

LAW AND JUSTICE FOUNDATION OF NSW

National CLC Conference 2007 – Legal Needs Assessment Training

IDENTIFYING LEGAL NEED AND THE NATURE OF YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY – AN EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH

Information	Sources (website)	Some Questions
Community profile and demographics	<p>Australian Bureau of Statistics provides a huge amount of Census based statistics. Use the ABS search engine and particular key words (eg Illawarra, community profile) to track down useful statistics for your area.</p> <p>http://www.abs.gov.au/</p> <p>Summarised and accessible ABS census data by LGA only. See http://www.id.com.au/home/default.asp?pg=5&STE=1</p>	<p>What are the key characteristics of your area/community (eg overall size of resident population; proportion of males/females; proportion ATSI, CALD; percentage of persons renting, unemployed, etc)?</p>
	<p>NSW Health provides a great deal of important <i>non-health</i> statistics for each Health Area in NSW (eg unemployment and family assistance benefits recipients by health area). Includes ABS data. Includes SEIFA data (described below).</p> <p>http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/chorep/toc/choindex.htm</p>	<p>Do your area’s residents differ markedly from the State population (or adjacent areas)?</p> <p>What legal issues may be associated with your area’s population (eg an aged population will have their own unique legal issues)?</p>
	<p>Local Councils</p> <p>The NSW Department of Local Government contains contact information including web links to all local councils in NSW: http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/dlg_LocalGovDirectory.asp</p> <p>Local Council websites differ, but generally contain a profile of the local community (eg using Tamworth City Council) http://www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=34162 and other relevant information such as community safety and crime prevention programs (eg) http://www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=25396</p>	<p>Does your area have a larger proportion of particular population groups (eg young people, aged persons, unemployed, women, single parent families, on government benefits, Aboriginal, renting accommodation, CALD, disability, homeless) that may result in higher numbers of particular legal issues?</p> <p>Does your area experience substantial seasonal increases in population (eg holiday makers, seasonal workers, etc) that may create particular legal problems?</p> <p>What do the community safety and crime prevention programs of your local council(s) tell you about the criminal, civil and family issues in your area?</p>
Level of Socio-Economic Disadvantage	<p>SEIFA data. The ABS also provides a relative measure of each area’s level of socio-economic disadvantage. This is available down to the postcode level. Often Local Councils will report on their relative level of advantage/disadvantage (see above).</p> <p>Individual indices are also available for ‘economic’ disadvantage and also ‘educational/employment’ disadvantage should you want to pursue more relevant measures for legal need areas such as credit/debt and employment inquiries. 2006 measures of disadvantage will be available around March 2008. Measures from the 2001 Census for Victoria and NSW may be validly used until then and are available in both table and map form at: http://acl.arts.usyd.edu.au/jss/</p>	<p>What is the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage for your area as identified by the Census? (eg high Index of S-E Disadvantage).</p> <p>Is your area characterised by a high level of economic disadvantage and/or a high level of educational/employment disadvantage?</p> <p>What do these tell you of possible legal issues?</p>
	<p>Dropping off the Edge. Professor Tony Vinson’s latest report <i>Dropping off the Edge</i> (2007) measures levels of health, safety, and economic, employment and education participation as indicators of disadvantage, and presents evidence of the ameliorating effects of social cohesion.</p> <p>http://www.australiandisadvantage.org.au/.</p>	<p>How does your area rate in terms of Vinson’s measures of social inequality?</p> <p>What social structures/programs (‘investments’) does your community have in place to counter the adverse and compounding effects of socio-economic disadvantage?</p>
	<p>Pockets of disadvantage – ecological fallacy. This is the problem of assuming that populations or households in an area are relatively homogeneous in their socio-economic characteristics. Particularly important, even for relatively ‘well-off’ areas which may hide the needs of more needy groups.</p> <p>http://www.apa.org.au/upload/2004-4E_Kennedy.pdf - demonstrates point through the experience of Indigenous people.</p>	<p>Are there identified ‘pockets’ of attenuated disadvantage in your area? What are the characteristics of persons living in these ‘pockets’? What are the special legal needs of these disadvantaged groups?</p>

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	The Premier's Community Builders program http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/	Are there funded programs for strengthening local communities and minimising the effects of disadvantage and other socio-legal problems operating in your area?
Community organisations	Community directories. Local councils often put together directories of community organisations and other services located within their area. Although sometimes 'out-of-date', a great starting point for identifying what human services are provided in your area – and what services are not. For example, see Tamworth City Council website: http://www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=27977	What government and non-government services exist in your area? What does this tell you about the residents living in your area and their social and legal problems? What other public legal services are located in your area (eg Legal Aid office; Chamber registrar)?
What services are needed in your area?	(Matching services to needs) What types of needs are specifically catered for in your area? What can these other services tell you about legal needs in your area?	Are there relevant services in your area to support special needs groups in your area (eg ATSI Tenants' services for Aboriginal residents; community employment services for unemployed persons; migrant resource centre for CALD, etc)?
	(Gaps in services) See model questionnaire for local community organisations re legal need in the area.	Is there any information available suggesting that a service 'gap' exists in your area? Has there been a call for particular human services to be located/set up in your area? (eg NLA Forum, local surveys, letters to MPs, newspaper articles, letters to editor of community newspapers)
<i>In the near future, much of the following information may be available via Data Digest 3 Legal Inquiries Tool. The Foundation is currently tendering to have this application built and intends to make it available to the public legal sector by mid 2008.</i>		
Identified legal need (legal services data)	CLSIS	What do your CLSIS reports show you about expressed legal need in your area? Does this differ from the NSW picture or even neighbouring areas? Eg, your CLC may get substantially higher proportions of housing, credit/debt or employment inquiries than are recorded statewide?
	Specialist CLCs	What do the records of the specialist CLCs tell you about residents in your area? (Specialist CLCs record the postcode of inquirers). What is the level of inquiries made from residents in your area, to specialist centres such as the Tenants' Union, Women's Legal Service, Consumer Legal Credit Centre?
	Legal inquiries made to other legal services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LawAccess NSW - Legal Aid NSW - Aboriginal Legal Service - (etc) 	Obtaining LawAccess and Legal Aid data may show that residents from your area are seeking legal assistance from other service providers in addition to (or that complement) the inquiries to your centre. Getting a feel for legal inquiries to other public legal assistance services will provide a more complete picture of legal need in your area.
	Referrals to CLCs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LawAccess NSW - Legal Aid NSW 	LawAccess and Legal Aid also refer inquirers to CLCs. This provides additional information on what other legal service providers see as your role in addressing legal need in the area.
Other identified legal need (Foundation research)	Foundation reports <i>Justice Made to Measure</i> (6-region survey) Special needs group studies (eg older persons, mentally ill, homeless, prisoners) Use JustSearch to access electronic copies of these reports, http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/justsearch Use key terms (eg your region/area, specific legal issue, disadvantaged group, etc) to obtain information relevant to your area and its population.	The Foundation's research reports provide additional information on the legal issues experienced by various high need groups (eg homeless, older persons, the mentally ill, prisoners). <i>Justice Made to Measure</i> is a survey of legal needs in six disadvantaged areas which also identified the <i>pathways</i> taken to resolve legal problems.

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Australian Bureau of Statistics Website: Some key packages of demographic information

Title of information	What it includes	The web reference
2006 Census QuickStats by Location	“Processed” snapshot information available by local government area, statistical division or subdivision, state or territory or Australia wide. Gives useful processed information (percentages etc) for Age, Country of Birth ,Main Language Spoken at Home ,Religious Affiliation, Marital Status, Income, Family Characteristics, and Dwelling Characteristics	http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ProductSelect?newproducttype=QuickStats&btnSelectProduct=Select+Location+%3E&collection=Census&period=2006&areacode=&geography=&method=&productlabel=&producttype=&topic=&navmapdisplayed=true&javascript=true&breadcrumb=P&topholder=0&leftholder=0&currentaction=201&action=104&textversion=false
2006 Census Community Profiles by Location	This is the gateway to the 2006 Census Community Profiles. It will ask you to put in a place name or post code ‘e.g., Illawarra’. It will then ask for which size area you would like (e.g., the statistical division, or the State electoral Division), showing a map of the boundaries of these. Community profile information is ‘raw’. Need to calculate percentages etc.	http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/LocationSearch?ReadForm&renavtabname=Location%20Search&&navmapdisplayed=true&javascript=true&textversion=false&collection=Census&period=2006&producttype=Community%20Profiles&method=&productlabel=&breadcrumb=PL&topic=&
Snapshot data	These are more processed data, available for Australia, for each State, for each Capital city and or each ‘statistical local area’ (may match local government areas – but not always’). Give you percentages of persons by age, gender, Indigenous status, access to computers, language spoken at home, education, employment etc.	http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ProductSelect?newproducttype=Community+Profiles&btnSelectProduct=Select+Location+%3E&collection=Census&period=2001&areacode=&geography=&method=&productlabel=&producttype=&topic=&navmapdisplayed=true&javascript=true&breadcrumb=P&topholder=0&leftholder=0&currentaction=201&action=104&textversion=false
Local Government Area populations and median ages - New South Wales	A list of all local government areas and median age in 1996, 2001 &2006.	http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3218.0Main%20Features51996%20to%202006?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3218.0&issue=1996%20to%202006&num=&view=