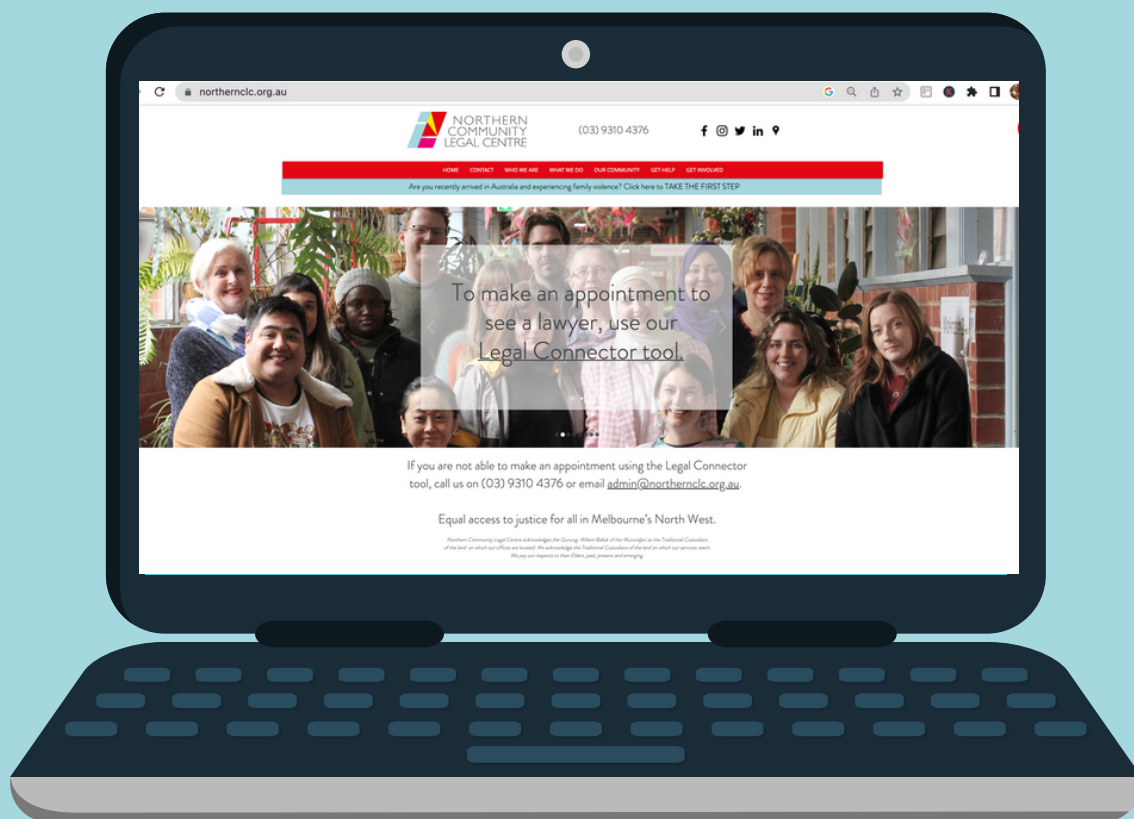


# Technology Enhanced Access to Legal Assistance (The TEALS Project) Report November 2022



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The authors of this report are Tania McKenna and Hannah Gordon.

Northern Community Legal Centre's (NCLC) purpose is to ensure equal access to justice for all in Melbourne's Northwest.

NCLC's catchment extends from Seymour on Taungurung Country all the way to Brunswick on Wurundjeri Country. NCLC acknowledges the Gunung Willam-Balluk clan of the Wurundjeri people, part of the Kulin Nation, as the traditional owners of the land on which our Broadmeadows office stands. We acknowledge the legacy of colonial resistance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

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# Executive Summary

This report has been prepared by Northern Community Legal Centre (NCLC) to summarise the findings from our TEALS (Technology Enhanced Access to Legal Services) Project funded by the Victorian Law Foundation and completed in November 2022. The TEALS Project aimed to explore whether an interactive online tool could streamline the triage process in a way that is comfortable and safe for the service user, whilst lessening the burden upon administrative staff.

The problem that the tool would ideally respond to was the unknown characteristics of those turned away from the service. In any given year over a third of people who contact NCLC are deemed ineligible for legal appointments based on strict eligibility guidelines, due to high demand for legal services. NCLC had limited information regarding the legal and non-legal needs of this cohort. It was envisaged that the tool would enable us to make better decisions regarding who would get priority access to legal service appointments to ensure a targeted response. It was assumed that NCLC would have the capacity to respond to an increase of 10% demand as a response.

In analysing the project findings, this report first provides the context for NCLC's existing service delivery framework and triage model. Operating through phone, email and in-person, NCLC's triage process prior to the implementation of this project was limited by a lack of consistency in guidelines and processes. Barriers to client disclosure of sensitive information were noted with concern.

The TEALS project was developed in response to these concerns. To implement the project NCLC developed an interactive online tool, which we named 'the Legal Connector'. The design and operation of the tool are detailed in this report along with the project implementation timeline which is comprised of four key stages (Project Development, Staff Upskilling and Tool Development, Pilot Phase One and Pilot Phase Two).

This was a small-scale project with the budget to cover a 0.2 FTE Project Officer with no additional resources to cover administrative support, community engagement or extensive training or promotion. This report notes these resource limitations along with the markable impacts of other funding uncertainty during the project period on the delivery of this project and our ability to fully integrate the tool into NCLC's service delivery model as well as meet the extra service demand. All project findings need to be viewed with this in mind and the subsequent disruptions to service delivery.

The Legal Connector Tool was accessed by over 400 people across the project period, however valid data is available for 159 individuals. From these interactions, 31 people became clients of NCLC (an additional seven people made appointments but did not attend). The remaining 121 people who we have valid data in relation to are classified as inquirers within this report or as persons who received a referral from NCLC to another service/s. A detailed breakdown of the demographic makeup of Tool users is included in this report, providing an insight into legal need among the community.

The project aimed to test six core assumptions which underpin the findings of this report. Responding to these six core assumptions, analysis of the project led to the development of twelve key findings:

Assumption: The addition of an automated intake and triage process would lead to more efficient administration and information processing.

- Finding 1: Overall, the design and implementation of the Legal Connector added to workload for NCLC's administrative team
- Finding 2: The Legal Connector led to more structured data intake and demonstrated some positive benefits in improving the administrative team's sense of safety.
- Finding 3: The Legal Connector has the potential to reduce the administrative workload for NCLC Lawyers conducting intake with clients and improve the provision of safe and responsive services.

Assumption: People would feel more comfortable disclosing sensitive information via a confidential online form.

- Finding 4: Service inquirers found the tool reasonably easy to use.
- Finding 5: There is mixed evidence regarding whether an automated triage process may be a more comfortable way of providing sensitive information for particular demographic cohorts.
- Finding 6: The Arabic language Legal Connector Tool did not lead to improved accessibility to NCLC legal services for our culturally diverse community.


Assumption: The additional information provided by service inquirers accessing the tool would enhance NCLC triage capability, ensuring that legal services are targeted to those with the highest legal need.

- Finding 7: Service inquirers in crisis appear to be more likely to phone for an appointment than use the online tool.
- Finding 8: The additional client information provided by the Legal Connector Tool supports targeted service delivery.

Assumption: Service inquirers accessing the tool who are deemed ineligible for assistance would receive better and more targeted referrals based upon the additional information provided.

- Finding 9: Most service inquirers did not experience enhanced referral efficiency.
- Finding 10: In person referrals are likely to be more targeted and appropriate when compared with automated referrals.
- Finding 11: The introduction of the Legal Connector Tool had a positive impact on the number of service inquirers.

Assumption: The Legal Connector Tool would lead to increased traffic to NCLC, and that NCLC would have capacity to respond to a 10% increase in demand for services.




Assumption: The data gained from community members using the tool would enhance our broader understanding of the legal needs within our community, and the extent to which NCLC was meeting community need.

Finding 12: Information and data gathered through the Legal Connector Tool paints a picture of immense legal need in our community and limited available resources.

Overall, this report concludes that there is some benefit in utilising an online tool as a mode of access to legal services. These benefits include the ability to provide automated referrals for clients that are not eligible for service delivery; the potential to learn more about our clients prior to offering an appointment (and accordingly provide more targeted assistance); an enhanced sense of safety for administrative staff when communicating with service inquirers electronically (text or email); and an enhanced understanding of the legal needs within our community due to the additional data collected. There is also some limited evidence that certain cohorts are more comfortable, or at least as comfortable, with disclosing sensitive information online, however there is strong evidence that this does not extend to community members from culturally diverse backgrounds.

NCLC cautions that the process of full integration into triage and intake process is resource intensive, requiring far greater investment than originally anticipated, and these resource limitations impacted upon this project. We did not have the technical expertise to build the tool in a way that utilised its full automation capacity, and our website interface with the tool impacted upon useability with mobile devices. An additional key limitation was that NCLC's client management database was not able to interact with the tool, and accordingly full automation, where the user receives an automated appointment following use of the tool, was not possible. Instead, NCLC's administration team had to conduct manual conflict-of-interest checks after reviewing the information provided by the service enquirer, or follow up where insufficient information was provided, and then attempt to re-contact the client to either offer an appointment or provide an appropriate referral. This process was not straightforward as people would often not answer, and the monitoring and management of this system created additional workload and workplace stress for the administrative team. It also led to less efficiency from a user perspective, when compared with the process of simply phoning to make an appointment. This is critical considering that the majority of NCLC clients are community members in crisis, who require certainty about access to legal assistance. With many NCLC clients also at risk of homelessness (on average between 15 and 20% of clients), it is likely that the difficulties of using the tool on mobile devices also impacted upon accessibility for this cohort.

Accordingly, to realise the full benefits of automated triage at NCLC, would have required extensive staff upskilling to incorporate more complex filtering into the tool, redevelopment of our website, and migrating our client data to more sophisticated legal practice management software platform. Considering NCLC's resource limitations, and NCLC's service delivery model which is largely targeted at people in crisis and clients from diverse cultural backgrounds, questions remain regarding the value of further investment. When operating in a resource limited environment, the identified challenges undermined many of the benefits of the automated triage process.



However, despite these challenges and limitations, NCLC was able to ascertain useful insights regarding potential pitfalls and considerations when implementing an automated intake process which we hope will provide guidance to the broader sector. These findings are particularly important in times of fiscal tightening, where technical innovations are often seen as the quick fix solution to complex and resource intensive community support programs.

NCLC assesses the overall impact of the project as positive on our operations. Implementation of the project provided an opportunity for NCLC to identify inconsistencies between triage and intake practice and the extent to which they adequately align with our strategic service framework. In response we have implemented additional guidance, training, and modification of forms to ensure consistency of practice in determining which community members are prioritised for access to legal assistance. It is anticipated that these reforms will enable us to ensure we continue to deliver legal services to those community members identified as having the highest level of legal need.

This project has further confirmed our understanding of the unmet legal need in our catchment i.e., those clients who did not receive legal assistance due to our narrow service delivery guidelines. This data obtained will be invaluable in supporting NCLC's advocacy efforts to raise awareness of unmet legal need in our catchments and to enhance access to justice for people in Melbourne's North - West.

# Introduction

Northern Community Legal Centre's purpose is to ensure equal access to justice for all in Melbourne's North-West. NCLC formed in 2016 as an amalgamation of the Moreland Community Legal Centre and the Broadmeadows Community Legal Service. In this short period of time, NCLC has been able to respond to both emerging and escalating community needs. Our catchments of Merri-bek, Hume and Mitchell Shire are home to communities who experience some of the greatest structural and systemic disadvantage in Victoria.

In response to high demand for legal services across our catchment, NCLC has implemented a strategic and targeted service delivery framework focusing on priority cohorts identified as facing multiple forms of disadvantage and marginalisation, and as having the highest unmet legal needs. This includes people with mental illness and other forms of disability, victims/survivors of family violence, young people, newly arrived and refugee people, people who are experiencing homelessness, people who identify as LGBTQIA+, people with drug and alcohol dependency and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Whilst the demand for services has increased, our capacity to respond has been limited by static funding and funding uncertainty.


The TEALS Project was developed in recognition that triage and intake within community legal settings is often complex, requiring an assessment across a range of factors including the suitability of the legal issues, the capability of the community member to self-assist, and the applicability of the social disadvantage indicators that are recognised drivers of legal need.

The dilemma for NCLC and many other community legal centres where administrative staff are responsible for intake is how to sensitively triage clients with multiple and complex issues in a way that is not intrusive or triggering, and within the skillset of the staff member. Even with highly trained staff, the time required to build trust and rapport with a client is considerable.

In looking for solutions we reviewed available research on screening methods from the health sector broadly and the family violence sector specifically, where stigma and shame have been identified as a key barrier to disclosure. Our preliminary findings identified that a computer assisted self-administered screening tool increases the odds of individuals disclosing intimate partner violence by 37%, in comparison to a face-to-face interview screening (Hussain, N., et al., 2015). We also considered other benefits of an electronic triage process including efficiency, ease of translation into community languages, the capability to build consumer feedback into the tool, and the potential for improved data collection/evidence regarding our clients' personal circumstances and legal needs.

The TEALS Project aimed to explore whether an interactive online tool could streamline the process of obtaining client information in a way that is comfortable and safe for the service user, whilst lessening the burden upon administrative staff. The project aimed to test six core assumptions:

1. The addition of an automated intake and triage process would lead to more efficient administration and information processing.
2. People would feel more comfortable disclosing sensitive information via a confidential online form.
3. The additional information provided by service inquirers accessing the tool would enhance NCLC triage capability, ensuring that legal services are targeted to those with the highest legal need.

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4. Service inquirers accessing the tool who are deemed ineligible for assistance would receive better and more targeted referrals based upon the additional information provided.
  5. The Legal Connector Tool would lead to increased traffic to NCLC, and that NCLC would have capacity to respond to a 10% increase in demand for services.
  6. The data gained from community members using the tool would enhance our broader understanding of the legal needs within our community, and the extent to which NCLC was meeting community need.

By utilising technologically assisted triaging, the TEALS Project also aimed to pilot a model that could be utilised across the community legal sector to ensure that resources are widely being prioritised towards community members who are most in need of free legal assistance.



# Setting the Scene: NCLC's Existing Triage Model

NCLC's client intake has historically operated through phone, email, and in-person contact. Individuals are asked a short series of intake questions to identify where clients are located, the type of legal issue they are experiencing, and information required to perform the conflict-of-interest check that is a requirement for provision of all legal services. Questions regarding membership of priority cohorts were not historically asked on a consistent basis by the administrative team, with NCLC's Casework and Advice Guidelines functioning as the guiding document for the assessment and triage process. The administrative team did ask about the age of the caller and when deemed appropriate or relevant the year of their arrival in Australia. This process was at times imprecise.


Inquirers who are not eligible for legal assistance on the basis that they are out of catchment, have an unsuitable legal matter, or do not fall within service delivery guidelines, are provided with appropriate referral information by the administrative staff member. Referrals may be provided to other generalist community legal centres that service the inquirer's geographic location, specialist community legal centres whose work focuses on relevant areas of law and where appropriate private lawyers. In addition to legal referrals, NCLC provides ineligible inquirers referrals to non-legal services (including social workers, community services and unions) and to dispute resolution bodies.

Where deemed suitable for legal assistance by administrative staff, inquirers are either offered an appointment in a legal clinic structured according to the type of legal problem (i.e., Family Violence, Family Law), or are placed into a cohort clinic (i.e., Youth or Newly Arrived) or generalist clinic (legal issues for which we do not have a specific clinic but can provide advice in accordance with our Casework and Advice Guidelines). NCLC runs up to sixteen clinics per week, with each clinic comprising of four 45-minute appointments at which lawyers undertake a more intensive client-intake process, take client instructions, and provide relevant legal advice (as well as referrals to other legal and non-legal services). Following clinic appointments, clients with identified need for ongoing legal assistance who are deemed eligible based on NCLC's Casework and Advice Guidelines may be provided with ongoing case-work support.

Eligible service inquirers typically receive a clinic appointment within one to three weeks. When wait times blow out significantly, NCLC will attempt to target our service provision by placing stricter guidelines on who will be eligible for assistance and who will be referred out (for example someone who may be able to get advice from a specialist service such as Tenants Victoria may be referred to their services).

In planning for this project, NCLC identified that the existing client intake process is comprised of four phases:

1. **Screening** – Clients are deemed eligible for legal assistance (through a clinic appointment) based upon location and type of legal issue.
2. **First Triage** – Clients are prioritised against our strategic focus priorities (cohorts with the most need) and provided with a clinic appointment.

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3. **Intake** – Information is gathered by lawyers at the commencement of a legal advice session, where additional client information is obtained to provide appropriate legal advice and additional referrals.
  4. **Second Triage** – Information gathered at the intake stage is tested against NCLC’s Casework and Advice Guidelines to explore whether further legal support (opening a casework file, or multiple files) is required.

In addition to this main triage pathway, some clients access NCLC’s services via the duty lawyer services which NCLC provides for Family Violence Intervention Order applications and affected family members at the Broadmeadows Magistrates Court. Clients seen at the duty lawyer service are asked a series of intake questions like those asked of clients at a clinic appointment. Many clients receiving a duty lawyer service may also need and be eligible for additional advice or casework assistance. Depending on the circumstances of the client they may enter the client intake process at different phases, with some clients assessed as eligible for clinic appointments while others may be assessed as needing more extensive casework support without a clinic appointment being required. While the duty lawyer intake process was not the focus of the TEALS project it is important to keep in mind as an alternate pathway to NCLC’s services, and that clients accessing services via this pathway may potentially skew the project evaluation data. This has been noted where likely to impact.

Overall, NCLC recognised that there was a conspicuous gap in the consistency of the first triage stage of the client intake process. Multiple triage flowcharts and guidelines had been created over the years of NCLC’s operation, being altered and adapted as NCLC changed our Casework and Advice Guidelines and service delivery focus in response to demand and funding fluctuations. This has meant that there has not been one clear and consistent set of triage guidelines that have been followed by the administrative team. In implementing the Legal Connector Tool, NCLC intended to add structure to the screening and first triage processes, and to test whether these first two phases of client intake could be automated. As further explored in this report while the automation of the triage stage proved to be complex, project implementation has enhanced consistency within the triage process.

# Project Implementation

The TEALS Project commenced in May 2021.

## **Project development: May – July 2021**

The development stage of the project consisted of researching best practice triage models and triage questions for identifying sensitive information, with a specific focus upon inclusive practice and question framing. A Program Logic was developed with input from relevant staff, and an evaluation framework established. Considerable time was spent investigating the most appropriate tool to be utilised to undertake a triage survey, and consultations occurred with our administrative team to explore the best options for integrating an online triage tool into our existing triage model.

## **Staff upskilling and tool development: August – December 2021**

Initial project plans and designs envisaged intake automation to be assisted by a simple online survey. After preliminary research and consultations, in August 2021, it was determined that the project would instead be supported by software that provided greater scope for automation. In choosing software to develop the tool, NCLC determined that a simple no-code program was needed so that the tool could be built by our staff who have limited technical capability. This was essential as NCLC does not have a dedicated IT employee. NCLC found appropriate software that was also suitable for translation into multiple languages, could incorporate automated referrals when filtering out ineligible inquirers (for example, based upon postcode, as previously described), could generate an automated email alert to the administrative team when an inquiry was completed, and had the capacity to generate automated forms containing client data.

In September 2021, key NCLC staff members received training on how to build the interactive online bot, and development of the tool commenced that same month. A build map of the online bot was developed, and the information flow was continually refined throughout the process based on consultation feedback. A promotional strategy was developed to inform our partners and community about the tool. Staffing and technical issues led to the launch being delayed until early 2022.


## **Piloting of the tool (Pilot Phase One): January – June 2022**

In January 2022, Pilot Phase One of the legal triage tool – which we named ‘the Legal Connector’ – commenced. The launch of the tool was supported by promotional activities among stakeholder networks and the public. NCLC shared information regarding the tool via email with our stakeholders, promoted the tool in an article in our bi-monthly newsletter, included information and a link to the Legal Connector on our website’s homepage and added a link to the tool to the email signatures of all staff members. Additionally, the launch of the tool was covered in local newspaper the Northern Star Weekly.<sup>1</sup>

The Legal Connector tool was imbedded in NCLC’s website and accessible by all website users via the main page or a tab named ‘Make an Appointment’. Referral partners were requested to direct their clients to use the Legal Connector Tool rather than referring clients to contact NCLC’s

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<sup>1</sup> [New tool streamlines legal advice process | Northern \(starweekly.com.au\)](https://www.starweekly.com.au/news/new-tool-streamlines-legal-advice-process)



administrative team via phone. The administrative team adopted a policy of directing inquirers who contacted NCLC via email and individuals who contacted via phone with unclear legal issues to the Legal Connector to enable the gathering of additional information for assessment. Due to a technical issue the tool was removed for the entire month of February, and then re-launched in March and tested for a further three-month period from March to June.

Evaluation questions were incorporated into the tool during Pilot Phase One (as detailed. The questions included:

1. On a scale of 0-10 (10 being very easy; 0 being very difficult), how easy or difficult was it to use this online questionnaire?
2. Would you be happy to use this way of contacting us again?
3. Are there things in this questionnaire that we could improve?

During Pilot Phase One, bi-lingual staff members at NCLC began the development of an Arabic language version of the tool, as Arabic is the largest language group outside of English in NCLC's catchment.

### **Refining and improving the tool, and re-testing (Pilot Phase Two): July – September 2022**


At the end of Pilot Phase One an interim review of the project was undertaken. Feedback provided by inquirers was reviewed and some helpful and practical suggestions were incorporated into the tool for Phase Two of the piloting process. Feedback included recommendations on providing further explanations as to why certain questions were being asked, providing additional space for free-text comments, and changing the layout and colour of the bot to enhance readability. Additionally, the broader interim review of the Legal Connector provided an opportunity to enhance uniformity across NCLC's intake processes. Through the review we identified what questions needed to be added to align the tool with NCLC's existing client intake form and what elements of the Tool could be added to the intake form. See Annex for the full text of the Legal Connector with changes following the Pilot Phase One review.

The findings from Phase One of the project were further incorporated into the Arabic language Legal Connector Tool which was launched in July 2022 at the beginning of Pilot Phase Two. To promote the tool NCLC shared information regarding the Arabic language Legal Connector Tool with stakeholders via email, included information in Arabic on NCLC's website home page and promoted the tool on social media.

Pilot Phase Two concluded at the end of September 2022, however both the English and Arabic language tool remained operational beyond the project period.

### **Overview of the Legal Connector Tool**

The Legal Connector Tool operates online, embedded in NCLC's website with accessible links available on the homepage. Information is provided about the operation of the tool on the Legal Connector webpage informing inquirers that they will be asked a short series of questions about any legal and non-legal issues they are facing. Inquirers are informed that after completing the Legal Connector Tool NCLC will be in contact within three business days regarding next steps. When developing the tool, it was determined that a chat-like structure would be utilised, with inquirers being asked between one and 40 questions depending on the information provided and their assessed



eligibility for NCLC's services. The tool is designed to refer out clients who are clearly ineligible for NCLC's services as soon as possible to minimise the burden on these inquirers. As such, the tool can take between one and ten minutes for an individual to complete. The tool progresses from asking basic screening questions to more detailed demographic questions and questions relating to the inquirers legal matter, to aid the triage and intake stages. Most questions operate with multiple choice answers, with some allowing for free text.

When using the tool, individuals will either receive an automated referral to another service or will be asked additional questions required to progress the intake process. For example, individuals who provide a postcode outside of NCLC's catchment and subsequently answer 'no' to a question asking whether they work or study within Hume, Merri-bek or Mitchell Shire are referred to the Federation of Community Legal Centres' directory, where they can find their geographically appropriate legal service. Individuals who input a postcode within NCLC's catchment will progress through the tool, with some other points of referral occurring as they progress. For example, inquirers who identify that they have a family violence intervention order matter at a court other than the Broadmeadows Magistrates Court are provided with a directory of the relevant community legal centres that service Magistrates courts across Victoria. Other inquirers will continue to progress, being asked additional questions regarding their living and employment situation and their identification with certain demographic cohorts which align with NCLC priority cohort groups.

Where inquirers are unable to provide certain information – including contact information – the tool directs them to contact NCLC's administrative team via phone. This element of the design acts as a safety net to bring inquirers into the service, rather than excluding inquirers who are unable to provide requisite information. In other instances, such as where an inquirer does not have the information of the other party to their legal matter (which is required to undertake a conflict-of-interest check), the inquirer is able to progress in the form but is informed about the potential limitations on our ability to help if this information cannot be provided.

Once an individual provides all the relevant legal and non-legal information, they receive a message letting them know that their inquiry will be reviewed and repeating that they will be contacted within three working days by NCLC's administrative team. Inquirers are then asked a short series of feedback questions (detailed above) before the tool is completed.

A flow-chart of the tool's questions and progress is included in the Annex to this report.

# Project Challenges

The TEALS Project faced a number of challenges due to technological issues and staffing limitations which impacted upon project timelines and subsequent user testing, and funding uncertainties that led to changing triage practices as we narrowed eligibility criteria in response to resource limitations.

## **Extent of user testing**


Several external factors impacted upon the project timeline which in turn impacted upon the level of user testing. The process of identifying appropriate software, upskilling staff in using the software, and building the tool took longer than originally anticipated. Once the tool was launched in January 2022, partner agencies raised concerns regarding the visibility of client data after completion of the tool, and accordingly the tool was removed for the month of February 2022 while the software company applied a technical fix. The Arabic version of the bot was also delayed due to the tool not being able to read text from right to left, however again the software provider was able to respond promptly to rectify the problem. These two issues caused some delays in the original project timeline. With extensive promotion occurring in January 2022, the loss of momentum following removal of the tool during February 2022 may have negated against any promotional activities undertaken, leading to a smaller pool of users. In addition, time delays caused the budget applied to this project to be inadequate, leading to capacity issue which impacted our ability to continually refine and adapt the tool, and to apply additional community engagement strategies which may have assisted in attracting diverse community members to test the tool.

## **Useability of the tool on mobile phones**

Despite overall positive feedback from users in relation to the ease of use, a technical concern was identified regarding the usability of the tool on mobile phones. Several inquirers alerted NCLC to display issues that limited their engagement with the tool when accessing via mobile phones. While NCLC discussed this issue with the software provider, the complication appeared to have arisen due to interface issues between the tool and NCLC's website. No simple solution was available to correct this issue without NCLC conducting significant website redevelopment and the problem persisted across the project period.

## **The impact of funding and resourcing limitations on the service model**

This project occurred at a time of notable funding uncertainty caused by an unfortunate combination of COVID-19 related impacts on the funding landscape and the conclusion of several funding streams. Funding uncertainties that occurred throughout the project period compounded and limited our capacity to provide legal advice to inquirers contacting NCLC via the tool who did not reach the standard required to be considered a priority client. The funding environment also notably affected staffing within our legal team, with NCLC losing two lawyers towards the end of the 2021-22 financial year as their roles could not be guaranteed beyond the end of the financial year. This led to a 20% reduction in NCLC's capacity to provide legal services and necessitated the suspension of NCLC's three weekly generalist clinics (each with four available appointments) at the beginning of July 2022. This meant that NCLC was only able to provide legal services to clients satisfying eligibility criteria for the established priority client clinics: newly arrived migrants and refugees, women on temporary visas experiencing family violence, youth, and victim/survivors of family violence.



The number of clients eligible for legal appointments who inquired via the Legal Connector was reduced dramatically as NCLC was forced to increasingly narrow service eligibility in the face of diminishing resourcing and capacity. It was not until the conclusion of the project period that NCLC was able to recommence additional clinics in the form of two additional generalist Priority Client Clinics that run weekly.

This service delivery transition placed an additional burden on and confusion within the administrative team regarding eligibility criteria and increased service gaps for many in need seeking NCLC services who were previously eligible for legal assistance. The tool was not modified to account for changing eligibility criteria, as the specified time-period for narrowed eligibility criteria was unclear, and more complex filtrations based upon client profiles would have been required which was beyond our staff's technical capability (for example, where two or more eligibility criteria points were satisfied against particular legal issues). Accordingly, each Legal Connector enquiry had to be examined carefully by administrative staff to see whether an appointment could be provided. In addition to this manual process, the number of ineligible clients who contacted via the Legal Connector tool, who needed to be recontacted with appropriate referral information also increased, leading to significant administrative burden as often multiple contact attempts were required.

### **Validity of data**

While over 400 people interacted with the Legal Connector Tool across the nine months of the project period, clear data is only available for 159 individuals. The remaining 240 people provided insufficient information to validate their responses. These individuals did not receive automated referrals or provide adequate data to enable follow-up from NCLC's administrative team to gather additional information or book appointments. These 240 inquirers provided a varying extent of demographic information, making initial analysis of responses at times inconsistent and unclear. While this may point to a very high rate of abandonment, we are aware that this group included stakeholders and partners testing the Legal Connector Tool, as well as NCLC staff acquainting themselves with the tool. Additionally, this group did include inquirers who exited the tool early or would not provide relevant information. It is unclear how many of these inquirers subsequently completed the tool or contacted the administrative team. Therefore, a clear abandonment rate cannot be stated with certainty. For consistency of data, only individuals who provided enough information to receive a referral (either automated or via the administrative team) or to become clients are included in the analysis in this report.

# Snapshot of Service Inquirers Using the Legal Connector Tool

Of the 159 individuals who completed the tool or provided adequate information, 27 were provided automated referrals, 94 were referred to another service by NCLC's administrative team (referred to throughout this report as 'inquirers') and 38 became clients.<sup>2</sup> For the 27 individuals who were provided automated referrals, minimal demographic data was gathered due to referrals being provided early in a user's progression through the tool on the basis of postcode or legal problem type.

Demographic and legal information is therefore available for 132 inquirers of the Legal Connector Tool. Of these 132 inquirers, 79 (60%) utilised the Legal Connector Tool during Phase One of the project, while 53 (40%) used the tool during Phase Two.

## Legal problem type

Almost a quarter (23%) of inquiries concerned 'family law' related legal problems. 'Family violence', 'tenancy', 'fine' and 'other' completed the top five legal areas of inquiry. Among those who selected 'other' as their legal problem type, three concerned debt, two concerned court representation, two concerned building and conveyancing, one concerned family law and one concerned property, while the legal issue was unclear for the remaining three inquirers.

PROBLEM TYPE	Phase 1		Phase 2		TOTAL	
FAMILY LAW	18	23%	13	25%	31	23%
FAMILY VIOLENCE	12	15%	7	13%	19	14%
TENANCY	8	10%	7	13%	15	11%
OTHER	6	8%	6	11%	12	9%
FINES	8	10%	4	8%	12	9%
MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT	6	8%	5	9%	11	8%
CRIMINAL	7	9%	4	8%	11	8%
EMPLOYMENT	2	3%	5	9%	7	5%
CONSUMER	4	5%	1	2%	5	4%
DEBT	4	5%	0	0%	4	3%
VOCAT	2	3%	0	0%	2	2%
CENTRELINK	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
MIGRATION	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
POWER OF ATTORNEY	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
TOTAL	79		53		132	

<sup>2</sup> This figure of 38 includes seven individuals who did not attend their appointment after booking in with NCLC.

## Demographics

### Age

Almost three quarters of inquirers (73%) were between the ages of 25 and 49. Only 10% of inquirers were under 25 years of age (classified as 'youth'). There was very minimal variation across both phases of the project.

AGE	Phase 1		Phase 2		TOTAL	
Under 18	1	1%	1	2%	2	2%
18-24	7	9%	4	8%	11	8%
25-34	25	32%	20	38%	45	34%
35-49	32	41%	19	36%	51	39%
50-64	12	15%	8	15%	20	15%
65 and OVER	2	3%	1	2%	3	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>		<b>53</b>		<b>132</b>	

### Gender

The majority of inquirers identified as female (58%). Notably, an additional 4% of inquirers identified as non-binary or gender diverse.

GENDER IDENTITY	Phase 1		Phase 2		TOTAL	
FEMALE	44	56%	32	60%	76	58%
MALE	31	39%	19	36%	50	38%
NON-BINARY	4	5%	0	0%	4	3%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
OTHER	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>		<b>53</b>		<b>132</b>	

### Income

Across the project period, 58% of inquirers reported earning less than \$600 per week – including 11% who reported no income – categorising them as experiencing financial disadvantage. Overall, a very low proportion (11%) of inquirers would be categorised as receiving middle or above average income.

INCOME	Phase 1		Phase 2		TOTAL	
NO INCOME	7	9%	7	13%	14	11%
1-199	6	8%	1	2%	7	5%
200-299	6	8%	1	2%	7	5%
300-399	11	14%	10	19%	21	16%
400-599	18	23%	11	21%	29	22%
600-799	5	6%	6	11%	11	8%
800-999	12	15%	5	9%	17	13%
1000-1249	6	8%	6	11%	12	9%
1250-1499	5	6%	3	6%	8	6%
1500-1999	2	3%	2	4%	4	3%
2,000 +	1	1%	1	2%	2	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>		<b>53</b>		<b>132</b>	

## Alignment with priority cohorts

The Legal Connector Tool gathered data on whether inquirers identified as members of NCLC's priority cohorts in order to aid our administrative team in triaging inquirers and to gather data on legal need. During Pilot Phase One of the project, in addition to being asked about their legal problem type and basic demographic information, inquirers were asked if they identified with any of six listed groups, including whether they were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, had an alcohol or drug dependency, had arrived in Australia in the last five years, were impacted by gambling, or were living with a disability. A seventh option of 'none of these' was also available. Following a review of Phase One it was determined that additional categories should be added to ensure alignment with other intake documents utilised by NCLC and required fields on CLASS.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, while the first question of the tool asked all inquirers 'If you are experiencing family violence, please confirm it is safe for you to continue completing this questionnaire now' with 'Safe to Continue', 'Not Safe to Continue' and 'Not Applicable' as the available answers, data gathered from this questions was inconclusive. As such the following four categories were added to the tool for Pilot Phase Two: whether inquirers were experiencing mental ill health, living with an intellectual disability, were a sole parent with dependent children, or were a victim or survivor of family violence. The question of whether an inquirer was experiencing homelessness or was at risk of homelessness was also added.

With these additional questions included we saw an increase in the overall identification by inquirers with priority cohorts. For Pilot Phase One, a third of inquirers (34%) identified with one or more of NCLC's priority cohorts. In Pilot Phase Two, with the extra priority cohorts added, this doubled to 68%. Additionally, 51% of total inquirers identified with two or more priority groups in Pilot Phase Two, compared to only 10% for Pilot Phase One.

COHORTS	Phase 1		Phase 2	
NONE	52	66%	17	32%
ONE COHORT	19	24%	9	17%
TWO COHORTS	7	9%	17	32%
THREE COHORTS	1	1%	8	15%
FOUR (OR MORE) COHORTS	0	0%	2	4%
TOTAL	79		53	

Due to the variations of questions between Phase One and Phase Two, demographic cohort information for inquirers included in this report is largely limited to those who completed the Legal Connector Tool during Pilot Phase Two. These changes enhanced NCLC's ability to identify individuals who belonged to NCLC's priority cohorts. In turn, the data from this Phase most accurately captures NCLC priority cohort framework.

In Pilot Phase Two, the top five identified groups were persons experiencing homelessness (25%), victims or survivors of family violence (25%), sole parents with dependent children (25%), people experiencing mental ill health (23%) and people living with a disability (20%).

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<sup>3</sup> CLASS is the Community Legal Assistance Services System used by community legal centres in Australia as a case management and funder reporting database.

COHORTS	Phase 2	
LIVING WITH A DISABILITY	10	19%
LGBTIQ+	4	8%
NEWLY ARRIVED	4	8%
ALCOHOL OR DRUG DEPENDANCY	1	2%
IMPACTED BY GAMBLING	1	2%
ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER	1	2%
EXPERIENCING MENTAL ILL HEALTH	12	23%
LIVING WITH AN INTELECTUAL DISABILITY	3	6%
SOLE PARENT OR DEPENDENT CHILD	13	25%
VICTIM OR SURVIVOR OF FAMILY VIOLENCE	13	25%
HOMELESSNESS INDICATOR	13	25%
NONE	17	32%
TOTAL ANSWERS	53	

It is notable that while 'living with a disability' is the fifth highest identified group, if a broader definition of disability is adopted to include 'experiencing mental ill health' and 'living with an intellectual disability', this becomes the highest identified group, comprising 32% of total inquirers (duplicates removed where a single inquirer ticked 'yes' to more than one of these three groups).

COHORTS	Phase 2	
LIVING WITH A DISABILITY	10	19%
EXPERIENCING MENTAL ILL HEALTH	12	23%
LIVING WITH AN INTELECTUAL DISABILITY	3	6%
DUPLICATES REMOVED	-8	
TOTAL	17	32%

When looking more closely at the 25% of inquirers who NCLC has categorised as experiencing homelessness, 6% were identified as homeless, 17% as at risk of homelessness and 2% as living in temporary housing.

HOMELESSNESS INDICATOR	Phase 2	
HOMELESS	3	6%
AT RISK	9	17%
TEMPORARY HOUSING	1	2%
HOMELESSNESS INDICATOR	13	25%
NONE OF THESE	40	75%
TOTAL	53	

# Project Findings


## 1. The Impact of the Legal Connector on Administrative Efficiency and Safety

### **Finding 1: Overall, the design and implementation of the Legal Connector added to the workload for NCLC's administrative team**

Throughout Pilot Phase One and Two, regular communication occurred between the administrative team and project team regarding their experience of engaging with the Legal Connector Tool. While NCLC anticipated some increase in the workload on the administrative team in the early months of the project while they adjusted to using the new technology, it was believed that this demand would reduce over the project period and be offset by increased efficiency and the reduction in other demands on the team. For example, NCLC anticipated that the tool might reduce the number of calls received by the administrative team due to clients utilising an alternative mode of access. However, data gathered during Pilot Phase Two demonstrates only a slight reduction in the overall number of calls that resulted in client referrals. From July-September 2022, there were 265 clients calls in which clients were referred to other legal and non-legal services. This was a reduction of 26 calls compared to the same period in 2021 (291 calls), amounting to a reduction of less than two calls per week. This aligns with feedback gathered through surveys and focus group discussions with the administrative team, where they stated that they noticed no impact on the number of calls received from clients or service inquirers.

Overall, across both pilot phases of the project the Legal Connector Tool increased the workload for the administrative team, specifically creating additional work for the members of the team tasked with managing the Legal Connector Tool inquiries. During Pilot Phase Two NCLC employed an additional casual administrative staff member (working between 0.2 and 0.4 FTE per week) to help manage the additional workload. It is estimated that management of the Legal Connector Tool added an additional 2 hours of work for this staff member per week. Staff reported that many inquirers (up to half) did not answer when contacted to follow up on their online inquiry, with multiple attempts at contact having to be undertaken (via phone, and subsequent email or text). Keeping track of client inquiries and inquiry statuses (for triage and project evaluation purposes) also created additional workload for the administrative team.

An important function of the tool was the capacity to filter out and provide referrals to clients who were not deemed eligible for NCLC's clinic or casework services due to their location, for example, or the type of legal matter reported. In this regard, the tool generated administrative efficiencies by automating work that would otherwise have been done manually by the administrative team. However, more complex filtering (for example, determining eligibility based upon a combination of problem types and identified client demographics) was not applied to the tool due to capacity constraints and the limited technological capability of NCLC's team. Accordingly, a manual administrative review was required for each service enquirer to determine eligibility, in addition to the manual step of conducting a conflict-of-interest check. This second step was necessary as the software could not be integrated with NCLC's CRM software to automate this process.




With greater refinement of the automated referrals process in consultation with the tool's software developers, it may be possible to reduce the burden and workload experienced by the administrative team. If a greater percentage of ineligible clients could be provided automated referrals to other service or legal self-help tools, the overall workload on the administrative team would be reduced drastically, although noting there are limitations on the specificity of referrals that can be automated within this process (see Finding 11). Further, if there could be greater integration between the tool and NCLC's other software that could automate conflict checks and other stages of triage this would further reduce the burden on the team. More time and resources would be needed to provide training to NCLC staff and work with the software developers to ensure NCLC staff are comfortable and capable of utilising the tool to its fullest capability.

The following example is provided to illustrate the difficulties faced by the administrative team in triaging clients who used the Legal Connector Tool.

During the Pilot Phase Two period, 13 inquirers (25% of the 53 people who inquired during this period) identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness. These clients would generally be deemed eligible for assistance based upon being considered a priority client due to their homelessness status. However, only two of these clients received a legal advice appointment. Of the remaining 11 inquirers who identified as affected by homelessness, five were contacted by the administrative team and deemed to have unsuitable legal matters, thus receiving appropriate referrals (two inquirers had employment matters and were referred to Job Watch and the Fair Work Ombudsman; two others had tenancy related matters and were referred to Tenants Victoria and the Dispute Settlement Centre; and the final inquirer had a family law related matter). One inquirer could not be assisted due to an identified conflict, two inquirers were contacted by the administrative team, but NCLC was unable to assist in the required time frame, and one inquirer was a previous client to whom NCLC had already provided advice on the same legal issue. Finally, the administrative team attempted to contact two other inquirers on multiple occasions via phone and email but were unable to make contact to gather further information and book an appointment.

## **Finding 2: The Legal Connector led to more structured data intake and demonstrated some positive benefits in improving the administrative team's sense of safety**

In implementing the TEALS project and reviewing NCLC's previous intake processes there was a recognition of the need for a more structured client intake and triage process broadly. When undertaking the interim project review of Pilot Phase One, NCLC utilised the findings from the initial project stage to inform a broader review of our intake forms and procedures. This process led NCLC to align the questions asked across NCLC's intake forms – including the forms used by lawyers in clinic appointments and during duty lawyer services – with each other and with the Legal Connector Tool. Further, NCLC implemented a structured client intake script for the administrative staff to triage inquirers who contact NCLC over the phone or in person to ensure that all clients seeking clinic appointments are appropriately triaged against NCLC's Casework and Advice Guidelines. Staff were provided guidance on the way to frame questions to clients and provided with clear eligibility guidelines to triage inquirers against.



We were also interested in whether the administrative team would experience less workplace stress by having less engagement with difficult clients, or by not having to turn clients away who were deemed ineligible for assistance. While the administrative team reported no impact on the number of stressful phone calls they received, they did report an overall increase in their sense of safety when responding to clients and service users who had requested an appointment via the tool. This increase was largely driven by the ability to text or email clients to refuse their appointment request and to provide referrals rather than having to provide this information verbally over the phone or in person. However, feedback also noted that the increase in the number of service inquirers coming through the Legal Connector meant that the number of instances of having to refuse clients via email or text were more frequent, adding to their overall workload.

Staff also stated that they experienced enhanced comfort when triaging clients in-person, by being provided with a clear script and guidelines for triaging clients over the phone, and more confidence in informing inquirers of eligibility criteria. This highlights that some simple strategies can greatly enhance staff safety and comfort in conducting their day-to-day roles, regardless of the mode of intake and triage.

Resourcing, funding limitations and the limited project timeframe hindered NCLC's full utilisation of the Legal Connector Tool. While the administrative team directed inquirers who contacted NCLC via email – as well as those who contacted via phone with unclear legal issues – to complete the Legal Connector tool, a policy of all inquirers being directed to the tool was not adopted. NCLC's management team, in seeing the additional pressure placed on the administrative team because of the tool and the closure of the generalist clinics, determined it was inappropriate to direct all enquiries to the Legal Connector Tool.

### **Finding 3: The Legal Connector has the potential to reduce the administrative workload for NCLC Lawyers conducting intake with clients and improve the provision of safe and responsive services.**

A key benefit of the tool identified during the project period was the software's capacity to generate automated forms with client data. Where client appointments were made via the Legal Connector Tool, our administrative team provided forms containing the client data in advance to NCLC Lawyers, allowing them to access detailed client information prior to meeting with the client and avoiding having to ask clients repetitive questions at intake when completing the client intake form. Having access to client information prior to the appointment also provides the opportunity to provide a more culturally safe and trauma informed practice model, for example, a lawyer may have greater awareness of preferred pronouns, or be aware of literacy limitations because of the client information provided, without having to go through the intake questions.

An additional step of using the generated form to replace intake forms has the potential to lead to significant time savings by removing the need to manually transfer data between forms. Due to uncertainty regarding the continued use of the Legal Connector Tool beyond the project period, NCLC did not invest further in refining our intake forms and systems to fully integrate and test this feature. However, it is recognised that this integration would reduce the administrative workload for the legal team, allowing them to better utilise their limited time with clients to gain a deeper understanding of their legal issues and provide more extensive legal advice.

## 2. User Satisfaction in Using the Tool

### **Finding 4: Service inquirers found the tool reasonably easy to use**

Findings from the evaluation questions provided at the end of the Legal Connector questionnaire were used to assess service inquirer satisfaction. Overall, inquirers found the tool reasonably easy to use, with an average score of 7.9 out of 10 being recorded across 125 survey responses. Based on the 125 individuals who responded to at least one of the survey questions, 82% indicated that they would be happy to use the tool to contact NCLC in the future, while 15% would not want to use the tool again (3% did not answer this question). 78% of inquirers did not think there were elements in the questionnaire that could be improved, while 17% did. There does not appear to be any correlation between identification with certain demographic groups and the reported usability of the tool.

### **Finding 5: There is mixed evidence regarding whether an automated triage process may be a more comfortable way of providing sensitive information for particular demographic cohorts**

One assumption in implementing the tool was that people might feel more comfortable disclosing sensitive information in an interactive online form rather than telling an NCLC staff member by telephone or face-to-face. Through the evaluation questions imbedded in the Legal Connector Tool, NCLC hoped to gain an insight into the comfort of individuals in disclosing personal information. However, only two inquirers provided feedback on the appropriateness of asking sensitive questions over an online form, both recommending that these questions are asked in person and not online.

Looking at comparative client and inquirer data over the testing period provides mixed insights. It is notable that across the whole project period (Pilot Phase One and Two), 8% of inquirers identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. During this same period, only 2% of NCLC's total clients identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. This increase in identification may denote a greater ease in disclosure of gender identity and sexuality when using an online form.

During the project NCLC introduced monitoring of the mode through which a client connected with NCLC in CLASS under two categories of 'Legal Connector' and 'Administrative' (via phone or in person). All clients that accessed services via the Legal Connector – even if they subsequently called to make appointments while waiting for a response – were registered in CLASS as connecting via the Legal Connector Tool. While a total of 1,644 clients accessed NCLC's service during the project period, the mode of access for 500 clients was not recorded (due to their contacting NCLC prior to this monitoring becoming practice among the NCLC staff). For clarity of data these individuals have not been included in the demographic comparison. The number of clients who accessed NCLC's services via the Legal Connector is notably smaller (31 people) than those who accessed our services via the administrative team (1,113).

The 'Legal Connector' group reported higher rates of living with a disability than the 'Administrative' group (65% compared to 54%). They also reported higher rates of mental ill health (58% compared to 49%) and of living with an intellectual disability (10% compared to 5%). There were also slightly higher rates of clients who identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community (3% compared to 1%). Keeping in mind the differentiation in size between the data sets, these findings may denote a greater ease in disclosing mental health issues and disability status, as well as supporting the above finding regarding disclosure of gender identity and sexuality.

However, among the 'Legal Connector' group, notably less people identified as victims or survivors of family violence (58% compared to 73%) or as experiencing financial disadvantage (71% compared to 82%). This lower rate of disclosure of family violence appears to negate the assumptions that underpinned the project. However, this data output is likely a consequence of NCLC having clear alternative service access pathways for victims/survivors of family violence which bypass usual triage methods, such as via direct referral from the Broadmeadows Magistrates Court for family violence duty lawyer services. This referral process artificially increased the number of clients identifying as victims/survivors of family violence through administrative channels.

COHORTS	LEGAL CONNECTOR		ADMINISTRATIVE	
LIVING WITH A DISABILITY	20	65%	601	54%
LGBTIQ+	1	3%	9	1%
NEWLY ARRIVED	2	6%	130	12%
ALCOHOL OR DRUG DEPENDENCY	1	3%	64	6%
HOMELESSNESS INDICATOR	5	16%	203	18%
ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER	0	0%	29	3%
EXPERIENCING MENTAL ILL HEALTH	18	58%	543	49%
LIVING WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY	3	10%	58	5%
SOLE PARENT OF DEPENDENT CHILD	9	29%	411	37%
VICTIM OR SURVIVOR OF FAMILY VIOLENCE	18	58%	811	73%
FINANCIAL DISADVANTAGE INDICATOR	22	71%	914	82%
TOTAL ANSWERS	31		1113	

To undertake a thorough review of the project and to capture a range of client experiences, in September 2022 we conducted a focus group with 20 Arabic-speaking women to gauge the cultural accessibility of the Arabic language Legal Connector Tool and their comfort with using it to disclose personal information. Inquirers overall found the tool easy to use, giving it an average score of eight out of ten. Additionally, 70% of focus group members were 'comfortable' filling out online forms, and an additional 25% 'very comfortable'. However, despite the usability of the online form, 65% of focus group members still stated that they were most comfortable sharing personal information with a legal service in person. 15% stated they would be the most comfortable sharing personal information via an online form and 20% of inquirers stated they would prefer to share this information via phone. In an additional smaller focus group with Arabic-speaking women in September, 100% of inquirers selected in-person as their preferred method of disclosing personal or sensitive information. Recognising that this data is specific to a particular cultural group, further examination of this assumption and its applicability across different population groups is needed.

### **Finding 6: The Arabic language Legal Connector Tool did not lead to improved accessibility to NCLC legal services for our culturally diverse community.**

Throughout the Pilot Phase Two when the Arabic language Legal Connector Tool was live, only one legitimate inquiry (other inquiries included partners and staff members testing the tool) came through the Arabic language version of the tool.

NCLC publicised the Arabic Language version of the tool via stakeholder networks, social media and on our website. However, due to the constraints of the project NCLC did not have the resources to undertake extensive community engagement, education, and promotion among the Arabic-speaking community. It is unclear how successful the tool would be in enhancing access to NCLC's services if supported by an intensive community engagement strategy, however initial findings demonstrate that our Arabic speaking community are not seeking out online forms as a way of engaging and accessing services.

## **3. Impact Upon Targeted Service Delivery Prioritising Those with Highest Legal Need**

### **Finding 7: Service inquirers in crisis appear to be more likely to phone for an appointment than use the online tool**

In a focus group held with the administrative team at the end of the project, it was reported that multiple clients called to make appointments between their inquiry via the Legal Connector Tool and hearing back from the administrative team. Data from Pilot Phase Two shows that this occurred with at least two of the seven inquirers who became clients during this period. While the same monitoring of the administrative process did not occur during Pilot Phase One, the reports from the administrative team during the focus group showed that this occurred on many more occasions than documented. As will be discussed further below, the average wait time between persons lodging inquiries with the Legal Connector Tool and being contacted by the administrative team was 3.5 working days.

A logical conclusion may be that the delay in responding to inquiries is not appropriate for people facing a crisis who require an immediate response. For several inquirers the administrative team attempted numerous follow-up calls and emails to organise an appointment or request additional information (such as the details of Other Parties for the conflict check) but were unable to get in contact with inquirers. For others, by the time NCLC was able to get in contact with the inquirer we could not assist them within their required timeframe or found that they had reached out to other service providers in the interim.

### **Finding 8: The additional client information provided by the Legal Connector Tool supports targeted service delivery**

#### **Demographics**

As noted above, over 80% of clients who connected to NCLC via the Legal Connector Tool did so during Pilot Phase One (1 January – 30 June 2022). This was largely driven by having less stringent eligibility guidelines prior to the suspension of NCLC's three generalist clinics in July 2022, constituting

twelve potential appointments per week. When viewing the demographic profiles of the relevant clients, this impact can also be seen. During Pilot Phase One of the project, NCLC was able to provide appointments to individuals who were experiencing financial disadvantage but did not always fit into one of our priority cohort groups (71% of clients did not identify with a priority group).

During Pilot Phase Two, only one client did not identify with any of the priority cohorts, with all other clients identifying as victims or survivors of family violence, as well as other priority cohort groups.

COHORTS	PHASE 1		PHASE 2		TOTAL	
LIVING WITH A DISABILITY	3	10%	1	14%	4	11%
LGBTIQ+	2	6%	0	0%	2	5%
NEWLY ARRIVED	2	6%	0	0%	2	5%
ALCOHOL OR DRUG SEPENDENCY	1	3%	1	14%	2	5%
IMPACTED BY GAMBLING	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
EXPERIENCING MENTAL ILL HEALTH	N/A	0%	2	29%	2	5%
LIVING WITH AN INTELECTUAL DISABILITY	N/A	0%	0	0%	0	0%
SOLE PARENT OF DEPENDENT CHILD	N/A	0%	2	29%	2	5%
VICTIM OR SURVIVOR OF FAMILY VIOLENCE	N/A	0%	6	86%	6	16%
HOMELESSNESS INDICATOR	N/A	0%	2	29%	2	5%
NONE	22	71%	1	14%	23	61%
TOTAL ANSWERS	31		7		38	

The additional data obtained because of triage through the Legal Connector Tool assisted NCLC to determine which clients were eligible for assistance as we narrowed our client eligibility guidelines during phase 2 of the project. While many inquirers were manually screened out upon administrative review of the data, special out-of-clinic appointments were made for at least two clients who had contacted NCLC via the Legal Connector Tool because of the additional information they provided that identified them as priority clients. This information is unlikely to have been revealed through administrative triage processes. When service delivery and client eligibility is restricted due to resourcing and capacity issues, the additional client information provided via the tool enhances our capability to identify priority clients and provide them with support.

## 4. Impact Upon Capacity to Provide Appropriate Referrals to Ineligible Inquirers

### **Finding 9: Most service inquirers did not experience enhanced referral efficiency**

Of the 159 individuals who completed the tool or provided adequate information, 27 were provided automated referrals, and 94 were referred to other services by NCLC's administrative team.

For the 27 clients that received an automated referral, this process was relatively streamlined with the inquirer receiving the referral early in the automated triage process. This automated referral process also delivered time savings to the NCLC administrative team who would otherwise have spent time making this referral directly.


For the 94 inquirers that received manual referrals from NCLC's administrative team following completion of the Legal Connector Tool, this process was not immediate. Referral data gathered by the administrative team evidence wait times ranging between one to seven working days, with an average wait time of 3.5 working days between a user's first contact with NCLC via the Legal Connector tool and their referral to other services. This wait time is notably longer when compared with clients contacting NCLC via phone or in-person, who were provided immediate referrals once queries related to eligibility are resolved.

An end of project survey and focus group undertaken with the administrative team further reinforced the extended wait times for service users. The administrative team noted that staffing limitations played a crucial role in limiting their ability to provide punctual and immediate responses to inquiries through the Legal Connector Tool. For Pilot Phase One management of the Legal Connector Tool was undertaken by the existing administrative team which comprises 1.6 FTE workers to manage as many as 2,500 calls annually. For Pilot Phase Two an additional casual administrative worker was employed who was tasked with managing the tool. The employee only worked one to two days per week, meaning the Legal Connector Tool was not able to be consistently monitored. We note that if further automation could be built into the tool such as automated conflict of interest checks, then more inquirers would receive a streamlined response earlier.

### **Finding 10: In person referrals are likely to be more targeted and appropriate when compared to automated referrals**

It has been stated that NCLC did not use the tool to its full capacity due to technical limitations, and that additional automated referrals could have been built into the tool. However, it should be noted that there is a limit to which an automated tool can provide referrals that are targeted and appropriate.

The automated referral process operates by identifying a particular data point and building in a referral option associated with the data point. For example, if the inquirer is out of catchment, the inquirer is referred to the Federation of Community Legal Centre's website containing a list of community legal centres and the catchments they service. However, many of our clients require a more considered referral to address legal or non-legal needs. For example, consider the needs of an inquirer who has been made homeless and requires emergency accommodation. The referral options may vary according to varying demographic intersections such as age, gender, the need for a culturally specific or faith-based service, whether family violence has led to the problem, whether the inquirer is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, and so forth. In this situation, the quality of the referral relies



on the ability of the person taking the information to apply their knowledge of local and specific community programs considering the varying and intersecting needs of the inquirer, including past experiences with different service providers. In this way, while automated referrals can play an important role in filtering out clients and providing referrals to gateway information sites, the referrals made are likely to be less targeted and appropriate compared to the information that can be gathered and applied via in-person contact. The potential to make a warm referral for a client in crisis is also a feature of in-person assistance which cannot be automated.

## 5. Increase in Demand

### **Finding 11: The introduction of the Legal Connector Tool had a positive impact on the number of service inquirers**

Based on data recorded in CLASS, between 1 January and 30 September 2022 NCLC's administrative team provided referrals to 439 people who were not eligible for legal assistance. This data includes the 94 service inquirers who received follow up referrals after connecting to NCLC via the Legal Connector Tool. Additionally, as noted above, 27 service inquirers received automated referrals, totalling 466 service inquirers across the nine-month period receiving a referral service.

In the same nine-month period in 2021 (Jan-September), NCLC provided referrals to 390 service inquirers. The 2022 figures represent an increase of 80 service inquirers (a 20.5% increase).

It should be noted that NCLC has experienced an overall 21% increase in clients and service users when the two periods are compared (1,719 clients/service users in January-September 2021 compared to 2085 clients/service users in January-September 2022). This increase in demand does need to be viewed in the context of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown restrictions which led to a drop in clients accessing legal assistance during lockdown periods in 2020 and 2021, and a subsequent rebound in the number of service inquirers during 2022 consistent with pre-COVID numbers. NCLC saw an overall decrease in client figures in 2021, correlating with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the fact remains that persons contacting NCLC via the Legal Connector make up over a quarter of all NCLC referrals for this period, an impact directly attributable to the Legal Connector Tool.

While the number of service inquirers increased, the number of inquirers that became eligible clients was less than expected. It has been noted that community legal centres have a range of factors that impact upon their capacity to take on new clients, particularly where funding limitations and related staffing deficits lead to narrowing of eligibility for services. The impact of narrowing eligibility at the beginning of the 2022-23 financial year due to staffing shortages correlated with a noticeable decrease in the number of clients who made an appointment via the Legal Connector Tool, while the number of inquirers via the tool remained stable. Between 1 January and June 30, 2022 (Pilot Phase One), 119 service inquirers and 24 clients connected to NCLC via the Legal Connector Tool. From July 1 until 30 September 2022 (Pilot Phase Two), 122 service inquirers and only seven clients connected to NCLC via the Legal Connector Tool. This correlates with an overall reduction in clients. Between 1 July – 30 September 2021, NCLC saw 531 clients, while for the same period in 2022, NCLC saw 508 clients.

## 6. Responding to community need

### **Finding 12: Information and data gathered through the Legal Connector Tool paints a picture of immense legal need in our community and limited available resources**

Over the project period, NCLC provided referrals to inquirers who accessed the service via the Legal Connector Tool at a rate three times higher than we were able to offer appointments. More than 50% of those inquirers who we could not assist received referrals to other services experienced financial disadvantage (earning less than \$600 per week). Almost half of the inquirers (47%) who received referrals identified as a member of at least one of NCLC's priority cohorts, but due to other factors – such as their type of legal matter, level of income or NCLC's capacity at the time – we were unable to provide legal assistance. This project has reinforced our understanding that there are a large proportion of community members who require free legal advice but who aren't able to access our services due to the impacts of resource limitations upon our service structure.

An anticipated benefit of the tool was that the data gathered would inform NCLC's understanding of community need, and that this data would be of benefit by informing our strategic service delivery framework. The data gathered via the Legal Connector Tool has provided evidence that has confirmed NCLC's understanding of local community legal need, particularly in the family violence and family law space. As mentioned earlier in this report, almost a quarter (23%) of inquirers concerned family law related legal problems. Family violence, tenancy, fines and 'other' completed the top five legal areas of inquiry. For those who became clients after connecting via the Legal Connector Tool, half of their legal issues concerned a family law or family violence related legal matter (32% family law, 18% family violence). This need for family law advice reinforced to NCLC that there is a gap in available legal support for community members with family law issues. Of the 31 people who contacted NCLC regarding family law legal matters, only 12 became clients. This occurred during a period where NCLC had limited Family Law advice to victims/survivors of family violence as part of our narrowing of service eligibility guidelines. Of the remaining 19 inquirers almost 70% were low-income earners many of whom would be unable to fund a private lawyer for their matter.


## Conclusion

Overall, this report concludes that there is some benefit in utilising an online tool as a mode of access to legal services. These benefits include the ability to provide automated referrals for clients that are not eligible for service delivery; the potential to learn more about our clients prior to offering an appointment (and accordingly provide more targeted assistance); an enhanced sense of safety for administrative staff by not having to refuse access to service inquirers in person, and an enhanced understanding of the legal needs within our community due to the additional data collected. There is also some limited evidence that certain cohorts are more comfortable, or at least as comfortable, with disclosing sensitive information online, however there is strong evidence that this does not extend to community members from culturally diverse backgrounds. This reinforces our understanding that legal services should be wary of 'one size fits all' pathways for clients to access their services and that online tools are generally not appropriate as a substituted form of access to services, but instead should be considered an additional net-widening tool.

A key benefit to this project, which was not fully comprehended in the design stage (focusing more upon access and triage) is the value to lawyers of having access to comprehensive client information in advance of the client appointment, rather than needing to ask these questions as part of their own client intake process. This ensures lawyers have greater insight when meeting with the client, raising awareness of factors they may need to consider when providing a culturally safe and trauma informed response. If there could be greater integration of the Legal Connector Tool at the intake stage – including with case management software such as CLASS and Action Step – then this may also lead to significant time savings by producing an automatically generated client intake sheet, leaving the lawyer with more time to spend on exploring the presenting legal issues rather than spending time on completing paperwork. Even for organisations not using an automated triage process, consideration should be given as to whether this function could be met by sending clients a pre-appointment questionnaire prior to receiving legal assistance or using a tool similar to the Legal Connector to generate an automated intake sheet, although further exploration is needed regarding the appropriateness of this process for culturally diverse service users.

A key project conclusion is that clients in crisis who are seeking legal support are likely to require a swift response and personal engagement to tell their story. This ensures that they have certainty regarding when they will see a lawyer, and/or the opportunity to explain important additional information which may lead to a fast-track appointment where necessary, or to obtain appropriate targeted referral information at the time of inquiry. The preference for in-person and immediate contact is demonstrated by the number of clients who either chose not to use the tool, or both used the tool, and then contacted NCLC in person to obtain an appointment, as well as those that contacted other services in the interim period prior to NCLC following up on their enquiry. The human element of engagement with services cannot be overlooked when trying to create more 'efficient' and streamlined ways to provide services to clients, and as noted in this report, referrals to inquirers to address their legal and non-legal needs are likely to be more appropriate and responsive to intersecting needs in comparison to automated referrals provided through an online tool.

Questions remain, and further research is required, to determine whether further enhanced automation of the tool (beyond the modifications made by NCLC) to provide more complex filtering and automated referrals, would lead to improved service delivery efficiency. While we have insufficient research to reach a conclusion, it should be noted that commonly service inquirers who used the tool



could not be reached by the administration team when attempting to follow up on their inquiry (up to half), and several clients did not attend their scheduled legal clinic appointments (7 out of 38). This may indicate a higher 'dropout rate' for appointments when the appointment has been scheduled using a method that is devoid of human engagement.

This project has demonstrated that implementing an automated triage process requires appropriate resourcing for systems wide change that allows integration across all methods of triage and intake, upskilling of staff, sophisticated client management software, and appropriate website software that can accommodate the tool. It is somewhat ironic that by not having the resources to fully design and integrate the tool into triage processes and intake systems, this project has added to burden of our under-resourced administrative team when it was intended to achieve the opposite.

NCLC's learnings include the importance of implementing a community engagement strategy to raise awareness and obtain feedback on the useability of an online tool for the marginalised client cohorts who commonly access community legal centres for assistance. NCLC undertook this activity with one identified cohort, Arabic speaking women, but did not have the resources to fully undertake these activities across our various priority cohorts and language groups. Further research is required into the comfort of using online forms as well as accessibility implications for those who may not have access to electronic devices.

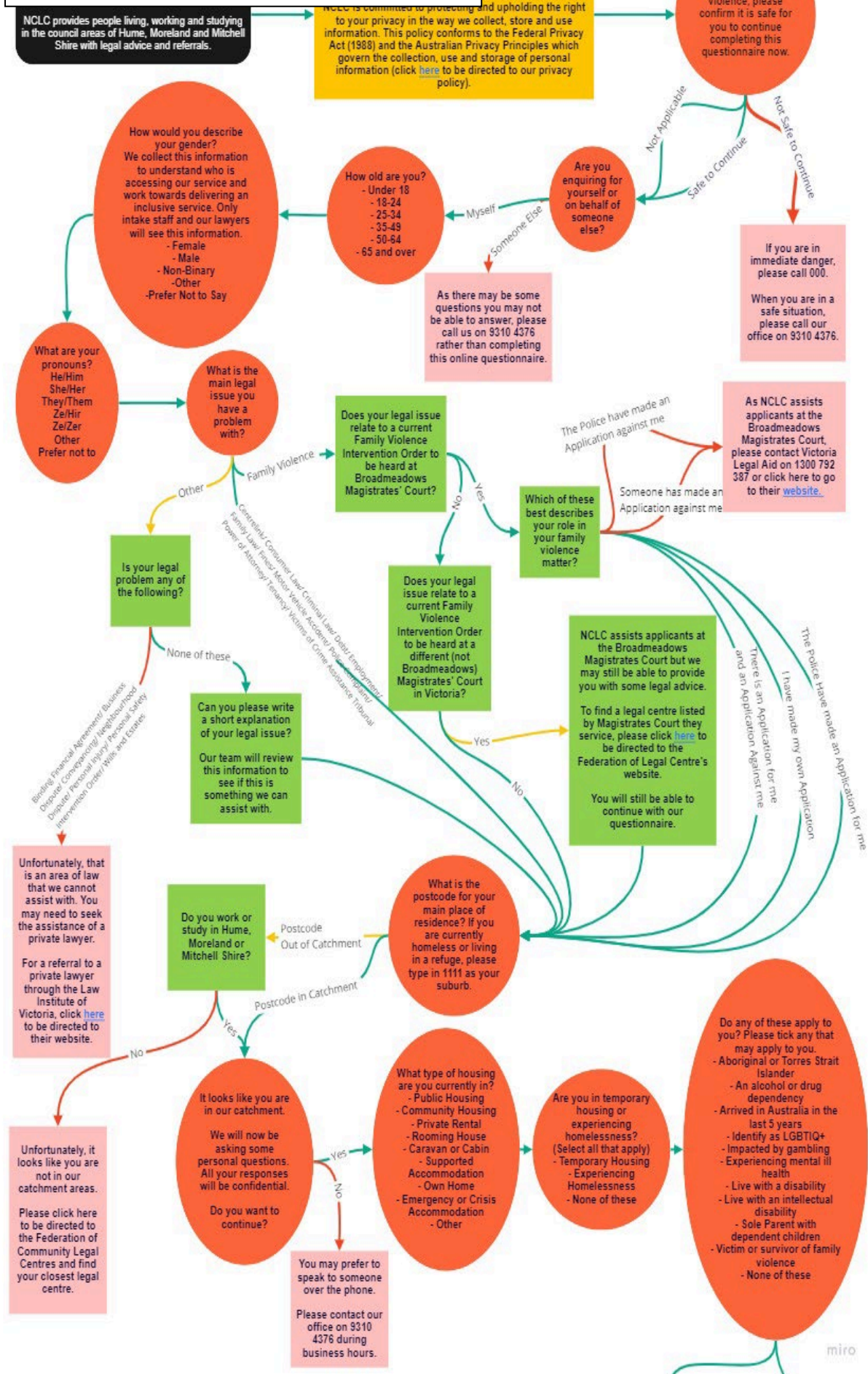
What this project has highlighted is that use of an automated triage tool, and the net widening and data gathering that stems from this process, can provide a snapshot for legal need in our community, and inform service priorities accordingly. This project demonstrated that at NCLC there is extensive legal need within our catchment that we are unable to meet despite our attempts to streamline access to legal services. This is evidenced by the small number of clients that received a legal clinic appointment following inquiry via the Legal Connector. A significant number of these inquirers had limited financial means to seek private legal assistance elsewhere. With NCLC's catchment covering two of the state's four growth corridors, demand for legal services is only projected to increase in the coming years. As such NCLC will continue to search for solutions to enable us to reach more clients and provide a greater number of services. However, adequate funding is needed to support the development of innovative and evidenced-based solutions.

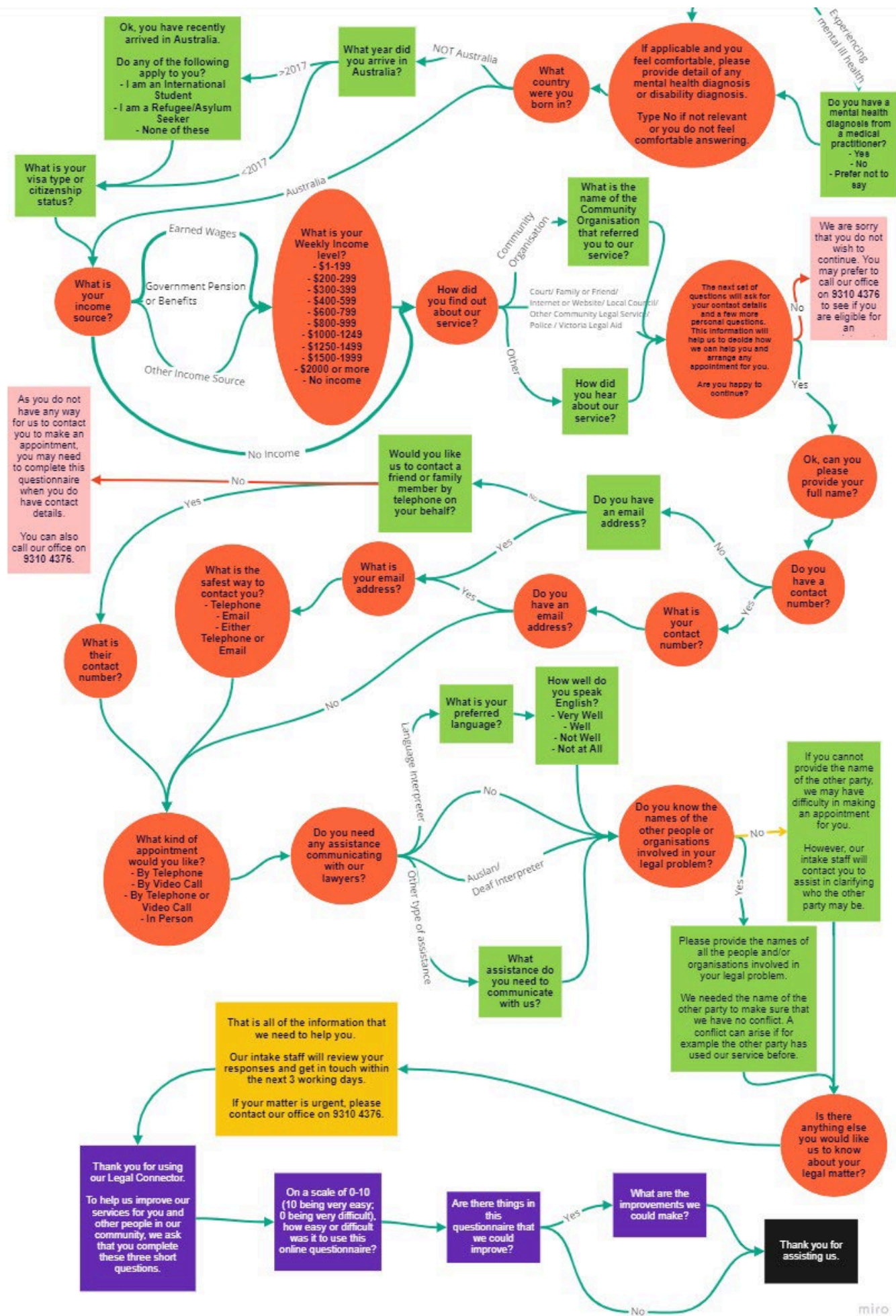
NCLC will continue to see if improvements can be made to the tool to circumnavigate some of the barriers to success identified within this report and to identify other opportunities for enhanced intake workflow. We would like to acknowledge everyone who supported NCLC piloting this tool through providing guidance, technical support, and feedback. We would also like to acknowledge and thank our administrative team for their flexibility in adapting to new ways of working and collecting additional data to support the project findings. In addressing some of the issues raised in this report, NCLC will continue to advocate to raise awareness of community legal need, and to explore the most effective way of reaching those clients who are most in need of our services.

## Lessons and insights

- 1 For resource limited, small organisations like NCLC, the benefits of automation are significantly lessened where manual conflict-of-interest checks are still required, and legal appointments cannot be generated automatically. These additional administrative steps, and the follow-up contact required with clients, negates time savings achieved through implementation of the tool.
- 2 While our findings evidence that demographic cohorts may experience comfort in disclosing sensitive issues online, our data clearly demonstrates that many cohorts prefer a more human approach when discussing personal issues. This was particularly true for clients of non-English speaking background, despite having a tool available in language which they found easy to use. Consideration should be given to the target cohorts of services using automated triage processes and whether this is the most suitable triage method considering the demographic profile of service users.
- 3 Implementing a triage tool requires considerable resources, capability building, and systems wide integration including additional administrative support; upskilling of staff to ensure technical expertise; utilisation of bi-lingual staff to support versions of the tool in languages other than English; website platforms capable of interfacing with the tool; case-management systems sophisticated enough to generate automated conflict of interest checks and legal appointments; and extensive community engagement to ensure that marginalised cohorts have access to and have the opportunity to provide feedback on the accessibility of the tool.
- 4 While automated referrals may lead to reduced workload for the administrative team, there is a limit to the extent to which these referral sources are targeted and appropriate. Automated referrals will lead inquirers to gateway referral sites, however referrals made in person are likely to be more specific and targeted to the inquirers intersecting needs, based upon the staff members knowledge of local services and programs, and providing the opportunity for warm referrals where clients are in crisis and requiring immediate assistance.
- 5 Regardless of implementing an automated triage process, our findings indicate that there is significant benefit to having inquirers complete a pre- appointment client survey. Some inquirers may find this a more comfortable way of disclosing sensitive information, and there are significant time-savings for lawyers when conducting intake by reducing the number of questions to be asked. Having prior knowledge of the inquirer's circumstances can also enhance the lawyer's capacity to provide a culturally safe response. However, further exploration is required as to whether clients from diverse backgrounds would complete these pre-appointment surveys.
- 6 This project highlights the importance of dedicating time and resources to streamlining intake process, but potentially ignores the important role of administrative staff in providing a trauma informed response. This project allowed us to review intake and triage processes across the organisation, and ensure that administrative staff have clear guidance, including a script for asking sensitive questions, that greatly enhanced their level of comfort when asking questions of inquirers. Similar guidance for asking sensitive questions was provided to our legal team. We also improved our lists of referral sources and pathways for use by frontline staff, ensuring that inquirers could be provided with appropriate and targeted referrals. In this way staff responsible for in-person triage can have their level of comfort and safety within triage processes greatly enhanced.
- 7 Automated triage processes are at their most efficient when services have less complex eligibility restrictions and simple structures for identifying clients that are eligible or ineligible for access to services. This simplifies the process of automation and removes the extra manual steps required to determine eligibility.

# Annexure 1: Legal Connector Question Map





## Annexure 2: Legal Connector script: Arabic translation

BLACK TEXT = Included in both the pilot and launch Bot

CROSSED TEXT = Removed from Bot at the end of Pilot Phase One

GREEN TEXT: Additions following Pilot Phase One review

BLUE TEXT: Updated position of text following Pilot Phase One review

English	Arabic
Thank you for contacting Northern Community Legal Centre (NCLC).	شكراً لإتصالك بالمركز الاجتماعي القانوني الشمالي (NCLC)
NCLC provides people living, working and studying in the council areas of Hume, Moreland and Mitchell Shire with legal advice and referrals.	يوفر NCLC خدمات الاستشارة القانونية والإحالات للأشخاص الذين يعيشون ويعملون في مناطق هيوم، موريلاند وميتشل شاير (Hume، Moreland، Mitchell Shire)
The information you give us will help us to decide whether we can help you. The whole questionnaire should take about 10 minutes. The information you provide to us is confidential.	المعلومات التي ستقدمها لنا ستساعدنا على تحديد ما إذا كان بإمكاننا مساعدتك. يستغرق وقت إجراء الاستبيان بأكمله حوالي 10 دقائق. جميع المعلومات التي ستزودنا بها ستكون سرية.
NCLC is committed to protecting and upholding the right to your privacy in the way we collect, store and use information. This policy conforms to the Federal Privacy Act (1988) and the Australian Privacy Principles which govern the collection, use and storage of personal information (click <a href="#">here</a> to be directed to our privacy policy).	تلتزم NCLC بحماية ودعم حقوقك فيما يتعلق بخصوصيتك بالطريقة التي نجمع ونحفظ ونستخدم بها المعلومات. تتوافق هذه السياسة مع قانون الخصوصية الفيدرالي (1988) ومبادئ الخصوصية الأسترالية التي تحكم جمع المعلومات الشخصية واستخدامها وحفظها (اضغط هنا لتجد سياسة الخصوصية الخاصة بنا).
OK	موافق
If you are experiencing family violence, please confirm it is safe for you to continue completing this questionnaire now	إذا كنت تعاني من العنف أسري، يرجى التأكيد أنه من الآمن لك إكمال هذا الاستبيان الآن
Safe to continue	آمن لإكمال الاستبيان
Not safe to continue	غير آمن لإكمال الاستبيان
Not applicable	لا ينطبق
<b>If you are in immediate danger, please call 000.</b>	إذا كنت في خطر داهم، الرجاء الاتصال على الرقم 000
When you are in a safe situation, please call our office on <b>9310 4376</b> .	عندما تكون في وضع آمن، يرجى الإتصال على الرقم 9310 4376.
Are you enquiring for yourself or on behalf of someone else?	هل الاستفسار لك أو إنك تقوم بالاستفسار بالنيابة عن شخص آخر؟
Myself	لي
Someone else	لشخص آخر
As there may be some questions you may not be able to answer, please call us on 9310 4376 rather than completing this online questionnaire.	ربما يكون هناك بعض الأسئلة التي قد لا تتمكن من الإجابة عليها، الرجاء الاتصال بنا على الرقم 9310 4376 بدلاً من إكمال هذا الاستبيان عبر الإنترنت.
How old are you?	كم عمرك؟
Under 18	أقل من 18
18-24	24 - 18
25-34	34 - 25
35-49	49 - 35
50-64	64 - 50
65 and over	65 وما فوق

How would you describe your gender? We collect this information to understand who is accessing our service and work towards delivering an inclusive service. Only intake staff and our lawyers will see this information.	كيف يمكنك وصف جنسك؟ نقوم بجمع هذه المعلومات لمعرفة من هم الأشخاص الذين يرغبون الوصول الى خدمتنا والعمل على تقديم خدمة شاملة لهم. فقط الموظفين الذين يجمعون المعلومات الأولية والمحامون من سيرون هذه المعلومات.
Female	أنثى
Male	ذكر
Non-binary	غير ثنائي
Other	أخرى
What are your pronouns?	
He/Him	
She/Her	
They/Them	
Ze/Hir	
Ze/Zer	
Other	
Prefer not to say	
What is the main legal issue you are having problems with?	ما هي المسألة القانونية الرئيسية التي لديك مشاكل معها؟
Centrelink	السنترلنك
Consumer	المستهلك
Criminal Law	القانون الجنائي
Debt	الديون
Employment Law	قانون التوظيف
Family Law	قانون العائلة
Family Violence	العنف العائلي
Fines	الغرامات
Migration	الهجرة
Motor Vehicle Accident	حوادث المركبات (السيارات)
Police Complaint	شكوى الشرطة
Power of Attorney	وكالة عامة
Tenancy	الايجار
Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal	محكمة مساعدة ضحايا الجريمة
Other	أخرى
Binding Financial Agreement	اتفاق مالي ملزم
Business Dispute	نزاع تجاري (نزاع عمل)
Conveyancing (buying or selling houses or similar)	نقل ملكية (شراء أو بيع منزل أو ما شابه)
Neighbourhood disputes	نزاعات مع الجار
Personal Injury	إصابة شخصية
Personal Safety Intervention Order	أمر التدخل القضائي الخاص بالسلامة الشخصية
Wills and Estates (inheritance)	الوصايا والاملاك (الميراث)
None of these	لاشيء مما ذكر
Unfortunately, that is an area of law that we cannot assist with. You may need to seek the assistance of a private lawyer.	لسوء الحظ، هذا مجال قانوني لا يمكننا المساعدة فيه. قد تحتاج إلى طلب المساعدة من محام خاص.
For a referral to a private lawyer through the Law Institute of Victoria, click <a href="#">he re</a> to be directed to their website.	لإحالة إلى محام خاص من خلال Law Institute of Victoria، اضغط <a href="#">هنا</a> ليتم توجيهك إلى الموقع الخاص به.
Can you please write a short explanation of your legal issue?	هل يمكنك كتابة شرح موجز لمشكلتك القانونية؟

Our team will review this information to see if this is something we can assist with.	سنقوم فريقنا بمراجعة هذه المعلومات لمعرفة ما إذا كان هذا شيء يمكننا المساعدة فيه.
Does your legal issue relate to a current Family Violence Intervention Order to be heard at Broadmeadows Magistrates' Court?	هل تتعلق مشكلتك القانونية بأمر التدخل القضائي الخاص بالعنف العائلي الحالي ليتم الاستماع إليه في محكمة الصلح في برودميدوز؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
NCLC assists applicants at the Broadmeadows Magistrates Court, but we may still be able to provide you with some legal advice.	يساعد مركز NCLC مقدمي الطلبات في محكمة الصلح ببرودميدوز لكن قد يكون بأستطاعتنا أيضاً تزويدك ببعض الإستشارات القانونية.
To find a legal centre listed by Magistrates Court they service, please click <a href="#">here</a> to be directed to the Federation of Legal Centre's website.	للعثور على مركز قانوني مدرج من قبل محكمة الصلح، يرجى الضغط <a href="#">هنا</a> ليتم توجيهك الى موقع Federation of Legal Centre
You will still be able to continue with our questionnaire.	يمكنك الاستمرار بملء هذا الإستبيان
Which of these best describes your role in your family violence matter?	أي مما يلي يصف بشكل أفضل دورك في مسألة العنف الأسري؟
I have made my own Application	لقد قدمت طلبي الخاص
The Police have made an Application for me	الشرطة قدمت لي الطلب
The Police have made an Application against me	الشرطة قدمت الطلب ضدي
Someone has made an Application against me	قام شخص ما بتقديم الطلب ضدي
There is an Application for me and an Application against me	هناك طلب لي وطلب آخر ضدي
As NCLC assists <b>applicants</b> at the Broadmeadows Magistrates Court, please contact Victoria Legal Aid on 1300 792 387 or click <a href="#">here</a> to go to their <a href="#">website</a> .	بما أن مركز NCLC يساعد مقدمو الطلبات في محكمة الصلح ببرودميدوز ، يرجى الاتصال بـ Aid Legal Victoria على 1300792387 أو اضغط <a href="#">هنا</a> للذهاب للموقع الإلكتروني الخاص بهم.
What is the postcode for your main place of residence? If you are currently homeless or living in a refuge, please type in 1111 as your suburb	ما هو الرمز البريدي الـ Postcode لمحل إقامتك الرئيسي؟ إذا كنت حالياً بلا مأوى أو تعيش في ملجأ، يرجى كتابة 1111 لتكون بمثابة رمز ضاحيتك
It looks like you are in our catchment.	يبدو أنك من ضمن المناطق التي نستطيع تقديم خدماتنا لها.
We will now be asking some personal questions. All your responses will be confidential.	سنقوم الآن بطرح بعض الأسئلة الشخصية. ستكون جميع ردودك سرية.
Do you want to continue?	هل تريد الاستمرار؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
Unfortunately, it looks like you are not in our catchment areas.	لسوء الحظ، يبدو أنك لست من ضمن المناطق التي نستطيع تقديم خدماتنا لها.
Please click <a href="#">here</a> to be directed to the Federation of Community Legal Centres and find your closest legal centre.	يرجى الضغط <a href="#">هنا</a> ليتم توجيهك إلى Federation of Community Legal Centres للعثور على أقرب مركز قانوني لك.

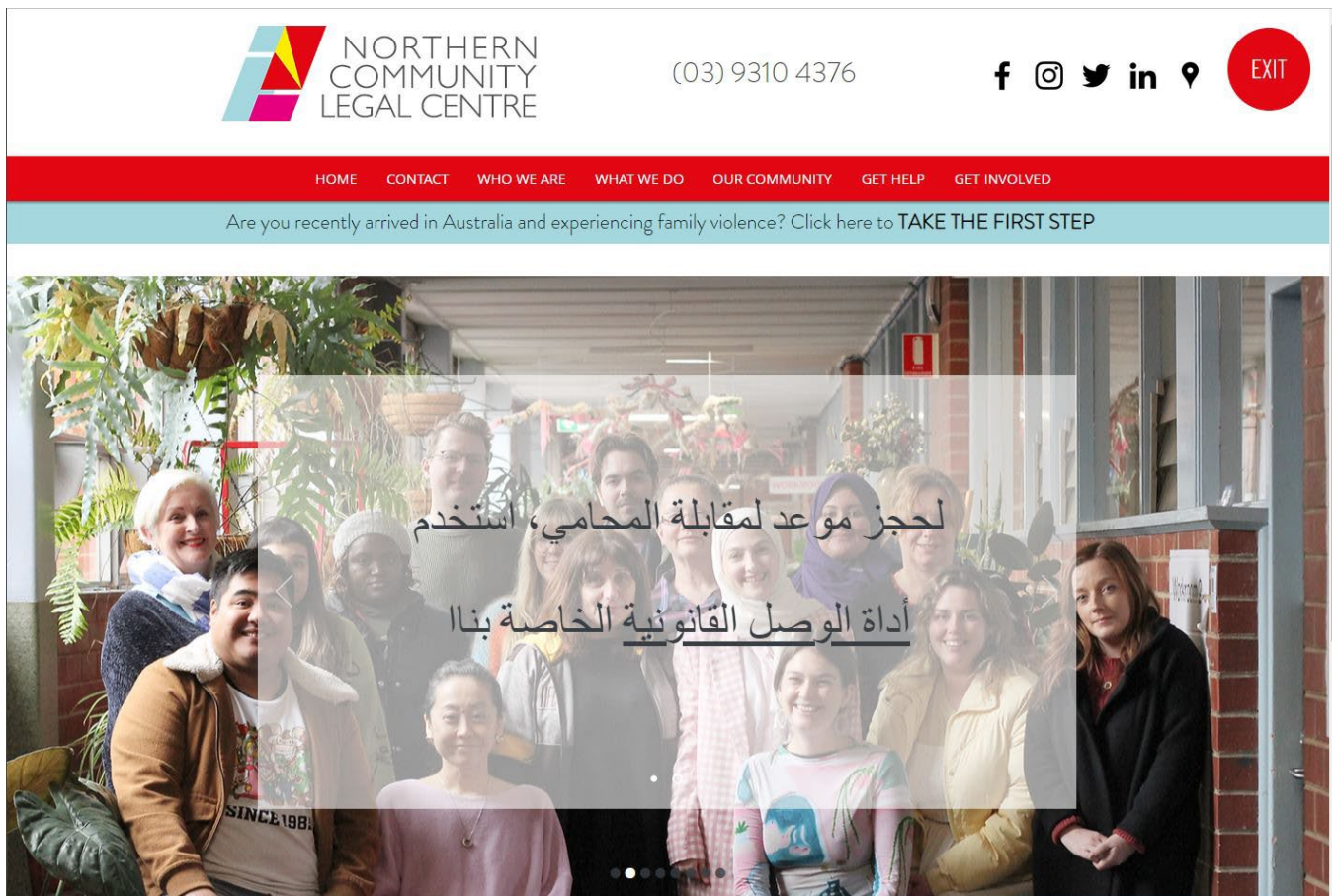
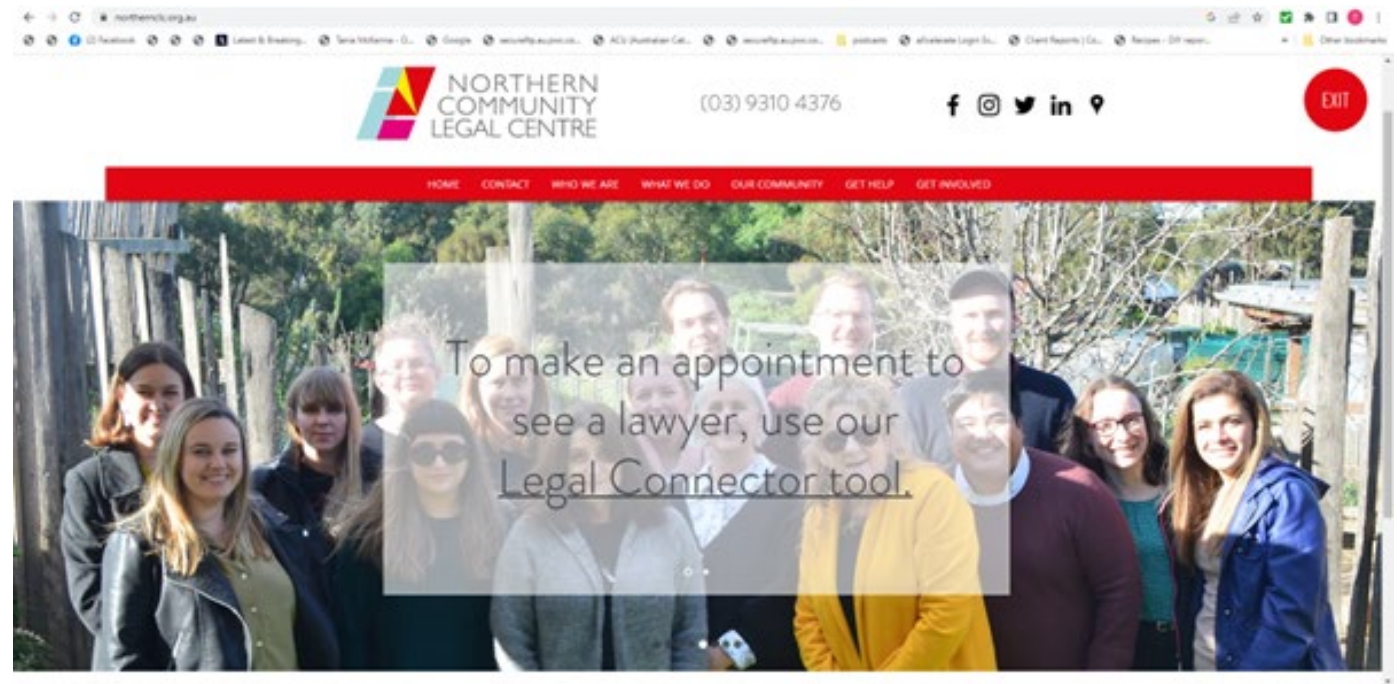
What type of housing are you currently in?	ما هو نوع السكن الذي تعيش فيه حالياً؟
Public Housing	(الاسكان العام) السكن الذي توفره الدولة
Community Housing	الإسكان المجتمعي
Private Rental	تأجير خاص
Rooming House	غرف سكنية
Caravan or Cabin	بيت متنقل (كارافان) (أو كابينه)
Supported Accommodation	إقامة مدعومة
Own Home	(بيت خاص) امتلاك
Emergency or Crisis Accommodation	إقامات الطوارئ أو الازمات
Other	أخرى
Are you in temporary housing or experiencing homelessness? (Select all that apply)	هل أنت في مسكن مؤقت أو تعاني من التشرد؟ (اختر كل ما ينطبق)
Temporary Housing	بيت مؤقت
Experiencing Homelessness	أعاني من التشرد
None of these	لا شيء مما ذكر
Do any of these apply to you? Please tick any that may apply to you.	هل أي من التالي تنطبق عليك؟ يرجى إختيار ما قد ينطبق عليك.
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	السكان الأصليون أو سكان جزر مضيق توريس (Aboriginal (or Torres Strait Islander
An alcohol or drug dependency	إدمان على الكحول أو المخدرات
Arrived in Australia in the last 5 years	وصلت الى استراليا في آخر 5 سنوات
Identify as LGBTIQ+	تعرف بـ LGBTIQ+
Impacted by gambling	متأثر بالمقامرة
Live with a disability	لديك إعاقة
Live with an intellectual disability	تعاني من إعاقة ذهنية
Sole Parent with dependent children	أحد الوالدين مع أطفال معالين
Victim or survivor of family violence	أحد ضحايا العنف الأسري أو الناجين منه
None of these	لا شيء مما ذكر
Do you have a mental health diagnosis from a medical practitioner?	هل لديك تشخيص للصحة النفسية من الطبيب؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
Prefer not to say	أفضل عدم القول
If applicable and you feel comfortable, please provide details of any mental health diagnosis or disability diagnosis.	إذا كان ذلك ممكناً وكنت تشعر بالراحة، الرجاء تقديم تفاصيل عن أي تشخيص للصحة النفسية أو تشخيص للإعاقة
Type <b>No</b> if not relevant or you do not feel comfortable answering.	اكتب لا إذا كان هذا لا يشملك أو إذا كنت لا تشعر بالراحة في الإجابة
What country were you born in?	في أي بلد ولدت؟
Ok, you have recently arrived in Australia.	حسناً، أنت من الواصلين الجدد الى استراليا.
Do any of the following apply to you?	هل ينطبق أي مما يلي عليك؟
I am an International Student	أنا طالب دولي
I am a Refugee/Asylum Seeker	أنا لاجئ / طالب لجوء
None of these	لا شيء مما ذكر

What is your visa type or citizenship status?	ما هي نوع تأشيرتك أو وضع المواطنة؟
What is your income source?	ما هو مصدر دخلك؟
Earned Wages (wages, salary, self-employed)	(أجور مكتسبة) أجور، راتب، عمل حر
Government Pension or Benefits	المعاشات أو الاستحقاقات الحكومية
Other Income Source (e.g. investments)	(مصادر دخل أخرى) مثل الاستثمارات
No income	لا يوجد دخل
What is your weekly income level?	ما هو مستوى دخلك الأسبوعي؟
\$1-199	\$1-199
\$200-299	\$200-299
\$300-399	\$300-399
\$400-599	\$400-599
\$600-799	\$600-799
\$800-999	\$800-999
\$1000-1249	\$1000-1249
\$1250-1499	\$1250-1499
\$1500-1999	\$1500-1999
\$2000 or more	\$2000 or more
No income	لا يوجد دخل
Do you believe that COVID has created or impacted on your legal problem?	هل تعتقد أن COVID قد تسبب أو أثر على مشكلتك القانونية؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
How did you find out about our service?	كيف علمت بخدماتنا؟
Court	المحكمة
Community Organisation	منظمة مجتمعية
Family/Friend	العائلة/ صديق
Internet/Website	الانترنت/ موقع الكتروني
Local Council	المجلس البلدي المحلي
Other Community Legal Service	الخدمات الاجتماعية القانونية الأخرى
Police	الشرطة
Victoria Legal Aid	Victoria Legal Aid
Other	أخرى
What is the name of the Community Organisation that referred you to our service?	ما اسم المنظمة المجتمعية التي أحالتك إلى خدماتنا؟
How did you hear about our service?	كيف علمت بخدماتنا؟
The next set of questions will ask for your contact details and a few more personal questions. This information will help us to decide how we can help you and arrange any appointment for you.	ستكون المجموعة التالية من الأسئلة عن معلومات الاتصال الخاصة بك وبعض الأسئلة الشخصية الأخرى. ستساعدنا هذه المعلومات في تحديد كيف يمكننا مساعدتك وترتيب أي موعد لك.
Are you happy to continue?	هل ترغب بالمتابعة؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
We are sorry that you do not wish to continue. You may prefer to call our office on 9310 4376 to see if you are eligible for an appointment.	نأسف لعدم رغبتك بالمتابعة. قد تفضل الاتصال بمكتبنا على الرقم 9310 4376 لمعرفة ما إذا كنت مؤهلاً للحصول على موعد.

Ok, can you please provide your full name?	حسنًا، هل تستطيع تقديم اسمك الكامل رجاءً؟
Do you have a contact number?	هل لديك رقم إتصال؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
What is your contact number?	ما هو رقم الإتصال الخاص بك؟
Do you have an email address?	هل لديك بريد الكتروني؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
What is your email address?	ما هو بريدك الالكتروني؟
Do you have a friend or family member we can contact on your behalf?	هل لديك صديق أو فرد من العائلة يمكننا الإتصال به نيابة عنك؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
What is their contact number?	ما هو رقم الإتصال الخاص بهم؟
As you do not have any way for us to contact you to make an appointment, you may need to complete this questionnaire when you do have contact details.	نظرًا لعدم وجود أي طريقة للاتصال بك لتحديد موعد، فقد تحتاج إلى إكمال هذا الاستبيان عندما يكون لديك معلومات الإتصال.
You can also call our office on 9310 4376.	تستطيع أيضاً الإتصال بمركزنا على الرقم 9310 4376.
What is the safest way to contact you?	ما هي الطريقة الأكثر أماناً للإتصال بك؟
Telephone	الهاتف
Email	البريد الالكتروني
Either Telephone or Email	إما الهاتف أو البريد الإلكتروني
What kind of <b>appointment</b> would you like?	ما نوع الموعد التي تريده؟
By Telephone	عن طريق الهاتف
By Video Call	عن طريق مكالمة فيديو
By Telephone or Video Call	عن طريق الهاتف أو مكالمة فيديو
In Person	شخصياً
Do you need any assistance communicating with our lawyers?	هل تحتاج إلى أي مساعدة للتواصل مع محامونا؟
Auslan/Deaf Interpreter	أوسلان/مترجم للصم
Language Interpreter	مترجم لغة
Other type of assistance	نوع آخر من المساعدة
No	كلا
What language do you speak?	ما هي اللغة التي تتحدثها؟
What is your preferred language?	ما هي لغتك المفضلة؟
How well do you speak English?	ما مدى إتقانك للغة الانكليزية؟
Very Well	ممتازة
Well	جيدة
Not Well	غير جيدة
Not at All	غير جيدة على الإطلاق
What assistance do you need to communicate with us?	ما هي المساعدة التي تحتاجها للتواصل معنا؟
Do you know the names of the other people or organisations involved in your legal problem?	هل تعرف أسماء الأشخاص الآخرين أو أسماء المنظمات المعنيين الذين لديهم علاقة بمشكلتك القانونية؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا

If you cannot provide the name of the other party, we may have difficulty in making an appointment for you.	إذا لم تتمكن من تقديم اسم الطرف الآخر، فقد نواجه صعوبة في تحديد موعد لك.
However, our intake staff will contact you to assist in clarifying who the other party may be.	ومع ذلك، سيتصل بك موظفو الاستقبال لدينا للمساعدة في توضيح من قد يكون الطرف الآخر.
Please provide the names of all the people and/or organisations involved in your legal problem.	يرجى تقديم أسماء جميع الأشخاص و/ أو المنظمات المعنية والتي لديها علاقة بمشكلتك القانونية
We needed the name of the other party to make sure that we have no conflict. A conflict can arise if for example the other party has used our service before.	نحتاج إلى اسم الطرف الآخر لتأكد من عدم وجود تضارب. يمكن أن ينشأ تضارب إذا استخدم الطرف الآخر خدماتنا من قبل على سبيل المثال.
Is there anything else you would like us to know about your legal matter?	هل هناك أي شيء آخر تود أن نعرفه عن مشكلتك القانونية؟
That is all of the information that we need to help you.	هذه هي كل المعلومات التي نحتاجها لمساعدتك.
We needed the name of the other party to make sure that we have no conflict. A conflict can arise if for example the other party has used our service before.	كنا بحاجة إلى اسم الطرف الآخر لتأكد من عدم وجود تضارب. يمكن أن ينشأ تضارب إذا استخدم الطرف الآخر خدماتنا من قبل على سبيل المثال.
That is all of the information that we need to help you.	هذه هي كل المعلومات التي نحتاجها لمساعدتك.
Our intake staff will review your responses and get in touch within the next 3 working days.	موظفو الاستقبال لدينا سيقومون بعرض إجاباتك والاتصال بك في غضون أيام العمل الثلاثة القادمة
If your matter is urgent, please contact our office on 9310 4376.	إذا كان الأمر طارئاً، يرجى الاتصال بمكتبنا على الرقم 4376 9310.
Thank you for using our Legal Connector.	شكراً لاستخدامك الرابط القانوني الخاص بنا.
To help us improve our services for you and other people in our community, we ask that you complete these three short questions.	لمساعدتنا في تحسين خدماتنا لك وللآخرين في مجتمعنا، نطلب منك إكمال هذه الأسئلة الثلاثة القصيرة.
On a scale of 0-10 (10 being very easy; 0 being very difficult), how easy or difficult was it to use this online questionnaire?	على المقياس من 0 إلى 10 (10 سهل جداً، 0 صعب جداً)، ما مدى سهولة أو صعوبة استخدام هذا الاستبيان عبر الإنترنت؟
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10
Would you be happy to use this way of contacting us again?	هل ستقوم باستخدام هذه الطريقة للاتصال بنا مرة أخرى؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
Are there things in this questionnaire that we could improve?	هل هناك أشياء في هذا الاستبيان يمكننا تحسينها؟
Yes	نعم
No	كلا
What are the improvements we could make?	ما هي التحسينات التي يمكننا القيام بها؟
Thank you for assisting us.	شكراً لك على مساعدتنا.

## Annexure 4: NCLC Webpage (homepage)



## Annexure 4: NCLC Legal Connector Tab



(03) 9310 4376



EXIT

HOME CONTACT WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO OUR COMMUNITY GET HELP GET INVOLVED

الترجمة للعربية

### MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

To make an appointment to see a lawyer, you can use our online Legal Connector tool below. You'll be asked a short series of questions about any legal and non-legal issues you may be facing, which will help us determine how best we can help you. We'll be in touch within three days regarding next steps. All information you provide is confidential.

If you'd rather speak to someone directly, please call our Centre on (03) 9310 4376 or email [admin@northernclc.org.au](mailto:admin@northernclc.org.au).



Legal Connector Tool

- Information
- Save progress
- Download record
- Start again

Progress

Thank you for contacting Northern Community Legal Centre (NCLC).

NCLC provides people living, working and studying in the council areas of Hume, Merri-bek and Mitchell Shire with legal advice and referrals.

The information you give us will help us to decide whether we can help you. The whole questionnaire should take about 10 minutes. The information you provide to us is confidential.

NCLC is committed to protecting and upholding the right to your privacy in the way we collect, store and use information. This policy conforms to the Federal Privacy Act (1988) and the Australian Privacy Principles which govern the collection, use and storage of personal information (click [here](#) to be directed to our privacy policy).

Ok