



Hon Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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FREE NSW LEGAL HELP SERVICE CELEBRATES 10TH BIRTHDAY

NSW Attorney General Greg Smith SC today visited LawAccess NSW to congratulate the service on 10 years of helping people address their legal problems.

“LawAccess is a free telephone and online service that provides fast and practical legal information, referrals and in some cases legal advice to people in NSW, including many who are unfamiliar with the legal system and from disadvantaged backgrounds,” Mr Smith said.

Since it began in 2001, the service has answered more than 1.3 million calls and provided in excess of 138,000 advice sessions. Almost 15 per cent of its advice sessions were given in 2010/11.

“Over the past 10 years, the most common calls fielded by LawAccess have related to family law and parenting arrangements, debt issues, wills and employment law,” Mr Smith said.

Priority customers include those who live in regional, rural and remote areas of NSW, who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, who have a disability, who are homeless or who are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Mr Smith said calls had increased more than 14-fold since the service, now based in Parramatta, began.

“LawAccess received 1,761 interpreter calls in 46 languages in 2010/11, compared to just 125 calls in 18 languages in its first full year of operation,” Mr Smith said.

LawAccess works closely with face-to-face services including Legal Aid, Community Legal Centres and local courts. The service, which receives funding from the NSW Government, was established in partnership with the Department of Attorney General and Justice, Legal Aid, the Law Society of NSW and the NSW Bar Association.

To contact LawAccess, phone 1300 888 529 or call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450. For online help, visit www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au. The website features the new LawAssist service, which helps people representing themselves in court.

LawAssist currently covers the small claims debt process, motor vehicle accidents, apprehended domestic and personal violence orders and fines. LawAssist recorded more than 121,000 visits during its first year of operation in 2010-2011.