



Who drives change?

By Northern Suburbs Community
Legal Centre
Karen Merrin
Laura Post
Kathryn Heslop

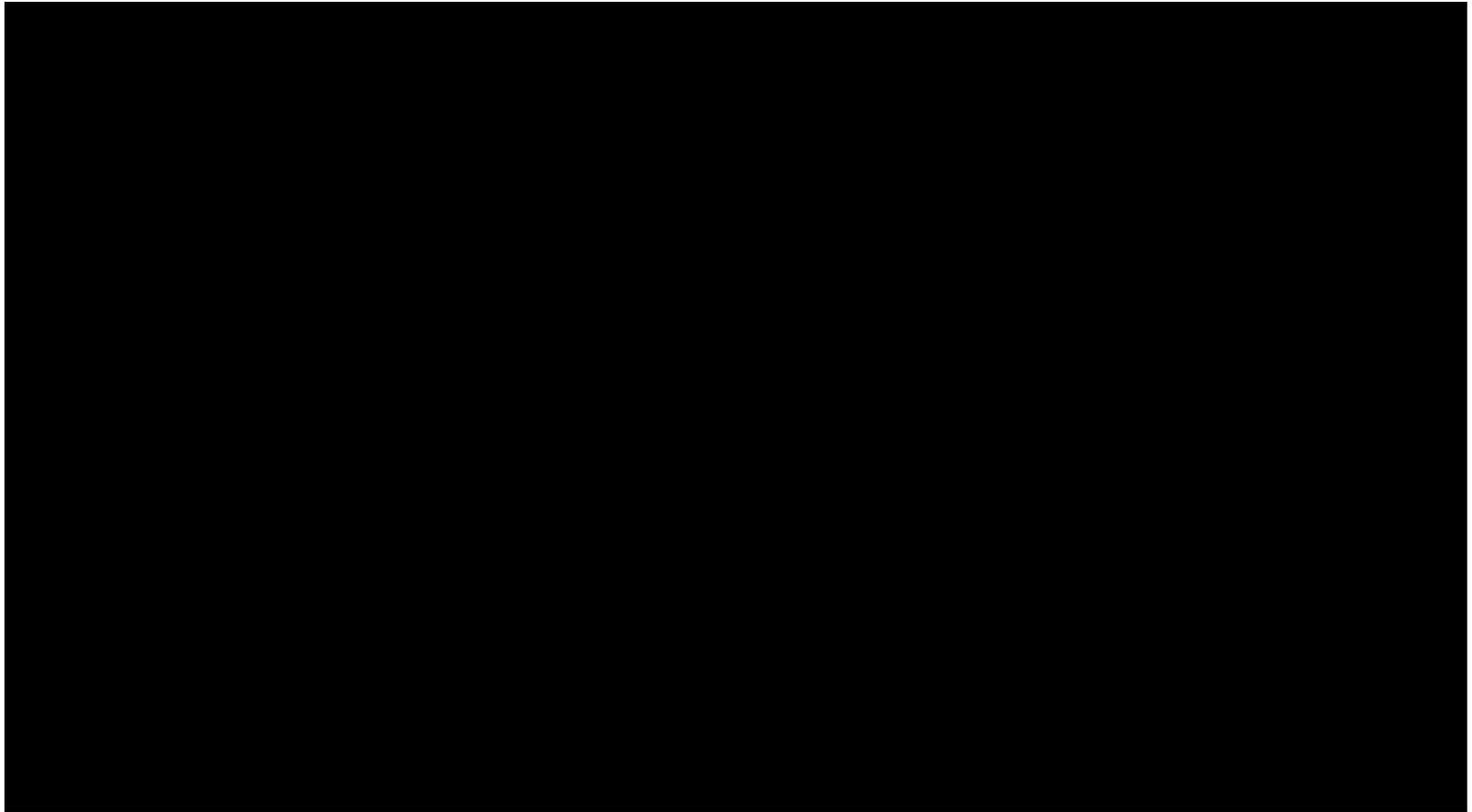
Developing throughout the years

- As new funding climates emerge and community needs change, who drives change in the community sector? Policy, government, the board, community needs or staffing? How do you prioritise diverse needs?
- Juggling limited resources for new opportunities.

NSCLC: the History

- NSCLC was established in 1996 with the office in Mirrabooka. The focus was direct service delivery to the community. Legal services were family and civil law.
- In 2006, a new office was established in Joondalup, in partnership with Edith Cowan University School of Law and Justice.
- Currently, NSCLC provides assistance in tenancy, older persons rights, civil matters, family law, criminal law, as well as a variety of other programs including community legal education.

A glimpse of the work we do...



Why Mirrabooka?

Demographics

- In Mirrabooka, 46.28% of people were born outside Australia.
- 23.6% of people speak English not at all or not well.
- Compared with WA as a whole, where only 34% were born outside Australia and only 5% speak English not well or not at all.
- In addition, Mirrabooka households had \$152 less per fortnight than the median income of households across WA.
- Further, of prisoners polled, Mirrabooka's postcode was the post code given most frequently as the last address, making it the highest represented in prisons in WA.

Why did we change?

- “Light bulb moments”
- Changing environments
- Listening to staff
- Listening to community
- Responding to external factors



Laura Post: Who our staff are, and what my experiences have been



Legal Services

Services we provide:

- * Family law
- * Civil law
- * Criminal Law
- * Older peoples rights
- * Tenancy law

How do we provide it:

- * Phone advice
- * Face to face advice
- * Court room representation

What have we achieved?

Employees have represented clients at:

- * Criminal Trials and pleas in mitigation;
- * Final order restraining order hearings;
- * 3 strikes tenancy hearings;
- * Family Court trials;
- * State Administrative Tribunals hearings.

What are our results?

- * High charge withdrawal rate in criminal matters;
- * Significant resolution of restraining orders without the need for final order hearings;
- * Approx 75% of trials or hearings won
- * Most 3 strikes cases won, or withdrawn prior to hearing

New Innovations: Duty Lawyer Service for Restraining Orders

In 2014, we commenced providing a respondent duty lawyer service in restraining order matters.

This came about at the request of the local Magistrates Court.

After 6 months of providing the service, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of matters proceedings to final order hearing, as most matters are now resolved either by undertaking or consent orders.

This has relieved the pressure on the Court system and the stress on applicants.

It has also had the unforeseen consequence of seeing an exponential rise in the number of referrals directly from the Court and on occasion from the Magistrate themselves.

Kathryn Heslop: Volunteer Experiences



Community Legal Education

We provide community legal education on a number of different issues, including:

- * Road Traffic law;
- * Family and domestic violence;
- * Tenancy matters and “Rental Ready” programs;
- * Finance and debt;
- * Older people’s rights;
- * Human Rights are Aussie Rules.

Last financial year (2013/14) we have completed 140 CLE sessions.

Road traffic education

Came about when we identified this as a particular area of confusion affecting new migrants.

Started providing education sessions.

This led to the development of a DVD and booklet, in conjunction with the Department of Transport and WA Police and the community. We also started providing legal clinics for road traffic matters, undertaking license checks for clients out of the local shopping centre and increased phone advices on road traffic matters.

We also responded as required by the community: in particular running map reading programs for new migrants.

Family and domestic violence

We also provide community legal education sessions on family and domestic violence.

We found a high number of women in migrant communities being affected by family and domestic violence and often having no support network and limited English skills, or any knowledge of what family and domestic violence was.

We engaged these women by building relationships with TAFE and migrant education programs. Under the guise of education about the Australian legal system, we were often able to talk to these women about what domestic violence was, and engage them with our service if they needed it.

Human Rights are Aussie Rules



The program started in 2012 as an initiative from the Eastern Community Legal Centre. Focuses on teaching children about human rights through sport.

We have rolled the program out to a wide number of primary schools, and in 2012 took the program to the Kimberly communities.

This year, we've started tailoring the program for CALD children, older children and NAIDOC week. We've also developed a relationship with the football commission.

What's next?

In 2014, we obtained a grant to do a DVD about family violence in conjunction with the WA Police. The focus is children and parents, rather than intimate partner violence.

Other areas for development we are seeing include property dispute in domestic violence relationships, immigration issues stemming from family breakdown, loss of engagement as a result of inappropriate community pressure. These are the new challenges for us as a Centre to rise and meet.