



Queensland Association of  
Independent Legal Services Inc

# COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS STATEMENT

December 2013

## Being a members of QAILS

In addition to the QAILS Constitution (see **attachment**), section 5 of *QAILS Policies and Procedures* (adopted in October 2010) deals with QAILS's core business (member services). Policy 5.1 deals with 'Support to member community legal centres' to clarify and strengthen the relationship between QAILS and its members, and deals with the following specific issues:

- decisions by member community legal centres to seek support from QAILS;
- provision of support to member centres (including support to member centres to participate in QAILS processes);
- noting that QAILS does not provide support for:
  - (1) disputes between staff and management committee of member organisations or over internal operations of member organisations;
  - (2) disputes between member community legal centres; or
  - (3) funding applications.

(This policy is being reviewed, and a revised *Membership Policy* will be provided to QAILS members in early 2014 for feedback, before being ratified and adopted by the QAILS management committee. The new policy will revisit these issues, and better articulate policies and practices supporting member participation, decision-making, communication, external representation, and other matters.)

This *Collaboration and Partnerships Statement* provides further detail about the framework for collaboration between QAILS members, and with other organisations by (and through) QAILS.

## Collaboration between QAILS members

QAILS members seek to support each other in their work to enhance, improve and expand the provision of legal services to the people of Queensland.

QAILS members recognise that cooperation between them is desirable to discharge their respective functions and maximise the effectiveness of their work to improve the welfare of and to address the legal and socio-legal needs of disadvantaged Queenslanders.

This statement seeks to establish a framework for effective and sustainable relationships that promote that objective, through:

### Encouraging quality service delivery

QAILS encourages and supports high quality service delivery by its members, through:

- administering the national accreditation scheme;
- under the guidance of the Professional Indemnity Insurance Representative, supporting centres to comply with their professional obligations under relevant legislation and risk management practices/procedures;
- providing training and professional development to QAILS members' staff, including through its state conference, annual workshop, webinar program and other initiatives, offered at low cost or free, in ways that are accessible to community legal centre staff across the state; and
- administering a community legal centre mentoring scheme.

### Regular liaison and exchange of information

QAILS will:

- provide regular updates to QAILS members through a fortnightly e-newsletter;
- provide information to individual centres, including through responding promptly to inquiries from member community legal centres;
- coordinate and deliver an annual state conference and annual workshop/planning session (within available resources).

QAILS members will:

- advise QAILS of relevant activities, proposed funding and project submissions for the purpose of preventing duplication and enhancing cooperation, pursuant to rule 11(c)(iii) of the QAILS Constitution;
- attend the annual state conference and annual workshop/planning session.

### **Maintaining effective referral protocols**

In order to ensure effective referrals of clients, QAILS members will:

- ensure that the information on the 'community legal centre Directory' area of the QAILS website is up to date;
- advise the QAILS office if there are changes to:
  - capacity to accept referrals;
  - capacity to see/assist clients;
- provide 'warm referrals' to other QAILS members for:
  - particularly vulnerable people seeking assistance; and/or
  - urgent legal issues

(In this context, a 'warm referral' requires a staff member from the referring community legal centre to make contact with a staff member from another community legal centre with the permission of the service user, provide details about the service user's circumstances, and provide contact details to the recipient community legal centre, who will then contact the service user to provide advice and/or assistance.)

### **Working together to reduce overhead costs**

In 2014, QAILS and its members will work together on a new 'Back Office' project to identify possible group procurement opportunities, consolidation of functions and other savings in areas including human resources, payroll, finance, information and communication technology, and accommodation.

## **Collaboration with other organisation by (and through) QAILS**

QAILS will enter into formal relationships with other service providers, on behalf of its members, to ensure appropriate collaboration and referral.

At the time of preparing this document, QAILS (on behalf of its members) is negotiating memoranda of understanding with organisations identified as having common areas of interest by DJAG as part of its review of legal assistance funding, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service;
- Court Network; and
- Carers Queensland,

to improve service delivery (including avoiding duplication), to develop template referral protocols with QAILS members, to partner in the development and delivery of community education, and research and policy activities, and to adopt a consultative and collaborative partnership with each organisation. These memoranda will be ratified by the QAILS management committee and provided to QAILS members.

QAILS actively participates in forums that encourage collaboration and participation with other organisations. These forums currently include:

- Queensland Legal Assistance Forum (currently chaired by QAILS);
- Queensland Futures Forum;
- Workforce Council Industry Reference Group;
- National Rural Law and Justice Alliance; and
- UQ Pro Bono Centre Advisory Board.

QAILS is also a member of the National Association of Community Legal Centres (**NACLC**), which supports 19 National Networks of community legal centre workers (and sometimes others) who work and/or have interest in particular areas of law, with particular target groups or community legal centre operations. These Networks share resources, provide support and specialist expertise, and develop national policy and positions regarding current issues faced by their clients, and participate in public debate on those issues. Through NACLC, QAILS members are also able to partner and collaborate with a number of national peak bodies, including ACOSS, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, and others.

## **Attachment: Members' obligations under QAILS Constitution**

Under clause 11(b) of the QAILS Constitution, all Ordinary Members and Associate Members are obliged to:

- (i) adhere to QAILS's rules and objects; and
- (ii) subscribe to the purposes of QAILS; and
- (iii) comply with all policies of QAILS; and
- (iv) promote the aims and interests of Ordinary Members; and
- (v) pay membership fees and such additional levies as may be decided by QAILS and NAcommunity legal centre, from time to time.

Under clause 11(c) of the QAILS constitution, Ordinary Members are also obliged to:

- (i) work cooperatively with other Community Legal Centres in furthering the aims and interests of QAILS; and
- (ii) advise QAILS of relevant activities, proposed funding and project submissions for the purpose of preventing duplication and enhancing cooperation; and
- (iii) undertake to review, discuss, and give due consideration to the decisions of QAILS; and
- (iv) comply with the NAcommunity legal centre Accreditation Criteria or satisfy QAILS that they are actively working towards complying with the Accreditation Criteria.