

Working Together: The Nature of Collaborative Legal and Social Services and Their Influence on Practice

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Abstract : Practice collaborations between legal assistance and social support services have emerged as a growing framework worldwide for delivering services to clients with high degrees of disadvantage, vulnerability and complexity. In Australia, the past five years has seen a significant growth in these socio-legal collaborations, with programs being delivered through legal, social service and health organizations and addressing a range of issues including mental health, immigration, parental child abduction and domestic violence. This presentation is based on research currently mapping the nature of these collaborations in Australia and exploring the influence that collaborating professions are having on each other's practice. In a similar way to problem-solving courts being seen as a systematic take up of therapeutic jurisprudence in the court setting, socio-legal collaborations have the potential to be a systematic take up of therapeutic jurisprudence in an advice setting. This presentation will explore the varied ways in which socio-legal collaboration is being implemented in these programs. It will also explore the development of interdisciplinary therapeutic jurisprudence within them, with preliminary findings suggesting that both legal and social service practice is being influenced by the collaborative setting, with legal practice showing a more therapeutic orientation and social service professions, such as social work, moving toward a legal and rights orientation.

Keywords : collaboration, socio-legal, Australia, therapeutic jurisprudence

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