

36th Annual Report 2013-14

Legal Services Commission of South Australia

# Access Services Program

065

# Access Services Program 2013-14

066

*The Legal Services Commission provides free information and advice to the people of the South Australia in respect of their legal rights.*



*Christopher Boundy, Manager Access Services Program.*

The Legal Services Commission conducts an Access Services Program that delivers free legal information and advice, and legal education, to all South Australians. Through the Commission's telephone advice help line, or through interviews by appointment, qualified lawyers and experienced para legal staff respond to legal enquiries. General legal education sessions are run for members of the community by the Commission's community legal education staff.

## **Legal Information and Advice**

Between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2014 Access Services staff responded to nearly 100 000 enquiries and legal questions. Over 71 000 of these enquiries came from calls to the Legal Help Line. This free legal advice service is accessed through 1300 366 424 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, 27 400 booked half hour advice appointments were provided by Commission staff, most of which were in person. Some booked appointments were provided by telephone so as not to disadvantage regional or remote clients or those with mobility issues. Advice staff provide general legal advice as well as more specialist advice in areas such as migration law, domestic violence and Centrelink matters. Personal appointments are available at each of the Commission's eight offices and at the regular outreach service provided at Murray Bridge and the Adelaide Magistrates Court.

## Access Services Program 2013-14

Advisers regularly visit the Adelaide Remand Centre and metropolitan prisons to provide information and advice to inmates on family law and child support matters.

### Specialist Services

#### Migration

Advice and assistance is provided in certain migration matters. Each application for assistance is assessed on its merits to ensure an appropriate allocation of Commission resources. Migration lawyers at the Commission are mainly involved in assisting clients with onshore protection visa applications, but they 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). Many of the beneficiaries of this specially funded legal service have been the victims of domestic violence and are in need of urgent migration legal 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 people who are involved in litigation with Centrelink. A legal adviser is also available at the AAT to provide pre-hearing advice to unrepresented applicants in Commonwealth workplace injury compensation matters.

#### Consumer law

A specialist adviser in consumer law and consumer credit law is employed in the Adelaide office. This adviser regularly attends the Investigation Summons Court in the Adelaide Magistrates Court to give debtors advice and assistance in conjunction with financial counselling staff. The role includes a regular weekly radio spot on ABC Riverland, speaking about verbal contracts, second hand car dealings and door-to-door scams.

In February, the Commission hosted the first meeting of the South Australian Consumer Law Consultative Forum for 2014. The forum meets quarterly and includes representatives from a wide range



of organisations including financial counsellors, community legal centres, State and Commonwealth regulatory bodies, the Law Society of SA, Consumers SA and the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS). Topics discussed included changes to residential tenancies laws and real estate legislation, the new Consumer Credit Legal Service and the Utilities Literacy program.

In conjunction with Consumer and Business Services, two seminars were held to coincide with World Consumer Rights Day. The *Help Me if You Can* seminars were presented as hypotheticals and posed a range of common consumer law related problems. A panel of experts presided, consisting of representatives

## Access Services Program 2013-14

068

from the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Consumer and Business Services, Consumers SA and the South Australian Energy and Water Ombudsman.

### Domestic violence

People in many sectors of the community experience domestic violence. Experienced legal and para legal advisers provide expert assistance and referral support for victims.

### Family law and child support advice in prisons

Commission staff regularly attend 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 require individual specialist advice about a family situation that has occurred as a result of incarceration. They are appreciative of the advice provided by 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. The advisory service operates a dedicated telephone advice line available to all financial members of the PSA, including members of the Community and Public Sector Union/State Public Services Federation (SA Branch), the principal trade union representing workers who provide community services to South Australians.

### Community Legal Education

Community legal education is an important component of the Commission's work. It is specifically referred to in section 10(1) of the *Legal Services Commission Act 1977* as a function of the Commission, requiring the Commission to—

*initiate and carry out educational programs 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 a desired outcome the targeted delivery of preventative legal services through community legal education and information and appropriate referrals.

In 2013-14 legal information and education sessions were conducted for more than 18 000 participants. These education sessions are designed to provide legal and civic education to people identified as being at risk of social exclusion. Priority groups are young people, people with a disability, older persons, Aboriginal people, new migrants, prisoners and people living with chronic health issues. To access marginalised groups such as these, sessions are also provided to community sector workers.

Public legal information sessions were held on a variety of subjects including consumer law, migration law, family violence, juvenile justice, wills and advance care directives, child support and family law. These free sessions were presented at the Commission's Adelaide

## Access Services Program 2013-14



2014 Walk for Justice team

office with simultaneous webcasts across South Australia. Registration for a public information session is now available online through the Commission's website.

### Community engagement

The Commission is committed to contributing to the community through participation in events such as National Reconciliation Week, Law Week, Youth Week and Refugee Week. The Commission has joined forces with some of Australia's leading businesses, sporting bodies and NGO's to support the **RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME** campaign.

Staff members regularly hold morning teas and engage in other events to raise funds in support of the Cancer Council, the Butterfly

Movement, Red Cross, the RSPCA, the Heart Foundation and JusticeNet SA.

### Youth education

The Commission's innovative youth education program assists young people and community workers to understand the law and how it may affect them. The aim of the program is to help young people know their rights, understand their responsibilities, and navigate confidently through the legal system, knowing when and were to ask for help and seek further assistance. In the past year, the Youth Legal Education Officer facilitated 221 legal education sessions with a total of 5 963 participants. In addition to

holding seminars in the Adelaide and metropolitan area, outreach sessions were held in the regional centres of Mount Gambier, Berri, Renmark, Clare, Murray Bridge, Victor Harbor and the outer Adelaide Hills.

The Commission's work in youth legal education is based on a community centred approach, using practical and culturally appropriate methodologies. Support is provided for relevant organisations and community members, including educators, parents and people working with young people.

The Commission's short film *Trusted Moments* continues to be promoted by the Department of Education and Child Development as a resource for relationships and sexual health education. It is also promoted through the National Youth Connections network and an advertisement for *Trusted Moments* has appeared as a top banner in *Learnlink*, the Department of Education's 'teacher learning' online.

Officially launched in November 2012, the film has received widespread acclaim and support.

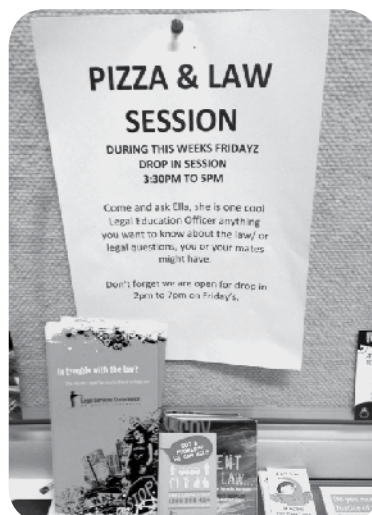
## Access Services Program 2013-14

Family Planning Western Australia has endorsed and promoted the resource within its school and community health worker networks.

During 2013-14, 70 organisations independently screened *Trusted Moments* and 40 schools or organisations received community legal education workshops delivered by Commission staff. In addition, various organisations and government departments promoted the film and its use as a teaching resource.

In 2013-14 many organisations used *Trusted Moments* within their own programs. Shine SA included *Trusted Moments* in its school program, resulting in 120 government schools presenting the film to year 10 students. SAPOL included *Trusted Moments* within its school program run by 17 local service areas in South Australia.

During this financial year, legal education sessions relevant to young people were delivered at a diversity of forums. These included the Aboriginal Health Council's conference and the City of Charles Sturt's 'Youth Central', a drop-in centre providing an 'open space'



for young people after school. 'Pizza and Law' sessions allowed young people to talk informally to a lawyer about legal issues important to them in a relaxed and familiar atmosphere.

A further initiative in 2013-14 was a series of workshops at the Kilburn

Education Centre run in partnership with ActNow Theatre. Using seed funding from the City of Port Adelaide Enfield, a project was developed to engage vulnerable young people in a theatre process to develop their capacity to understand and better cope with the legal system. The project aims to provide a positive program for young people by using theatre and storytelling to explore how legal issues can affect the lives of participants, and how to access the help of the Legal Services Commission. By engaging young people who are in, or at risk of entering, the criminal justice system, the project can build its educational content to meet the needs of those experiencing severe social, geographic and economic disadvantage.



## Access Services Program 2013-14



Governor's Multicultural Award 2013 for work in migrant education



Far north community radio station – Umeewarra

### Migrant education

This financial year the Migrant Information and Legal Education Program engaged with 6 075 new migrants, almost double the number from the year before. Much of the migrant education work is delivered with the aid of *What's the law? Australian Law for New Arrivals*, a resource kit that explores legal issues commonly encountered by new arrivals in a simple audio visual format.

The migrant community legal education program is underpinned by extensive consultation with migrant community groups and is delivered in partnership with local specialist organisations including, English Language Services, Living Skills Unit (TAFE), Red Cross, the African Women's Federation, the Muslim Women's Association, the Overseas Chinese Association, Multicultural Communities Council, Middle Eastern Communities

Council, Salisbury City Council, Lutheran Community Care, Life Without Barriers, Survivors of Torture and Trauma Rehabilitation Service, Women's Health Services, and Uniting Care Wesley Bowden.

Highlights this year of the migrant community legal education program included being a finalist in the Governor's Multicultural Awards, an outreach tour to migrant communities in Mt Gambier and Naracoorte and receiving a grant from the Law and Justice Foundation of South Australia to develop a *Short Guide to South Australian Law for New Migrants*, which is due for completion next year.

### Aboriginal education

The Aboriginal Education Program was given a boost in February 2014 with the commencement of the *Legal Show*, produced by Umeewarra Media for South

Australia's only Aboriginal radio station.

The *Legal Show* consists of regularly broadcast sessions on different topics of law. The Commission's Legal Advice and Community Legal Education Officer (ACE lawyer) appears on the show on a fortnightly basis, with a representative of the Port Augusta based Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation appearing on alternate fortnights. Radio shows are pre-recorded and topics are selected through consultation. The very first radio broadcast provided an opportunity for the ACE lawyer to talk about the range of education, support and advice offered by the Commission.

The ACE lawyer works from the Commission's offices at Whyalla and Port Augusta and has extensive involvement in local school and community events, providing free

## Access Services Program 2013-14

educational sessions and promoting use of Commission services. Presentations have this year ranged from a session on *Wills and Advance Care Directives* at the Whyalla Library, to education sessions at secondary schools on *Young People and the Law*. Through the ACE lawyer the Commission continues its ongoing weekly involvement in the TAFE Pathways Program at Port Augusta TAFE.



### Law for Community Workers course

The Law for Community Workers course consists of two subjects offered in Certificate IV in Justice Studies delivered in association with TAFE SA. The course was originally developed in 1989 for Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement field officers and the Commission's paralegal staff. Since 1996 it has been video conferenced across

072

CLE Sessions by attendees	2012-13		2013-14	
	Attendees	Info Sessions	Attendees	Info Sessions
Criminal law	2781	33	3781	126
Civil law	2046	47	2597	83
Family law	2131	56	1610	31
General law	4181	270	10 255	313
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 139</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>18 243</b>	<b>533</b>
By State	6348		11 726	
By Commonwealth	4791		6517	

Publications distributed	2012-13	2013-14
Family law	16 949	17 023
Criminal law	9 598	13 715
Civil law	75 558	56 088
<b>Total</b>	<b>102 105</b>	<b>86 826</b>
By State	39 821	33 254
By Commonwealth	62 284	53 572



# Access Services Program 2013-14

South Australia to expand the student base and to allow rural and remote students to attend. Around 40 community workers from across the sector now attend each year to enhance their legal knowledge and their ability to assist clients with legal problems.

## Web services

The South Australian public makes extensive use of the online resources provided by the Commission. The Commission website contains contact information for the Commission, legal updates of interest to the public and the Law Handbook. Visits to the main desktop Commission website increased by 11% in the past year with an average 18 218 visits each month.

### Commission mobile website

Since the mobile website was launched in 2012, site visits have consistently grown. Mobile phone calls to the Legal Help Line (1300 366 424) from the Commission's mobile website increased by 70% this financial year to over 3 000 calls.

## Website page views

	2012-13	2013-14
Law Handbook online	1 439 963	1 118 851
LSC site	637 454	708 019
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 077 417</b>	<b>1 826 870</b>
State Law	1 211 504	1 065 431
Commonwealth Law	865 913	761 439
Criminal Law	534 579	469 505
Civil Law	1 114 202	979 751
Family Law	428 636	377 614

### LegalAidSA android app

This free app, available for android phones, has been downloaded over 200 times across Australia since November 2012. The LegalAidSA iphone app was introduced in November 2011.

### Duty Solicitor Handbook

The Duty Solicitor Handbook online was launched in July 2012 and is a popular online resource for many people, although principally used by Commission legal practitioners. The site content is accessible on both desktop and mobile devices, and in 2013-14 recorded 53 113 site visits (up 65% from 2012-13) and 120 738 page views (up 41% from 2012-13).

### Law Handbook

This plain English, free and accessible publication is widely acknowledged as the premier resource for free legal information in South Australia. In 2013-14 the website experienced extensive traffic from mobile devices, and in particular mobile tablet devices, with an average of 10 013 visits per month (31% increase on 2012-13).

### Webinars

The Community Legal Education Unit has introduced in-house webcast facilities for its free public information seminars. This enables registrants to participate in training sessions through their desktop computer at home or from work. Each session now has an average of over 40 online registrants in addition to the live seminar audience.

## Access Services Program 2013-14

074

### Twitter

The Commission continues to successfully use Twitter on a daily basis to distribute information on legal resources and relevant public information, as well as legal aid and consumer law updates. The LegalAidSA channel had 1 627 subscribers as at 30 June 2014.

### Facebook

The Commission's Facebook page has expanded in content and reach since commencing in September 2013 and already has 433 subscribers. It is an effective way of communicating to all South Australians, with regular visitors from communities at Port Augusta, Millicent, Victor Harbor, Coober Pedy and Naracoorte. The Child Support Unit's Facebook page is integral to the provision of child



*Di Thompson, Senior Librarian, with her 25 Years Service Award*



support information and promotes the Unit's vital call back service where clients can schedule a call to speak to a child support legal adviser.

### YouTube

The Commission's YouTube channel was first implemented in October 2011 and is a useful adjunct to the education program. In 2013-14 there was a 42% recorded increase in visitors viewing the Commission's videos (2 823 video views).



### Library

The library at the Commission is a valued resource as well as a retreat for those seeking some quiet reading time. It occupies pride of place at the front of the Adelaide office building. In addition to assisting the Commission's 219 employees, the library staff offer research and support to those private legal practitioners who are undertaking legal work for clients who have been granted legal aid funding.

The library is well serviced by experienced staff. This year, the Director presented the Commission Librarian, Di Thompson, with a certificate representing 25 years of service. The library assistant, Ros Emms, has completed 18 years of service with the Commission. In 2006 the Australian Law Librarian's Group named Di Thompson Australian Law Librarian of the Year.