

For immediate release
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Doors open on new legal service for individuals with mental illness

A new legal service was launched in Toowoomba in late 2016 to provide free face-to-face advice on mental health law, guardianship and administration, and other legal matters to individuals with mental illness.

The service, known as the Toowoomba Mental Health Legal Outreach Clinic is currently operated one day per month by a lawyer from Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI), a Brisbane based specialist legal and advocacy service for individuals with disability. The service is based at The Advocacy and Support Centre (TASC) National Toowoomba office, with outreach to local health services including Toowoomba Base Hospital and Baillie Henderson Hospital. The service is open to anyone in the Toowoomba region who is currently receiving involuntary treatment or care for a mental illness or intellectual disability.

Tony McCarthy, Solicitor of QAI's Mental Health Legal Service commented, 'On average, individuals assisted by the outreach service have been detained in mental health services or subject to involuntary treatment for more than 15 years. For many of these people, contact with this outreach service is the first time they have had access to face-to-face legal advice about their rights.'

'The service provides individuals with a one-off face-to-face advice appointment with one of QAI's specialist lawyers. Ongoing assistance may be provided in some cases, such as where the person requires representation before the Mental Health Review Tribunal or the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. We will also be linking individuals to other services in the region for help with issues that the service is unable to assist with.'

'The service will see staff from QAI and TASC work together with a range of other legal and non-legal services within Toowoomba to ensure some of the most vulnerable individuals with disability in Queensland are given access to the supports they need to protect their most basic human rights,' Mr McCarthy added.

Toowoomba residents seeking an appointment to the service should contact QAI by phone on **(07) 3844 4200** or by email to outreach@gai.org.au. Family members, carers and support persons may also contact QAI to refer a person to the service.

Ends

NOTES:

Community Legal Centres Queensland Inc (formerly QAILS) is the state-wide peak body representing community legal centres in Queensland. Queensland community legal centres have 40 years of service delivery experience providing free information, advice and referral, casework and representation to the community. www.communitylegalqld.org.au

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