

Incorporating law students in community legal practice: Burden or benefit?

Community Legal Centres Queensland Conference
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UQ Pro Bono Centre

Rosalind Williams – Practitioner-in-Residence
Tamara Walsh – Director

W: law.uq.edu.au/probono
E: probono@law.uq.edu.au



Acknowledgement of **Country**

We acknowledge the Yuggera and Turrbal peoples as the True Owners and Custodians of this land, the waters, and the skies. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

We acknowledge the Traditional Law and Lore which was practised upon this land for millennia before the common law was forced upon it, and which continues to be practised today.

We acknowledge the injustices faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as a result of settler law.

We recognise their valuable contributions to Community through activism and advocacy and to wider Australian and international society.





UQ Pro Bono Centre

Pro bono Roster

No reward, no academic credit

- Partnerships with legal service organisations and non-government organisations.
- To deliver pro bono legal and related services – including research, writing.
- Projects of varying duration: one day to several years (mostly one semester).
- Work can include: client services (intake); creation of legal resources (fact sheets); research/submissions; paralegal-type support.

Case law databases:

- UQ/PLS Deaths in Custody Project: deaths-in-custody.project.uq.edu.au
- UQ/Caxton Human Rights Project: law.uq.edu.au/research/human-rights/case-notes
- Elder Abuse Project (with Caxton Legal Centre)
- UQ/QAI NDIS Project
- UQ Deaths in Care Project



UQ Pro Bono Centre

Clinical legal education program (general)

- LLB elective
- Currently run 9 different clinics for ~ 50 students each semester.
- Students attend one day a week (9am-5pm) for 13 weeks.
- We run a general induction session, at UQ.
- We also debrief with the whole group at the end, at UQ.
- Our clinical partners are:
 - Caxton Legal Centre - Consumer Law Advice Clinic
 - Law Right - Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic; Mater Clinic
 - RAILS
 - YFS Legal
 - PLS – Prisoner Law Clinic; Deaths in Custody Clinic
 - Tenants Queensland
 - Environmental Defenders Office



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Clinical legal education program (RRR)

- LLB elective
- Runs during winter and summer breaks.
- Students attend (on site) for 2 weeks (10 days).
- They are expected to complete additional research tasks from home:
 - during the following 4 weeks.
 - equivalent to around 3 days' work (~ 20 hours).
- We provide a grant of \$5000 to the host CLC to cover supervision expenses.
- We may be able to cover additional expenses (eg. travel to outreach locations) by agreement.



UQ Pro Bono Centre

Clinical legal education program (RRR)

- We do not cover students' travel or accommodation expenses.
- Currently, the goal is to send students home to undertake the placement. (However, this may change.)

Why are we doing this?

- To encourage students to view RRR legal practice as a career option.
- To expose students to the important work of RRR CLCs.
- Part of the RRR Justice Project – externally funded.

What students say about clinic:

‘At **law school**, your exam question ends after they say: do they have a cause of action? Likelihood of success? What damages could they get? And they don't ask: is this an appropriate remedy for this client? What steps would they have to take’

‘I feel like I properly was able to **apply** some of my legal knowledge and then also see, like, the real implications of how you talk to people’ ... ‘I probably remember the law so much better now that I have, like, a situation that I've used it in.’

‘I've been in the classroom a million days, but to get out there I think is something that I'm really hungry for.’



What students say about community law:

‘I think the fact that that **client** had someone who was on their side and willing to keep kind of pushing for them made the world of difference when it seemed like no one else would.’

‘I don't think I quite realised how many hats you have to wear as a **solicitor** in a legal centre or any type of legal practitioner centre that takes in such a wide intake of clients. But you go from family law to personal injury just with a snap of the finger and more, obviously.’

‘The people were really lovely. I feel like the work that I did was really valuable’

‘when I was there, it was like, OK, this is actually where I want to end up. ‘



What students say about RRR legal practice:

‘there is that **community** feel and they all kind of are there for each other.’

‘Everyone gets to know each other... they have connections with everyone... even in that short time, you seem to know everybody, and even the security guards.’

‘if they [**clients**] were in the city, they have access to other resources. But in the RRR area there are limited other services to go to. In the city, you can turn on every corner and you know, I guess you have more people, but you also have more opportunities for help. I just think there's a lot less other areas of support holding them up.’

‘It probably opened up a lot more **options** than I thought.’





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CREATE CHANGE

For the students, this is life changing.

But what about for the CLC and its staff?

Benefits for CLCs

- Support for your team – individually and collectively (productivity and morale).
- Opportunities for your staff to develop new skills in supervision and mentoring.
- Increase the profile and awareness of the work of your CLC amongst the student cohort.



What can students do?

- Helping with intake procedures
- Conflict checking
- Meeting and greeting clients
- Phone intake
- Observing interviews
- Writing file notes
- Completing forms – eg. Legal Aid applications
- Undertaking research for files and CLE activities
- Researching law reform
- Doing follow up phone contact with clients
- Contacting government departments for information
- Writing case histories and chronologies
- Assisting with the management of files
- Assisting with the preparation of briefs to counsel
- Attending court with lawyers
- Shadowing staff at stakeholder meetings
- Attending inhouse PD activities



Top tips for success

1. Thorough induction session
2. Induction pack
3. Giving feedback more than once
4. Debriefing





Discussion

- What have your experiences with student placements been like?
- What can law schools do to better prepare students to work in CLCs?
- How can we encourage early career lawyers to consider RRR practice?

Working with Interpreters: Information Session

Thursday 18 July 9am-1:30pm

With presentations from:

- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)
- Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)
- Australian Sign Language Interpreters and Translators' Association
- UQ School of Languages and Cultures

Cost:

UQ students Free

All others \$25





Contact us:

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