

Lower Mid North Coast

Family Law Pathways Network

Terms of Reference



Contents

1. Aims & Objectives of the Network	p3
2. The Auspice Organization	p6
3. The Structure of the Network	p7
4. Operational Procedures	p10
5. Meeting Procedure	p12
6. Appendices	p14

1. Aims & Objectives of the Network

Purpose

The Lower Mid North Coast Family Law Pathways Network (LMNC FLPN) aims to:

- support and resource stakeholders in the family law system to achieve the best outcomes for separating families
- enhance coordination of services offered to separating families through collaboration between organizations operating within the family law system
- cultivate a shared understanding of professional roles within the sector.

Scope

Membership to the LMNC FLPN is free for anyone who wishes to join and is relevant to all professionals working with separating families in the Family Law System. Membership to the network will be flexible and all stakeholders working in the family law system will be included directly or indirectly. The Network (as per the funding agreement) covers the following and surrounding areas: Taree, Port Macquarie and Kempsey.

Stakeholders involved may include but are not limited to:

- Family Court
- Federal Magistrates Court
- Family Lawyers
- Community Legal Centres
- Legal Aid
- Family Relationships Service Providers
- Family Mediators
- Counsellors
- Psychologists
- Family Violence Services
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Support Services
- Aboriginal Support Services
- Family Support Services
- Mental Health Services
- Drug and Alcohol Services
- Health Sector
- Centrelink
- Child Support Agency

- Family and Community Services
- Services for Grandparents

Objectives

The Network Objectives are:

- a) establish and maintain strong links with:
 - i. locally based providers;
 - ii. agencies working in areas associated with the family law system, in particular mental health, drug and alcohol services;
 - iii. agencies working in areas associated with family violence and child protection;
 - iv. Indigenous and CALD services; and
 - v. the Family Law Courts;
- b) develop and maintain appropriate referral mechanisms between locally based organizations operating as part of or alongside the family law system.
- c) develop and maintain shared understanding of the roles of network members and key organizations in the family law system.
- d) develop and maintain awareness of products, services and training available to members.
- e) develop and maintain cross-sector training to help build stronger working relationships across the family law system.

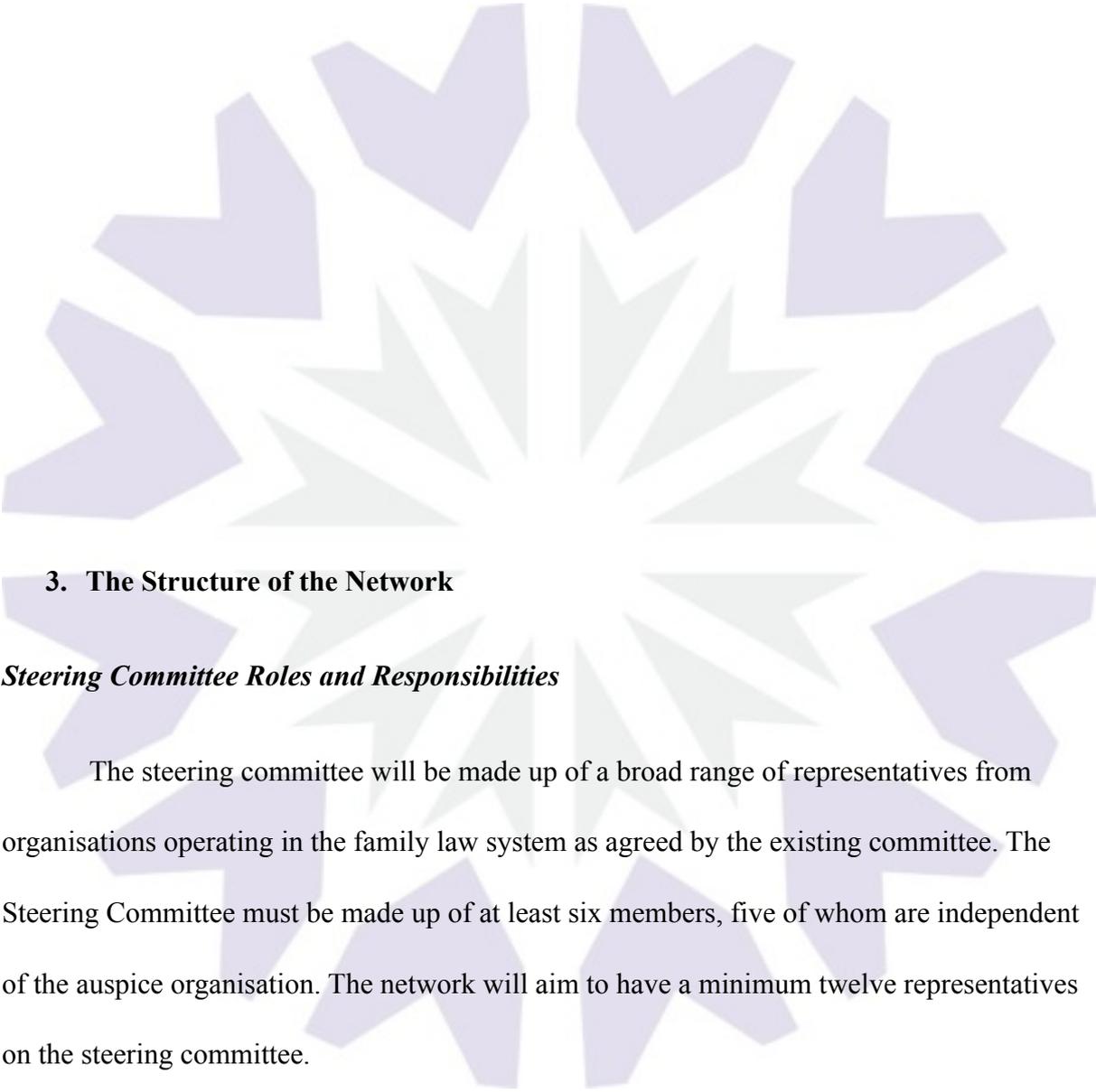
- f) develop and maintain ways to share information within the Network where appropriate.

Additional Network Objectives

- a) coordinate meetings, events, conferences or training courses on a state or regional basis.
- b) provide court-related information to networks that do not have access to such information.

2. The Auspice Organisation

The auspice organisation (Interrelate Family Centres) is responsible for the funding and budgeting of the FLPN. The auspice organisation manages and facilitates the network and the Area Manager in each region oversees the conduct of the project officer and operation of the network. The Director for Services oversees the operation of the Network on an executive level. The auspice organisation is responsible for fulfilling the Networks objectives in collaboration with the network Steering Committee. The Attorney General's objectives and expectations of the auspice organisation are as set out in the funding schedule.



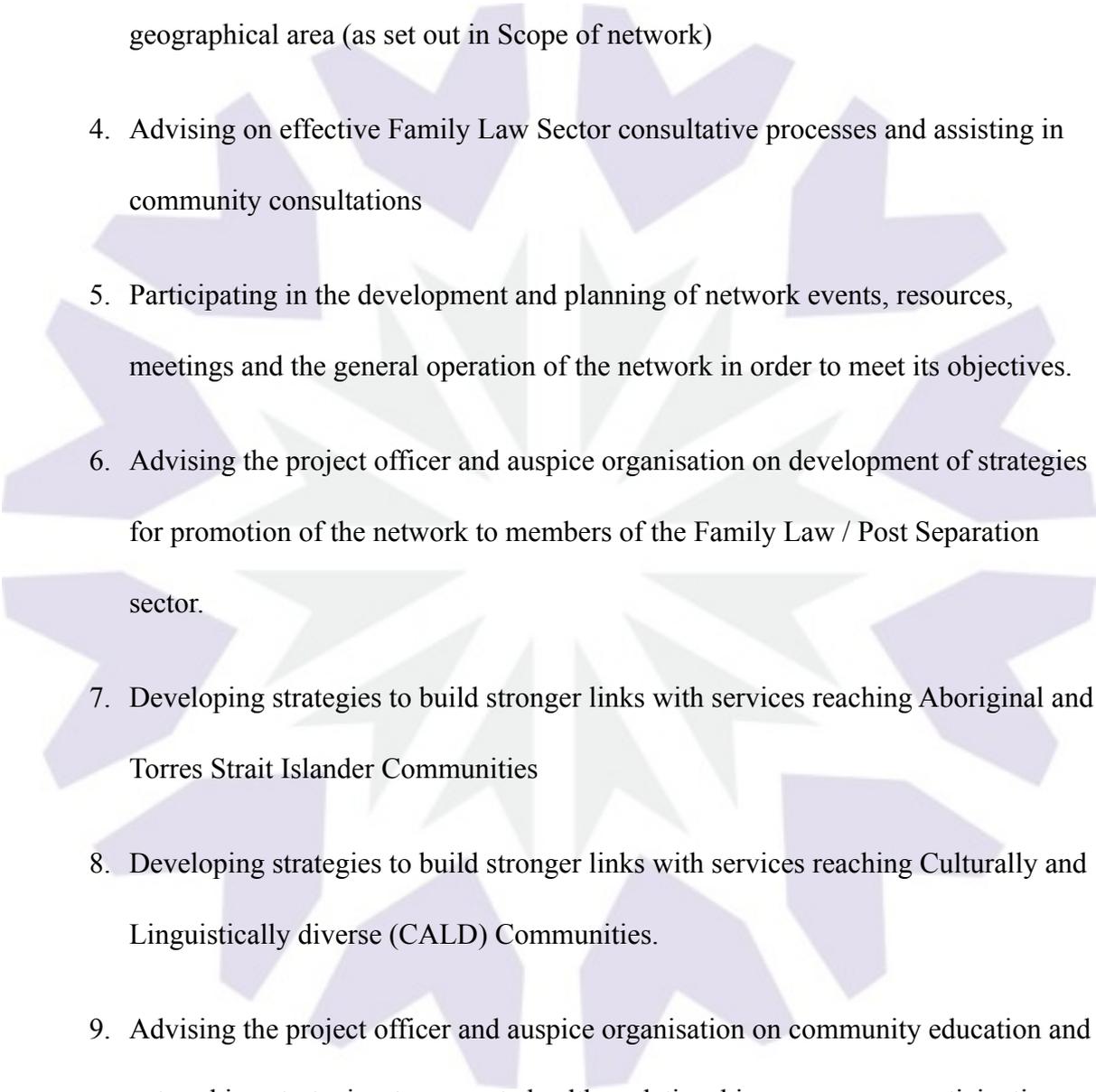
3. The Structure of the Network

Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The steering committee will be made up of a broad range of representatives from organisations operating in the family law system as agreed by the existing committee. The Steering Committee must be made up of at least six members, five of whom are independent of the auspice organisation. The network will aim to have a minimum twelve representatives on the steering committee.

Steering Committee members will assist the networks operation by:

1. Developing a strategic Work Plan in June or July of each year to progress the objectives of the network (subject to renewal of funding)

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2. Providing advice from time to time on matters referred from the project officer and auspice organisation
 3. Providing ongoing advice on the resource and training needs, opinions and aspirations of family law system service providers operating in the networks local geographical area (as set out in Scope of network)
 4. Advising on effective Family Law Sector consultative processes and assisting in community consultations
 5. Participating in the development and planning of network events, resources, meetings and the general operation of the network in order to meet its objectives.
 6. Advising the project officer and auspice organisation on development of strategies for promotion of the network to members of the Family Law / Post Separation sector.
 7. Developing strategies to build stronger links with services reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
 8. Developing strategies to build stronger links with services reaching Culturally and Linguistically diverse (CALD) Communities.
 9. Advising the project officer and auspice organisation on community education and networking strategies to promote healthy relationships, encourage participation and collaborative practice between family law system service providers in the networks local geographical area (as set out in Scope of network)

10. Promoting the FLPN and alerting the project officer and auspice organisation to any developing issues of relevance.

The Role of Proxies

When unable to attend, the individual member may appoint a proxy from their organisation to attend the Steering Committee meeting on their behalf. The proxy shall comply with the LMNC FLPN Terms of Reference.

Observer Status

Regular observer status shall be granted to senior representatives of organisations deemed relevant by the Steering Committee. For example State and Federal Government Agencies.

Irregular observer status shall be formally requested through the Chair prior to the regular Steering Committee meeting. Invitations to observers shall be included in all correspondence with the wider network members.

Resignations by committee members

Any member who resigns from the steering committee or who is being replaced by another person will notify the Chair in writing. The correspondence will advise:

- Date of resignation;
- The name and contact details of the person representing the organisation

Wider Network Membership and Participation

There is also wider network participation from stakeholders from the above mentioned services who are not on the steering committee but who are involved with the FLPN in other ways. Some examples of wider network participation include:

- Attending network meetings
- Circulation of meeting minutes
- Registered on E-mail List
- Receive Network E-Bulletins
- Receive Invitations to Conferences or Training events
- Participate in resource & Information sharing
- Participate in informal and formal networking activities

4. Operational Procedures

Quorum

The quorum of a meeting will be half the steering committee members plus one.

Annual Work Plan

The steering committee will participate in a facilitated strategic planning day each year in June or July (subject to renewal of funding) to progress the objectives of the network.

Process of Election of the Network Chair

Elections will be held annually for the position of Chair. There shall be a regular rotation of the Chair. A notice of a pending election, including a formal request for nominations shall be sent to the Steering Committee members 6 weeks prior to the date of the election or other date as agreed by the Committee. Nominations shall be sent to the Project Officer prior to the scheduled election. When there is more than 1 nomination, nominees are to submit a brief statement of interest with their nomination form.

The election process shall be conducted by the Project Officer as a secret ballot during a Steering Committee meeting. The outcome of the ballot will be determined as first past the post.

The position of Chair shall be elected by the members of the Steering Committee. All Steering Committee members shall endeavor to be in attendance at the meeting at which the election is held. Where a committee member cannot attend they may supply a proxy if they wish and the ballot will continue as scheduled.

Chairperson Role

The Chair will ensure that Steering Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with meeting principles including:

- Remaining impartial and facilitating consensus where possible;
- Welcoming and introducing new members;
- Ensuring there is a quorum;
- Keeping to timelines;
- Prioritising and adhering to the agenda;

- Encouraging and facilitating participation in discussion;
- Following correct procedure for decision making;
- Summarising discussion and making sure decisions are recorded properly;
- Demonstrating good leadership, fairness and respect;
- The Chair shall be responsible for orientation of new Steering Committee members.

The Chair shall chair all regular meetings. When the Chair is unavailable the Deputy Chair will chair the meeting.

Where the Chair is unavailable to chair a meeting or unavailable for a period of more than one week, a representative of the auspice organisation who is also a steering committee member will act as chairperson and they will undertake the responsibilities of the Chair during that period of time only.

5. Meeting Procedure

Frequency & Structure

Meetings will be held quarterly. The steering committee meeting shall be one hour in duration.

Agenda

All Meetings will be informed by an agenda formulated by the project officer and distributed to the network members at least 5 working days prior to a meeting at which point steering committee and wider network members will have the opportunity to place items on the agenda if they wish. The items to be included on agendas for both meetings are as follows:

Steering Committee Meeting

- Report from PO
- Financial Report
- Current Project Update
- New Business
- Other

Minutes

The project officer will record the minutes of all meetings and distribute to all members of the steering committee and the wider network within five working days. See Appendix 1.

Network E-Bulletin

The e-bulletin shall be distributed on a quarterly basis in January, April, July and October. The project officer will call for contributions at least two weeks prior to the publication deadline which will be the third Friday of the month. Content for the e-bulletin shall be comprised of contributions from members of the LMNC FLPN and other related sources in the Family Law/Post Separation sector. The project officer shall hold editing responsibilities for the e-bulletin.

Clearinghouse Facility

The project officer will act as the clearinghouse facility for the network by circulating relevant Family Law/Post Separation sector news and information on professional development/employment opportunities, services and programs and any other relevant material via e-mail to the wider network.

APPENDIX 1

Lower Mid North Coast Family Law Pathways Network

Minutes of Steering Committee Meeting held Date

Time:

Location:

Topic	Discussion	Action
In Attendance		
Apologies		
Report from Project Officer		
Subcommittee Updates		

Financial Report		
Current Project Update		
New Business		
Other		
Next Meeting		

