

*You Have a Right to a
Lawyer – Barriers to
Access to Legal Services*

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Women's Legal Services
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Women's Legal Services NSW

www.womenslegalnsw.asn.au

State-wide service incorporating:

- Women's Legal Resources Centre (WLRC)
- Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS)
- Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program Training & Resource Unit (WDVCAP TRU)
- Indigenous Women's Program (IWP)
- Walgett Family Violence Prevention Unit (WVFP)
- Bourke Brewarina Family Violence Prevention Services



Project Overview

- QWE - Quarter Way to Equal
- Report by Women's Legal Services published 1994
- Barriers to Access to Legal Services for Migrant & Refugee Women
- 53 recommendations: Law Soc 3, Legal Aid 13, Community Legal Centres - 17



QWE Outcomes

- Areas of legal need:

- Family Law
- Domestic Violence
- Immigration, and



- Housing, Social Security, Sexual Assault, Employment, & others



“You Have a Right to a Lawyer”

- 2005 project addressing same subject matter
- 5 stage process
 - Focus groups with recently arrived women
 - Telephone interviews with service providers
 - Literature review
 - Analysis
 - Report writing
- Duration March - December 2005



Progress (to date)

- 6 Focus groups, 58 Women
 - 3 Middle East, 11 African countries
- 19 Telephone interviews
 - 9 Community Legal Centres
 - 10 Migrant Service Providers
- Literature Survey
 - Status of women (B+10, CEDAW report process)
 - Good practice for CALD communities
 - Status of legal aid



Issues

■ Communications

- Language / literacy / cultural
- Problems with interpreters (availability for small / emerging communities, gender)

■ Lack of knowledge / understanding of legal system

■ Immigration assistance

- Bringing the family

■ Divorce / separation / child support

■ Domestic violence

Good Practice

- Legal Theatre – Illawarra CLC & MRC
- Audio CDs on DV and AVOs in 5 community languages – IWSA
- Arabic radio program on credit & debt – Consumer Credit LC
- Before You Rent – Tenant's Union
- Purse Cards with legal assistance numbers - WLS
- CLC using community development approach with regional community



Recommendations

■ Partnerships

- MRC / CLC / Health
- Joint Project
- Grants: Law & Justice Foundation

■ Networking

- MRCs to contact specialist CLCs to give presentations to each other

■ Enhancing Knowledge

- MRCs to request CLCs for Community Legal Information sessions
 - Women's Legal Services NSW 02 9749 7700
 - Local CLC