

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES



KINGSFORD  
LEGAL CENTRE



Volunteer Solicitors Report

October 2007

## INTRODUCTION

This survey was conducted by students as a project for KLC throughout October 2007. With the aid of our volunteer solicitors, the aim of this survey is to assist Kingsford Legal Centre (KLC) in assessing and understanding the:

- Quality of the services and facilities provided at the Maroubra Outreach Clinic
- Impact of relocation on its clients and services
- Adequacy of its library resources
- Interactive teaching role of KLC to UNSW Law students.
- Effectiveness of its quarterly training sessions

This year the survey was conducted over a three week period through email correspondence and advice nights. Of the 50 volunteer solicitors at KLC we received nearly 20 responses to the survey. We would like to thank the many volunteer solicitors who contributed to this survey.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Question 1

How many years have you been a volunteer solicitor at KLC?

Respondent ID	No. of years	Respondent	No. of years
(1)	3	(11)	0
(2)	3	(12)	6.5
(3)	1.5	(13)	1
(4)	2	(14)	13
(5)	0.5	(15)	4
(6)	1	(16)	0
(7)	3	(17)	-
(8)	15	(18)	1
(9)	1		
(10)	9		
<b>Average</b>	3.91 years		

**Result:** While the average volunteer solicitor has stayed nearly 4 years at KLC, majority of the respondents have only begun volunteering recently in the last < 3 years.

## Question 2

Were you a student at KLC?

Respondent ID	Yes/No	Respondent	Yes/No
(1)	Y	(11)	N
(2)	Y	(12)	N
(3)	N	(13)	N
(4)	N	(14)	Y
(5)	Y	(15)	N
(6)	Y	(16)	Y
(7)	N	(17)	-
(8)	Y	(18)	N
(9)	N		
(10)	N		
<b>Yes (%)</b>	41.2	<b>No (%)</b>	58.8

**Result:** Fewer than half the respondents were former students at KLC.

## Question 3

Were you a student at UNSW?

Respondent ID	Yes/No	Respondent	Yes/No
(1)	Y	(11)	N
(2)	Y	(12)	N
(3)	N	(13)	N
(4)	Y	(14)	Y
(5)	Y	(15)	N
(6)	Y	(16)	Y
(7)	Y	(17)	-
(8)	Y	(18)	N
(9)	N		
(10)	Y		
<b>Yes (%)</b>	58.8	<b>No (%)</b>	41.2

**Result:** Majority of respondents are ex-students of UNSW law school.

#### Question 4

What motivated you to become a volunteer with KLC?

Respondent ID	Additional Comment
(1)	I feel it's important to give back to those who need help, social justice.
(2)	Needed a wider variety of legal experience.
(3)	Formerly a student volunteer at Fitzroy Legal Centre in Victoria. Wanted to be a professional volunteer post-admission.
(4)	Helping people, having legal skills.
(5)	Fond memories of KLC; Plans to continue doing CLC work!
(6)	Wanted to get involved again in CLC again and in particular KLC based on my positive previous experience here.
(7)	ABC program at KLC and desire to help law students and community.
(8)	To give back to the community (in a small way).
(9)	Secondment at KLC.
(10)	One of the KLC staff solicitors strongly encouraged me to volunteer – I had previously completed a secondment to KLC.
(11)	Good opportunity to meet/assist people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
(12)	I had been a volunteer at Marrickville LC before leaving Sydney for a few years and after I returned to Sydney I thought it would be worthwhile to continue at KLC. Being a volunteer keeps in touch with the world outside of work. Also it's a good place to meet students who might be interested in part-time work; I have had an ex KLC student working for me for the last year.
(13)	To assist members of the community to have greater access to law and gain experience in different areas of law.
(14)	I came as a student and never left. I like the KLC people and ethos. I have always liked the opportunity to use my legal skills to help people in a practical way. Contrary to other "good" causes and charities I've been involved with, KLC is hands on.
(15)	Colleague was a volunteer solicitor and was told there was a need. Also thought it would be a good experience as a new solicitor.
(16)	The staff.
(17)	Knowing how important solicitors are to advice nights and appreciating just how important the service KLC offers is. Also it has provided me as a young lawyer with additional experience in diagnosing legal issues across the employment/industrial law landscape.
(18)	Stopped practicing full time and sought to do some good, at the same time, keep in touch with legal practice.

#### **Result:**

The most common response among respondents was that they wanted to give back to the community and help the disadvantaged. Some commented that their decision was influenced by their positive past KLC experience.

## TRAINING

### Question 1

Have you attended a training session before? / If so how many did you attend in the past year? / Which sessions? / Was it useful?

Respondent ID	Attended training (Y/N)	If Y, how many in past year?	Which session/s?	Was it useful? (Y/N)
(1)	Y	0	-	-
(2)	Y	2	Employment, Personal Injury	Y
(3)	N	-	-	-
(4)	Y	2	Employment Law, PCA	Y
(5)	Y	1	Employment at Redfern Legal Centre	Y
(6)	Y	1	-	Y
(7)	N	-	-	-
(8)	Y	1	Dealing with difficult clients at Redfern Legal Centre	Y
(9)	Y	1	Drink driving	Y
(10)	Y	1	Unfair dismissal/ discrimination in employment	Y
(11)	N	-	-	-
(12)	N	-	-	-
(13)	Y	1	Employment law, unfair dismissal and discrimination law.	Y
(14)	N	-	-	-
(15)	Y	1	Personal Injury session	N (not in their area)
(16)	N	-	-	-
(17)	N	-	-	-
(18)	N	-	-	-
<b>Yes (%)</b>	58.8		<b>No (%)</b>	41.1
<b>Average session/s attended per person</b>				1.1

### **Result:**

Majority of respondents have attended at least one training session. On average they attended one training session in the past year. Nearly all respondents found the training sessions useful, except for one respondent who thought it was not directly relevant to their area of practice. The training session which covered employment law and unfair dismissal was the most popular session attended among respondents.

## Question 2

What practical clinical issues or specific areas of law would you like the training sessions to address?

Respondent ID	Additional Comment
(1)	-
(2)	Employment, Estates
(3)	Guardianship: child protection, elderly.
(4)	Debt recovery in local court (tactics, local court procedures); Criminal defence (dealing with police).
(5)	More on Commission in this core / also ADB, time was limited though.
(6)	Discrimination, Consumer credit, MVA
(7)	-
(8)	Any matters that are relevant to the centre and the most common matters.
(9)	Consumer Credit/debt session would be helpful as it's such a common issue.
(10)	Obtaining instructions from and advising clients with mental health issues.
(11)	-
(12)	-
(13)	-
(14)	-
(15)	Debt recovery, unfair dismissal, discrimination.
(16)	-
(17)	Handling aggressive clients.
(18)	Environmental law.

### **Result:**

Respondents are most keen to attend sessions which cover discrimination and consumer credit/debt recovery.

## CHANGES TO KINGSFORD LEGAL CENTRE

### Question 1:

Have you noticed any changes about the type of clients who approach KLC for help?

Respondent ID	Yes/No	Additional Comment
(1)	Y	They were more neighbourhood people, now not so
(2)	Y	There are more (younger) students
(3)	Y	They are slightly more wealthy
(4)	Y	They are slightly more educated
(5)	N	They have some apprehension about the environment
(6)	N	-
(7)	N	-
(8)	Y	They seem less desperate
(9)	Y	Not at Maroubra evening advice, but during secondment at KLC there appeared to be more students seeking advice
(10)	N	-
(11)	N	-
(12)	N	Some clients feel a little intimidated coming onto campus and Rainbow St was non-threatening (in a ramshackle sort of way)
(13)	N	-
(14)	Y	Overall the clients seem to be less needy. Seems we have lost the Matraville/Maroubra/ Little Bay housing commission residents and replaced them with more home owners and small business owners and students. There are many fewer Non-English speaking clients.
(15)	N	-
(16)	N	-
(17)	N	-
(18)	N	-
<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>38.9</b>	
<b>No (%)</b>	<b>61.1</b>	

### **Result:**

Most respondents noticed no change to the type of clients approaching KLC for advice. However, those who noticed changes noted that the clients seem less in disadvantaged and were more likely to be students.

## Question 2

Have you noticed any changes about the needs of the clients who approach KLC for help?

Respondent ID	Yes/No	Additional Comment
(1)	N	-
(2)	Y	Even more car accidents
(3)	Y	More civil, less poverty law
(4)	Y	Slightly more civil actions
(5)	N	-
(6)	N	-
(7)	N	-
(8)	Y	Needs seem more trivial
(9)	Y	Appear to be more debt/credit cases, though this is possibly not a result of relocation
(10)	N	-
(11)	N	-
(12)	N	-
(13)	N	-
(14)	Y	Seem to be giving more property/civil litigation/small business related advice rather than the debt/petty criminal/tenancy related matters/ There has been big reduction in AVO related advice
(15)	N	-
(16)	N	-
(17)	N	-
(18)	N	-
<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>33.3</b>	
<b>No (%)</b>	<b>66.7</b>	

### Result:

Majority of respondents noticed no changes about the needs of clients. However many of the respondents who noticed changes comment that they experienced more civil issues coming from clients.

### Question 3

Have you noticed any changes about the services which KLC provides?

Respondent ID	Yes /No	Additional Comment
(1)	N	-
(2)	N	-
(3)	N	-
(4)	Y	Improved due to better resources
(5)	Y	Layout of the centre, space in the rooms, privacy has all improved
(6)	N	-
(7)	Y	Is bit better facilitated and resourced
(8)	N	-
(9)	N	-
(10)	N	-
(11)	N	-
(12)	N	-
(13)	N	-
(14)	N	-
(15)	N	-
(16)	N	-
(17)	N	-
(18)	Y	The building in the University may be difficult to access. The centre at Maroubra Junction appears to be more "user-friendly"
<b>Yes (%)</b>	22.2	
<b>No (%)</b>	77.8	

#### **Result:**

Most respondents noticed no change to services provided by KLC. The few respondents who noticed changes commented favourably about KLC's improved resources. There is one respondent who is concerned about the Centre's accessibility to clients.

## LIBRARY RESOURCES

### Question 1

Do you think the library resources (including web resources) at KLC are adequate?

Respondent ID	Yes/No	Respondent	Yes/No
(1)	Y	(11)	-
(2)	Y	(12)	-
(3)	Y	(13)	Y
(4)	Y	(14)	Y
(5)	Y	(15)	Y
(6)	Y	(16)	Y
(7)	Y	(17)	Y
(8)	Y	(18)	Y
(9)	Y	(19)	
(10)	Y	(20)	
<b>Y (%)</b>	100	<b>N (%)</b>	0

**Result:** All respondents were satisfied with the library resources at KLC.

### Question 2

What additional resources would you like to see in the library?

Respondent ID	Additional Comments	Cont.	Additional Comments
(1)	-	(11)	-
(2)	-	(12)	-
(3)	-	(13)	-
(4)	Faster broadband required	(14)	-
(5)	Update some sources	(15)	-
(6)	-	(16)	-
(7)	-	(17)	-
(8)	-	(18)	
(9)	-		
(10)	-		

**Results:** Given that everyone was satisfied with the library resources at KLC, hardly any suggestions were made for the library's improvement. Only one respondent had an issue with Centre's internet connection speed. The other respondent recommended an update of some sources but didn't identify them.

## INTERACTION WITH LAW, LAWYERS AND SOCIETY STUDENTS

### Question 1

Your overall experience with student interaction has been:

Respondent ID	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
(1)		X			
(2)	X				
(3)	X				
(4)		X			
(5)	X				
(6)		X			
(7)	X				
(8)	X				
(9)		X			
(10)		X			
(11)	X				
(12)	X				
(13)	X				
(14)		X			
(15)		X			
(16)		X			
(17)	-	-	-	-	-
(18)	X				
<b>%</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>47.0</b>			

**Result:** All respondents felt that their student interaction experience has at least been very good. Most respondents felt they had an excellent experience.

## Question 2

What are the skills law students need to develop most?

Respondent ID	Long response
(1)	Law, people skills, problem solving
(2)	Listening and accurate reporting
(3)	Clear thinking of dates, times and places
(4)	Note taking, confident communication
(5)	Accurate note taking, quick research skills ,knowledge/awareness of loose-leaf services
(6)	Writing clear notes
(7)	Communication – ability to listen and differentiate information as provided.
(8)	Most seem to be interested, enthusiastic and thorough
(9)	Taking accurate notes of interviews, especially of legal advice
(10)	Interviewing to obtain relevant and required instructions
(11)	Need to be able to identify what clients are seeking
(12)	Interviewing clients (especially not letting clients hijack the interview process); sorting out the relevant from the irrelevant in what the client tells the student. ** I'd be happy to meet with students and give them my views on how to do this. Students often look for a legal solution for client and often don't realise that common sense is almost always applicable to helping solve client's problem. Looking at the big picture; most students are adept at gathering the facts, but then assemble the facts to state the problem that the client has.
(13)	Being a good listener which leads to taking accurate advice.
(14)	Would prefer to only work with KLC students over the course of a semester. LLS students not as committed or interested as KLC students.
(15)	Succinctly describe facts and clearly transcribe advice given to client.
(16)	Getting more information during the initial interview.
(17)	Depends on where they want to work! When dealing with clients in CLC – empathy, confidence and passion.
(18)	-

**Result:** Majority of respondents felt that it was important for students to record accurate, succinct and legible notes during client interviews. Good communication skills with clients were also important.

### Question 3

Do you discuss how the law functions in client's cases with students?

Respondent ID	Yes/No	Comments
(1)	Y	
(2)	Y	
(3)	Y	Sometimes
(4)	Y	
(5)	Y	Often
(6)	Y	
(7)	Y	Also talk about method/technique of giving advice
(8)	Y	Sometimes
(9)	Y	Depending on time and student interest
(10)	Y	Usually. Sometimes discuss whether the law is just/adequate.
(11)	Y	Need to discuss how law meets client's expectations
(12)	Y	But just as important to show student that the law and what is actually best for the client might be very different. I.e. Look at practical solutions and not concentrate on the law.
(13)	Y	Sometimes obvious that law isn't the solution to the problem.
(14)	Y	
(15)	Y	
(16)	Y	Depends on student's interest
(17)	Y	They always seem interested. I can't believe that KLC is compulsory for all UNSW law students.
(18)	Y	-
<b>Yes (%)</b>	100	
<b>No (%)</b>	0	

**Result:** All respondents discuss how the law functions with students. The frequency of the discussion depends on the student's interest. In addition to discussing how the law works, respondents may also discuss with students client's expectations, practical solutions and the technique of giving advice.

## MAROUBRA OUTREACH SERVICES

### Question 1:

Are the accommodation and facilities there adequate?

Respondent ID	Yes/No/ Not applicable	Comments
(1)	n/a	
(2)	n/a	
(3)	n/a	
(4)	n/a	
(5)	n/a	
(6)	n/a	
(7)	n/a	
(8)	n/a	
(9)	N	Generally good, but lack of separate interview rooms can be a problem (confidentiality reasons) when advice nights are busy.
(10)	N	Difficult to confer with other practitioners and students when there are board meetings in the large front room at the beginning of the advice session. Access to computers to draft letters for clients is very hard. Don't always have the pamphlets you want to give to clients.
(11)	n/a	
(12)	Y	Although sometimes a bit crowded and the client interview areas don't all offer privacy (but I haven't had a client object).
(13)	Y	-
(14)	n/a	
(15)	Y	-
(16)	N	Space is inadequate, lack of privacy
(17)	N	Does not provide clients with much privacy although haven't heard of any complaints.
(18)	Y	Is there anything that could be done to ensure greater privacy confidentiality amongst clients during the interviews, given the layout of the Centre?
<b>Yes (%)</b>	50	
<b>No (%)</b>	50	

### Result

Despite an equal mix of respondents finding the premises at Outreach to be either adequate or inadequate, all respondents are concerned about the space and privacy at the premises. The lack of separate interview rooms at the premises results in deficient privacy for clients – the biggest issue highlighted by the respondents.

## GENERAL FEEDBACK

### **Suggestions for improvement**

- Raise awareness of KLC services (outreach and on campus) in the community e.g. permanent signage at outreach service and other marketing.
- Continuing focus on outreach clients
- Increase awareness of the Centre to the community and a street front presence. Perhaps permanent signage at the outreach locations.
- An espresso machine? Perhaps more copies of the law handbook available on busy nights.
- An induction for new (and old) volunteer solicitors to help them increase familiarity with using web resources.
- Admin student could direct best room to use a bit better to avoid 2 clients being given advice at the same time in open plan area at back of main room.

### **Any other feedback**

- A few respondents commented that they enjoyed volunteering and interaction with the solicitors and students.
- The set up sometimes causes problems with confidentiality because the clients are in such close proximity (and within earshot of) the solicitors and students discussing matters.
- Junction advice nights seem to be attracting clients in good numbers which is good to see.
- KLC does a good job under difficult circumstances. There would be many more employment law solicitors that would be prepared to volunteer if the word got out. More advertising to top firms and advertising firms would be good.
- Facilities at Maroubra do not provide clients with much privacy
- The KLC experience is quite valuable!