



CJSN Newsletter

A project of the Intellectual Disability Rights Service Inc.

March 2005

New start with new faces for the Criminal Justice Support Network

CJSN in Action

The story of the holiday season shows all the cogs in CJSN's wheel in action.

While many people were enjoying Christmas, the mobile phone of Kylie Gersbach, Hunter Regional Co-ordinator rang, and the police required support for a person they had arrested. Action CJSN support worker: quick to respond as always, Kylie sent one of her dedicated support workers to Maitland Police Station.

No legal advice ... The client turned down offers to assist him in accessing legal advice. The support worker explained the importance of legal advice, his right to access it, and potential options. The client was clear and made a choice not to get legal advice. The charge was sexual assault. The offence was very serious. Without legal advice, the support worker was unable to support the client during the recorded interview.

No bail ... The client lived down the street from the alleged victim. According to police guidelines, this meant that the police couldn't give him bail. He remained in custody until his bail hearing in Maitland Court the next day.

Yes to legal advice ... His support worker went to court for the bail hearing. Things were getting more serious: the client changed his mind, he wanted legal advice, but no duty solicitor was at court that day. Action CJSN on call volunteer lawyer: the support worker contacted a CJSN on call lawyer in Sydney who spoke to the client over the phone.

Bail granted ... The client was advised by his lawyer to say three things to the magistrate. After

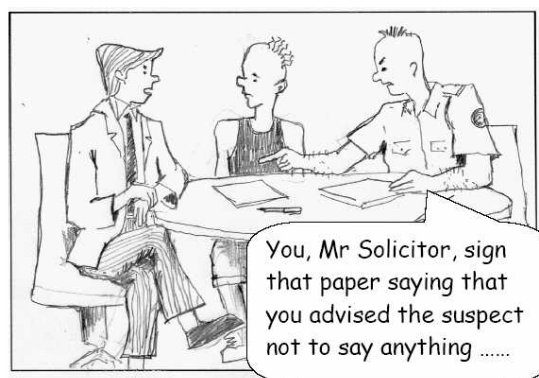
receiving this advice, he did something that most people aren't able to do: with the help of his

support worker, the client spoke for himself in court and was granted restricted bail.

"He got bail? That's fantastic! I didn't think he would because the offence was so serious," the client's lawyer was ecstatic when she was told the result.

This support reflects many of the ways in which CJSN works and makes a difference:

- support at a time when no one else is available;
- supporting people to really understand their rights and respect their choices;
- access to legal advice when nothing else is available;
- provision of legal advice from practitioners who have training in communicating with people with intellectual disabilities;
- demonstrating that when effective support is provided people are able to speak for themselves;
- positive experiences for both volunteer lawyer and support worker in being able to really make a difference.



CJSN Sydney

Training, training, training and service expansion have been the themes for CJSN in Sydney over Christmas and the New Year.

Training ... Two orientation sessions have been run for people interested in volunteering for court support since our last edition of the newsletter. An orientation session in December last year was targeted at a group of 7 law students who are all keen to continue on and complete the two day training to become court support workers. Court support training for the 17 volunteers who have completed the orientation session will soon be scheduled.

Training ... To expand the CJSN service to Sydney's West, Jane Thomson, Sydney Regional Co-ordinator, has been hard at work contacting disability services in Western Sydney to recruit disability workers who may be interested in volunteering for police interview supports with CJSN. The response has been refreshing. An orientation session for people interested in training for police interview supports has been held in February at the Parramatta Town Hall. The 10 volunteers who have completed the orientation session are due to commence CJSN's police interview support worker course next week.

Training ... Lawyers have said that they feel it's their professional responsibility to attend police stations when they receive a call from CJSN after hours: these were our favourite people among the 6 enthusiastic lawyers who attended our second workshop on 16 February, for lawyers interested in participating on our after hours on call roster. CJSN has now trained 14 lawyers to participate on the roster, which officially began operating on 9 February this year. It currently provides 24 hr coverage and back up for when the usual sources of legal advice is not available, and when the charges are very serious and in person advice is required.

Service expansion ... To complement the expansion in our volunteer network to Sydney's West, CJSN's job-sharing Sydney Regional Co-ordinators, Jane Thomson and Janene Cootes, have been promoting the CJSN service to police stations in Western Sydney where CJSN was previously unavailable for support.

CJSN in the Hunter

Is the Hunter CJSN's busiest region? We're sure this question has been racing through the mind of Kylie Gersbach, Hunter Regional Co-ordinator, during the support work that she has been juggling around a heavy training schedule for the past two months.

Kylie has recently run a training session for workers with disability services, completed a Youth Justice Conference support, and co-ordinated the 3 police supports and 1 bail court support that CJSN provided over the Christmas break.

Two students, Vicki and Nick, from Newcastle University, have been undertaking placements with Kylie. They are currently designing a short workshop and complementary resources aimed at informing people with an intellectual disability about their rights when they come in contact with the police. Two sessions of the workshop have been scheduled for February.

During mid December Kylie treated her volunteers to a well-deserved Christmas party that also celebrated the International Day of Volunteers. There are now 20 trained volunteers in the Hunter, with half a dozen expressions of interest in volunteering. Thankyou to Kylie and all her volunteers for all the great work!

CJSN Down South

Promotions and fresh faces are in the air for CJSN in the South. It didn't take long for former Southern Regional Co-ordinator, now Project Manager, Judy Harper, to show Karen Morrow the CJSN Southern Regional Co-ordinator ropes. Welcome to the team, Karen. It will be double the action in the South for CJSN with both Judy and Karen based there.

Karen and Judy are now located at:
Old Berry Courthouse, Victoria Street, Berry.
P.O. Box 422 Berry 2535
Ph 4464 2733
Karen's mobile: 0404 412 148
Judy's mobile: 0403 393936

Will Law Week see CJSN's biggest promotions? That's what Karen has been planning with local services, and promotion of events will be on the Law Week calendar.

The needs of victims with an intellectual disability will be addressed at a forum in Ulladulla that is being planned with the Victims of Crime Bureau. Discussions at this forum will drive CJSN's moves to better support victims with an intellectual disability.

It's official: CJSN is now formally providing support at Nowra Court and Police station. Meetings have been held with the magistrate and registrar of Nowra Court to cement this relationship, and now participate in the Court User Forum. Time will prove how valuable it is to people with intellectual disability and to CJSN.

Two training sessions later with the Wollongong Police, and over 220 officers in the South have now been trained about the rights of people with an intellectual disability, and about the CJSN service. It won't be long before all the officers in the Wollongong Local Area Command have been trained by CJSN, and special thanks go to Kylie MacFarlane, EDO at Wollongong Police Station for facilitating and supporting the training and CJSN presence in the Police station.



Volunteer training session at Wollongong Court

Up to Speed with the CJSN Team

Judy Harper, formerly CJSN's Southern Regional Co-ordinator has accepted the helm of CJSN Project Manager. We're confident that great things will happen under her guidance.

As of 31 January, Karen Morrow, the newest addition to the CJSN team, has assumed Judy's former position of Southern Regional Co-ordinator. Karen has an extensive background in working with parents with an intellectual disability, and managing community based and volunteer projects. We warmly welcome her to the team. From cheers to tears it's been emotional times for CJSN: we've said goodbye to Carol Hannaford, who

has resigned as CJSN Resources Officer. She's now the Project Officer of the Behaviour Intervention Service. Good luck, Carol – we'll miss you – and look forward to working with you in your new role.



Judy Harper, new CJSN Project Manager

Wanted: Criminal Lawyers

If you are a criminal lawyer interested in undertaking some work on a voluntary basis that will allow you to advocate for the rights of people with an intellectual disability, then we'd like to hear from you.

CJSN has recently set up an after hours roster of on call lawyers who provide advice to clients over the telephone or at police stations when serious offences are involved. The provision of legal advice during police interviews involving a serious offence is essential. Unless clients are provided with access to legal advice in such cases, CJSN support workers will not be able to support clients during the actual recorded interview.

Please fill in the form below and fax, email or post it to us if you're interested in knowing more.

Interested in Volunteering for the CJSN?

- I am a lawyer interested in volunteering for CJSN
- I am interested in training as volunteer support worker for the CJSN
- Put me on to the mailing list so I can keep in touch

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone (Work): _____ (Home): _____

(Mobile): _____

Email: _____

Fax, mail or email to: Intellectual Disability Rights Service
 Suite 2 C, 199 Regent Street Redfern 2016
 Fax: (02) 93182887 Phone: (02) 9318 0144
 Email: cjsn@idrs.org.au