



Nottingham  
Law School  
Nottingham Trent University

*Good Practice in Legal Education for the Community and Multidisciplinary Practice:* Nottingham Law School, Centre for Legal Education  
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COMMUNITY, CREATIVITY AND CULTURE IN LEGAL EDUCATION

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# Introduction

## This paper:

- examines emerging good practice in legal education for the community and in multidisciplinary practice.
- identifies key factors leading to effective learning deepening critical thinking and broadening perspectives.
- briefly discusses extant literature on good practice legal education
- identifies elements for effective legal education by examining two case studies.

# Rationale

The evidence base of multiple research studies of legal education for community and for a range of different professionals will be discussed. Recent research findings suggest such legal education can ground them in understanding legal rights and responsibilities, building their capability, confidence and ability to utilise legal information and practice in applying the new-found skills, empowering them to take action.

Legal professionals play an active part in professional development of non-legal professionals so that they are better able to respond to their client or patient problems. It also builds professional competency. Emerging empirical research suggests that empowering non-legal professionals leads to positive outcomes.

# Approach

Community Legal Education can be limited in impact if there is no consideration of the community or individual capacity to digest newfound knowledge in a practical way. Community development shaped and informed by the community's own needs provides opportunities, so they shape what information is relevant to them and have input into the methods and ways of receiving and implementing this newfound knowledge.

This has parallels in higher education in making courses relevant, useful, engaging and giving the students requisite skills and knowledge, confidence, capability that enables it to be long lasting even transformative!

Adult Learning theory is key as is practicing skills and involvement in course by applying and acting on newfound knowledge

# Case Study 1

Community legal education and professional training work undertaken by the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service in relation to at risk young people.

## OVERCOMING THE INVISIBLE HURDLES TO JUSTICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



# Community Development: Evaluation of the Invisible Hurdles Program

By Dr Liz Curran NLS, June 2022

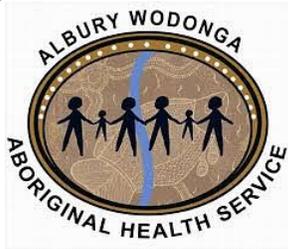
# Overview of Invisible Hurdles Program

## Project history

Stage 1 (pilot):  
*Oct 2015 to May 2018*

Stage 2: *Jan 2019 to Jan 2021*

Stage 3: Jul 2021 to June 2023  
(LSB+C funding for *Sept 2021 to Aug 2022*)



Health Justice Partnership/  
Integrated Justice Practice



# The how... also known as our Method Donut

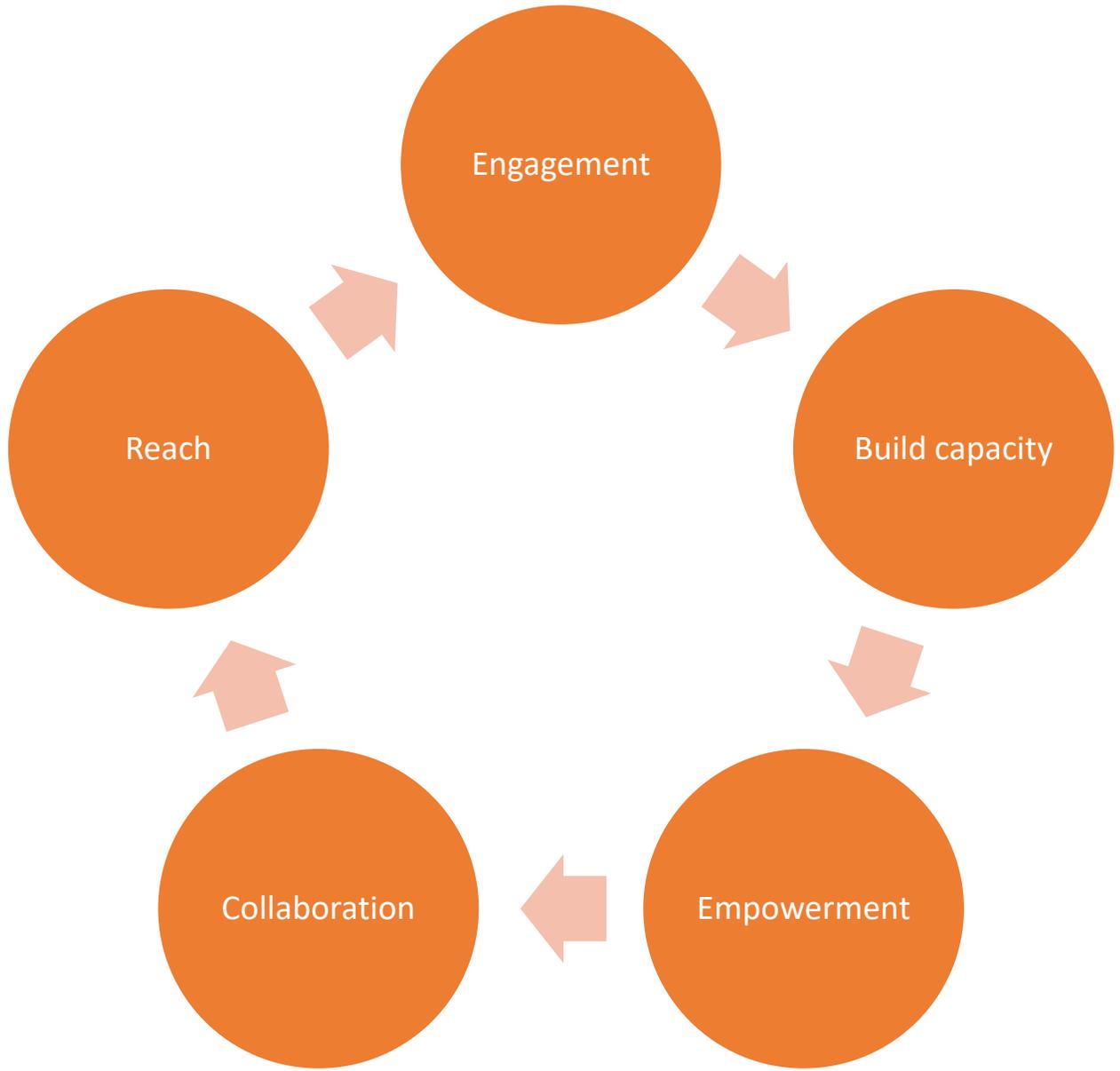


Available to young people and partners by phone/ text/email anytime

On-site at each partner

# Community Development approach to Project

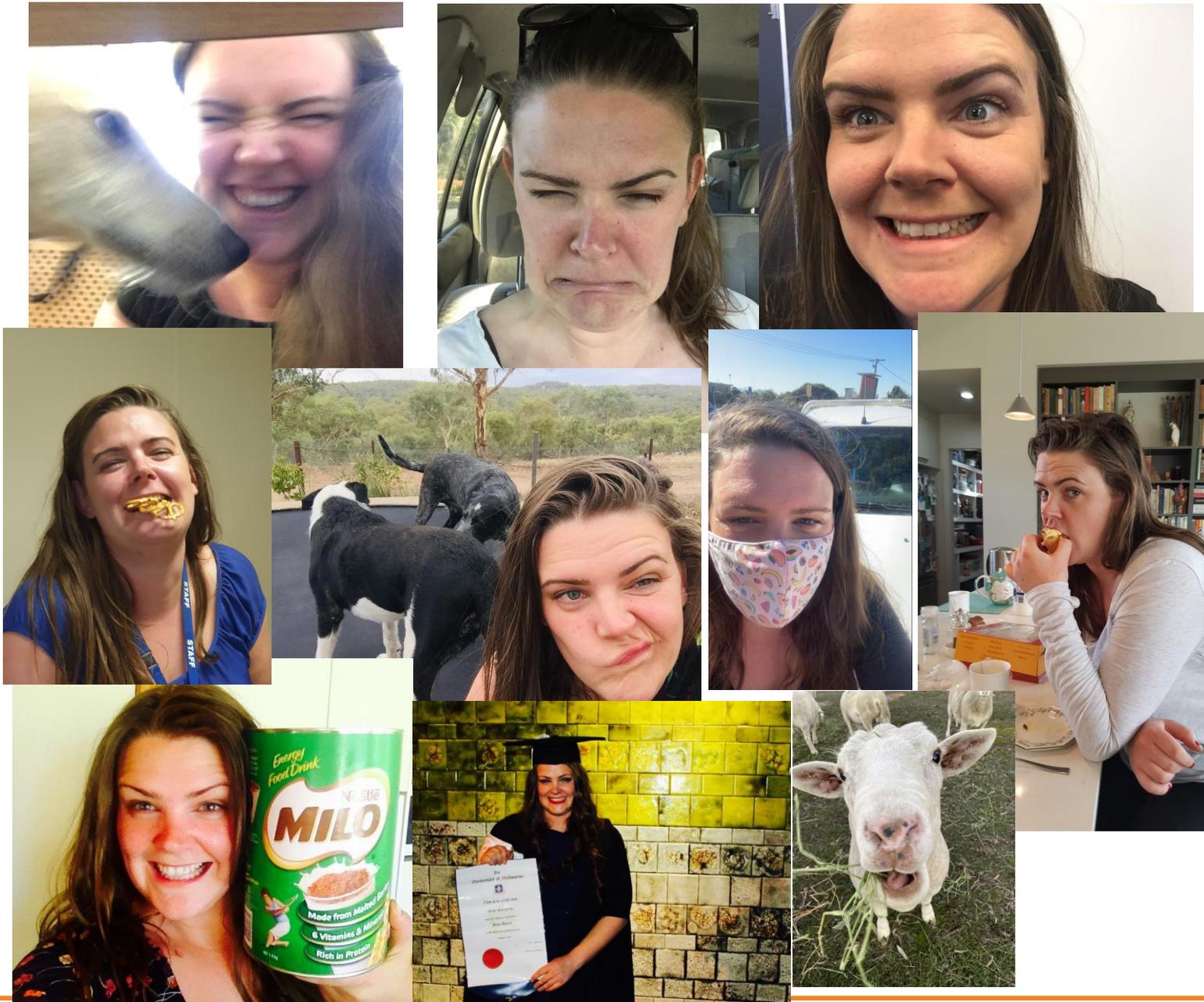
Reflective practice



# Community development activities



PRE-COVID	POST COVID
Community events	Cuppa dates
On-site presence	Games- true/false quizzes
Hallway/ water cooler chats	Dogs performing tricks...
Social media posts	'Bite-size', repetitive CLE and PD sessions
Staff meetings	COVID-19 Legal Health Check (electronic form)
Staff inductions	Being responsive to current events
Secondary consultations	'On-demand' model of CLE
Koori Men's Shed	Chats on Microsoft Teams/Zoom
Women's circle	
Newsletter contributions	



# Use of humour & snacks

- Breaking down barrier between “professional” and young people
- Establishing equal partnership
- Building rapport and trust

# Giving youth confidence to speak up, share ideas and help shape the future

Empowering young people to raise their voice in policy and decision-making was one of the successes of an expanded Invisible Hurdles Project. Stage II involved legal advice and representation as well as a comprehensive legal education program for young people from the three project partners, including Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre (WFLC), Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS) and North East Support and Action for Youth Inc. This approach turned out to be even more beneficial with COVID-19 causing significant disruptions to the students.

The *Pathways to empowerment and justice* The Invisible Hurdles Stage II Research and Evaluation Final Report was released in June 2021. Authors from The Australian National University, Pamela Taylor-Barnett, Hon. Lecturer, and Dr Liz Curran, Hon. Associate Professor, evaluated the project and noted the work had been "effective and outstanding". The Project Evaluators observed: "young people are some of the most disenfranchised young people in the nation, and therefore are often too stressed by their own daily concerns and too disempowered to engage politically."

"The voice of youth has to be heard to close the gap. Without hearing the voices of young people, decisions are made that will be ignored or done in a way that aren't applicable to those young people. They are our future." AWAHS staff member

## Local voice in youth strategy

A major achievement was having young people get involved in the public consultation process for a new, whole-of-government youth strategy. The Project team were involved in a community forum initially, and then engaged young people through a survey. The survey taught them about the process of law-making and what it means to be a democracy. Survey results were submitted to the government, and also used as part of an extensive collaborative submission.

## Road to change

WFLC students raised concerns about being unable to do driving practice during Stage 3 COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria. This would stop them getting the 120 hours they needed to get their P-plates. They were worried this delay would stop them getting a job after they finished school. The Project team proposed writing a letter to the government minister urging them to change the rules. The young people wanted to have their voices included in the letter. Shortly after the letter was sent, the rules were changed. While there is no way to measure how much impact the letter had, the young people were proud they had taken action.

## Idea leads to new project

One suggestion made by the young people was that "teachers and wellbeing teams (in schools) receive training in identifying family violence and be aware of local family violence services so this information can be made available to young people". This suggestion fed directly into a successful funding application by HRCLS to the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to run a new project, titled AMPLIFY, to work with four local schools.

## Building bridge with local police

The Project team worked with more than 20 young people to complete a Wodonga Police community survey. When a high level of distrust of police was recorded, the Project team helped the young people work out ways this could be improved. The young people decided to invite a police officer to the school. To remove any anxiety among the group the visit was structured like an episode of the program, "You Can't Ask That". The visit was such a success the police officer visits the school twice a term to chat to young people, answer questions and deliver education sessions.

## Standing up on issues

The encouragement led to students fuelling individual advocacy. One young person rang Australian Parliament House to speak to the Prime Minister after the ban on mobile phones in schools was introduced, while another wrote a letter to their local council about long grass attracting snakes at a playground near her house. Of the letter student, her teacher commented: "She was made to feel that she had a voice... It's something that will probably make her more politically active in the future... that her say is important". This empowerment was one of the main goals of the Project.

To read the Stage II Invisible Hurdles Project full story visit our website.

# For more info, check out:

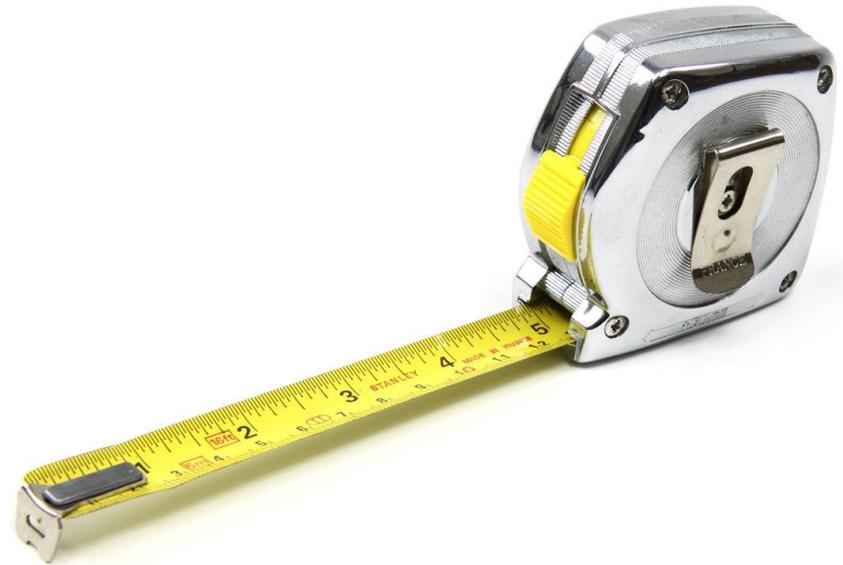
## Invisible Hurdles Stage I and Stage II Final Reports:

<https://www.hrcls.org.au/invisible-hurdles-project/>



1. *Introduction Research Evaluation Beginnings – expanding opportunity by integrating service delivery with community & professional development and policy change*
2. *Methodology – learning, reflective and iterative*
3. *Outcomes – transformations over time in practice and innovations in community development and collaboration through integrated justice and multidisciplinary practice*
4. *Why this research evaluation is critical to good practice, impact, innovation and sustainability*
5. *Significance to those delivering CD, CLE and Professional Development*

# The success of these activities and approaches?



# Case Study 2

Pivot from teaching of applied ethics from a School of Law setting to a School of Health and Care Professions with nursing and paramedic students already on placement or about to go onto Covid 19 wards in 2020.

Giving Voice to Values (GVV) is basically a tool kit for people to feel empowered to have difficult conversations when their ethics, values, or something wrong is being asked of them. This is very pertinent for nurses when a course of action might risk error or patient harm. It works on the premise that the more (when armed with a process to step through and develop our skills + tools) we rehearse and practice difficult conversations, not with a script, but adaptability and flexibility and a thinking process (especially when personal and professional stakes are high) the better able to we to handle situations when they arise. This is especially when we are taken by surprise or there is an urgency or a power differential at play.

# Why we did it and how we did it?

# Conclusion

Summary:

Lessons Learned Effective Legal Education

Drawn from the Draft Final Report; Going Deeper: IH Stage III, June 2022 by Liz Curran (NLS)

# Resources

- *Taylor-Barnett & Curran, Pathways to empowerment and justice: The Invisible Hurdles Stage II Research and Evaluation Final Report* Produced for the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service; Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service; Northeast Support & Action for Youth & Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre, ANU.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3867295](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3867295)
- Gouthro P (2018) 'Taking Time to Learn: The importance of theory in adult learning', 69 (1) *Adult Education Quarterly*, 60-76.
- Curran L, 'Lawyer Secondary Consultations: improving access to justice and human rights: reaching clients otherwise excluded through professional support in a multi-disciplinary practice' 8(1) *Journal of Social Inclusion* (2017)  
<https://josi.journals.griffith.edu.au/index.php/inclusion/article/view/8>

# Resources

Curran L (2021) *Better Law for a Better World*, Routledge UK, Chapter 11, Community Development and Professional Development, 180-202.

Curran L, Taylor- Barnett P & Vernon A, Reflecting on community development practice: Working with communities for effective change by enabling access to justice' (2017) 19 (1) *Flinders Law Journal*,. <http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/FlinLawJl/2017/3.pdf>.

## Resources (cont.)

*Curran & Taylor-Barnett*, (2019) 'Evaluating projects in multifaceted and marginalised communities: The need for mixed approaches, *Evaluation Journal of Australasia* Volume: 19 Issue: 1, pp: 22-38.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1035719X19832688>.

*Curran & Taylor-Barnett*, 'Overcoming the Invisible Hurdles to Justice for Young People: A Final Research and Evaluation Report of the Invisible Hurdles Project (Health Justice Partnership) with Pamela Taylor Barnett, November 2018.

[http://www.hrcls.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/DESIGNED\\_Full-final-Report\\_October\\_20181102.pdf](http://www.hrcls.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/DESIGNED_Full-final-Report_October_20181102.pdf)

CLE Made Easy (2010) Federation of Community Legal Centres and the Victoria Law Foundation, <https://www.vla.vic.gov.au/sites/www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/files/cle-made-easy-ed2.pdf>

# Resources Case Study 2 (cont.)

## GVV Resources:

Gentile M, What Is a Giving Voice to Values Case? <https://store.darden.virginia.edu/Syllabus%20Copy/What-Is-a-Giving-Voice-to-Values-Case.pdf>

Mary Gentile Resources How to act on your values, with Giving Voice to Values founder, Mary Gentile - Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (state.gov), <https://ylai.state.gov/how-to-act-on-your-values-with-mary-gentile/>

Curran, L, 'Giving Voice to Values Ethics Education Legal Educators Seminar' delivered by Dr Liz Curran On-line for Association of Law Teachers UK, Presentation Slides (May 12, 2020).

SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3603573> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3603573>

Curran L (2021) Better Law for a Better World, Routledge UK, Chapter 11, Community Development and Professional Development, 180-202.



**QUESTIONS  
COMMENTS  
SUGGESTIONS  
IDEAS**

