



**LEGAL INFORMATION
ACCESS CENTRE
(LIAC)**

State Library of New South Wales

Access to quality legal
information for the community

www.legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au

Writers: Elizabeth McKibbin, LIAC in collaboration with Judith Henderson,
Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales.

Layout: Publications and Design, State Library of New South Wales

Revised LIAC July 2008

Background

The Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC) was established in 1990 by an Agreement between the Law & Justice Foundation of NSW and the State Library of New South Wales to provide access to information about the law for the NSW community.

LIAC is based in the State Library of NSW where specialist librarians assist clients to access the extensive legal resources of the State Library. LIAC also provides access to legal information throughout the NSW community by coordinating the *Find Legal Answers* service available in all public libraries in New South Wales and online.

LIAC publishes *Hot Topics*, a series of plain language booklets on recent developments in the law. Four issues are published each year. *Hot Topics* are distributed free to all NSW public libraries, Legal Aid offices and community legal centres.

Between 1990 and 2000 LIAC was funded by the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW with an equal contribution from the State Library. Since 2000, LIAC has been jointly funded by the State Library and the Public Purpose Fund. Public libraries in NSW work collaboratively with LIAC and make a significant financial contribution to state-wide service delivery.

LIAC has an Advisory Board with members from a range of stakeholder organisations including:

Law and Justice Foundation of NSW

Law Society of NSW

NSW Legal Aid Commission

LawAccess NSW

Board of Studies NSW

Combined Community Legal Centres Group NSW

NSW Attorney General's Department.

The Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC)

Mission

To provide equitable access to quality legal information for the community across NSW.

LIAC believes that:

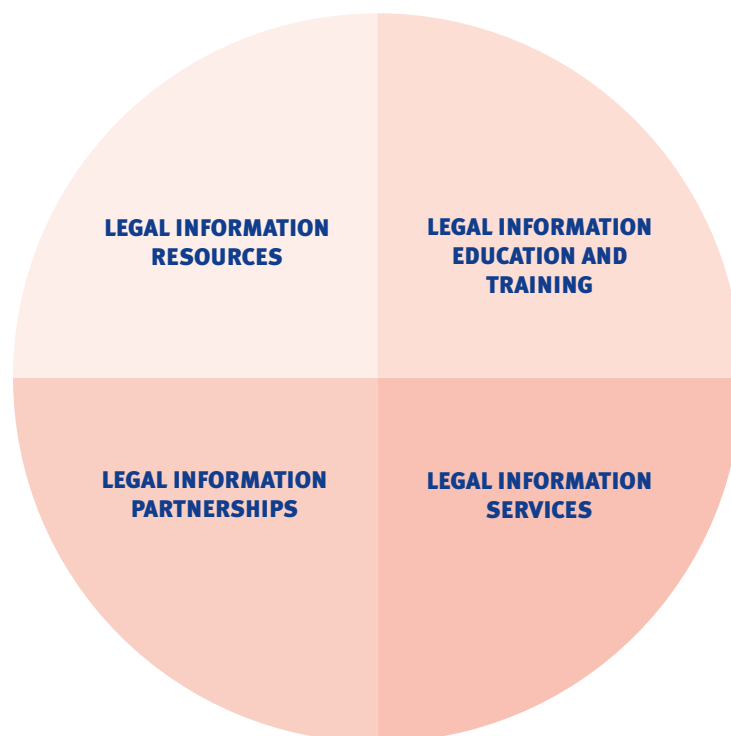
- everyone has a right to know the law
- it is in everyone's interests to know the law
- informed consumers make more effective use of legal services
- access to information about the law
 - supports the development of a legally literate society
 - builds social capital by increasing understanding of the legal system
 - empowers individuals and communities to make informed decisions
 - enables active participation of citizens in a democratic society.

LIAC believes that effective access occurs when legal information:

- is reliable, current and useful
- is readily available and affordable
- is understandable to the client
- specialists are available to guide people through the complexities of legal information.

LIAC creates effective access through four interdependent operational areas:

- legal information resources
- legal information partnerships
- legal information services
- legal information education and training programs.





Legal Information Resources

Access to reliable, current and useful information.

LIAC manages legal information by:

- Selecting and recommending legal information resources for the LIAC collection, other State Library of NSW legal collections and public library legal collections:
 - a wide range of resources from simple to complex in varied formats and languages.
- Making legal information manageable for public libraries by providing regularly updated standard legal collections and collection information:
 - *Find Legal Answers* Tool Kit (core plain language collection in 300 locations)
 - *Law Books for Libraries* (public library LIAC collection in over 80 locations)
 - free legal pamphlets
 - authoritative websites
 - all resources indexed on the *Find Legal Answers* website.
- Indexing free sources of plain language legal information:
 - print and online
 - community languages
 - wide range of topics.

LIAC publishes legal information resources

Hot Topics (print and online)

- Recent changes and current issues in the law to educate and inform the public
- Four issues per year
- Available on the LIAC website and AustLII (www.austlii.edu.au) (excludes the four most recent issues)
- Free to public libraries, community legal centres and Legal Aid offices
- Marketed to the education sector

Free Advice Guide (online)

- Annotated directory of sources of free legal advice and assistance

HSC student guides (online)

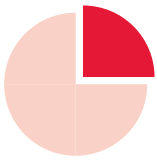
- *Legal Studies Research Guide* - guides for researching Legal Studies
- *LIAC Crime Library* - an annotated guide for students of criminal law cases in the news

Guides to legal research (print and online)

- Assistance for teachers, students and the general public

LIAC Alert

- Email newsletter about LIAC resources and services for other legal service providers



Legal Information Education and Training

Access to legal information specialist support.

LIAC develops legal information expertise through education and training programs for staff within LIAC and the State Library, in public libraries and for other intermediary groups.

LIAC librarians have:

- extensive knowledge of legal resources
- high level capacity to identify client needs and link to relevant resources through information pathways
- legal information education and training skills.

LIAC provides education and training support programs for:

Public librarians:

- based on LIAC's 5-step pathway methodology
- includes strategies for providing information but not advice
- 'train the trainer' programs
- all training notes available via the web.

Intermediaries and key referral agencies (eg. LawAccess, local government):

- based on LIAC's 5-step pathway methodology
- *Find Legal Answers* service
- research skills associated with finding legislation and case law.



Legal Information Partnerships

Legal information is readily available, affordable and useful.

LIAC creates ready access to legal information for the community through the existing infrastructure of NSW public libraries, drawing on the resources of the State Library of NSW.

LIAC works in partnership with NSW public libraries so that legal information is :

Readily available through the State Library and public libraries:

- in local communities
- open long hours
- non-threatening environments
- connected to the internet.

LIAC supports local promotion to ensure the community is aware of resources and services by providing public libraries with:

Promotional materials and tools:

- clearly defined branding
- range of materials (brochures, magnets, posters, signage)
- standard presentations for targeted client groups (eg. students)

Promotional opportunities:

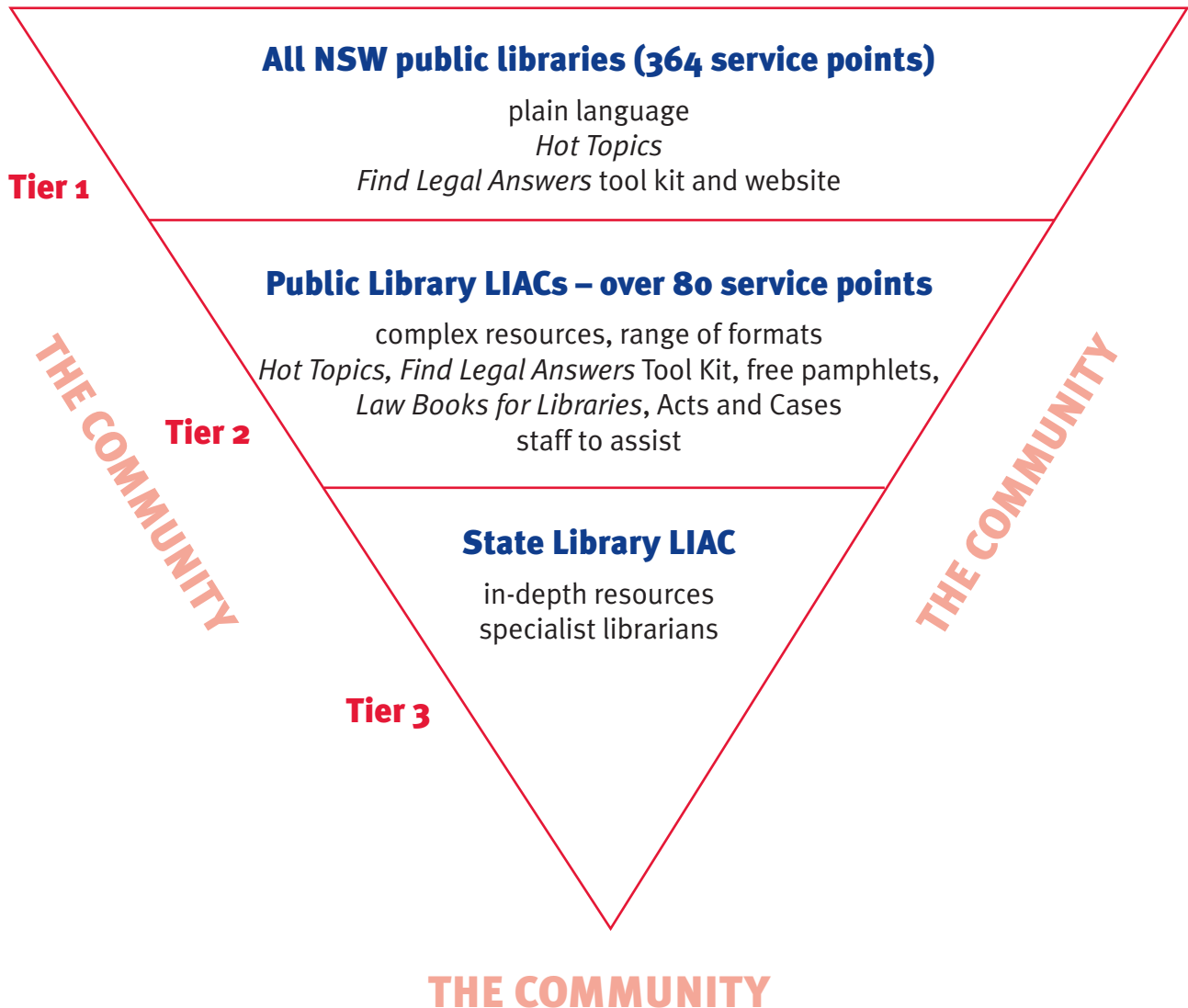
- collaborations with other intermediaries and legal agencies (eg. Law Week)
- annual LIAC Centre of Excellence Award for excellence in promoting community awareness of the LIAC service.

LIAC works in partnerships with other legal service providers and government agencies to improve the community's access to legal information:

- Law and Justice Foundation of NSW
- LawAccess NSW
- Legal Aid NSW
- NSW Department of Corrective Services
- community legal centres.

THE LIAC STATEWIDE SERVICE a three-tiered structure

THE COMMUNITY





Legal Information Services

Understandable legal information.

LIAC provides legal information services for the community through the NSW public library network, the State Library and via the web.

Tier 1 - All NSW public libraries

Assist clients to access plain language resources:

- *Find Legal Answers* Tool Kit
- *Hot Topics*, legal issues in plain language
- free and confidential service.

Tier 2 - Public library LIACs

Assist clients to access a wider range of legal resources:

- plain language resources (print and web)
- more complex resources in a range of formats
- liaison with State Library LIAC to meet client needs
- referral information
- free and confidential service.

Tier 3 - State Library LIAC services

Specialist librarians assist clients to:

- access the State Library's extensive law collection (print and online)
- search for authoritative information on the web
- use databases to check the latest developments in the law
- research legislation - current and historical
- locate cases - Australian and British
- select material for HSC Legal Studies assignments
- find plain language legal information
- free and confidential service.

Web services

LIAC provides online services to assist at www.legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au:

- community - *Find Legal Answers*
- researchers - how-to guides
- HSC students - *Legal Studies Research Guide*
- public libraries - training notes and service management.

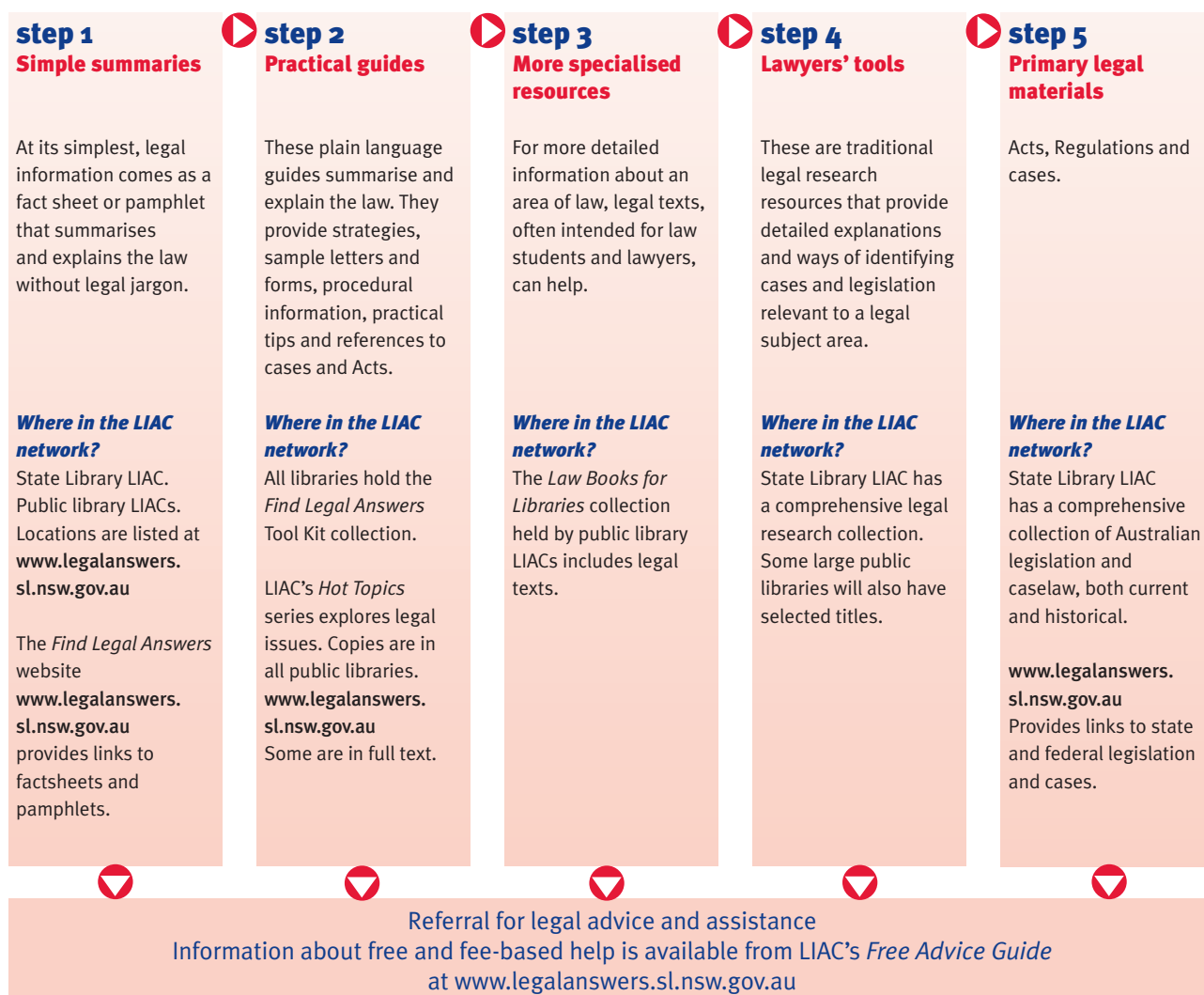


Legal Information Services

Understandable legal information.

LIAC's 5-step legal information pathway

- A framework for developing client understanding
- Simple to complex



CASE STUDY – FAMILY LAW

My daughter is divorced and has two young children. She's been offered a really good job in Western Australia. It would be a great opportunity for her, but the trouble is the children's father says he will try and stop her from going. I want to find out about this for her. What are his rights? What are her rights? She's pretty upset. I think it will help her if she understands more about the law. I don't know where to start.

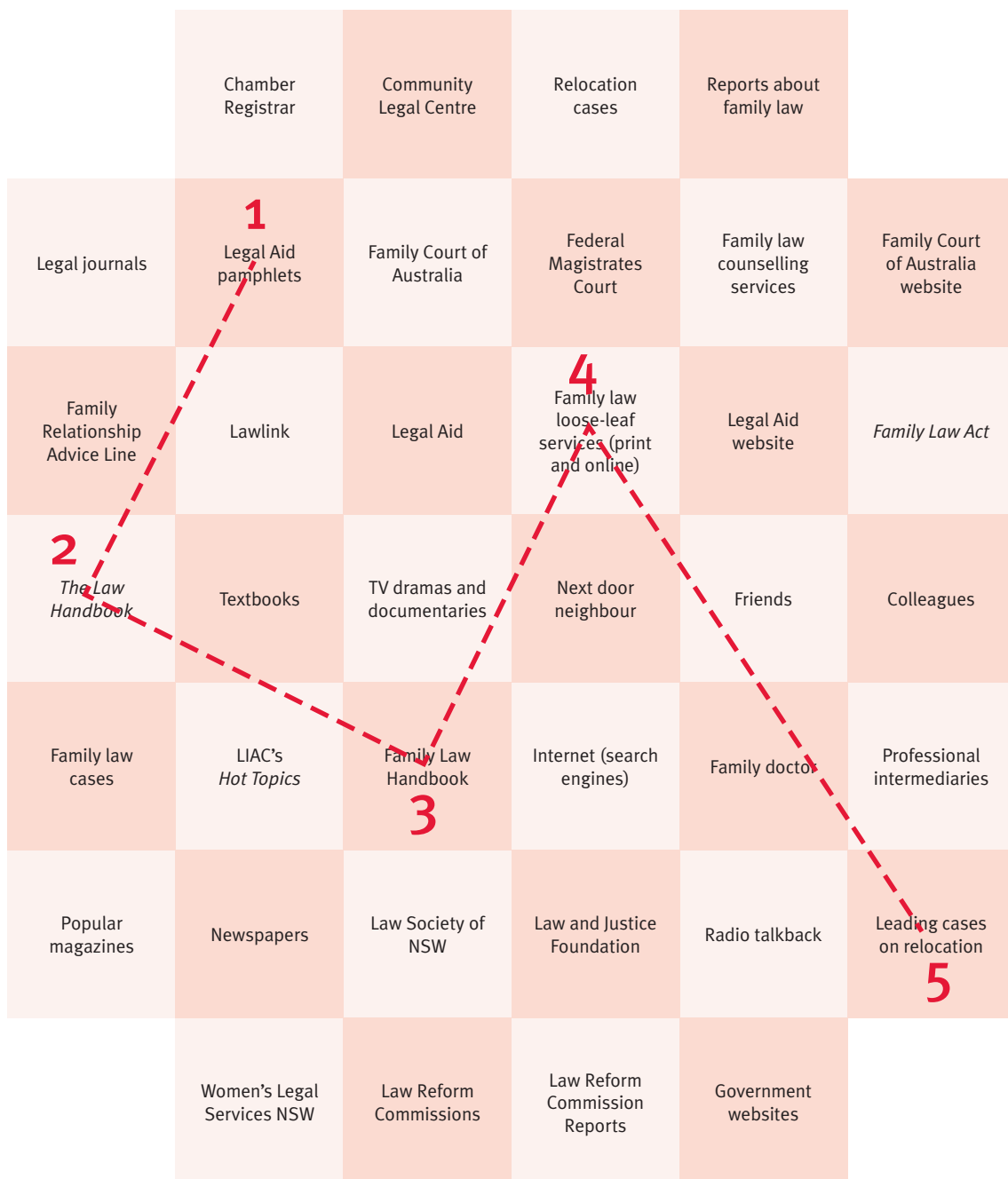
Family law information maze

	Chamber Registrar	Community Legal Centre	Relocation cases	Reports about family law	
Legal journals	Legal Aid pamphlets	Family Court of Australia	Federal Magistrates Court	Family law counselling services	Family Court of Australia website
Family Relationship Advice Line	Lawlink	Legal Aid	Family law loose-leaf services (print and online)	Legal Aid website	<i>Family Law Act</i>
<i>The Law Handbook</i>	Textbooks	TV dramas and documentaries	Next door neighbour	Friends	Colleagues
Family law cases	LIAC's <i>Hot Topics</i>	Family Law Handbook	Internet (search engines)	Family doctor	Professional intermediaries
Popular magazines	Newspapers	Law Society of NSW	Law and Justice Foundation	Radio talkback	Leading cases on relocation
	Women's Legal Services NSW	Law Reform Commissions	Law Reform Commission Reports	Government websites	

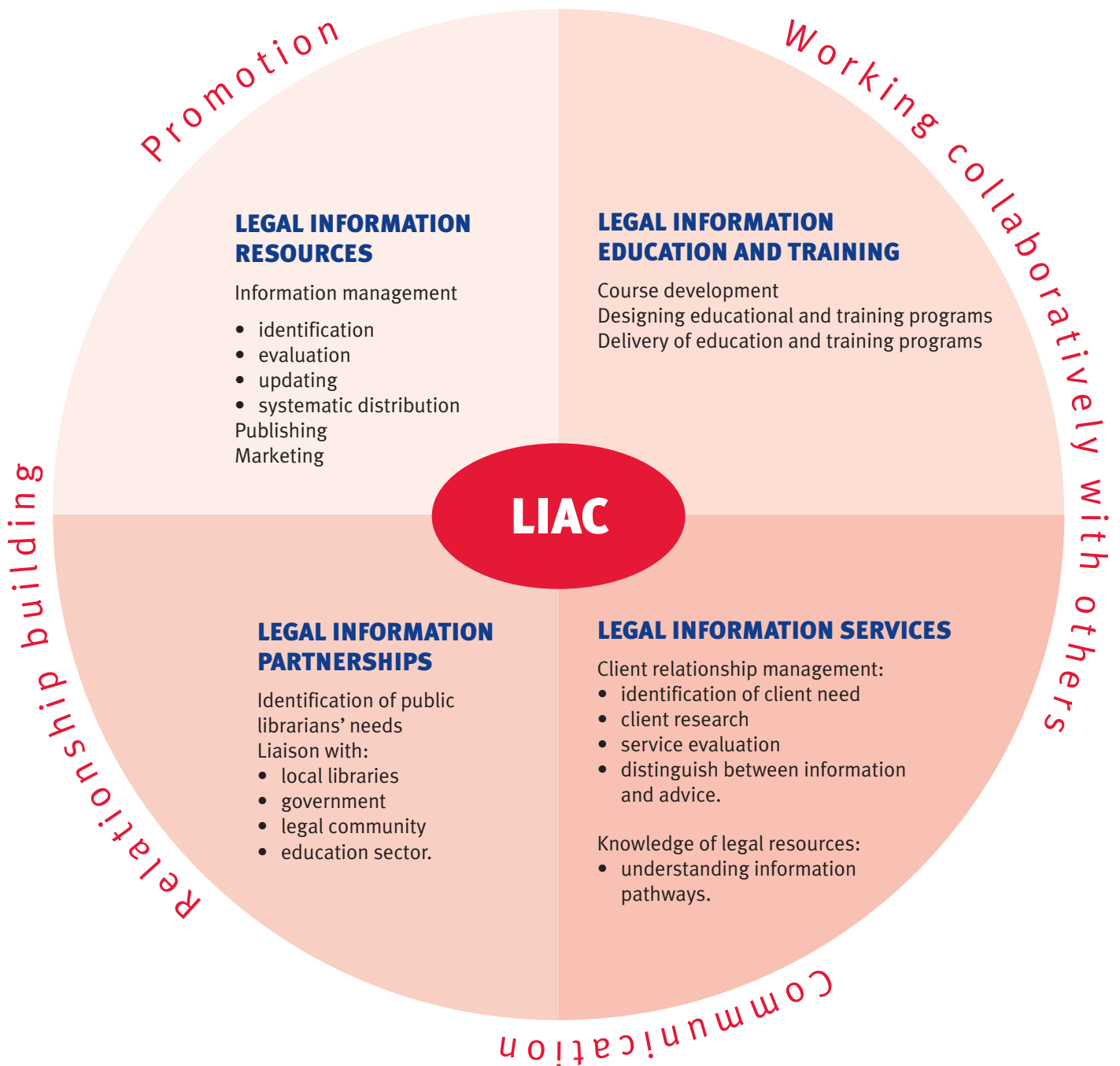
LIAC's Family Law Case Study Information Pathway

LIAC's legal information specialists:

- interview the client to determine the legal issue, the purpose of the inquiry and the level of existing knowledge and understanding
- select an appropriate starting point on LIAC's 5-step legal information pathway
- guide clients through legal information resources, including the Internet.

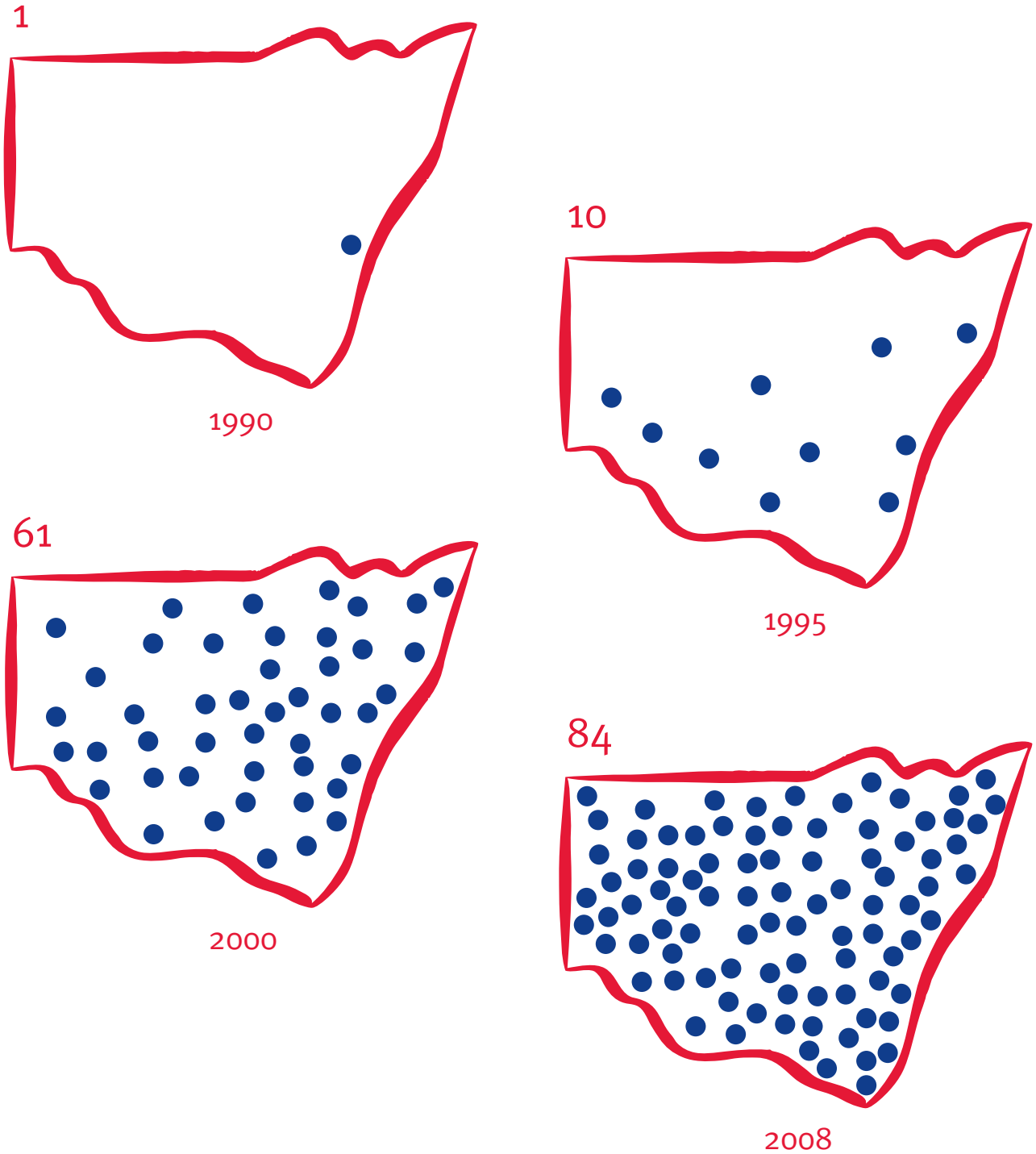


LIAC's Capabilities



LIAC: Sustained growth & demand

Growth of the LIAC network



Frequently Asked Questions about LIAC

Q Can anyone visit LIAC?

A Anyone can come into the LIAC Centre in the State Library in Sydney and undertake research. There are specialist librarians available to help.

Q Does LIAC offer any research services?

A Yes. LIAC will conduct preliminary legal information research for NSW clients outside the metropolitan area. Those with complex enquiries are encouraged to visit LIAC in person.

Q How do LIAC staff distinguish between information and advice?

A

- All information provided is from a resource. Clients are informed of the resource and its currency. (On the telephone brief information is read to clients.)
- No information is provided from personal knowledge.
- No opinion, interpretation or advice is offered by LIAC. Resources which provide interpretations and explanations of the law are located for clients.
- The service includes providing clients with information about sources of legal advice and assistance (free and fee based).
- Clients are informed that the LIAC service provides information but cannot provide advice. Signage and statements included in responses to information requests always include this information.

Q How many legal inquiries are answered by NSW public libraries?

A Estimated at 273,000 per annum
(7% of 3.7 million information requests for 2006-2007)

Q How many questions are answered each year in the State Library LIAC?

A 11,000 per annum (LIAC inquiry statistics 2007/08)

Case Studies

Role of an executor

A client rang LIAC because a family member had asked him if he would be the executor of an estate and he wanted to know what this would involve. The LIAC librarian who took the call located a clear overview of the role and responsibilities of an executor from a plain language resource, *Rest assured: a legal guide to wills, estates and funerals*, and read extracts to the client. This book is in the *Find Legal Answers* Tool Kit in his local public library. The librarian gave him details of the page numbers so he could read more fully himself.

Family law

A woman telephoned LIAC, sounding distressed. “My husband wants a divorce. What will happen? I have two young children - people keep telling me different things.” The LIAC librarian offered to send her a pamphlet on family law and also read extracts from a book in the *Find Legal Answers* Tool Kit. The woman was advised that if she required further information she could visit her local library and read *The Family Law Handbook*. The woman expressed relief that the information was clear and easy to understand and asked for the phone number of her nearest public library so she could check to see if they had copies for loan. The woman was also referred to Women’s Legal Services NSW, a community legal centre providing legal advice and assistance to women.

Development consent

A client came into LIAC at the State Library, and wanted information about planning laws. He and his partner had a café on the ground floor of a building which they wanted to expand into the first floor. The council had refused his development application because they said that it did not comply with their development control plan. He had read some useful introductory information about planning and development in the *Environmental Law Handbook* and *The Law Handbook* in his local public library, but he needed more. The LIAC librarian guided the client through a range of materials including looseleaf commentaries and case digests. Through his research the client was able to identify and read an important decision of the Land and Environment Court which discussed a similar issue. As a result he gained a greater understanding of the planning process and his rights in relation to the council’s decision.

Personal injury

A beachside resident emailed LIAC after having difficulty accessing legislation covering personal injury on a council beach. The LIAC librarian guided him to the *Civil Liability Act* on the NSW legislation website, and also directed him to the *Hot Topic* on Personal injury, also available on the internet. The client was advised that the *Hot Topic* contained some case references, and was also advised to visit the State Library LIAC to find further cases.

Contact Details

Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC)

State Library of New South Wales
Macquarie Street Sydney 2000
Tel: 61 2 9273 1558
Fax: 61 2 9273 1250
Email: liac@sl.nsw.gov.au
Internet: www.legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au

Opening hours

Monday – Friday: 10 am – 5 pm
Closed Saturday
Sunday: 10 am – 5 pm

LIAC Manager

Sue Walden
Tel: 61 2 9273 1571
Fax: 61 2 9273 1250
Email: swalden@sl.nsw.gov.au