

Non-English Speaking Background Women's Legal Information Project for the Top End

Women born overseas comprise a significant proportion of the population in the NT and are a section of the community which require specific information about community services, because of language and cultural barriers.

According to the 1996 ABS census statistics, approximately one quarter of the population in the NT was born overseas and two fifths of those people were from the UK with Philippines, Indonesia, Greece, Germany and US being the most significant other countries of birth.

The major languages spoken at home in the NT, other than English and Aboriginal languages, were Greek, Chinese languages, Tagalog, German and Italian. In Darwin itself, 5.8% of the population was born in South East Asia mainly Indonesia and Philippines.

In October 1993 the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission and the Darwin Community Legal Service commissioned a report on the *Legal Information Needs of Non-English Speaking Background Communities in the Northern Territory* (Jane Bathgate and Dino Hodge).

Key findings of that report were that the lack of awareness of services, language and cultural issues were barriers to access and equity. Family law was identified as a major

need in terms of legal information and assistance.

The Top End Women's Legal Service



Thyra Ou, Cambodian Community, Federica Gaskell, Department of Health's Ethnic Liaison Officer, Joy Montero, NT Working Women's Centre, Desiree Hathaway, Resource Advisory Program Beryl Moulder, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Ethnic Liaison Officer and Juliani Bousios, Greek Community Welfare Officer.

(TEWLS) is running a project, jointly funded with the NT Legal Aid Commission, which aims to address the findings of the Bathgate and Hodge Report. Highlights of the project, which has been running on a part-time basis since March 1999, include information distribution, workshops and radio skits.

The first stage of the project involved

distributing information to NESB communities about the Top End Women's Legal Service, Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, and Darwin Community Legal Service (including its Welfare Service, Domestic Violence Legal Help, Top End Advocacy Service and Disability Discrimination Service).

A series of meetings with NESB women (either settlement community workers or NESB community representatives) followed. Meetings were convened in Nhulunbuy, with the possibility of doing the same in Groote Eylandt in September. A consultation process was carried out with regards to the legal needs of women from these particular communities.

A series of workshops were run providing detailed information on the nature of the services provided in the territory and the availability of the legal services mentioned above.

The project is now in its second stage. A series of radio skits are being designed and produced by the women involved in the first stage of the project.

The skits will be in various community languages and present a hypothetical conversation between a group of women. The women will identify the legal issue involved and will recommend contacting the appropriate service.

The radio skits will be broadcast by Top FM, under the appropriate language program and SBS.

We welcome NESB women to contact us about the project and to participate in the focus groups and/or the production of the radio ads.

*Tatiana Lozano
NESB Project Worker
Top End Women's Legal Service.*

Law Society Contact

Firms are invited to nominate a representative in their organisation as their Law Society contact.

It is suggested that the contact person would be responsible for the dissemination of information to the appropriate members of the firm, facilitating admission, practising certificate and professional indemnity insurance procedures, dealing with

membership issues, accessing services provided by the Society, advising the Society as to the needs of their particular firm.

The purpose of this exercise is to assist the profession in the conservation of human and other resources and the expedition of communication. A form inviting nominations will be distributed to all firms in the near future.