

Talking justice: A guide for community legal centres

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Legal Centres
NSW

Always was, always will be.



I acknowledge Gadigal people as the Sovereign Owners of the Country that I am calling from. Sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, always will be Gadigal land.

TALKING JUSTICE

A guide for community legal centres



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clcnsw.org.au/talking-justice

Change takes community | clcnsw.org.au

Overview

1. Context and background

2. Key recommendations

- Use the 'people do things' rule
- Replace deficit language with strength-based stories
- Tell our story (never negate)
- Be reader-friendly and use plain language
- Tell compelling stories of change
- Tell human stories
- Lead with values and visions
- Know your audience

3. Words that work

About *Talking justice*

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Background

- **Why:** We're stronger together. Language is political. Crafting stories takes time.
- **Who:** Developed for people who work at community legal centres – for everyone, not just comms people!
- **When:** We encourage you to implement these recommendations across your work.

Values-based communications framework

- Draws heavily on the values-based framework developed by Anat Shenker-Osorio & Common Cause.
- Framing and values matter! Facts and evidence are important, but it's the context (or the narrative) in which they are placed that is critical.

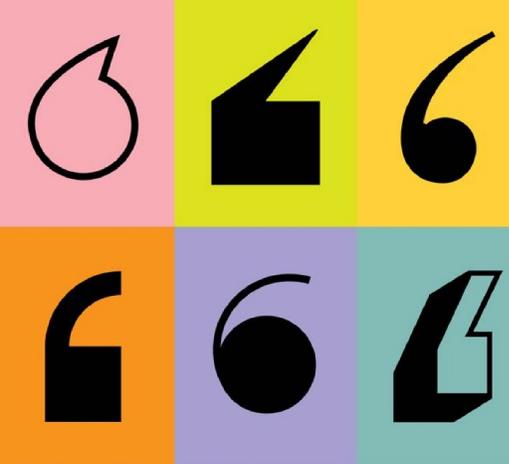
Raise the Age

Messaging Guide

A simple guide to talking to your friends, colleagues and local members of Parliament about why we need to #RaiseTheAge to keep children safe from prison, and invest in the alternatives that work.



#RaiseTheAge



The Power of Words

Having conversations about alcohol and other drugs
A quick guide




Framing Age Message Guide



PASSING THE MESSAGE STICK



A guide for changing the story on self-determination and justice

PWDA Language Guide: A guide to language about disability

Aug 2021 Update



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AUSTRALIA



Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide



Framing = The way an issue is posed or worded.



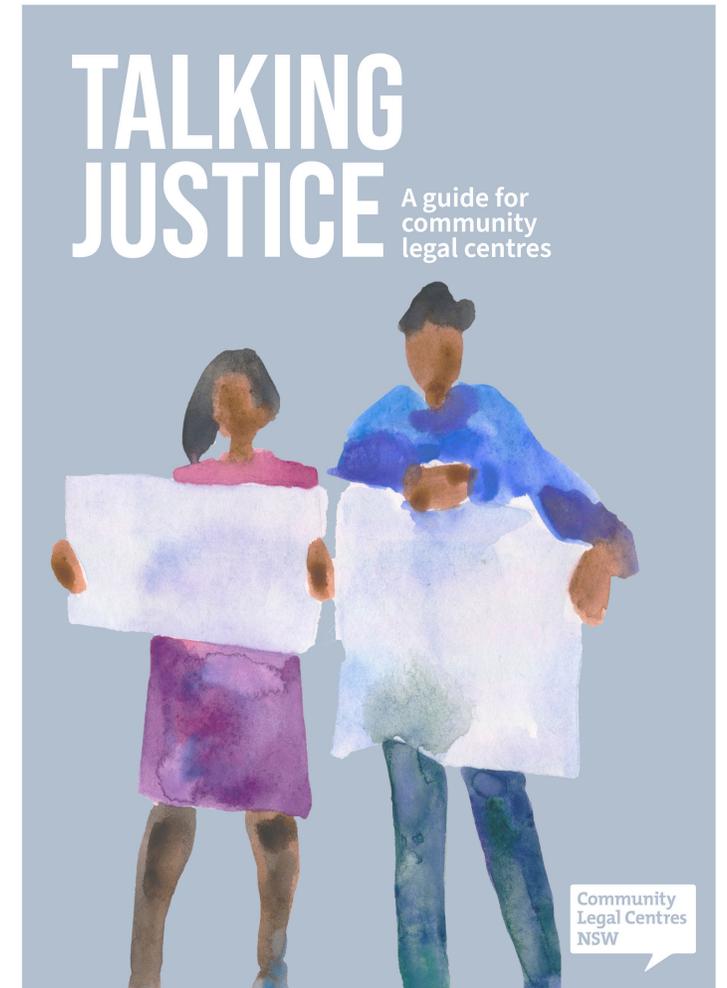
Natural gas or methane?



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A quick disclaimer!

- This is a guide – not a rulebook.
- Not intended to override an organisation's voice.



Recommendation 1

Replace deficit language with strength-based stories

Examples of deficit language

Avoid deficit language

At-risk of	Illiterate	Powerless
Disadvantaged	Low knowledge of rights	Slipped through the cracks
Disempowered	More likely to be homeless	Traumatised
Dysfunctional	More susceptible to	Unskilled, lack of skills
Hard-to-reach	Most incarcerated	Voiceless
Helpless	Overrepresented	Vulnerable

Why retire deficit language?

- Deficit language individualises structural problems and obscures the cause of harm or vulnerability.
- It can reinforce stigma, create shame, perpetuate stereotypes, and obscure the harm inflicted by other people, governments, and institutions.
- It can isolate the communities and people you're trying to connect with.
- It's the language of government.

“The term ‘vulnerable’ should be used with care. It comes from the Latin word for ‘wound’ and can suggest that people with disability are frail and in need of protection. We aren’t inherently vulnerable because of our disability, but rather because of the acts and/or omissions of the society in which we live. For example, government spending cuts that might result in us being imprisoned in our own homes with minimum support.”

— People with Disability Australia

Embrace strengths-based language

People are...

strong
powerful
self-determined
experts in their lives
knowledgeable
capable
wise
complex
leaders
creative
skilled

...despite the ongoing injustice they might face.

Embrace strengths-based framing

People seeking asylum are calling for your solidarity.

People with cognitive disabilities are experts in their own lives, despite experiencing discrimination in schools and the healthcare system.

When seeking safety, women who have experienced domestic violence often face a confusing and hostile legal process. The women we work with know what they need to find safety. It's our role to support them on that journey, to make their own decisions, and retake control of their lives.

Aboriginal-led community organisations have an extraordinary history of success and are best-placed to make decisions for Aboriginal people and Country.



“We don’t see ourselves as victims. We are warriors. We will stand up peacefully from the Pacific to the adversary, which is the fossil fuel industry.”

– Pacific Climate Warriors Campaign

Recommendation 2

Use the 'people do things' rule



“Our messages need to stop shining the gaze on our wounded bodies, and instead shine the gaze on the bullets fired at us, and the people firing them.”

— *Passing the Message Stick*

Use active voice



Use the 'people do things' rule



**An injured
builder?**

Use the 'people do things' rule



An injured builder?



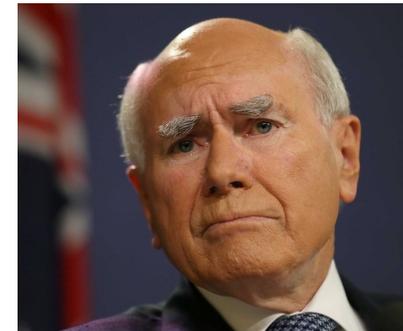
A manufacturer who falsified the weight limits on its ladders.



A colleague who intentionally pushed someone.



An employer who neglected work health and safety practices.



A government who introduced legislation that eroded workers' rights.

Examples of the ‘people do things’ rule

Aboriginal children are more than twelve times as likely to be removed from their family than non-Indigenous children.

The NSW Government removes Aboriginal children from their family at more than twelve times the rate of non-Indigenous children.

For Naomi, who is deaf, it was difficult to watch the government press conferences and keep up with the changes to Covid-19 rules.

During the pandemic, the Federal Government did not provide Auslan interpreters at press conferences. This excluded Naomi, who is deaf, from keeping up with changes to Covid-19 rules.

The gap between the health outcomes of rich and poor people are widening.

The Federal government maintains a low rate of income support, which forces people who are out of work, people with disabilities, and young families to live below the poverty line.

An application for compensation was submitted on behalf of Jo-Ann.

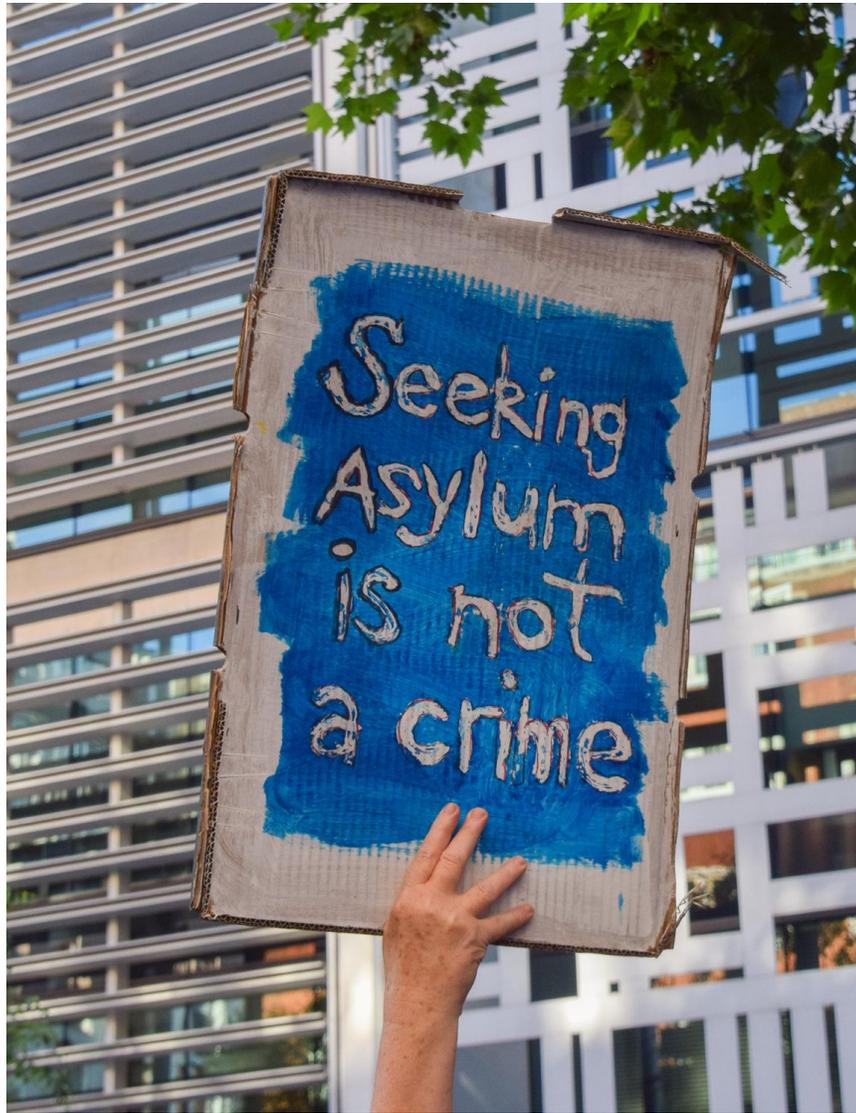
We helped Jo-Ann apply for compensation.

Recommendation 3

Tell our story (never negate)

Tell our story (don't negate)

- We sometimes negate when we want to dispel a myth or challenge a damaging stereotype.
 - “Closing youth prisons will not make our communities more dangerous.”
- Negations are words like ‘no’, ‘not’ and ‘never’.
- Lead from a place of truth – tell our story to break harmful or incorrect chains of association



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Examples of reframing

Avoid	Embrace
Seeking asylum is not illegal No human is illegal.	It is legal to seek asylum. When people cross borders their human rights come with them.
Closing youth detention centres will not make our communities more dangerous.	Our communities are safer when the government provides kids with proper support and care in community.
Raising income support payments is not a waste of taxpayer money and won't hurt the economy.	Raising income support payments means that all people are supported to live with dignity.

Recommendation 4

Be reader-friendly and use plain language

Avoid	Embrace
<p>Acronyms or contractions</p> <p><i>CLCNSW</i> <i>CLCs</i></p>	<p>Full names</p> <p><i>Community Legal Centres NSW</i> <i>community legal centres</i></p>
<p>Jargon, legalese, bureaucratic terms, specialist language.</p>	<p>Lucid language, which is alive, precise, and expresses complex ideas in ways that can be understood by people outside the community legal sector.</p>
<p>Hedging language is cautious, vague, and non-committal language. The extra verb creates an unnecessarily long sentences and dilutes the impact of our work.</p> <p><i>We are committed to providing...</i> <i>We seek to...</i> <i>We aim to support...</i> <i>We work to create...</i> <i>We hope to maintain...</i></p>	<p>Assertive language is clear, confident, and direct.</p> <p><i>We do...</i> <i>We are...</i> <i>We create...</i> <i>We maintain...</i> <i>We provide...</i></p>

Acronyms and Terms

in common use in the CLC sector

A

AAT Administrative Appeals Tribunal
<http://www.aat.gov.au/>

ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics
<http://www.abs.gov.au/>

ACLO Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer

ACOSS Australian Council of Social Service
<http://www.acoss.org.au/>

ACWA Association of Children's Welfare Agencies

ANU Australian National University
<http://www.anu.edu.au>

AOD Alcohol and other drugs

ARAFMI Mental Health Carers ARAFMI NSW Incorporated
<http://www.arafmi.org/>

ASIC Australian Securities and Investment Commission
<http://www.asic.gov.au>

ASU Australian Services Union, the relevant union in respect of the SACS Awards
<http://www.asu.asn.au/>

Impersonal or indirect language

This service...
The client...
The member of the public...

Personal and direct language

I am here to support you...
We care about...
Join us as we...
Together, we can...
We worked together to...

Lengthy paragraphs of text, no use of colour or images

Use lists, visuals, headings, and a logical structure

Abstract terms

Better life outcomes
Improved wellbeing
Positive resolutions

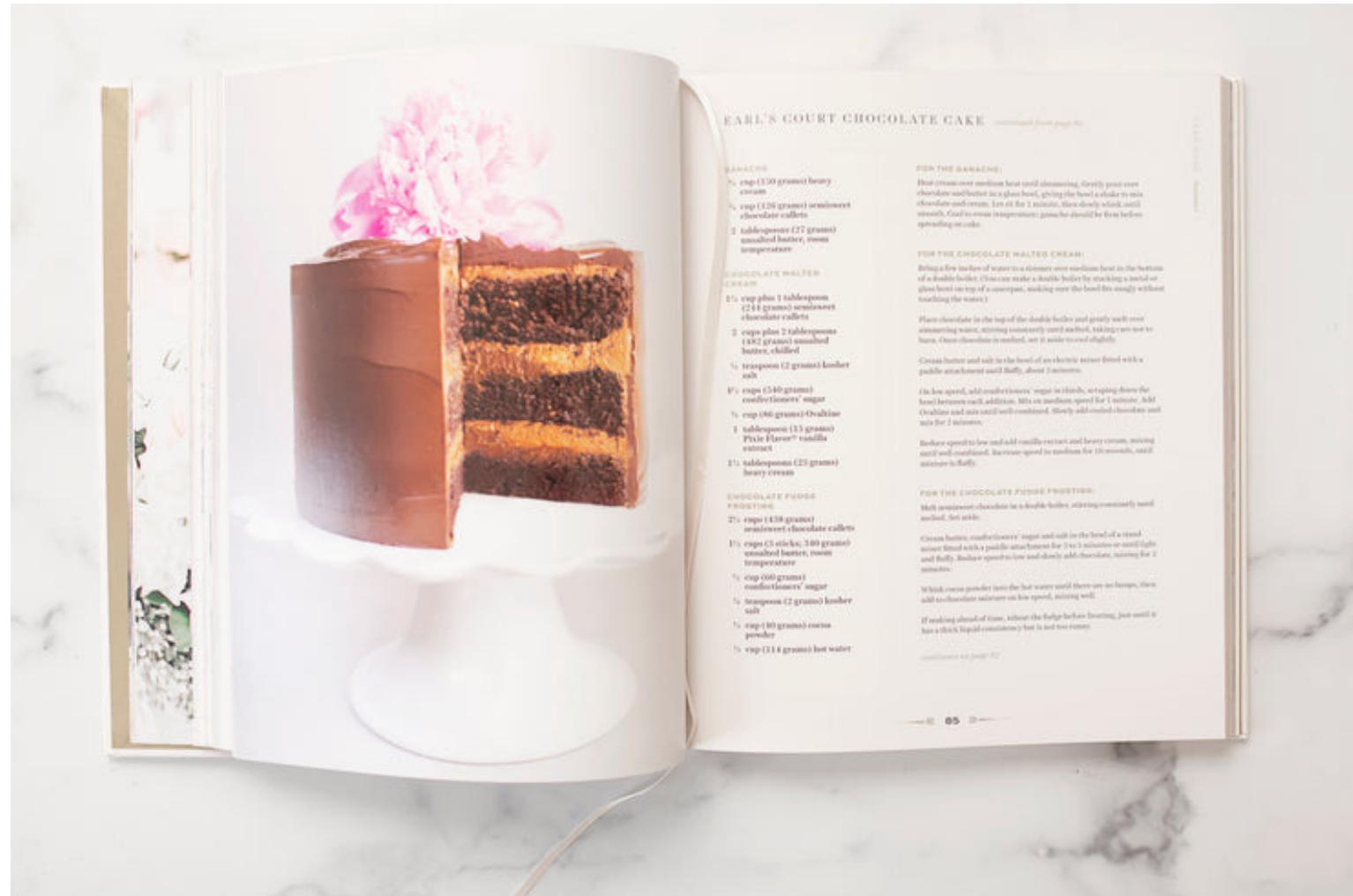
Use concrete and conversational language

Housing
Healthcare
Enough money to live on
Reduced stress
An end to violence
Community connection

Recommendation 5

Tell compelling stories of change

'Talk about the cake, not the recipe'



Recommendation 6

Tell human stories

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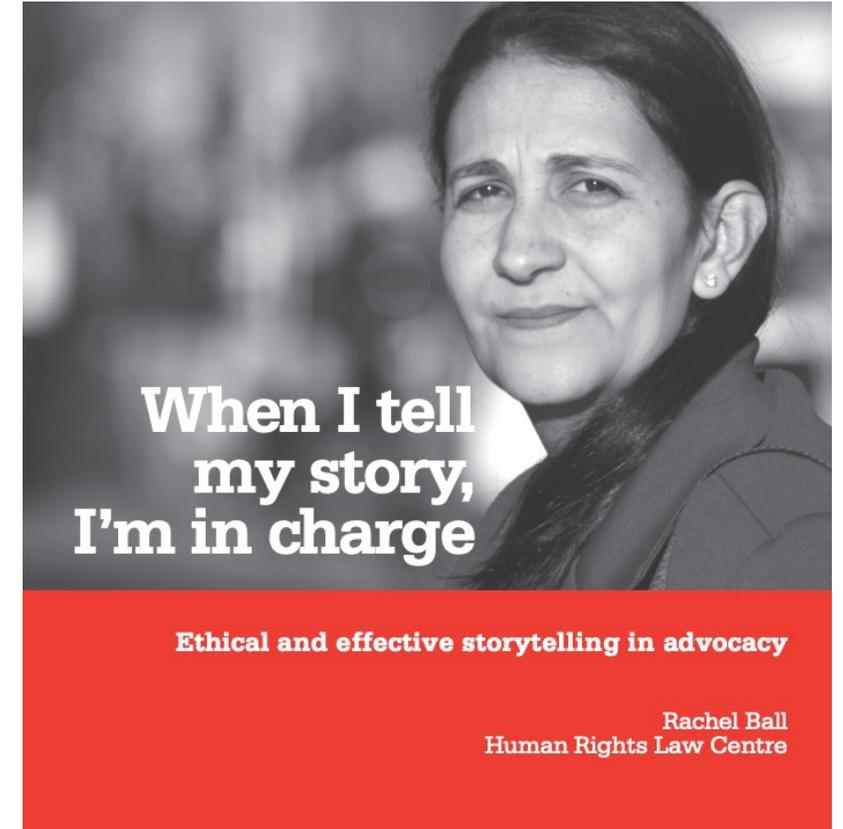
Why tell human stories?

“Stories are powerful. They can cut through prejudice, build understanding and motivate people to challenge injustice. Storytelling can empower individuals and communities by recognising their experience and expertise and promoting their agency. Storytelling also gives rise to difficult ethical questions and risks for clients, communities, community legal centres and campaigns.”

— Rachael Ball, When I tell my story, I’m in charge: Ethical and effective storytelling in advocacy

Key principles

- Consent
- Participation & self-determination
- Collaboration
- Situate stories in the context of broader campaigns



When I tell my story, I'm in charge: Ethical and effective storytelling in advocacy, Rachel Ball

Recommendation 7

Lead with values and visions

Prime intrinsic values

- Community
- Care
- Collaboration
- Equity
- Fairness
- Social justice
- Protecting the environment
- Dignity
- Diversity
- Equality
- Safety
- Bodily autonomy



Avoid extrinsic values



Self-reliance

*Bootstraps
narratives, self-
interest*



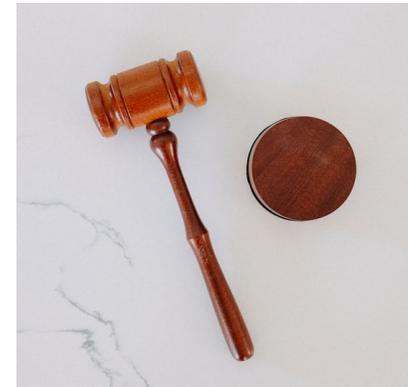
National security

*Protectionist &
nationalist
narratives*



Wealth

*Value for money,
material gain, cost-
benefit, economic
growth*



Order

*Law and order,
discipline,
authority,
tough-on-crime*

“Where something is the right thing to do, we demonstrate that by showing how it helps people/planet. A ‘better economy’ is not our end goal. We want a better society, a healthier planet, a better life.”

— Lily Spencer, Australian Progress

Values-based messaging for community legal centres

“Community legal centres run on the smell of an oily rag. We do more with less, providing the most cost-effective legal services in the legal assistance sector.”

“We give free, confidential, and practical legal help to people living on low/no income.”

“We treat our community with respect and dignity.”



VALUE

Every family needs healthcare to enjoy our lives to the full.

VILLAIN

Poorly funded and culturally insensitive health services run by outside 'experts' have meant many Aboriginal people have missed out on quality health care.

VICTORY

Aboriginal run and controlled community health services work really well.

VISION

With this approach we're seeing much healthier Aboriginal people and communities.

Recommendation 8

Know your audience

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How to map your audience

Demographics (age, gender, race or ethnicity, language spoken, income, education, family status).

Language (will English communications exclude our core audience?)

Geography (where do they live and work).

Attitudes and beliefs (preferences, cultural and social values, political leanings).

What communications **channels** does the target audience use?

Which **messengers** are most trusted?

What **design**, visuals, and colours might best-engage this audience?

Words that work – for community legal centres

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Words that work

Avoid	Embrace
CLCs Your organisation's acronym Legal assistance provider	Community legal centres The full name of your organisation
Geographic catchment area	Our local community
Service provision	Support, assistance, help
Referral pathways, referral networks	Link people up with other support, like counselling and housing
Clients, consumers	People, communities, the people we support, the people we work with, our community

Words that work

Government investment
Injection of government money

Government funding
Government support

We can help with family law, civil law, traffic law, criminal law, etc.

We can help with legal issues, like fines, debt, car accidents, domestic violence, discrimination, etc.

Deliver positive client outcomes, positive resolution to the matter

Offer people options, empower people to make a choice.
NB: When talking about the outcome of peoples' matters, use concrete language like: Stable housing, paid off debt, gaining independence, financial stability, keeping kids with family, healthcare, living free from violence, etc.

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[/talking-justice](http://clcnsw.org.au/talking-justice)

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