

Te Korowai Ture o Waitākere  
Waitākere Community Law Service



**2010 PROSPECTUS**  
**FOR**  
**LAW STUDENT**  
**VOLUNTEERS**

## Background Briefing

Waitakere Community Law Service (“WCLS”) is a community law centre which was established to enhance the lives of people most in need and whose lives are impacted by unresolved legal issues. A key focus for WCLS is to identify systemic barriers to justice and make the most of opportunities for systemic change in the justice system.

Equal Justice Project (“EJP”) is a student-run, non-profit organisation which was established to promote access to justice in Auckland. EJP achieves its goals by promoting voluntary legal work by law students in partnership with community groups and the profession.

WCLS and EJP recognised their common interest and have thus formed a partnership whereby EJP students have supported the work of WCLS by volunteering at WCLS legal advice clinics.

## What Sort Of Work Does WCLS Do?

WCLS focuses its services to meeting high unmet legal needs. Research demonstrates that high unmet needs correlate to other forms of social exclusion (many of which in turn correlate with poverty).

WCLS focuses its services towards members of the community who experience social exclusion in two ways:

1. By targeting services towards sectors of the community that have been deemed to be priority groups (i.e. groups who typically experience high levels of social exclusion)
2. By assessing clients in terms of the level of social exclusion they experience and delivering appropriate levels of service to each client.

The priority groups we have identified are:

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ■ Tangata Whenua              | ■ People with disabilities |
| ■ Tagata Pasifika             | ■ Mental Health clients    |
| ■ People on low incomes       | ■ Refugees and Migrants    |
| ■ People who receive benefits | ■ Single parents           |
| ■ People under 25             | ■ People over 65           |

WCLS works primarily in the following areas of law:

- |                        |                                     |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Family               | ■ Criminal and traffic              |
| ■ Employment           | ■ Tenancy and Housing               |
| ■ Discrimination       | ■ Public/Administrative Law         |
| ■ Consumer and Debt    | ■ Immigration (to a limited degree) |
| ■ Benefit entitlements | ■ ACC                               |

## **How Does WCLS Deliver Its Services?**

In attempting to resolve a client's legal issue, WCLS seeks to provide the client with sufficient legal information, strategies and tools to solve their legal issue for themselves. If the legal issue is ongoing, the client will be provided at each stage with further such support. Where the legal issue calls for direct assistance, WCLS will attend to telephone calls and correspondence on the client's behalf. The emphasis on empowerment remains throughout - the client will be encouraged to undertake whatever tasks they are capable of doing themselves.

Except in exceptional circumstances, WCLS is not able to represent clients in Courts or Tribunals. If a client requires representation in a Court or a Tribunal, WCLS will usually refer the client to a private solicitor and cease to act for the client on that matter.

## **Why Volunteer?**

The five main reasons you should volunteer at WCLS legal advice clinics are:

1. You will get hands on experience dealing with real clients.
2. You will practice the core skills you will need in your future legal work.
3. You will give to your community and to improve the lives of those in need.
4. You may also credit your volunteer hours at WCLS towards a community placement opinion credit.
5. You will also be provided with certificate verifying the type of work you did, what learning outcomes you obtained, and how well you performed (further references are available only at the discretion of the WCLS).

## **Am I Eligible?**

Students who have completed Stage 2 Laws and wish to volunteer will be eligible to express an interest and attend an induction seminar.

WCLS may decline, suspend or revoke a place on the programme in the event that the student does not have the minimum competencies. Minimum competencies include:

- The ability to act in a professional and appropriate manner
- An ability to communicate clearly in written and spoken English
- The ability to synthesise information into their work practices.

WCLS may also decline, suspend or revoke a place on the programme:

- In the event that a student fails, after a reasonable opportunity, to meet the student practice guidelines and WCLS policies.
- In the event that the student commits a serious breach of the student practice guidelines and/or WCLS policies.

## **WCLS Clinics**

WCLS currently delivers 5 legal advice clinics per week (4 in Henderson, 1 in Northcote). The clinics are staffed by WCLS lawyers on a roster. The lawyers interview and advise clients on a first-come-first-served basis. Clients do not need an appointment - they simply turn up.

Students work with the lawyers during clinic. Most clients are seen by 1 lawyer and 1 new student. Some clients may be seen by a new student acting under the supervision of a WCLS lawyer, or by approved students alone.

Students are allocated to clinics through a roster system. Usually, students have one or two rostered days per fortnight. Students will be required to attend from 9:30-12:30 Monday to Thursday for the Henderson clinic, and from 10:00-1:00 on Mondays for the Northcote clinic.

WCLS does see some clients outside of clinic times and by appointment. Volunteer students are rarely involved in those meetings.

## **How Do Clients Access Clinics?**

Clients arrive during clinic times. First time clients fill out a job sheet that outlines the nature of the problem and provides WCLS with personal and statistical information.

Once the client has completed their job sheet, they are seen by the next available lawyer (together with a student) in the order in which they arrived.

## **What Do Students Do In Clinics?**

New students are responsible for the following activities:

- Attending interviews with a lawyer or conducting interviews under a lawyer's supervision.
- Taking notes during interviews.
- Assisting lawyers with research and problem solving prior to advice being given.
- Taking comprehensive notes of advice as it is given.
- Writing file notes that summarise a case's material facts, the advice given, as well as any outcomes.
- Printing file notes & attaching them to a client's file.
- Doing follow-up work as directed (such as making phone calls or drafting letters/other documents).
- Attending clinic meetings and summarising the daily files.
- Delivering files to the supervising lawyer at the conclusion of said meetings.

## **Conducting Interviews**

New students are able to interview clients under the observation and guidance of WCLS lawyers after they have attended 4 clinics.

Students will be provided with interview guidelines. Students must follow those guidelines when interviewing clients. The student's role when interviewing is to obtain the material facts.

The student **MUST NOT** provide advice to clients. If a client asks a question that requires applying law to the clients facts (i.e. giving advice) the student must decline to answer that question. Giving advice is the lawyer's job.

## **Further Training**

New students will be required to attend a training session after approximately one semester of participation in the volunteer programme. That training session is in addition to the initial induction they received. It is an opportunity to receive feedback on their work. It may also form the basis of preparing them for work as an approved student.

## **Approved Students**

Approved students will be provided with further opportunities to develop their legal skills. Approved students may potentially:

- Conduct conflict checks.
- Conduct client interviews independently of WCLS lawyers.
- Take responsibility for on-going case work on particular client files.
- Support clients at meetings with third parties.
- Engage in some of the other WCLS activities (such as tenancy advocacy services; legal education; providing 0800-lawinfo).
- Occasionally conduct research.

Approved students undertake additional activities under the direction and supervision of WCLS lawyers.

## **How Do I Get Approved?**

A student may be approved if they demonstrate they have met professional standards of client service. To demonstrate you have met professional standards of client service you must show that you have mastered the tasks expected of a new student, particularly those around interviewing. You will also need to demonstrate you can follow additional guidelines and that you have an appropriate sensitivity to client needs to make you a safe practitioner.

The Manager and Senior Lawyer will be responsible for assessing and approving a student. There is no set timeframe for gaining approval. However, it is likely that you will need to

have volunteered for at least 40 hours before you will have sufficient experience.

### **Opinion Credit Substitute**

It is acknowledged that some students will use their volunteering at WCLS to obtain an opinion credit with the University of Auckland undergraduate law programme. The Faculty of Law may grant an opinion credit to students who undertake a 40 hour community placement. The volunteer programme is a qualifying community placement.

WCLS will retain a log-book recording student volunteer hours. Students will be responsible for making note of their attendance and ensuring that this is signed off by a WCLS staff member.

### **How Will You Get The Most From Your Experience?**

The opportunity to work directly with clients under the supervision of an experienced lawyer is a rare privilege for students and future lawyers. It is an opportunity for you to learn some of the hardest and most fundamental skills of being a lawyer. It is an opportunity to learn those skills in a safe and supportive way. It is very unlikely you will get this opportunity again before your first legal job.

You are urged to take grab this opportunity in both hands. There are no shortcuts for learning these skills - the only way is to practice them.

WCLS lawyers are extremely busy doing important client work. You will gain the most from this opportunity if you are proactive and seek out opportunities. Do not be afraid to ask WCLS staff if there are any tasks you can help them with. Ask for opportunities to practice skills you want to learn – such as interviewing clients or drafting documents. Take responsibility for your own learning, but do not try to run before you can walk. If you commit to this programme, are patient, and follow the processes we provide your opportunities to learn will expand.

## APPENDIX 1

### WCLS - EJP Calendar 2010

<b>SEMESTER 1 ROSTER</b>	
<b>Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March</b>	Semester 1 begins
<b>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March</b>	EJP Information Day
<b>Mon 22<sup>nd</sup> March</b>	WCLS induction training for all prospective volunteers / Additional training for experienced students
<b>Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March</b>	WCLS sends roster for Semester 1 to all volunteers
<b>Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Start of Semester 1 roster
<b>Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> April – 17<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Mid Semester Break – roster continues as usual apart from 5 <sup>th</sup> April
<b>Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April – Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May</b>	Graduation – roster continues as usual
<b>5<sup>th</sup> June – 28<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Study Break/exams – please advise of availability
<b>Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Queens Birthday – WCLS CLOSED
<b>Wk beg 21<sup>st</sup> June</b>	EJP promotion of volunteering opportunities in Semester 2
<b>28<sup>th</sup> June to 19<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Inter-semester break – Semester 1 Roster continues
<b>Wk beg 5<sup>th</sup> July</b>	WCLS induction for new students for Semester 2 roster / Feedback and advanced training for experienced students
<b>Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Roster for Semester 2 circulated to all volunteers
<b>SEMESTER 2 ROSTER</b>	
<b>Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Start of Semester 2 and new roster
<b>Mon 30<sup>th</sup> Aug – Sat 11<sup>th</sup> Sep</b>	Mid Semester Break – roster continues
<b>Mid October</b>	EJP promotion of volunteering opportunities during the summer holidays
<b>23<sup>rd</sup> October – Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November</b>	Study break/ exams – roster continues as much as possible.
<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October</b>	Labour Day – WCLS CLOSED
<b>Wk beginning 15<sup>th</sup> November</b>	WCLS induction for new students volunteering over the summer holidays
<b>SUMMER HOLIDAYS ROSTER</b>	
<b>Friday 19<sup>th</sup> November</b>	WCLS circulate new summer holiday roster to all volunteers
<b>Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> November</b>	Beginning of new summer holiday roster
<b>Dec 24<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> January inc</b>	CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAY - WCLS CLOSED
<b>Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2011</b>	WCLS reopens – roster continues
<b>Early March 2011</b>	End of summer holiday roster / induction and advanced training

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Basic housekeeping**

- The Law Service will retain a log book for recording your hours and the type of work undertaken. Student volunteers will be responsible for ensuring a lawyer signs this off after each session.
- The Law Service expects volunteers to arrive before clinic starts at 9.30am.
- If volunteers are running late, please contact the office, so that we know you are coming.
- Please inform the Projects Officer at the Law Service as soon as possible if you are not able to make your rostered clinic so that we are able to find a replacement from our reserve list.
- Our dress code is smart casual, as appropriate for a professional organisation.
- The Law Service will provide name tags which we expect volunteers to wear.
- Volunteers should act in a respectful and sensitive manner towards clients, who come from a very diverse range of backgrounds.

# APPENDIX 3

## Central Henderson showing Trading Place, Railway Station and Bus Stops.

