
I Location of community legal centres and disadvantage

The locations of community legal centres (CLCs) in many jurisdictions largely reflect the fact that CLCs were traditionally established on the initiative of their communities in response to a lack of access to legal services (discussed in chapter 21). But the areas with legal need in the past may not be the same areas with legal need today. This appendix looks at information about the location of CLC clients, the location of the CLCs they use, and measures of disadvantage and income, to examine whether CLCs are located in areas where they are likely to be most needed.

Administrative data about the clients that use CLCs are collected through the Community Legal Service Information System (CLSIS).¹ The data items collected include the locality of clients, which the Commission has matched to postcodes (where possible). These postcodes were then matched to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Socio-Economic Information for Areas* (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (ABS 2013). Information on the location of CLCs was also provided to the Commission, which was also matched to postcodes and SEIFA. Each CLC client and CLC was mapped to a SEIFA decile (with a higher decile indicating a lower level of disadvantage).

If CLCs only provided services to relatively disadvantaged clients, then, all else being equal, the greatest proportion of CLC clients would be in locations associated with lower SEIFA deciles. However, this is not the case, with CLC clients being (roughly) evenly distributed across each SEIFA decile (table I.1). Another indicator of serving disadvantaged communities would be for the CLCs themselves to be located in relatively disadvantaged areas. But the data indicate that around one fifth of CLCs are located in postcodes that correspond to the bottom three SEIFA deciles, while over two thirds of CLCs are located in postcodes associated with the top three SEIFA deciles.

¹ These localities are usually recorded as a suburb, which allows for easy linking to a postcode. More cryptic responses are not always mappable, and in some cases data are not recorded for a small number of clients.

Table I.1 SEIFA deciles of CLCs and their clients
Per cent, 2011-12

SEIFA decile	CLC clients	CLCs ^d	
	Total	Total (unweighted)	Total (weighted)
1	10.0	9.4	9.5
2	9.1	5.5	5.3
3	7.4	5.5	4.6
4	10.4	2.2	3.4
5	10.2	4.1	4.2
6	11.5	4.1	4.1
7	10.0	4.1	3.6
8	10.0	30.1	29.8
9	12.5	22.6	22.4
10	8.0	6.2	8.2
na ^a	0.8	6.3	5.0
Other ^b	0.2		
Total ^c	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a 'na' refers either to clients or CLCs whose locality maps to a postcode exclusively for post office box use. Accordingly, these special postcodes have no population or SEIFA index. ^b Includes those where location could not be identified, or the locality of the individual was an overseas location. ^c May not sum to 100 due to rounding. ^d CLC location is weighted by the number of clients it serves.

Sources: Commission estimates based on unpublished CLSIS data and ABS (*Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2011*, Cat. no. 2033.0.55.001).

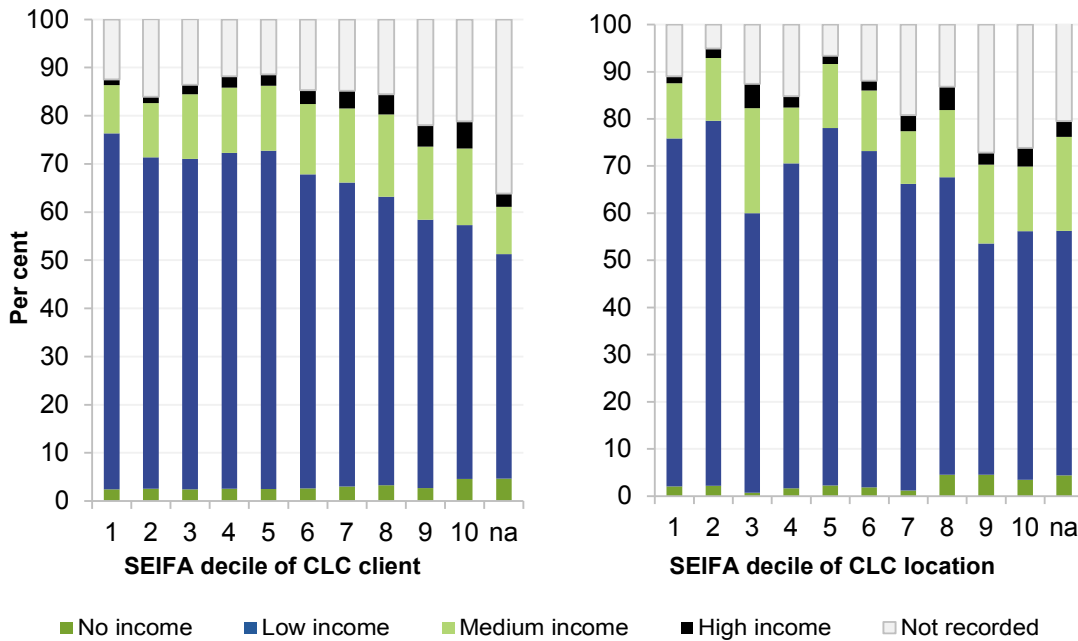
However, there are some reasons why using SEIFA postcodes may not be appropriate to measure legal need.

1. The SEIFA scores associated with postcodes reflect the *average* level of disadvantage. There can be relatively disadvantaged individuals in postcodes associated with high SEIFA scores.
2. Many CLCs offer outreach services, and so travel to more disadvantaged locations relative to their main office.
3. Some specialised CLCs provide a particular service that is not aimed at disadvantaged clients. For example, environmental defender offices provide assistance to all members of the community irrespective of their socioeconomic status.
4. Some CLCs focus on particular matters rather than servicing a particular geographical area. In doing so, it may make sense for them to be centrally located (in high SEIFA decile areas) to try and provide services to as many people as possible.

These concerns can be addressed by comparing administrative data on the income of individuals that use CLCs against the SEIFA decile of their postcode (figure I.1). The left hand panel presents this distribution, and indicates that while most CLC clients report low incomes irrespective of their SEIFA decile, the average income of CLC clients from advantaged postcodes is higher than those from disadvantaged postcodes. The right hand

panel in figure I.1 is also consistent with this finding, suggesting that CLCs located in high SEIFA deciles serve smaller proportions of low-income clients than their counterparts located in low SEIFA deciles.

Figure I.1 Reported income by SEIFA decile of CLC client and CLC location^a
2011-12



^a 'na' of SEIFA decile refers to those localities linked to postcodes for post-office box purposes only. Income is defined in CLSIS as no income, low income ('under \$500 per week or \$26 000 per year'), medium income ('between \$500 and \$1000 per week or \$26 000 to \$52 000 per year'), high income ('\$1000 per week or over or \$52 000 per year or over'), not applicable or not stated.

Data sources: Commission estimates based on unpublished CLSIS data and ABS (*Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2011, Cat. no. 2033.0.55.001*).

The issue of placement of CLCs is discussed in further detail in chapter 21.