

# HIV-RELATED LEGAL SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA: ANALYSIS OF LEGAL SERVICES DELIVERY BY THE HIV/AIDS LEGAL CENTRE

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## Background:

Socio-legal and public health scholarship demonstrates that unmet legal needs have a significant impact on health, particularly in relation to communicable diseases like HIV. The HIV/AIDS Legal Centre ('HALC') is a not-for-profit, specialist community legal centre established in recognition that the provision of legal services plays an important role in the enabling environment for people with HIV; a factor consistently affirmed by national and sub-national Australian HIV strategies. HALC has provided legal and advocacy services across all major areas of law to those with HIV or Hepatitis-related legal matters for nearly 30 years. This has resulted in a unique archive of administrative and legal services data on: the changing legal problems and needs; levels of access to justice; and outcomes for those experiencing HIV-related legal problems.

## Methods:

A multimethod design using a self-reported cross-sectional survey ( $n=103$ ) and administrative data ( $n=18,842$  episodes of service) collected from a specialist HIV-related community legal centre in Sydney, Australia.

## Results:

Administrative data indicate HALC completes an average of 1,042 discrete legal matters for clients per annum. These matters cover all major areas of law, with an increasing case load in migration law. The demographic profile of clients has shifted over time, and is increasingly identifying as heterosexual, female, culturally and linguistically diverse and younger. The vast majority of clients frequently experience serious financial disadvantage while self-report cross-sectional survey data indicate that legal services delivery brings about positive change to client's finances, housing, safety and stress levels.

## Conclusion:

There exists a significant burden of highly complex legal needs coupled with low access to justice for those living with HIV in Australia. Accessible, approachable and affordable legal services are one way of reducing the treatment and outcome disparities driven by the 'synergistic interaction' of HIV with unmet legal needs.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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