



Brad Hazzard MP

Attorney General Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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LENDING A LEGAL HAND AGAINST LOUSY CONTRACTS

A free legal service helping Aboriginal people in remote communities resolve problems with loan sharks, fines or unfair contracts for renting household goods has been so successful it will be expanded, Attorney General Brad Hazzard has announced.

“*Money Counts* is an innovative project that sends lawyers from Legal Aid NSW to Aboriginal communities that are not well served by existing legal services,” Mr Hazzard said.

“The project has been running for only a year and has already helped resolve more than 630 consumer and other civil law issues for 350 people in four small communities, mainly in the state’s Far and Central West.

“Research has shown that money problems are prevalent in the Aboriginal population as they are largely excluded from the mainstream financial system. They therefore can fall victim to unfair pay-day lenders, household good rental contracts or bad deals when switching utility companies.

“Often people sign up to funeral insurance without realising they will pay well in excess of the cost of the actual funeral over the life of the contract.

“These issues are so prevalent that in some communities as many as thirty per cent of the population have sought - and received – legal help with these money worries.”

Money Counts has been run in Dareton, Lake Cargelligo, Condobolin and Murrin Bridge and around Taree.

Bill Grant, Chief Executive of Legal Aid NSW said discussions were underway with partner organisations to expand *Money Counts* to other communities in regional NSW.

“Our lawyers work closely with local organisations, other services, and key elders to teach them to spot legal problems early and refer people for assistance.

“We are very pleased we are able to expand *Money Counts* to other parts of the state, and cover an even broader field of legal issues encountered in everyday life.”

Legal Aid offers free civil law services across the state. For your local service visit www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au