



CJSN Newsletter

A project of the Intellectual Disability Rights Service Inc. September 2005

CJSN Volunteers Nominated for Award

CJSN congratulates its volunteer network for being nominated for the Law and Justice Foundation Volunteer Award for 2005. The network was nominated by the Lawyers Reform Association (LRA) for its contribution in improving access to justice for people with an intellectual disability as a group of socially and economically disadvantaged people.

The LRA has been contacted and interviewed by the Foundation to support the nomination. The winner of the Foundation's awards will be announced at a dinner to be held at the Parliament House, Sydney, in October this year. The role of CJSN's volunteer support workers in filling the gap in the criminal justice system that has existed, especially when members of the Police interview alleged offenders, was identified as an important reason why CJSN's volunteers qualify for the Volunteer Award.

Fiona's Statement to the Police

Fiona is a woman who was sexually assaulted by her mother's partner. She was taken to the police station by her mother to make a statement to the police. The police recognised that Fiona's mother could not act as a support person for Fiona in making a statement: she was in a situation of conflict of interest due to her relationship

with her partner, the alleged perpetrator. So, the statement was not taken.

Fiona was living in a granny flat on the same property where her mother and mother's partner were living. There was a high risk of Fiona being sexually assaulted again. The police couldn't find anyone to support Fiona in making a statement. She was assaulted a second time.

Demonstrating significant courage, Fiona went to the police on her own. Due to Fiona's intellectual disability, the police were still unable to take a statement from her without a support person present.

Fiona then turned to Amy, a Coordinator at her recreational activities service. Amy contacted CJSN expressing considerable distress and concern at the situation that Fiona was continuing to live in, and asking CJSN for support. Her concern motivated her to assist Fiona to move to a women's refuge.

A CJSN worker went with Fiona to the police a third time and supported her to give a statement about the assaults. It was important to Fiona that she speak to a female police officer, which hadn't happened in the past, and the CJSN worker was able to ensure that this occurred. After the direct support at the police station was provided, CJSN contacted the police and organised for them to accompany Fiona

and Amy to go back to the house Fiona had been living in and picking up her belongings. She was still afraid to go to the premises on her own.

Fiona continues to wait for more permanent housing, and to find out whether the police will take her case any further. This is another example of where CJSN was able to provide an appropriate support person where none was otherwise available, and most importantly, in helping Fiona tell her story to the police.

Police Interview Video Now Complete

Filming is now finished for CJSN's Police Interview Video/DVD resource. It will be packaged as part of *CJSN's Police Rights Kit*, along with our Police Interview Photo Booklet, animated CD on Bail Conditions and Training Materials. The aim of the package is to teach people with intellectual disabilities about their rights when in contact with the police as an alleged offender, and improve their ability to assert their rights.

We plan to launch the Police Rights Kit in November. A train the trainer component is also being developed so the package can be utilised in an ongoing and individualised way to support and empower people in the longer term. The photo booklet and resource on bail conditions will also be made available via our website.

CJSN thanks Sergeant Amanda Calder, Public Relations Coordinator, NSW Police and the Commander of Dee Why Police for making it possible for the video to be filmed at Dee Why Police Station, and providing staff for an entire day.

If you would like to find out more about the Police Rights Kit or place an order for the Kit, please contact CJSN by phone on (02) 9318 0144, or email at cjsn@idrs.org.au.

Funding for Bail Resource

CJSN has received confirmation that the Law and Justice Foundation will be providing the project with a \$5 300 grant to complete graphic animation work for a CD resource on bail conditions for people with an intellectual disability. The CD resource will form part of the Police Rights Kit as outline above. It will be based on the same story from the video and photo booklet.

The bail resource will also be available from the CJSN section of the website, and will be formatted so that sections of the resource can be made available on email. The resource focuses on the importance of bail conditions, and helps to explain common conditions and the outcomes of breaching them. Understanding, remembering and complying with bail conditions can be a challenge for a person with an intellectual disability, and often brings people back into contact with the system.

CJSN Outreach

CJSN Outreach Worker, Leonie Kirwan recently visited Mudgee to talk with disability service providers and other people interested in hearing about what CJSN could provide to the Mudgee/Gulgong community. Leonie was responding to earlier expressions of interest from people who were interested in undertaking training from CJSN.

Following the visit, five people expressed interest in participating in the Court and Police training and nominated themselves as 'the can do team'. These people are already undertaking some court support to clients they support through their various services. Comprehensive training will certainly assist them in continuing this role.

This group then took the initiative to organise a meeting with the Mudgee Court Registrar Anthony Goodwin, whose prior knowledge of CJSN, meant he was keen to support this local initiative. To complement the training of workers at local services, IDRS Principal Solicitor, Peter McGhee, will conduct a session for Local Court staff, solicitors and Sergeants of Police on relevant aspects of law pertaining to people with an intellectual disability. Anthony volunteered to assist with organising Peter's visit, and a date has been set for training the Mudgee/Gulgong local workers in October.

Mudgee will also be an area where the Train the Trainer Police Rights Package will be promoted and utilised.

Leonie will continue to support this area, and promote the 1300 Information and Advice line knowing that there is a network of skilled and interested referral points.

They certainly are a 'Can Do Team' at Mudgee/Gulgong.

Leonie has also been busy with visits to Albury and Port Macquarie to ascertain areas of need, and options and priorities for providing support and capacity building.

CJSN Hunter

Nearly all the new volunteers from the Hunter have had an opportunity to participate in Court Supports due to the

marked increase in referrals from Newcastle DADHC case workers and the legal profession. The Hunter has received 6 referrals and has completed 17 Court supports in August.

The Geographical spread from these supports are:

- 3 at Maitland Court
- 3 at Toronto
- 6 at Newcastle Court
- 1 at Gosford
- 3 at Belmont
- 1 at Musellbrook

Numbers of Police supports and police referrals are increasing too with 8 referrals and 7 supports. At the time of going to print Hunter CJSN had 17 court supports scheduled for September.

CJSN Down South

August was a record month for CJSN in the South, with a total of 15 supports provided in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. This included one Juvenile support at Port Kembla Children's Court and one District Court matter. Three Police supports were provided at Wollongong station.

Support for the CJSN project is growing in the South. Chief Inspector Wayne O'Keefe of Lake Illawarra LAC and Sergeant Steve Edwards of Shoalhaven LAC will be regulars on our Advisory Committee. Also, thank you to Paul Ryan – OIC and Solicitor, Wollongong Legal Aid for joining the committee. The input from Police and Legal Aid is invaluable to CJSN, particularly in the southern local areas of the region where the demography and geography varies greatly.

A warm welcome to all new CJSN volunteers! August has been a busy month for volunteers: eight new volunteers have

completed the two day police training; seven volunteers have completed the two day court training in both Nowra and Wollongong. This mixed and experienced group will boost our resources significantly as we continue to grow to meet demand. The next step in the volunteer process is to recruit some Aboriginal volunteers from the Shoalhaven to enable us to provide more culturally appropriate supports, including Circle Sentencing support for people with intellectual disabilities. Enquiries are welcome – phone Karen: (02) 4464 2733.

Regional Coordinator – Karen Morrow presented information about CJSN and rights for people with intellectual disabilities to the Illawarra Self Advocacy Group, and a feature article on CJSN titled "Unsung Heroes" was published in the Illawarra Mercury. CJSN also had an information stall at the "Illawarra Expo of Options & Services for People with Disabilities"

CJSN Meets with Staff at Wollongong Court

A very positive action meeting took place with Wollongong Court Registrar and staff recently to discuss existing gaps and barriers for people with intellectual disabilities attending Wollongong Court, particularly on busy list days.

Issues such as: access; administrative processes; effective communication; information; signage; health and safety, were brainstormed.

Some innovative new improvements will be trialled as a result and we will continue to report as they roll out over the coming months. This was an initiative of Registrar Bill Wheeler and the Southern Advisory Committee. Many thanks to Wollongong

Court for its continuing commitment to CJSN and people with an intellectual disability.

AVO's – Resources

Being involved in any part of the AVO process is extremely confusing and stressful for people with intellectual disabilities. CJSN staff and volunteers are regularly faced with the challenges this process presents, and assisting people to understand the many options, implications and requirements of outcomes.

Sally Chopping, Hunter Regional Coordinator, has been working with law students of the Newcastle University Legal Centre to develop resources that will assist volunteers and staff in their role of supporting people through the AVO process.

The final draft is now being reviewed and will soon be available for volunteers to add to their "bag of tricks", and will also be available on our website, so keep your eye out if you're interested.

Extended Funding for CJSN

Funding for the CJSN project from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has been extended until **June 2006**. This was excellent news.

CJSN was originally funded as a pilot project for three years until December 2005. With an extensive evaluation of the project currently underway, and the project continuing to develop, we are certain that CJSN will be able to demonstrate the importance of the role it plays in the criminal justice system, so that it will be seriously considered for continued funding beyond June 2006.