

Strategic Operating Plan 2025 - 2030

This plan outlines how we will measure success, the benefits of our work and a five year strategic operating plan for the NLA Directorate.

This plan will be reported on as a regular agenda item at NLA Directors meetings and will be reviewed annually.

1. Outcome statements for success of NLA

The following outcome statements are designed to assess the success of NLA over the next five years. These statements provide measurable indicators of NLA's effectiveness in advocacy, funding, and partnerships. While they establish a framework for evaluation, they will be refined and improved over time to reflect evolving priorities and challenges.

By focusing on performance outcomes rather than output measures, these statements aim to capture the broader impact of NLA's work in enhancing access to justice and strengthening the legal assistance sector.

Recognition and Influence in Government Decision-Making

Success Indicator: NLA is consistently consulted by government bodies on legal assistance matters and is regarded as an essential stakeholder in policy development. Evidence of success includes formal invitations to policy discussions and inquiry and submission processes, participation in advisory panels, references to NLA's recommendations in legislative and budgetary decision and decision makers supporting or accepting NLA recommendations.

Increased Funding for Legal Aids

Success Indicator: Legal Aids across Australia receive increased government funding to expand their services. This is evidenced by higher allocations in federal and state budgets, improved service delivery capacity, and enhanced support for communities experiencing disadvantage seeking legal assistance.

Strengthened Partnerships with legal assistance providers

Success Indicator: NLA is recognised as a key partner by colleagues in CLCs and First Nations legal assistance services, leading to increased collaboration on advocacy efforts, resource-sharing initiatives, and joint strategic planning. Success is reflected in formal or

informal agreements, joint advocacy campaigns and submissions to government, and coordinated service delivery models that improve legal assistance for disadvantaged groups.

Success Indicator: NLA demonstrates support to private lawyers delivering legal aid services and is recognised as a key partner by the Law Council of Australia and State/Territory Law Societies, leading to a sustainable legal aid market and increased collaboration on advocacy efforts. Success is reflected in findings of the national private practitioner census, joint or aligned advocacy campaigns and submissions to government.

Collaboration between Legal Aids (LAs)

Success Indicator: LAs trust and support each other in the delivery of their work, leading to a more cohesive and effective national legal aid network. Success is demonstrated through collaborative submissions and projects, shared best practices, and a unified approach to addressing sector challenges.

These outcome statements provide a foundation for assessing NLA's progress and ensuring its efforts translate into meaningful change. Over the next five years, they will be reviewed and refined to align with shifting priorities and emerging opportunities in the legal assistance sector.

Benefits of National Legal Aid



Stronger positions

Being part of National Legal Aid provides Legal Aids with the strength of forming united positions in support of policies, actions or campaigns to achieve better legal access for vulnerable people across Australia.



Shared insights

Through NLA, members benefit from shared insights into working contexts, business and service delivery models, as well as IT and management strategies. It offers valuable opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving.



Forum for solutions

NLA serves as a forum to discuss challenges, exchange recommendations, and develop solutions that enhance service effectiveness.



Pooled resources

By pooling resources, members contribute to and benefit from national priorities, strengthening the impact of legal aid services across jurisdictions.



Enhanced Networks

Additionally, NLA fosters the sharing and expansion of professional networks, creating a stronger, more connected legal aid sector committed to improving access to justice.

2. NLA Directorate Strategic Operational Plan 2025 - 2030

2.1. Ensure people facing disadvantage obtain legal representation by increasing core funding from all levels of government

- Develop and implement campaign outlining Legal Aid contribution to ending domestic and family violence
- Continue promoting essential role of Private Practitioners and market supply issues
- Continue to highlight the unique & essential role of government law related services (NDIS, migration, child support, social security)
- Continue to highlight ongoing demand issues, particularly for at-risk groups including victim-survivors and people with disability
- Continue to promote the unique role Legal Aid can play in national service delivery in areas such as disaster
- Identify emerging justice issues and advocate for investment in supporting access to justice in those areas
- Continue to promote community, political & media awareness of the role of NLA and Legal Aids

2.2. Advocate for the safety and well-being of families and children within the legal and justice systems

- Continue to provide a leadership role in Family Law reform
- Continue to provide a leadership role in Child Support reform
- Improve the evidence base of good practice models of service delivery and service system improvements for families and children
- Develop a collaborative approach to delivering services to victim-survivors of domestic and family violence
- Develop capability of family law workforce where nationally relevant (ICL program, coercive control project)

2.3. Implement Closing the Gap priority reforms including delivering culturally appropriate services and supporting more First Nations services

- Develop a national implementation plan for delivering the priority reforms of the Closing the Gap report
- Develop and commit to First Nation leadership in Legal Aids, in consultation with the First Nations Advisory Group
- Develop principles for working with the First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence and NATSILS that support self-determination and collaboration
- Supporting implementation of culturally safe practices within NLA and Legal Aids

2.4. Advocate in strategic areas of civil law including Centrelink, NDIS, migration and appeals of government decisions

- Continue to provide a leadership role within the Legal Assistance sector in government law reform
- Develop and support national legal assistance Communities of Practice (R@W and Disability)
- Provide leadership in delivering systems change
- Identify and advocate for emerging issues within government law reform

2.5. Establish a nationwide evidence base to demonstrate legal need and the impact of legal assistance for disadvantaged clients

- Establish an ABS dataset that includes all LA service delivery
- Implement NLA data management strategy focused on purpose and quality
- Align development of data in LAs with Close the Gap Priority 4 and data sovereignty principles
- Establish an outcomes CoP that supports increasing outcomes capability within LAs
- Develop one outcomes measurement project in one DV-relevant service delivery program within LA
- Develop a NLA research and evaluation strategy: Identify at least one area of emerging issues per year and a potential research area
- Support the implementation of a national legal needs survey

2.6. Ensure safe and sustainable working conditions and culture to attract and retain a strong and engaged legal aid workforce

- Continue to implement the ICL Quality Program
- Continue to implement the With You Project
- Identify and develop national projects that support the workforce and improve capability such as coercive control training
- Undertake the Private Practitioners census review and evaluation (within 2 - 3 years)
- Support workforce capabilities through delivering quarterly webinars on key areas
- Develop strategies for Legal Aids to be culturally safe and a responsive employer of choice for First Nations people
- Develop a lived experience framework that incorporates, celebrates and acknowledges First Nations expertise and people with lived experience
- Support National Working Groups and Networks
- Support national conferences such as the biennial Access to Justice conference

Enablers

- Collaborative relationship with AGD and Government
- Collaborative relationship with legal assistance sector
- Collaborative relationship with Legal Aids
- Strong and strategic advocacy, campaigning and communication strategy
- Program of building strategic capability across legal assistance sector
- Evidenced based approach underpinning all work