessions were presented in conjunction with TAFE SA and broadcast via videoconferencing facilities to metropolitan, rural and remote sites around South Australia. Registration is available on-line through the Commission's website.

An extensive number of legal education resources have been developed with other agencies and are freely available from the Commission including–

- a DVD entitled *What's the Law?* to assist new migrants to learn about Australian law; and
- a *Workers' Rights* booklet and 16 fact sheets about workplace entitlements to assist employees understand their rights and obligations and to provide information about common work related problems.



The cover art of 'What's the law?' DVD resource



'Trusted Moments' website



'Trusted Moments' promotional postcard

## Access Services Program 2012-13

### Youth education

After the success of the theatre workshop performances of *Expect Respect*, promoting respectful relationships amongst young people, the Commission made a short film entitled *Trusted Moments* to underscore this important message.

*Trusted Moments* was officially launched at the Nova Cinema in Adelaide in November 2012 by the Minister for Youth and Social Inclusion, Hon Ian Hunter MLC. In attendance were 120 invited guests including teachers, school counsellors, youth workers, legal practitioners, members of youth support services, and representatives from government and youth advocacy agencies. The film received widespread acclaim and support, and has been promoted by the Department of Education and Child Development as a resource for sexual health and relationships education. It is also being promoted through the National Youth Connections network. SHine SA is using *Trusted Moments* in its Year 10 Focus Schools 2013 curriculum (reaching 90% of government schools). Acknowledgment and thanks are due to the management and staff of SHine SA for the assistance provided to the Commission during the film's production.



*Chief Justice French presents the Diversity and the Law Award 2013 to Alice Hall, MILE Education Officer*

Available in DVD format, the film has proven an excellent calling card for the Commission's Youth Legal Education Officer who has built educational sessions around the showing of *Trusted Moments* resulting in some impressive attendance numbers (3488 students involved in 124 sessions).

### Migrant education

The Commission assists new migrants in South Australia by delivering educational programs to improve understanding of Australian law and methods of accessing legal assistance.

Community legal education staff delivered educational sessions to over 2800 new migrants in the past financial year and undertook

extensive consultation with migrant community groups to ensure the sessions met the needs of each community. Much of the educational work focused on the needs of the Bhutanese Community, the African Women's Federation, the Muslim Women's Association, Afghan women, the Overseas Chinese Association and the Burundian community. Partnerships were also developed with specialist training service providers such as English Language Services (TAFE), LM Training Specialists, the Multicultural Communities Council, Centrelink Multicultural Forums, Australian Refugee Association, the Migrant Resource Centre and Lutheran Community Care.

This financial year the Commission was the recipient of a National Migration and Settlement Award for its work in raising awareness of legal rights and responsibilities amongst asylum

## Access Services Program 2012-13

062

seekers, refugees and migrants. The *2013 Diversity and the Law Award* was presented at a ceremony in the Great Hall of Parliament House by the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, Justice Robert French AC.

### Aboriginal education

The Commission is part of an enterprising program teaching legal studies at TAFE to young Aboriginal people in Port Augusta. The scheme provides support for Aboriginal young people to study and gain work experience as an introduction to careers in law. Another part of the program includes tutoring and mentoring in the TAFE course *Justice and Policing Studies Aboriginal Pathways Project (Paralegal Certificate IV)*. This course is also aimed at encouraging Aboriginal young people to consider careers in the legal sector.

A further educational program targeted at Aboriginal people is the ACE (Aboriginal Community Education) Law and Advice program. This program is overseen by a lawyer/educator working from the Commission's regional offices at Whyalla and Port Augusta. It involves community liaison meetings for Aboriginal people, with the involvement of 279 participants in the past financial year, and legal education sessions attended by 840 Aboriginal young people.



(L-R) Legal Education Officer, Alice Hall; Chief Justice Robert French; Manager of Access Services, Christopher Boundy at the Awards ceremony, Canberra.



2012 cyber bullying forum: Teacher, Claire Adams; Legal Services Commission of South Australia legal advice and community legal education officer Michelle Morgan and Cummins Area School principal Teelah Wilson. Photo courtesy of Port Lincoln Times.

### Law for Community Workers course

The Law for Community Workers course consists of weekly two hour lectures in two accredited subjects in the TAFE SA certificate IV in Justice Studies. The course was originally developed in 1989 for Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement field officers and the Commission's paralegal staff, and

since 1996 has been video-conferenced across South Australia to expand the student base and to allow rural and remote students to attend. Staff from both original organisations still attend to enhance their knowledge along with a wide range of community workers (an average of 40 enrolments) across the State annually. Each year six scholarships are provided to students from new and emerging communities.

## Access Services Program 2012-13



Legal Education Officer, Liz Ahern, presenting a Justice Studies certificate.

CLE Sessions by attendees	2011-12		2012-13	
	Attendees	Info Sessions	Attendees	Info Sessions
Criminal law	987	38	2781	33
Civil law	1430	52	2046	47
Family law	1032	57	2131	56
General law	7623	310	4181	270
<b>Total</b>	<b>11072</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>11 139</b>	<b>406</b>
By State	6228		6348	
By Commonwealth	4844		4791	

Publications distributed	2011-12	2012-13
Family law	17 665	16 949
Civil law	8810	9 598
Criminal law	79 750	75 558
<b>Total</b>	<b>106 225</b>	<b>102 105</b>
By State	40 710	39 821
By Commonwealth	65 515	62 284

## Access Services Program 2012-13

064

### Web services

With the public accessing more information and resources online the Commission's web services have been instrumental in enabling access to the publications, services and resources provided by the Commission as part of its charter to ensure access to justice to all South Australians.

The Commission website, [www.lsc.sa.gov.au](http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au), continues to provide information about the Commission's services and promote the value of legal help and assistance to the community. The 2012-13 financial year has seen the Commission successfully improve its web accessibility through the production of an array of mobile websites that optimise the viewing experience of Commission content for phone and tablet devices.



*Commission's mobile enabled website, launched November 2012*

### Mobile website innovation

In November 2012 the Deputy Premier, Hon John Rau MP, launched the Commission's mobile website. The Commission now has dedicated mobile websites for the Commission site, the Law Handbook and the Duty Solicitor Handbook, all of which were created in-house.

Such has been the strong demand for information from the public using mobile phones and tablet devices that there has been an increase in visits to the Commission site of almost 300% in the last 12 months.



*Scan the QR code to view the Trusted Moments trailer*

### Strong Commission site growth

In addition to the strong uplift in mobile web traffic to Commission sites, the main desktop Commission site experienced user growth of 24.2% over the 2012-13 financial year, with an average of 16 776 visits each month.

### Duty Solicitor Handbook

An addition to the Commission site has been the Duty Solicitor Handbook launched in July 2012. This new online resource is a practical guide to help duty solicitors in the course of their daily work. The site content is accessible for both desktop computers and mobile devices and has had an average of 3 300 visits per month since its launch.

### Law Handbook Online

A valuable educative resource provided by the Commission is The Law Handbook Online [www.lawhandbook.sa.gov.au](http://www.lawhandbook.sa.gov.au). This publication is widely acknowledged as the premier resource for free legal information in South Australia and continues to be updated regularly. In the past financial year the website experienced an overall increase in mobile device visits, and in particular increased visits using mobile tablet devices. Nearly 6 500 visits per month were recorded from mobile devices to the Law Handbook Online – an increase of 26.5% on the Handbook's year prior mobile traffic.



## Access Services Program 2012-13

### LegalAidSA Android app

Since its launch in November 2012 this free app, available for Android phones, has been downloaded over 200 times across Australia. This app follows the successful launch of the LegalAidSA iPhone app in November 2011.



The Commission launched its android version of the LegalAidSA phone app in November 2012

### Online innovations

The Commission has recently introduced webinar sessions to extend the audience reach of the Commission's free community education sessions. Each training or education session can now have its audience capacity lifted to incorporate up to 100 online guests who can receive and interact with the live presentations. These webcasts have been very well received and have generated excellent positive feedback from metropolitan and regional community workers regarding the quality and delivery of the seminars.

### Mobile website projects

Earlier this year the Commission was involved with a South Australian Government working group to create greater awareness of the *Safe Communities Healthy Neighbourhoods* strategy. For the joint Law Week public promotion the Commission produced a mobile website that brought together and showcased the various State government mobile web content created to assist the public in emergency situations.

### Twitter

The Commission is continuing to be a leader in utilising social media networks to inform the public of the legal education resources, services and event opportunities that it provides. Since November 2011 the LegalAidSA Twitter account has been a daily voice on the internet and, by 30 June 2013, had secured its 1 000<sup>th</sup> subscriber.



The Commission's LegalAidSA 1,000th Twitter subscriber

### Facebook

The Commission's Facebook site continues to provide an effective and engaging means of delivering information and child support services to clients across South Australia. The site recorded 275 108 content clicks during the past 12 months and provides a cost effective and direct means for the Commission to connect with its geographically diverse client base online.

The Child Support Unit's Facebook page is integral to the provision of child support information and services and supports the Unit's call-back service. As of 30 June 2013 the ChildSupportUnitSA Facebook community had 1 200 subscribers.

During the financial year the following comment was posted to the Child Support Unit on its Facebook site:

“ Just wanted to say thank you so much for helping me with my change of assessment application. It is finally done as kids dad would not respond to CSA they had to contact his employers, ATO etc. It has now been changed to a fair amount and that is all I have ever wanted. Thank you ☺

I have recommended you to several people who I know you have also helped. You offer a great service to help for a confusing system!

”

## Access Services Program 2012-13

066

### YouTube

The Commission's YouTube Channel, established in October 2011, has proven to be another solid online resource for South Australians to watch legal education video content. Over the last financial year the site has had 1 987 video views with over 2 600 minutes of footage viewed in total. 56% of these views were from desktop computers and 36% were viewed on mobile devices.

### Library

The library at the Legal Services Commission is highly valued. As well as providing access to cases and other legal resources for the legal staff at the Commission, it offers research support to private legal practitioners who are undertaking legal aid cases.

The Librarian and a Library Assistant provide the Commission's legal practitioners with training in how to conduct legal research and use the ever expanding on-line facilities.

### Website page views

	2011-12	2012-13
Law Handbook online	1 859 228	1 439 963
LSC site	452 260	637 454
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 311 488</b>	<b>2 077 417</b>
State Law	1 434 628	1 211 504
Commonwealth Law	876 860	865 913
Criminal Law	611 614	534 579
Civil Law	1 266 290	1 114 202
Family Law	433 584	428 636