



Health Cares About Justice

A HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN WESTERN HEALTH & BRIMBANK MELTON COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE (Comm Unity Plus)

Health Cares About Family Violence
Marlene Dixon, Program Director

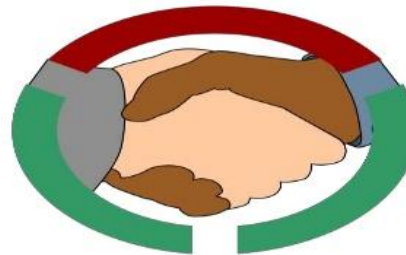
Health cares about Justice - What and Why

Health cares about Justice is a partnership between BMCLC and Western Health which aims to achieve better health and justice outcomes for vulnerable individuals experiencing family violence.

Partnership working

“Any situation in which people work across organisational boundaries towards some positive end.”

Lester et al, 2008



Health Cares about Justice



Community Lawyer Greta Haywood and Nurse Karen

Do you or your patients need support or advice relating to family violence, elder abuse, money, fines or any other legal issues?

Legal help and advice is available for patients, staff and volunteers at Western Health every Friday at Sunshine Hospital

To request an appointment to see a Community Lawyer talk to your midwife, social worker or doctor

If you would like to refer your patient to our Community Lawyer you can find more information and a referral form on our intranet

Benefits of a HJP

Peoples personal circumstances can impact health and vice versa. Adding a lawyer to the healthcare team makes sense.

- Clients don't have to travel to different locations to see a lawyer when in the midst of a health issue.
- Legal issues are identified and addressed early.
- Lawyers have a better understanding of the context within which a client's legal issue arises enabling tailored assistance
- Collaborative approach to problem solving in a supported environment.
- Professional development across the health and legal sector

Family Violence Incidents in Brimbank Melton

	July 2012 – June 2013	July 2013 – June 2014	July 2014 – June 2015	July 2015 – June 2015	July 2016 – June 2017
Brimbank	1,927	2,143	2,480	2,725	2,246
Melton	1,422	1,620	1,942	2,110	2,104

(Family incidents recorded by police region and local government area - July 2012 to June 2017)

Legal Services at the Hospital

BMCLC provides the following services at the hospital:

- Legal advice and representation to clients/patients with Family Violence and related legal issues.
- Professional Development Training for staff at the Hospital.
- Secondary Consultations to staff at the hospital who may be assisting someone experiencing or impacted by family violence.
- Community legal education.
- Warm referrals where required.

Legal issues BMCLC assists with

The HJP Lawyer provides advice and assistance with the following legal issues:

- Applications for Intervention orders
- Assistance for Victims of Crime
- Family law – Parenting plans, simple property disputes
- Fines and Infringements associated with family violence
- Criminal Law matters associated with Family Violence
- Assistance with other legal issues that are associated with Family Violence (For example Housing).
- Elder Abuse
- Where BMCLC cannot assist directly, we will seek to make a warm referral to an appropriate agency.

Jane's Story

Jane, aged 23, was pregnant and due to give birth in a month. During a routine visit at the hospital, she disclosed to her social worker that she had separated from the father of the baby due to continued verbal and physical violence.

Despite him moving out of their shared rental premises, he continued to abuse her by driving past her home and sending abusive text messages to her.

Jane was extremely anxious. She was referred to the HJP Lawyer as she didn't know what she could do and whether to take any action. The HJP Lawyer advised her about the process for applying for an intervention order and provided her with reassurance that a lawyer could assist her with her application to the court.

She was assisted by a lawyer at the Bacchus Marsh Magistrates Court who walked her through the process. An order was made against her ex-partner.

Andrea's Story

- **Andrea**, aged 38 was an outpatient at the Sunshine Hospital. She disclosed to a doctor that she was extremely anxious as she had incurred a significant number of traffic infringements totalling over \$5000. She was due to face court in the next fortnight.
- At the time of incurring the infringements she was the victim in an abusive relationship with her ex-partner. They were both alcoholics and the police were called on a regular basis in response to reports of violence.
- She was referred to the HJP Lawyer who advised her that as a result of her family violence experiences, she may not have to pay the infringements. The Lawyer spoke with Andrea's social worker who prepared a report the family violence history. The HJP Lawyer wrote to Fines Victoria outlining Andrea's history and the fines were withdrawn under the Family Violence Fines Scheme.

HJP Challenges

1. Partnering with a very large public organisation

- Establishing a common vision
- Co-location
- Moving from outreach to partnership –
Establishing the lawyer as part of the hospital
- Locating champions and maintaining strong relationships
- Navigating new systems
- Breaking down silos - Accessibility to patients within different areas of the hospital

HJP Challenges

2. **Management and extension of resources**

- The 'F' word – moving from pilot funding to ongoing model
- Use and training of volunteers
- Tapping into partner resources.

HJP Challenges

3. Standing in the patients/client shoes

- Client trust – Dispelling myths for clients about social workers and lawyers
- Awareness of client capacity and sensitivity to client vulnerability
- Multiple health/legal issues - greater complexity of social situations and more complex legal proceedings
- Providing flexible assistance

HJP Challenges

4. Information sharing between lawyers, hospital and other organisations

- consent – context and capacity; consent for different purposes
- Understanding mandatory reporting – Ensuring both professions understand different obligations
- Obtaining information which is necessary
- Utilising a legal health check document

HJP Challenges

5. Succession planning

- Staff turnover – A reality
- Back up volunteers, lawyer, supervisor
- Professional development and capacity building.
- Making use of the HJP Australia website and working group to ensure ongoing systems in place which can be easily handed over.

HJP Challenges

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Assists with patterns of need and basis for advocacy
- Assists with funding
- Early Planning- M & E in-house or contracted
- Quantitative and qualitative methods – use of both at different stages
- Training of staff – Lawyers are not often qualified in M & E
- Case studies – individual consent

Find out more

Contact a midwife or social worker at Sunshine Hospital

Contact Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre on:

- 8312 2020 or
- legal@comm-unityplus.org.au

ST ALBANS OFFICE:

Level 1, 358 Main Road West

Phone: 8312 2020

Hours: Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

To make a booking, you can free call:

1800 266 675

Other Useful Resources

Health Justice Australia

- <https://www.healthjustice.org.au/>

Comm Unity Plus

- <https://www.comm-unityplus.org.au/>