

Now Open: NTLAC Minor Assistance Civil Service “MACS”

Civil legal problems are often complex and for vulnerable people can seem overwhelming. NTLAC has been fortunate to receive additional funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to commence a Minor Assistance Civil Service (“MACS”) for a limited time. The Service will continue until 30 June 2015 and will provide minor assistance to vulnerable people to identify their civil legal issues, enable them to progress resolution of these issues and help them access other services and organisations that can help.

What does MACS do?

NTLAC is now offering a MACS which is funded to provide minor assistance to eligible persons in the Northern Territory with particular civil law problems. This enables us to extend assistance past civil advice clinics to help people solve legal problems needing more than one-off advice.

What is minor assistance?

Minor assistance is legal help from a MACS lawyer to a person to help them take steps to solve their own legal problem. Minor assistance is not a grant of legal aid; is limited to three hours per case and, does not extend to legal representation.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible a person must have two or more vulnerabilities such as low income, mental illness, youth or

elderly, domestic violence issues, disability, Indigenous, non-English speaking background/culturally and linguistically diverse, literacy issues, remote location etc. In addition, a person in immigration detention in the Northern Territory is eligible.

What legal problems are covered?

Minor assistance will be provided in the following priority civil law areas:

- Consumer issues, including consumer credit and debt, consumer complaints, insurance.
- Employment matters, including unfair dismissal or unlawful termination, employee entitlements, contracts for employment, dispute resolution.
- Discrimination, including disability, age, pregnancy, sex or race.
- Other civil matters, only if it is reasonable or appropriate in the circumstances and there is no other service provider that can help.

(Examples of civil law matters MACS will not assist with include wills and estates, welfare rights or immigration advice, visa applications or immigration reviews/appeals).

How will someone access the service?

1. Contact NTLAC Helpline freecall number 1800 019 343 to make a Civil Law legal advice appointment with a NTLAC office in Alice

Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Palmerston or Tennant Creek. The NTLAC Helpline freecall number remains the first point of contact for all new inquiries, including those from people in immigration detention. If required, an Interpreter can be arranged upon request.

2. If the NTLAC civil lawyer thinks you are eligible for assistance from the MACS service they will refer your matter to MACS.
3. MACS will then decide if you are eligible for minor assistance from MACS and will contact the person directly to provide assistance.

What else does MACS do?

The MACS team also provide the Family Duty Lawyer Service at the Family Court and Federal Circuit Court in Darwin. This service is to provide assistance to litigants without legal representation in relation to family matters before the Court on the duty day. This service was previously out-sourced to private practitioners, but is now provided by MACS, which operates independently from the NTLAC Family Law Section.

Where is MACS?

MACS is run by a small experienced team of three lawyers and one paralegal, and is operating out of the NTLAC Palmerston Office.

For more information about MACS please contact Alison Hanley or Monica Settele on (08) 8999 3000. ●