

Newsletter

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New era for CASE

Legal services to the CaLD communities

CASE has broadened its services to become a generalist legal centre and provide free legal advice, representation and advocacy to members of the culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CaLD), as well as continuing its services for refugees and asylum seekers.

This is an exciting new phase for CASE and we look forward to working with our volunteers to develop the CaLD services including an evening clinic.

The lead up to the changes started back in 2005. With a decline in protection work, we expanded our services to include family reunion work for refugee and humanitarian visa entrants. At that time, we also carried out an analysis and identified unmet legal needs not within CASE's objectives as stated in its constitution.

In January 2009, at an Extraordinary General Meeting resolutions were passed that changed CASE's constitution to encompass CaLD work. The aim was to ensure CASE's longer term operation and relevance in meeting the unmet needs of marginalised groups in WA.

We have subsequently obtained Commonwealth community legal services funding to provide legal advice for the CaLD communities for three years. As a result, we now provide advice on tenancies, domestic violence, contracts, road traffic offences, discrimination, wills, enduring power of attorneys (EPAs), employment disputes and debts to CaLD community members.

The advice includes one off interviews, follow up appointments for complex matters, referrals and information sessions on legal topics. Accredited interpreters will be used for interviews and information sessions.

To set up our new services, Shayla and Emma have been reviewing where there is the greatest unmet need and how CASE might help. Kay and Emma have also been meeting with community workers in the field of new arrivals and coming up with a list of those in need.

If you are interested in volunteering for the evening legal service, contact Pam Bryant – pam@caseforrefugees.org.au. This volunteering is better suited to those able to work some regular hours and with previous work experience.

Funding news

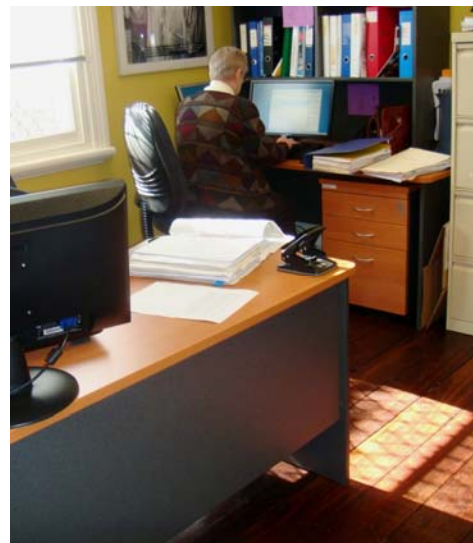
Lottery dreams assist CASE

CASE submitted a successful application to Lotteries West and received a substantial grant for furniture and equipment early this year. We did well – Lotteries West said it was the best application they had seen!

As a result, we have been able to make some great improvements to our office. This has included replacing all the furniture and revamping the waiting area for our clients. We have also been able to buy a new computer server, which has meant less downtime! Other improvements include new computers including three laptops, remote computer access and a copier/scanner.

The improvements have also allowed us more space as we have been able to move closed files to the storage containers in the backyard. We now can access them without interrupting interviews.

CASE also has new speaker telephones as part of a CARAD application for funding. This has enabled us to speak to clients with more privacy. Previously, only one phone had this capacity.



Centre for advocacy, support and education for refugees

Inaugural patron of CASE

At CASE's Extraordinary General Meeting in January 2009, a resolution was passed to enable CASE's board to appoint a patron or vice-patron.

Rosemary Hudson Miller, Associate General (Mission Support) of Uniting Church's WA Synod, has since been appointed as patron. We are pleased to welcome Rosemary as our patron. She has a long involvement with CASE and has been a hardworking member of the board. She is also Chair of CARAD.

Having the ability to appoint a patron or vice-patrons will enable CASE to promote its activities more widely, and assist in advancing our objectives within the community and with key stakeholders.



Above: Rosemary Hudson Miller

Volunteering for CASE

In July, CASE's volunteers contributed 253 hours, which doesn't count the board's work or unpaid work by staff.

There is currently a waiting list of law students seeking experience. However, we are seeking registered migration agents and people with work experience as volunteers and members.

Depending on their skills, volunteers may assist with administrative, clerical, para-legal and legal tasks, under the direction of our solicitor and migration agents. Solicitors who volunteer are required to have a current WA Practising Certificate.

General volunteer and legal training days are held several times a year for volunteers to learn about our client base and relevant areas of the law.

If you are interested in volunteering and able to work some regular hours, contact Pam Bryant, our Volunteer Coordinator, Tuesdays and Wednesdays on 9227 7311 until 2.30pm.

Community forums

First annual forum – *Who shapes our fears?*

Journalist David Marr spoke on, *Who shapes our fears? The role governments, oppositions and press play in alarming Australians about refugee boats* at CASE and CARAD's first annual community forum on 31 August at Christ Church Grammar School's Centre of Ethics.

David is co-author, with Marian Wilkinson, of the book, *Dark victory*, an account of John Howard's 2001 Federal election campaign in the context of the 'Tampa affair'.

After a welcome by Rosemary Hudson Miller, David traced the history of community attitudes and migration policy in relation to refugees arriving in boats. He suggested that about one third of the community have been and remain opposed to people arriving in boats.

The fears about refugees boats, David claimed, may have their historical origins in a sense of fragility about surviving in a sparsely populated continent. When asked, he suggested strategies for changing attitudes included 'picking away at false claims' and leaders contesting views in the public arena.

This forum was very successful with 225 people attending and some forced to sit on tables as we ran out of chairs! CARAD looked after the door and we ran a joint CASE/CARAD raffle, which we swear wasn't rigged, despite our treasurers each winning a prize.

We thank David for giving a thought provoking talk. You can view a presentation of it at: www.safecom.org.au/dmarr-xmas-island.htm



Above: David Marr speaking at Christ Church Grammar School

Presentation at Mirrabooka Migrant Resource Centre

Kay made her first presentation at the Mirrabooka Migrant Resource Centre in June on the new generalist services for the CaLD communities. This was to 35 volunteers and Kay described CASE and how to refer migration and general matters. Questions were asked about family reunion and protection matters.



CASE staff members

Gwynneth – a CASE champion!

Gwynneth made an honest woman of herself and become qualified as a Registered Migration Agent late last year! This made her immense knowledge official.

Her relationship with CASE also changed. Her paid hours were expanded so that she and Bill share a full time position as registered migration agents.

When asked, Bill said it was 'fantastic' working with Gwynneth because she 'knows so much'. Gwynneth has contributed her time and energy to CASE since 2002. What a champion!

Gwynneth says, 'in what now seems like a remote past life, I was a teacher, a job I loved. Then I became angry about the detention centres – and then came the Tampa.

At the end of 2002. I attended a CASE training session and opted for scribing. I retired from teaching at the end of 2003 and turned the two half days into two full days, while also doing Saturday permanent protection visa interviews – and then weekday ones when the Iraqi push was on.

I loved the change, loved 'working' in the city after a life in schools, loved the work and found the clients' resilience inspiring. I loved the atmosphere at CASE – people are so good to work with. They even put up with the Saturday rosters!

And now I'm a migration agent, thanks to the help of a generous donor who paid for my training at university, and job-sharing with Bill. Well, we share the hours and the pay, but I depend on his wisdom a lot!

I'm not a complete "CASE tragic". I know I get more out of the work than it takes out of me and that, of course, is what being a volunteer is all about'.



Above: Gwynneth, one of our Registered Migration Agents

Advocacy for our clients

Submissions to the Minister and DIAC

CASE board convenor, Jo Buontempo recently met with the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans when he was in Perth to present CASE's comments on proposed changes to the quota system for refugee intake numbers.

CASE has also made comments on a proposed expansion of the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS). This scheme gives free, professional migration advice and application assistance to eligible immigration clients in need. CASE is one of the agents for IAAAS in WA.

Work rights for protection visa applicants

CASE also made a submission to the DIAC regarding work rights for protection visa applicants.

The rule on work rights has since changed from July. Permission to work will generally be made available to protection visa applicants and people seeking ministerial intervention who remain lawful, meet time limits and engage with the DIAC regarding their immigration status.

This replaces the 45 day rule, which allowed only protection visa applicants who lodged their application within 45 days of arriving in Australia to obtain permission to work.

There is more information on this at: www.immi.gov.au/refugee/permission/



Annual General Meeting

27 October 2009

CASE's AGM will be on 27 October 2009 at 5.30pm at the ASeTTS office, 286 Beaufort Street, Perth. Members will be notified of details closer to the date. If you need more details, contact the CASE office.



Congratulations

CASE offers its congratulations to clients who have had successes at tribunals and those who have had successful family reunion matters. Thanks to staff for their great work in achieving these successes.

Board news

Bon voyage to Maria

CASE's highly energetic board convenor, Maria Lamattina, has left to go travelling to India, Greece and South America for a year or so.

Maria's contribution to CASE has been immense and includes helping us get the storage containers last year, and chairing and organising our annual general meetings.

We will miss Maria's enthusiasm and warmth and wish her well on her travels.

Changes to the board membership

We farewell board members, Maria Lamattina, Rosemary Hudson-Miller, Christine Knight and Mohammed Albhadi and thank them for their contribution.

Current member, Jo Buontempo is now board convenor, replacing Maria. We also welcome the following new board members.

The new vice-convenor is Steve Shaw. He is a senior lecturer at Murdoch University and Director of Perth City Legal. He also volunteers for CASE.

Caro Kay is another new board member. She is an established operator of small medium enterprises and consults to government nationally and internationally and to international clients such as the United Nations Environment Programme.

Previous board member, Judyth Watson has returned to the board. A former MP, Judyth has a long commitment to social justice and advocacy. This has included assisting with the establishment of CARAD and CASE and heading a statutory mental health advocacy body for five years.

David Markovich has also joined the board. He is a senior associate with Minter Ellison solicitors and has been involved in a variety of paid and voluntary social justice causes. This has included a legal internship at the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.



Strategic planning day

CASE's board held a strategic planning day in February and revised its strategic plan. Maria helped us focus and also generously provided catering.

The board focused on ensuring the strategic plan was still relevant and the goals achievable. There are plans for another planning day in September.



Thanks!

Assistance to CASE comes in many ways, not only through our volunteers working in the clinics and membership on our board.

Board member, Brenda Robbins, ran an information stall on CASE in Hyde Park as part of Harmony Week. And after a storm in early May, CASE treasurer, Wendy and her mum and daughter came and mulched all the leaves and spread them through the garden.

For the renovations to the kitchen/waiting room, Kay's friend, Keith, came and put holes in the wall and partitions.

And Kathryn, a volunteer, asked some relatives to donate to CASE rather than buy her Christmas presents last year!

A new system for contacting clients thanks to Travis

Travis, a new volunteer at CASE, discovered a better system for sending information to clients. Staff and volunteers can use the Outlook program to send sms messages to clients through LEAP. At 15c a text, 'txtonline' provides CASE with a more cost efficient option than phoning clients. The system takes less time to confirm appointments while reminding clients more readily, as well as enabling CASE to keep records of the details sent.

Supporters

We also value the kind support given to us by the following people and organisations:

- Uniting Church
- United Nations' Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFT)
- The Commonwealth's Community Legal Services Program
- Julian Burnside
- WACOSS
- Minter Ellison
- Allens Arthur Robinson Charity Committee
- Nido Petroleum Limited
- CARAD
- Our many donors and volunteers

CASE staff members

Emma – our new lawyer

Emma joined the CASE team in May 2009 after working as weekend volunteer. She is helping to establish CASE's general law service for the CaLD community. Emma has gained a breadth of experience working for various legal firms and as an in house counsel in a major publishing house. She was admitted as a legal practitioner in WA in May 2004, having previously worked on the east coast as an editor and journalist for more than a decade.

Jess – our new receptionist

It is Karratha's loss, as Jess has taken over from Kay as CASE's receptionist. Everyone agrees she has taken to the role like a duck to water, which is strange considering she is from Karratha.

In her home town, Jess was known for her desire to leave and travel. When she did, she went to the United States and Germany as an exchange student. While Jess currently has no pets, she does feed the goldfish in CASE's office.



Above: Jess looking out from the reception desk

Kathryn

Kathryn is our temporary receptionist while Jess is on a legal placement back in her home town of Karratha.

Kathryn says she is 'thriving on meeting new people, learning about the complexities facing refugees, and working so close to Perth. I'm also challenged by the parking limitations, and the camber of the floor that has me rolling off to the right all day!'

Goodbye to Holly and Kay

Holly, our client liaison officer, has left. She was valued by our clients for her knowledge about the history of ethnic groups and for remembering where clients were up to in the progress of their applications.

We will be losing Kay at the end of September when she moves to Melbourne. She plans to learn Spanish and do lots of walking there. We wish Kay all the best and thank her for contribution to CASE and hard work in assisting to keep our office running.

Welcome to Caro and Mwaba

We welcome Caro as our new office administrator and Mwaba as our new community legal education officer. Both have worked at CASE previously. More about them in the next newsletter!

Donations

With thanks to LEAP

CASE thanks LEAP programmer, Simon, who donated us an extra licence.

Part of our grant from Comic Relief Australia last year was used to buy LEAP Migration Manager software to manage our client work. We use the software to store all the DIAC forms. It provides a sophisticated networked file management. It brings up files for review and we can send file notes and check files from home.

How to make a donation

Since 2002, CASE has provided free assistance to refugees and humanitarian visa applicants in their claims for protection and reunion with family members and is now extending services to provide legal advice and information to the CaLD communities. Grants and donations go directly into running our centre, including staffing, administration, volunteer coordination and training and capital works.

Donations can be made in the following ways:

By phone: Call 08 9227 7311 and use your credit card.

By fax: Download a printable donation form from www.caseforrefugees.org.au and fax to: 08 9227 7188

By mail: Download a printable donation form from www.caseforrefugees.org and send to: 245 Stirling St, PERTH WA 6000.

On line: Click on the "make a donation" icon on our website at: www.caseforrefugees.org.au