

MEADOWBROOK

# Legal help for women at hospital

## MOVE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Sarah Orr**

VICTIMS of domestic abuse can now access legal aid at Logan Hospital thanks to a new on-site solicitor.

The Women's Legal Service teamed with the hospital to establish Queensland's first Health Justice Partnership, to connect vulnerable patients with support.

Solicitor Gail Shearer, who has been based at the hospital since July, said the initiative would enable them to reach women who might otherwise conceal their plight.


"Within the hospital environment, clinicians and doctors are focused on doing what they're employed to do," Ms Shearer said. "We are asking them to think a little more laterally ... to consider 'why is that patient

here' and 'what might have been going on in their lives.'

"(In many cases) people will actually tell their health or welfare provider about their issues, because they are forming that relationship of trust."

So far 300 hospital staffers have been educated about the service. As 20 per cent of women report the start of violence during pregnancy, Ms Shearer also spends time in the antenatal ward.

"For women exposed to domestic violence it's not easy to get out," she said. "Once a woman knows that there is assistance out there that could be the start for them to think, 'maybe I could do something about this.'"

 **If you or someone you know needs help, phone WLSQ on 1800 957 957**



**Health justice partnership solicitor Gail Shearer is based at Logan Hospital.** Picture: RIC FREARSON