

## Questions on Notice

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL** You mentioned just briefly, Ms Hull, in your opening remarks about your service running programs around healing and I wondered if you could tell us a bit more about that. I am happy for your colleagues to also address that if they would like?

Warra Warra Legal Service runs specific programs around healing and family violence prevention.

A brief outline of the projects is set out below:

Speaking and Healing - 'Speaking & Healing Project' has been run with an enthusiastic response. Warra Warra Legal Service, in collaboration with Knowmore Legal Service, led four projects focusing on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence. The projects facilitated by Aboriginal workers engaged Aboriginal people and workers by creating a safe space to yarn, to be heard and to heal together.

The projects, despite dealing with the heavy topic of Domestic Violence child sexual abuse, bring new hope to communities who are desperate for positive change. The projects were a space for people to not only share their hard stories, but also to reconnect and share positive stories of family and loved ones and aspirations for the future even in the current claim.

Desert Pea Media Collaboration - This year WWLS teamed up with Desert Pea Media to provide a workshop/project to Broken Hill High School Students. The students attended a week long workshop. Desert Pea Media provided a space for the students to express their ideas and thoughts about Family Violence in the Far West Region. The students then developed a song and accompanying film clip exploring their ideas and stories of Family Violence in the Far West and the impact intergenerational trauma has had on their community.

Family Fun Day – Human Rights - The Family Fun Day /Human Rights was an opportunity to promote the importance of speaking out, healing for the Aboriginal community members in a fun and safe location, to introduce new healing tools and to nurture communities. This was an opportunity to promote skill development and self-care to workers, who assist communities who may want to tell their story and/or give evidence to the Royal Commission.

NAIDOC Week – NAIDOC Day in the Park – WWLS had a stall set up with information on our service and promotional goodies to give away to community members. And the end of the week WWLS held a pancake morning tea to conclude the NAIDOC week celebrations. Similarly to the Family Fun Day the NAIDOC celebrations were an opportunity to introduce new healing tools and to nurture communities.

Art Space - WWLS have a functioning Art Space. This space is aimed for clients to drop in and take time out when necessary. This space aims to provide clients with a place to sit safely and comfortably in order to heal. The space is in its early stages, but has seen some recent traffic. WWLS hopes to expand this project into a more structure program.

**The Hon BEN FRANKLIN: At the end of your presentation, which I thought was excellent, you talked about the need for more services in the Far West, and I think the your example of the Brewarrina situation is a very good one, but I was wondering what specific services you think would be required in an ideal work out here to assist the situation.**

The Far West region has limited services to assist clients dealing with issues arising from intergenerational trauma.

Services could be increased across the criminal justice sector, general legal sector (including family support and mediation services), health sector and the Community Services sector.

There is currently no Mental Health Clinician at the Broken Hill Local Court; a mental health clinician can provide support and assessment to people who are appearing in the local court. Currently if someone is suffering from mental health issues and is appearing in local court there is no immediate mental health support available for them at the court.

There are currently limited opportunities to access rehabilitation facilities in the Far West Region; this is a significant issue for the community. An indigenous specific run rehabilitation centre is needed. Consultation with the Local Aboriginal community is paramount to determine the needs of the community and how such a service could be set up.

Further discussion should occur on a local level with the Local Aboriginal community regarding needs and services available around early intervention, healing and family support, all of which are paramount to ensuring positive change within local communities.

In relation to Family Law services, there are currently no on the ground mediation services for families in dispute. Currently, clients are referred to Mildura or Adelaide in order to access mediation. This is a significant issue, which results in family law matters being directed straight to court without any possible mediation before. Specific family relationship services and mediation services would benefit the community.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Could you take that on notice? Is it possible to check with those elders?**

At this stage I have been unable to contact elders in relation to this.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Roughly how many clients do you see? You can take that on Notice. I am trying to work out how big the demand is for the number of staff you have?**

Between a the period of 30 June 2015 and 12 April 2016 there service gave over 470 advices regarding Family law, Victims Support, Care and protection matters and Apprehended Violence Orders.

The rough amount of 470 advices does not mean we see 470 clients, but rather have given advice 470 times. This could be multiple advices to the one client.

We generally have around 100- 150 clients at a time.

During this period the service opened around 140 cases, these cases vary between Family law, Care and Protection, Victims Support matters and AVO matters. The cases also vary in the amount of resources provided for each matter, for example a Family Law or Care and Protection matter will

generally be extremely resource intensive. Both Solicitors and non-legal case workers will provide intensive support throughout the legal process, which could take up to 6 - 18 months.

**The Hon. SHAQUETT MOSELMANE: I have a question about numbers. You indicated that you have about 100 open files and you have seen a couple of hundred people in six month period. I am just wondering what do you think is the size of the population out there that could potentially be you client base and perhaps - because of the shortage of current facilities and service- you could address if provided with more resources?**

At Warra Warra Legal Service, our core response is to assist with legal issues, we will give advice, representation and support around family law matters, victims support, and care and protection matters in children's court. We have two solicitors and Aboriginal support staff who are able to respond to these matters.

We are currently have a high case load, generally clients are from the Broken Hill area, it is difficult for Warra Warra Legal Service to effectively service the outlying communities such as Wilcannia, Menindee and Wentworth region, simply because of the travel involved, distance between each community and limited human resources.

Currently Warra Warra Legal Service travel to Wilcannia fortnightly, Wentworth region and Menindee on a monthly basis any follow up that is required is completed via telephone.

This is often hindered by issues around telephone service in outlying communities.

Ideally, if Warra Warra Legal Service had a specialised Outreach Solicitor and Aboriginal Support worker (preferably from the Local community) who were employed to travel on a weekly basis to these communities our service to these communities could be increased and the service provided would become more efficient and effective.

Matters dealt with by workers at Warra Warra Legal Service are extremely resource intensive with clients demonstrating at least five (5) of the following indicators:

1. Family violence by a current or former domestic partner;
2. Intergenerational family violence
3. Mental health issues
4. Drug and Alcohol Abuse issues
5. Literacy and numeracy issues
6. Financial issues
7. Housing/Accommodation issues
8. Discrimination issues
9. Victimisation as a result of other forms of crime [i.e. non family violence related]
10. Links with organised crime
11. Intergenerational Trauma
12. Connection to/effected by ramifications of the Stolen Generation - intergenerational grief and loss.

In general terms, more often than not clients who access Warra Warra Legal Service have suffered intergenerational grief, sadness and loss in relation to past government policies.

Warra Warra Legal Service would benefit from a on the ground Aboriginal worker (either social worker or family support worker) to assist clients with connecting with other relevant services and

assisting clients as a supporting role. A specialised worker, providing this support would allow for a holistic approach to healing. With extra human resources WWLS could provide intensive assistance to clients.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What are the statistics for Indigenous people in the area?**

In 2011 Census data:

- 7.5% of Broken Hill's population were Indigenous Australians.
- 38.3% of Central Darling Shire population were Indigenous Australians; this includes towns of Menindee and Wilcannia, which are serviced by WWLS.
- 11.5% of Wentworth region population were Indigenous Australians: this includes towns of Wentworth and Dareton, which are serviced by WWLS.

**CHAIR: Because of the impact of past practises on the whole community, do you think that there is a general lack of trust and fear of dealing with government bodies? Is that something that needs to be acknowledged and addressed, if it exists?**

**Ms Ann Maree Payne:** Yes, I do think there is a lack of trust around government bodies. It does need to be acknowledged, I don't know how you would rebuild that trust. There is a lot of history between the government and Aboriginal people; it can't just be fixed overnight.

The Aboriginal community needs to be consulted on legislative changes and needs to have say about what's happening in our communities.

We need healing programs and family support services run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people that are specific for each community.

The government needs to start talking to us more and listening.