Progress Report 2

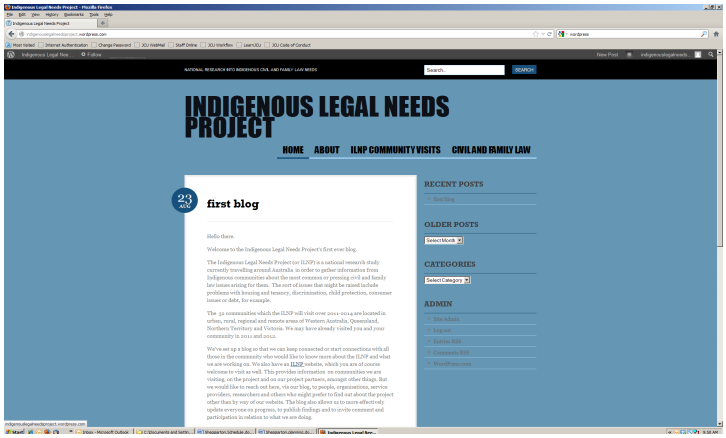
August 2012

ILNP Social Media and Website

Social Media

The ILNP has now set up social media for the project. At this stage, our social media consists of a blog, which is likely to be linked in the future to an ILNP Facebook page. The blog is at http://indigenouslegalneedsproject.wordpress.com/.

We noted in our first ILNP Progress Report that both stakeholder and focus group participants wanted ongoing information about the project and to stay connected with the it, and that social media may be one way of ensuring this occurs. Setting up social media is in part a response to this need, although we hope also to inform and to encourage, by way of social media, participation of those who have not to date been visited by the ILNP.



ILNP Blog Page: http://indigenouslegalneedsproject.wordpress.com/.

ILNP social media is designed to increase access to information about the project *and* about Indigenous civil and family law needs and issues generally. Increasing access to information, in particular, for Indigenous community members (those we have visited and those we have not) is a specific focus of the ILNP foray into social media.

The ILNP will use the media to post regular project updates; to share information about policy, law, activism and related issues that may be of interest and to invite comment and collaboration around the important social and legal issues we are currently looking at in our research. Through social media, it is hoped that the project will not need to be solely focussed on formal reporting or on our (more traditional) website. It is also intended that use of social media will encourage collective thought and action around relevant issues.

The ILNP is not sure to what extent Indigenous communities are using or will use social media, including as part of the ILNP. Time will tell. We can report that during our visit to Swan Hill, someone in the local community posted details of the focus group we were running on their Facebook page. As a result, we had an overwhelming number of participants show up to the focus group, without the focus group coordinator for Swan Hill having made any direct contact with them. We have also been told by stakeholders of problems arising due to serious cyber-bullying (through social media) within some Indigenous communities. This perhaps indicates that for certain communities, social media may be an effective tool for information sharing around civil and family law issues and needs.

The ILNP has been working closely with Dr. Kishan Kariippanon on our social media project in order to ensure optimal engagement with communities. We would like to thank Kishan for his assistance to date in this area. Kishan is based at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin, NT.

Your comments in relation to the use of this forum for the project are most welcome, as is your input generally. If you have information that you think will be of interest (for instance, information relating to an upcoming forum on housing in your community, or to changes to relevant policy or law; community legal or other educational materials; comments about your own experiences of civil and family law needs and issues), please share with others through the blog. Once the blog is moving along, everyone will have a better idea of the sort of contributions that might be useful. So please visit us and subscribe!

Website

The website will continue to house all ILNP material as the ILNP 'mother ship'. The ILNP website is always updated with details of fieldwork completed to date and of upcoming fieldwork. We also place a list on the site of all interviews conducted, in part as a way of acknowledging contributions made to the project.

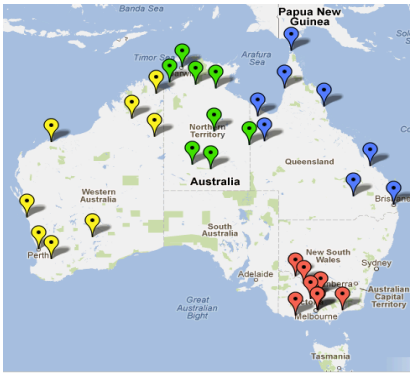
We hope to continue to work over the next few months on placing on the site more resources relating to relevant areas of civil and family law, including literature reviews and relevant reports etc. We have Simone Rowe joining us at JCU for a social work placement with the ILNP from late September until December 2012, and Simone will assist with this and other aspects of project work. Simone has already been working as a research assistant with the ILNP for some months. We would like to thank Simone for all her work on the project to date.

The ILNP website is at http://www.jcu.edu.au/ilnp/

ILNP Fieldwork

ILNP Community Visits

A decision was made in the first half of 2012 to try to complete fieldwork in each jurisdiction before moving on to the next. This not only has benefits in terms of project continuity, but it is also important as the ILNP will produce individual, jurisdictional reports upon completion of fieldwork in each State/Territory.



In our last Progress Report we discussed the travels of the ILNP in the NT, with fieldwork now completed in this jurisdiction. We are currently preparing a report on the NT (see below: **Reports**). The focus in terms of travel in 2012 has been completion of our eight Victorian communities.

An interactive map of all of the **32 communities** the ILNP is travelling to is available on our blog.

Victoria

The ILNP has completed fieldwork (stakeholder interviews and focus groups) in six of the eight ILNP communities in Victoria. The project has visited two communities in metro Melbourne (**Fitzroy and Heidelberg**), as well as **Bendigo, Shepparton, Robinvale** and **Swan Hill** (including Mildura**,** which has a number of services for the region in which the latter two communities are located). All eight Victorian communities should be completed by latew November 2012, with **Framlingham** and

Bairnsdale the only remaining communities to visit in this jurisdiction. We will also need to complete some further stakeholder interviews in Melbourne in the next couple of months.

Focus Groups (VIC)

There have been 12 focus groups (FGs) held in Victoria this year, with around 10 participants involved in most groups.

We have used the same FG process in Victoria as we did in the NT. At each FG, all participants completed a questionnaire with ILNP team members to identify priority legal needs and issues relating to access to legal services. In most cases, FG participants also engaged in a group discussion about legal needs and services with ILNP facilitators. We now have a total of **124 questionnaires** completed by FGs in Victoria (61 by men, 63 by women).

Robinvale Womens Focus Group VIC

Feedback from FG participants in Victoria has been positive. We continue to link participants up with local legal service providers as part of the FG work, as appropriate. If legal issues arise during FGs for which participants require legal assistance, connections can be made between participants and legal services. Some of the issues referred to lawyers in Victoria include victims' compensation, Centrelink debts, school bullying and housing.

The FGs also continue to be a forum where, often for the first time, participants' problems are framed as *legal* issues, for which there may be a *legal* remedy. In this sense, the FGs provide education and information relating to legal rights. Feedback provided by one of the Swan Hill focus group coordinators, as follows, provides an example of this aspect of FGs.

> *Thank you, it was a fantastic day, there has been a bit of talk in the community, one gentleman bailed me up at the railway station while I was waiting for my husband and expressed how much he got out of the session, and he stated that he actually learnt a couple of things that he did not know. I thought that was good positive feedback as the rest of the community members have been saying the same thing. So thank you it allowed our community to express their issues and brought about an understanding for the community (Focus Group Coordinator, Swan Hill).*

Bendigo Women and Men's FG, VIC

We have also been reminded of how important it is to not go into communities with any preconceptions about community preferences in terms of how participants may chose to participate in FGs. Every community is different. In Bendigo, for instance, the men and women chose to sit as one large group to participate with both male and female ILNP facilitators present (rather than splitting up by gender as usually occurs). In Robinvale, the women's FG met at the local Koori men's meeting place.

Having said this, there are some consistent themes arising as we travel through communities, both in terms of priority legal needs (housing, for instance) *and* issues raised in relation to legal service delivery. Further, although literacy and language may not *such* prominent issues for those participating in FGs in Victoria as they have been in some communities in the NT, it has still been important to work quite closely with many individual participants to ensure that communities have a genuine opportunity to provide us with information requested.

FG coordinators continue to work well, although it can still take some work to locate local Aboriginal persons who have the time to take on this role. We have had a diverse collection of local Indigenous people assisting with this aspect of the research, including community engagement officers from local Council, members of a local Aboriginal men's group, staff from Aboriginal Cooperatives and from an Aboriginal women's refuge.

Heidelberg Men's FG, VIC

We would particularly like to ensure that FG participants are kept informed about ILNP progress and we will be linking them to social media and research outcomes over time, including through FG coordinators. We again must thank all FG participants and coordinators for the time given and care taken in providing us with valuable information.

Stakeholder Interviews (VIC)

As noted above, the ILNP has also conducted a wide range of stakeholder interviews in each Victorian community visited. In general, all stakeholders contacted for an interview were keen to meet up to discuss needs and current service delivery in their communities. Stakeholder interviews have been conducted with government organisations (including the Equal Opportunity Commission, Consumer Affairs), non-government organisations (including Centacare, Aboriginal Cooperatives), and legal services (including project partners, private practitioners, community legal centres).

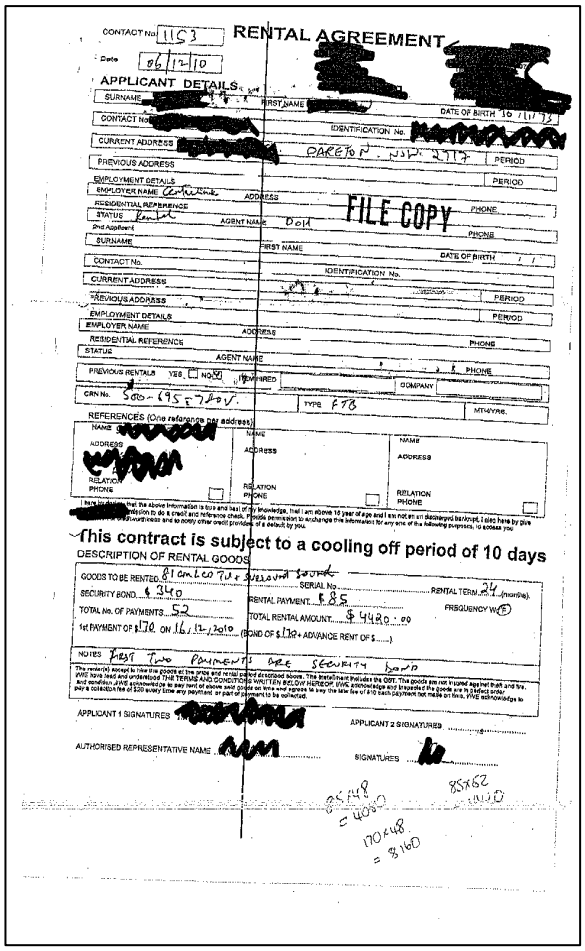
We note, in particular, that a number of (partner *and* non-partner) stakeholders have also assisted the ILNP to connect with other stakeholder organisations and FG coordinators in their respective communities, which was a great help to us. Thank you sincerely to all stakeholders who have contributed to the ILNP. We would invite you to join up to our blog so that we can keep in touch.

As an example of the type of information provided by stakeholders, set out below is a copy of a contract to hire/purchase a laptop and printer, entered into by an Indigenous client of a community legal centre (CLC) in Victoria. Accompanying this contract is a Centrepay authorisation for deductions to be made to pay for the hire purchase from the client's Centrelink benefits.

The CLC in question indicated that under this contract, $3920 would be payable over a two year period for a laptop and printer by their client, and that the commercial value of the equipment supplied was estimated at a *fraction* of the total amount payable under the hire purchase agreement.[1] The facilitation of these payments through Centrepay raised serious concerns for the

[1] Another example provided by the same CLC was payment of $4420 for a 32" Soniq TV and sound system, payable under a similar agreement over a two-year period, with the commercial value of this equipment again estimated as being far below that payable under the relevant agreement.

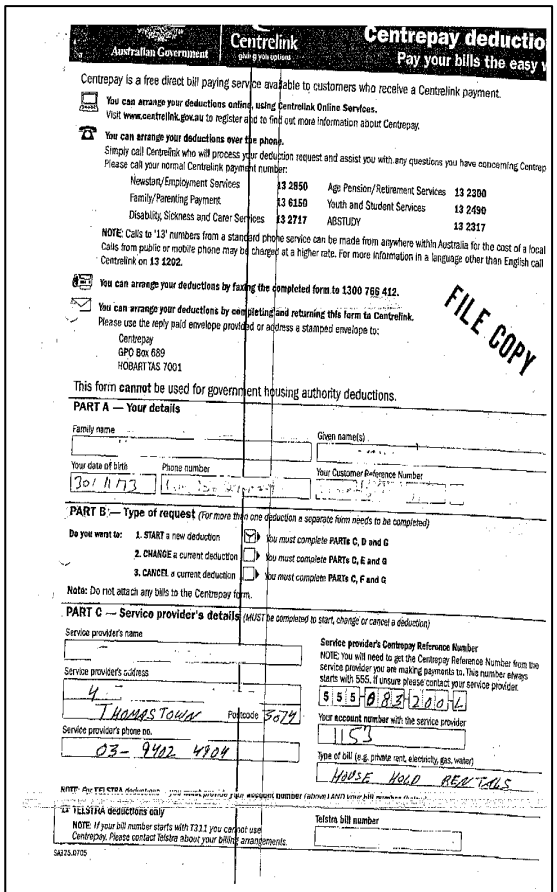
CLC as being contrary to both the stated objectives of the Centrepay scheme and the approval criteria that need to be satisfied before such deductions are authorised by Centrepay.



RENTAL AGREEMENT

FILE COPY

This contract is subject to a cooling off period of 10 days



Centrelink

Centrepay deductio

Pay your bills the easy

Centrepay is a free direct bill paying service available to customers who receive a Centrelink payment.

FILE COPY

This form cannot be used for government housing authority deductions.

PART A — Your details

PART B — Type of request

PART C — Service provider's details

The relevant policy and approval criteria are as follows. [2]

> *(The) primary objective in establishing and maintaining the Centrepay scheme is to enhance the well-being of (the Department's) Customers by improving their social capacity and encouraging their movement towards financial self management (s. 3, Centrepay Policy)…*
>
> *When considering whether an eligible Applicant should be approved as a Participant in the Centrepay Scheme, (the Department's) primary consideration will be whether, in (the Department's) opinion, allowing the Applicant to participate in the Centrepay Scheme will further the objective of the Centrepay scheme (as set out in section 3)…. (s. 5.2, Approval Criteria, Centrepay Policy)…*

WA and Qld

In 2012, the ILNP conducted stakeholder interviews with project partners and other stakeholders in both **Brisbane** and **Perth**. We have not completed FGs in either city yet, but will do so throughout 2012 and 2013. The interviewees in these jurisdictions again included government, non-government

[2] See Centrepay Scheme Policy at: https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/business/services/centrelink/centrepay-businesses/how-manage-your-business-centrepay/policy-terms-and-guides

and legal services and organisations. Please visit the link to *Interviews* on the ILNP website - https://www.jcu.edu.au/indigenous-legal-needs-project/progress/progress-reports - for a full list of Qld, VIC and WA interviews conducted to date.

Upcoming Travel

In terms of upcoming travel for 2012, as well as the final two Victorian communities (noted above) we will visit up to four other communities in both WA and Qld to conduct interviews and FGs prior to the end of the year. The latter will include (finalising of) **Perth** and a second community in WA (one of the following: **Narrogin, Geraldton or Kalgoorlie**), as well as two more communities in Qld (likely to include **Cairns** and also possibly further work in **Brisbane**).

We aim to complete visits to all outstanding ILNP communities by mid 2013, which in addition to those noted above will include six communities in WA and five in Qld.

Collaborations with stakeholders

The ILNP is currently discussing with (both partner and nonw partner) stakeholder legal services future collaborations that will enable us to combine ILNP research outputs with legal services' expertise and experience of working with Indigenous clients. These collaborations include meeting with and interviewing women imprisoned in Townsville Correctional Centre in relation to their civil and family law needs and any connections between the latter needs and their imprisonment and/or criminalisation. This project would be carried out in collaboration with a Brisbanew based CLC. We also hope to write a detailed paper on legal need and housing in the NT with solicitors from legal services in that jurisdiction.

ILNP Reporting

As indicated above, the ILNP will produce single, jurisdictional reports upon completion of fieldwork in each State/Territory. The NT Report is due out shortly. The report presents qualitative analysis and other information relating to priority Indigenous civil and family law needs *and* issues that have been raised relating to legal service delivery in the NT. The report also includes legal needs data based on the questionnaires completed by each of the FG participants. It is hoped that there will be a launch of the NT Report in the Territory once it is finalised. Each jurisdictional report will follow a similar format.

We will commence work on the Victorian Report in November 2012, but will need to wait until completion of all of our Victorian fieldwork prior to finalising this report. Reports for WA and Qld will not be completed until 2013.

The ILNP will aim to provide these reports to the wider community in as accessible a format as possible, including through our social media platforms (and/or directly through focus group coordinators). This will be done so as to ensure that those who participate in the project can see how the information they provide to us has been utilised, and to enable as many people as possible who have an interest in the results to be able to view them, with an emphasis upon Indigenous communities' access.

Usage Statistics

The ILNP has collected statistics from Legal Aid Commissions in the NT, Victoria, Qld and WA indicating levels and type of usage of their legal services by Indigenous people in areas of civil and family law. The ILNP will prepare a number of short reports based on analysis of this data.

ILNP Conference Presentations

ILNP at Critical Criminology Conference, TAS

In 2012, the ILNP presented at the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (FVPLS Forum), held in Cairns in May 2012.

The project also presented at the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) National Conference in Adelaide in August 2012 and at the Critical Criminology Conference in Tasmania in June 2012.

The ILNP will present at the National Indigenous Consumer Strategy (NICS) Conference in Sydney in September.

Partners

Finally, and importantly, the ILNP would like to again sincerely thank all of our partners for their continuing efforts to engage with the work of the ILNP. In Victoria, VALS' Client Service Officers have been particularly helpful in identifying stakeholder organisations for interview and in finding excellent FG coordinators to work with us on behalf of their respective communities.