



## Final grant report form

<b>Project title</b>	Hunter Youth Law Service
<b>Organisation</b>	Hunter Community Legal Centre
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<b>Date of this report</b>	09-03-2020

You must submit this Final Grant Report when you finish the project, in accordance with your Grant Agreement.

The report is divided into two sections – Part A and Part B.

### **PART A – EXTERNAL**

This part of your report is for external audiences. We may post this part of your final report on our website. It includes a description of the project, how you evaluated the project, what you found out and your recommendations. This information is useful for intending applicants to read, particularly if they are planning a project that is similar to yours, or that intends to work with a like audience.

## **PART A – EXTERNAL**

### **1. Description of the project**

Describe the project in just enough detail so that anyone can understand it. What was the aim of the project, who was the intended audience and what strategies did you implement to achieve the aim?

The aim of the Hunter Youth Law Service is to provide access to justice for young people with civil and family law problems in the Hunter region. The Hunter Youth Law Service provides legal advice and assistance for non-criminal matters i.e. civil and family law, at Hunter Valley Children's Courts. By providing legal assistance in a venue that young people are already attending the project aims to identify and provide early assistance for civil and family law problems that are often ignored and allowed to escalate. The youth solicitor attends Court on Children's criminal list day to talk to young people aged 15 to 24. Young people at the court waiting for their matter to be heard are approached by the youth solicitor and offered a legal health check, a tool to identify if the young person has any civil and family law issues. The project aims to:

- Increase young people's and their family's knowledge of where/how to get legal assistance.
- Provide early diagnosis and intervention in civil and family law issues (reducing escalation of issues).
- Increase the number of young people aged 15-24 who are engaged with the Hunter Community Legal Centre, addressing the gap in service delivery to young people within our catchment area.
- Resolve civil and family law issues to assist in young people's criminal matters – e.g. Housing can lead to better bail conditions.

### **2. The project – what happened?**

How did the project come about?

Our experience as a Community Legal Centre has shown us that disadvantaged young people have a wide range of legal issues including criminal, civil and family law. Deborah Macourt's report "Youth and the law: it's not all about juvenile justice and child welfare" confirms that young people have both a wide range of legal problems and substantial legal problems and that additional factors of disadvantage such as disability, homelessness or mental illness make young people even more vulnerable to legal problems.

Discussions with Children's Court Magistrate Sheedy and the Youth Services Manager at Cessnock confirm that there is a high need for civil and family law assistance for disadvantaged young people in the Hunter Region. Legal issues commonly experienced by young people in the Magistrate's court include; Education Act matters, school suspensions,

mental health issues, residential and care issues, homelessness, victims of crime, debt and complaints about Police. Furthermore our client data indicates a gap in our service delivery. While young people under 24 represent over 31% of the population of NSW, they only represented 10% of our clients before the project. The Law and Justice Foundation Collaborative Planning Resource indicates the catchment of the Hunter Community Legal Centre has a high proportion of disengaged young people (not studying and not working) compared to the state and to the total youth population in our catchment.

Briefly set out the project stages and what happened in each stage.

### **Stage 1. Planning**

- Youth lawyer recruited
- Steering committee formed
- Links developed with stakeholders
- Evaluation methods finalised
- Courts selected (Muswellbrook, East Maitland & Raymond Terrace)
- Gather resources

### **Stage 2. Commence Project**

- Solicitor attends courts (East Maitland fortnightly, Muswellbrook and Raymond Terrace monthly).
- Data gathered for evaluation (Client surveys, stakeholder surveys, client data)
- Steering committee meetings (quarterly)

### **Stage 3. End of project**

- Complete evaluation
- Produce report

### **If grant materials were produced:**

How were they distributed?

Flyers were distributed face to face during outreach at the courts, community events and interagency events. Flyers were also available at the courts and digital flyers were displayed on Hunter Community Legal Centre social media pages.

What was the extent of the distribution?

Materials were distributed throughout the 12 months (approximately) the project ran. Flyers were available at East Maitland, Raymond Terrace and Muswellbrook Children's Courts. Community and interagency events were all located within the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie,

Port Stephens, Great Lakes and Hunter Valley regions.

If applicable, at the time of this report, what has been the extent of online use of your publication?

N/A

Now that the project has concluded, how did the implementation and/or the outcome differ from what was originally intended? Did anything surprise you? Were there any unintended outcomes?

Something that surprised us was the number of police complaints. Police complaints were the third most common problem type among the young people we assisted. Young people described feeling as though they were being treated unfairly and unlawfully by police. Examples given by young people included body searches, police stops and not being taken seriously when they approached police for assistance. While some young people did not want to pursue any action, our youth solicitor assisted a number of young people to make formal police complaints.

It was identified throughout the project that follow up with young people regarding referrals needed to happen quickly, as it was often difficult to make contact with them and if too much time had passed between contact they may become disengaged. To help address this issue, student and volunteer solicitors at HCLC helped create a list of work development order providers across Newcastle, Hunter and Port Stephens areas beyond the public list which enabled the youth solicitor to organise work development orders for young people without the need to refer them to a third party (Legal Aid work development order team). Clients were also asked during their initial meeting with us to give their consent for the youth lawyer to obtain information on their behalf. The list of work development order providers will continue to be used within the Hunter Community Legal Centre.

We were unable to identify if the resolution of civil and family law issues was able to assist in young people's criminal matters in terms of bail conditions or sentencing. The service was not intended to go into the court. While we don't have firsthand data or observation of outcomes in criminal matters, we received informal feedback from stakeholders that young people's engagement in education did have a positive impact on their criminal matters.

### **3. Evaluation**

What questions did you ask to evaluate whether you had achieved your aim?

Client surveys were conducted over the phone and consisted of six questions. These

questions aimed to assess whether the project had been successful in meeting its aims and objectives, and to gain insight into client's individual experiences both with the Hunter Youth Law Service and the legal system more broadly.

In total, 28 Hunter Youth Law Service clients completed the survey. There were difficulties getting into contact with clients. A number of clients who did not have a phone had provided a phone number which belonged to a family member or friend. We found that during our office hours in which we'd conduct the surveys, we were mostly unsuccessful in getting in contact with these clients as they weren't with that family member or friend. Another issue was that many clients changed their phone numbers frequently. This was not only an issue in terms of conducting the client surveys but also for the youth solicitor who was still working on active files for these clients.

### *Client Survey Questions*

- Had you ever had help with this issue before you spoke to our service?
- Before speaking to our service, did you know a lawyer could help with this issue?
- Has this issue been resolved?
- Do you know where to get legal assistance in the future?
- How likely would you be to recommend this service to other people? (Scale 0-10)
- Do you have any other comments or feedback?

There were a number of relevant stakeholders to the project who were able to provide valuable feedback on the Hunter Youth Law Service. As the project is based at the children's court, we wanted to know if the project had an impact, positive or negative, on other services working with the young people at the courts. This included workers from Department of Education, Youth Justice and Family and Community Services, as well as duty solicitors, youth workers and court staff. Other stakeholders were steering committee members and members of agencies to which the service made referrals.

### *Stakeholder Survey Questions*

- Do you know what the Hunter Youth Law Service does/offers?
- How did you find out about the service?
- Has the presence of the Hunter Youth Law Service solicitor/worker at the children's court helped or hindered you to carry out your role? How?
- Do you want the service to continue?
- Is there anything you would change or suggest to improve the service for clients and the community?
- Do you have any other comments or feedback?

What data did you gather to answer your questions?

Between June and December 2019 the project worker conducted telephone surveys with clients and a combination of telephone and face to face interviews with stakeholders.

Data was also collected from the Community Legal Assistance Services System (CLASS), which is the data system community legal centres use to record and manage their legal and related services. This data includes demographic information, number and types of referrals, as well as client outcomes.

Did you achieve your aim? What did you find out?

Hunter Community Legal Centre believe we have achieved the aim of this project, to provide access to justice for young people with civil and family law problems in the Hunter Region. During the 12 months the project was operating the youth solicitor and a number of other HCLC staff, students and volunteers have not only participated in the outreach service to the children's courts but also attended many community and interagency events to build awareness of the legal services available to young people and their families.

The project successfully increased Hunter Community Legal Centres service delivery to young people aged 0-24 by 40%. This age group had previously represented only 10% of Hunter Community Legal Centres clients. For the year 2019 this had increased to approximately 14% of clients. 82% of clients that participated in the evaluation survey had not received assistance with their legal issues before engaging with the HYLS, with 75% unaware that it was a legal issue a lawyer could assist with. This highlights not only a lack of understanding of civil legal issues, but also the fact that young people are unlikely to seek assistance with these types of issues. An encouraging result from the client surveys was that 65% of the young people surveyed felt that they knew where they could get legal assistance in the future. This demonstrates that their awareness of legal services as well as their understanding of civil and family law matters has increased through their engagement with the HYLS.

### **Number of young people engaged with**

- Over 200 Legal health checks completed
- 28 outreach visits to Hunter Children's Courts
- 71 young people became clients of the Hunter Community Legal Centre
- A total of 118 referrals were made to external services which included:

Education Services (Department of Education, TAFE NSW, alternative education providers), Welfare Rights Centre, NDIS providers, Homelessness/Housing services, Birth Deaths & Marriages, Victims Services, Consumer Affairs/Fair Trading Department, Centrelink, Juvenile Justice, Revenue NSW, Work Development Order Service (Legal Aid NSW), Headspace and Department of Human Services.

## Law Check Up

NAME.....

Do you have a debt or unpaid fines? .....Yes/No  
Example: mobile, payday loan, credit card, car/bank loan, debt collectors, someone owes you money

Do you have a problem with something you bought or signed?.....Yes/No  
Example: scams, unfair deals, door-to-door sales, insurance, funeral or other policies

Do you have a problem with Centrelink? .....Yes/No  
Example: no payments, owe Centrelink money, charged with fraud, payments have stopped

Do you have a problem with your housing? .....Yes/No  
Example: evicted, repairs, behind in rent or mortgage, problems with landlord/flatmates/neighbours

Do you have a problem at work?.....Yes/No  
Example: sacked, underpaid, had an accident, bullied or harassed

Do you have family or relationship troubles? .....Yes/No  
Example: family breakdown, family violence, child support, placement, separation, want to see your kids

Have you been discriminated against, or harassed?.....Yes/No  
Example: by police, government department, school, real estate agent, shopping centre, at work or pub/club

Have you been treated badly by a Police Officer?.....Yes/No  
Example: strip searched, tasered, detained, unnecessary force, wrongfully arrested, stop and searches

Have you been injured: in an accident? Or been a victim of violence? ..... Yes/No  
Example: car/work/shopping centre accident OR domestic violence, physical or sexual assault OR been ordered to pay restitution/compensation

Are you living by yourself? ..... Yes/No  
Finding it hard to get your own Medicare Card/ID/birth certificate or changing your name

Do you have any problems at school? ..... Yes/No  
Example: unfairly suspended, expelled, in trouble for skipping, problems enrolling in school

Young Person's Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name)

consent to the Hunter Community Legal Centre releasing my personal information to any organisation that may assist in the resolution of the legal issues identified by me on this form.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Young Person's Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name)


consent to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organisation)

releasing my personal information to my solicitors at the Hunter Community Legal Centre.


Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Other contacts

Organisation	Consent to contact (Yes/No)	Case worker name	Case worker contact details
Juvenile Justice			
FACS			
Resi Care Service Provider			
NDIS			
Aftercare Service Provider			
OOHC Care Service Provider			
MH/Guardian/Other worker			



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**Figure 1. Legal Health Check**

## Demographics

- 89% of clients were under 18 years old. 11% were aged 18-24 years old. The youngest client was 8 years old.
- 43% identified as Aboriginal, highlighting that the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice system starts at a very young age. Of Hunter Community Legal Centre's total clients, only 10.74% identify as Indigenous.
- 69% of clients were male and 31% were female. Males only represent 43% of Hunter Community Legal Centre's total clients.
- 48% of clients identified as having a disability and/or mental illness. This is higher than the Hunter Community Legal Centre average, for which approximately 32% of clients identify as having a disability and/or mental illness.

## Types of service provided

Type	Type Description	Amount
Other Representation Service	Advocating on behalf of a client to a third party. Legal representation requires more extensive work. A service that requires more involvement because the client is not capable of advocating for themselves on the matter/s. Examples	24

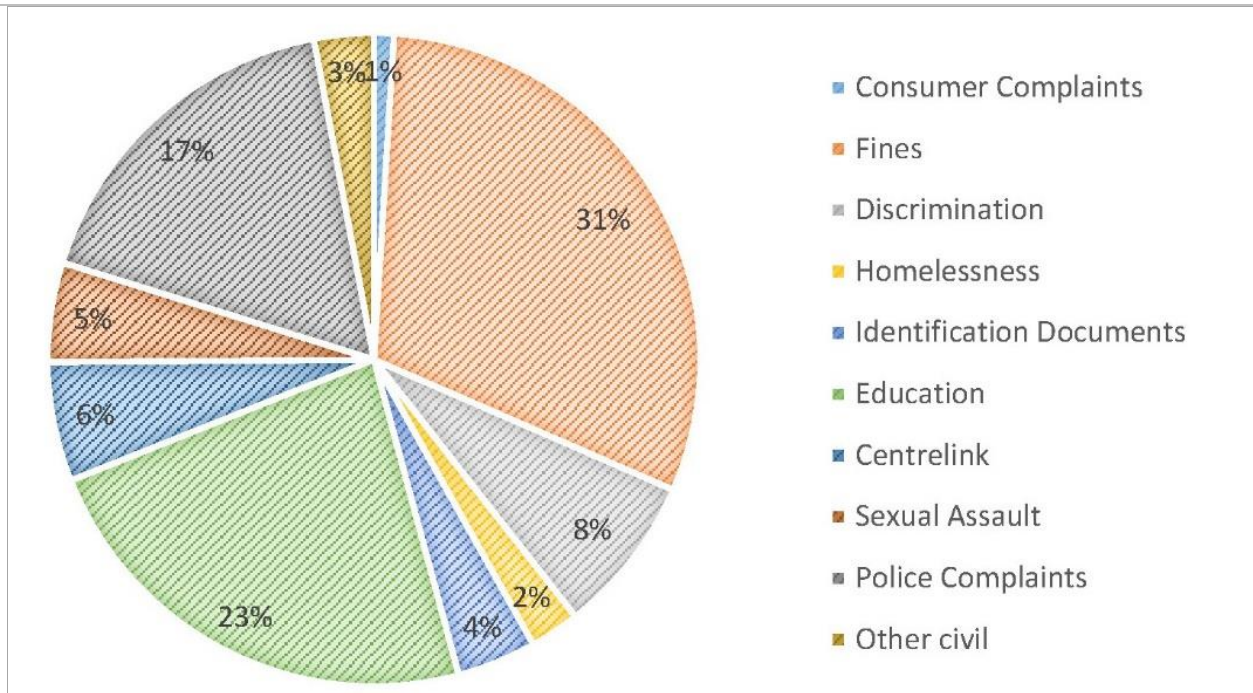
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organising a WDO for a client (requires communications with Revenue NSW, Legal Aid, etc.)</li> </ul>	
Legal Task	<p>Requires some assistance such as paperwork, online application, etc.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young person needs assistance with obtaining a Medicare card</li> <li>Assistance with a victims compensation claim</li> <li>Assistance with making a formal police complaint</li> </ul>	54
Legal Advice	<p>Less assistance than a legal task.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing information on how to recover funds and make a consumer complaint about goods not being received from online retailer</li> <li>Providing information on how a police complaint can be made but NOT assisting the young person to do so.</li> </ul>	98
Non Legal Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attending a meeting/appointment as a support person (not as a lawyer)</li> </ul>	8
Information	<p>Providing general information regarding a legal or non-legal matter.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing information how to apply for a Centrelink payment and what payments may be eligible</li> <li>Providing information on how to apply to an education provider (TAFE)</li> </ul>	343
External Referrals	<p>Referring young people to external services.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referrals made to homelessness services, education services, mental health services etc.</li> </ul>	118

**Table 1. Service types**

### Problem Types

Young people who engaged with the Hunter Youth Law Service often had more than one civil legal problem in addition to their criminal matter. Problem types were identified across ten categories; Consumer complaints, fines, discrimination, homelessness, identification documents, education, Centrelink, sexual assault, police complaints, and 'other' civil legal problems.





**Figure 2. Problem Types**

The most common legal issue we assisted with was fines, most often resulting from public transport offences (travelling without a valid ticket, smoking, putting feet on seats). The combined amount of debt resulting from fines for the 27 clients with this issue (at the time each first engaged with the service) was \$15,715.67 dollars. Of these clients, twenty were assisted in organising a work development order which would enable them to pay off their fines through participation in activities such as education and training, volunteer work, sport, recreational activities, counselling and doctors' appointments. Providing an opportunity to pay off their fines whilst also increasing their participation in activities that promote health, wellbeing and community participation can have a positive impact on a young person's life. If overdue fines are not paid, enforcement penalties apply. If a minor does not pay their fines after being sent a penalty reminder notice, they are charged a \$25 enforcement penalty. For people over 18, that increases to \$65. We saw a number of young people who had incurred hundreds of dollars' worth of enforcement penalties, increasing their total debt to over \$1000 dollars. Other enforcement penalties that young people face are licence and vehicle registration restrictions, where they may be restricted from obtaining a license, have their licence suspended, or have their vehicle registration cancelled. These kind of restrictions can have a negative impact on a young person's ability to participate in education and employment. This is particularly an issue in rural and regional areas where public transport is limited and attending school or participating in employment may require significant travel. Revenue NSW can also garnishee wages or bank accounts, issue Community Service Orders and seize personal property if overdue fines are unpaid.

The second most common problem type was education. The problems young people experience with education include expulsions, long suspensions and difficulty participating in traditional schooling due to mental health issues or disability. The majority of young people with education matters were disengaged from mainstream education for a variety of reasons. There were 22 referrals made to education providers including Department of Education,

TAFE, and specialist schools including Alesco Senior College, Margaret Jurd College and St Phillips Christian College DALE. These schools provide learning environments that cater to different needs, including young people who are parents, have mental health issues, disabilities and learning difficulties.

The following case study highlights the complexity of issues some young people face. The youth solicitor found that certain issues like finding secure housing and getting out of a violent relationship need to be addressed before young people are able to think about less immediate issues like education and employment.

### **Case Study 1 (Education matter)**

We met Ben\* at the Children's Court. After approaching Ben it was immediately clear that he had other concerns on his mind besides his criminal matter. Ben had been self-harming and disclosed that he had been a victim of violence. He wished to leave his current living situation. After working with our youth lawyer for a couple of weeks, Ben has now left his violent relationship and is seeking to become independent. He is now financially independent and recently paid off all his fines. He is now linked in with a community support service and has a case worker supporting him with housing. Our youth lawyer also assisted Ben in enrolling in school again and Ben is currently completing his HSC.

### **Findings from client surveys**

- Only 18% of clients had received help with the issue before. Of these clients, the majority had been helped by a family member.
- 75% of the clients surveyed did not know a lawyer could help them with their issue/s. This indicates that young people are unlikely to recognise when something is a non-criminal legal issue. The consequences for not recognising a legal issue and subsequently not seeking assistance, or not getting help from the right place, can have a major impact on a young person's life.
- Just over half of client surveys said the issue has been resolved. About a quarter of clients were unsure if the issue had been resolved, and another quarter said the issue had not been resolved. The reasons why issues had not been resolved fell into the following categories:
  - The issue is still ongoing
  - Waiting to hear back from an agency or individual
  - I have to contact/arrange something
- 62% of clients felt they knew where to get legal assistance in the future.
- 27 clients were assisted with issues relating to fines. 20 of these clients were assisted to organise work development orders (WDO). The combined amount owing to fines for those 27 clients (at the time each first engaged with the service) is \$15,715.67.

### **Client Feedback**

The feedback below all relates to outcomes – how the legal assistance helped the client, what was the result, what are they doing now etc.

*"I've started TAFE now and am looking for work. I'm starting to understand all the legal stuff, you guys helped me heaps".*

*"My youth allowance payments are all sorted and I have a MyGov account now".*

*"I thought I had payed all my fines off but she checked for me and I still had a small amount owing. Juvenile justice are organising it now so it'll be paid off. She's a really lovely lady. She was really good to understand. She explained it to me, I have dyslexia so yeah it was really good".*

*"I have just finished my traffic offender's course and am waiting to go back to court".*

*"Toobah helped with a Centrelink issue, claiming youth allowance. Toobah was able to speed up the process".*

*"Toobah arranged for me to get my fines paid off, I forget what it's called, yeah a work development order. I'm waiting to hear back from the people about it. I didn't know about it. My gym that I go to like every day has a sign literally right next to the bathroom about paying off your fines by going to the gym but I never took any notice of it".*

*"My fines are getting paid off a little bit each time by going to TAFE".*

The following feedback provided by young people is general feedback and includes young people's experience of dealing with youth solicitor Toobah Choudhari.

*"Toobah helped me, she asked me some questions and she was really nice. I saw her walking around and my mum said I should speak to her and I wasn't really keen at the start but it was actually really good. I'm usually pretty shy in that situation, I don't usually want to speak to people... in that situation, like I don't go to counsellors. People have always suggested it but I never do but Toobah was really nice and like, the way she handled it was really good"*

*"She [Toobah] was friendly and she knew what she was talking about"*

*"Toobah was fantastic, she and everyone at the centre are so helpful. I cannot recommend it highly enough"*

*"I just want to thank you guys so much for helping me"*

*"You guys are great"*

*"I would probably give it a 10 because it's actually a really good idea like being at the court"*

## **Stakeholder Feedback**

A total of six stakeholders were interviewed as a part of the evaluation. The stakeholders interviewed were:

- Duty solicitor, East Maitland Children's Court
- Manager of Headspace Maitland (Youth mental health service)
- Children's Court Magistrate
- Bail intake officer, Youth Justice
- Court Liaison Officer, Department of Education
- Project Office, Department of Education

Five of the six respondents said they wanted the service to continue, with one respondent saying they did not know enough about the service to answer the question.

Five of the six respondents said that the presence of the Hunter Youth Law Service at the Children's Courts had helped them in carrying out their role. One stakeholder responded not applicable to this question.

Stakeholders were also given the opportunity to provide general feedback about the service and any experiences they had with the youth solicitor.

*"...I think it gives access to the bigger issues around why they're attending court. It gives you that feeling, that if you're able to refer them to services, it feels like then you're actively participating in assisting the person beyond the legal matter."* – **Duty Solicitor, East Maitland Children's Court.**

*"...it meets another need and therefore it helps with the big picture. But also her [Toobah] knowledge is really good and it's good to be able to run things past her."* – **Court Liaison Officer, Department of Education.**

*"I think the significance is only just being made evident and therefore I think we have so much that could be achieved, and the relationships are very positive so we can only improve and we can only improve the outcomes for kids. I feel privileged to work with people who are so committed and passionate about young people. I see Toobah as similar to me in that she really wants to help young people, and she thinks out of the box and has similar values to me which is why we connect. And I love how she speaks with the kids she's so lovely with them. I feel privileged to have met her, work with her, learn from her and share my knowledge with her. I share bits of what I know too and she takes that on board and she might ask my opinion and I think that's really good... she's very humble."* - **Court Liaison Officer, Department of Education.**

*"Just that we've found Toobah and Yolanda [from Legal Aid] particularly good, we've done lots of referrals and enquiry with them they've been very helpful, informative and very helpful to young people. The feedback from young people has been very positive. From a worker perspective it's been very helpful."* – **Manager, Headspace Maitland.**

*"It's also about trying to build connections so that Toobah, etc., know a role or a person they can contact. Building the capacity of everyone at the courts, so that if they aren't able to speak to me, they know they can contact this person or this department etc."* – **Project Officer, Department of Education.**

*"We've used Toobah a lot, so we used her when she had really good engagement with a family of ours, and became involved in the youth justice conference, not as a lawyer but just as a support person for the young person. She was great at being able to explain things to the young person, not using legal jargon but making it easy for them to understand."* – **Bail Intake Officer, Youth Justice.**

*"I've referred people to her [Toobah], particularly for education and accommodation matters. I've not always followed up, but people haven't come back and said it didn't work or was wrong so, of course her capacity to offer assistance is as strong as it is limited by people's commitment and what services are out there. But again, if there is someone there that can call up shelters and services it takes pressure of the [legal] profession."* - **Duty Solicitor, East Maitland Children's Court.**

*"Young people will access services if they're in their face but if they're not in their face they won't so they should be at the courts, the services. I think if those services are doing their jobs and its working then we [magistrates] shouldn't really know anything about it. We're probably not in the position to know... I deal with the criminal matter and the other things, housing, education... their taken care of by those services."* – **Children's Court Magistrate.**

*"I'd love her [Toobah] to come to Broadmeadow [Children's Court]..." "...It can be improved through continuing it and expanding it, because of the fact Broadmeadow sits every week..." "...I'm sure there are opportunities at Broadmeadow but I guess I don't look for them so I don't see them. If she [Toobah] was on deck it might be a different thing. We do have discrete roles."* - **Court Liaison Officer, Department of Education.**

*"It's been a long time coming, this type of service... we're dealing with youth who are disadvantaged, and a lot of the time they come to court and have no family members there and to have Toobah, that support there is so valuable. She's so lovely with them she interacts with them so well so they automatically fall in love with her. We need someone who's prepared to go over the top to gain their trust and Toobah certainly does that. It really requires someone like that to do that role and gain the kids trust."* - **Bail Intake Officer, Youth Justice.**

#### **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

What is your conclusion?

The Hunter Youth Law Service helped to fill the gap in service delivery to young people experiencing civil and family law issues in the Hunter Region. The service was well received by both young people, their families and other stakeholders which is demonstrated through the feedback we received throughout the evaluation process. There are fewer services for young people in regional areas than in cities, and lack of transport options, schools and employment all create additional challenges for young people and their families in these areas.

We believe that all Children's Courts should have this type of service. This model of service delivery was effective because having a lawyer attend the Children's court removes

many of the challenges that stop young people and their families engaging with services. Moreover, the data gathered from the client surveys we conducted highlighted that young people do not recognise these issues as something a lawyer can assist with, so it is necessary that a solicitor takes a proactive approach to engaging young people at the courts.

Hunter Community Legal Centre will continue to provide the Hunter Youth Law Service at the Broadmeadow Children's Court. This was at the request of Communities and Justice, who are a part of a pilot project which involves co-locating different services in places where children and young people are already going (i.e. Children's Court). Hunter Community Legal Centre is funding the Hunter Youth Law Service at Broadmeadow Children's Court once a week.

What are your recommendations for improvements both for the intended audience of your project, and for the strategy you used to achieve your aim? What would you do differently next time?

We believe there should be legal health checks for all young people at the children's courts. This does not necessarily require having a civil solicitor at the court at all times, as suitably trained youth workers can conduct a legal health check and referrals can be made to a legal service for any civil or family law issues. For this to happen, there needs to be private and confidential rooms where a civil lawyer can speak to young people. This was a significant challenge our youth solicitor faced. The regional courts in this project had limited rooms, which meant legal health checks and subsequent conversations often took place outside of the courthouse (on a seat/bench, steps, footpath, etc.) or in corridors or waiting areas.

Contacting young people was another challenge we had. Many young people said they would find it easier to communicate via social media (Facebook, Instagram). If we were to repeat the project, we would create a social media profile specifically for the Hunter Youth Law Service, which could be used not only to communicate with clients but also to promote the service. It is worth noting that there is no single social media platform common to all young people, so a brief survey of young people at the courts may be helpful in determining a preferred platform, or a combination of two or more platforms could be utilised.