



# Indigenous lawyer 'silenced' after raising racism complaint against NSW legal service

[Rachel Stringfellow](#) - August 31, 2022



**NEWS**

A long-serving Indigenous lawyer who went public with racism allegations against Legal Aid NSW says the service tried to silence her following an explosive news investigation.

Darug woman Jayne Christian in June was among three culturally diverse Legal Aid lawyers who raised serious racism claims against the service she had worked at for nearly 10 years with ABC 7.30 in June.

Now, two months after the report, Ms Christian said her allegations had been cast aside by Legal Aid NSW.

"I was told from that I was named, and a real point was made that I'm entitled to a perception but it's not agreed," she said.

"I was told not to discuss the processes that dealt with my complaint... so you know, you're telling me not to talk about your process or talk about the way you've dealt with something as if it's not the racist thing itself."

"It's your perception but they're not actually looking at what they're doing to antagonize and irritate me as an Aboriginal person."

"So as a result of that, there were people in that meeting that felt quite culturally unsafe with the way that it was conducted."

The new revelations add to a workplace culture Ms Christian described as a "hostage situation" where diverse staff were made to feel uneasy about reporting discrimination.

Ms Christian said from her first month working at the service she noticed the derogatory way Indigenous people were spoken about.

"I remember being explicitly told you never made a complaint to HR about a manager because that's the end of your career," she said.

"You move through the organization knowing... the prejudices...but knowing that your hands are always tied."

"You can never actually do anything about it other than keep moving."

Legal Aid NSW said it had committed to reviewing its complaints management in response to the allegations.

From September all staff will also be required to complete anti-discrimination, sexual harassment and unacceptable behaviour, and Aboriginal cultural safety courses.

Legal Aid NSW chief executive Monique Hitter said with a large Indigenous employee and client base, it was important the service stamped out racism.

"We consider any allegation of racism or discrimination abhorrent in our workplace and we want a workplace that is culturally inclusive, that is safe for all of our staff, and is one that is built on respect," she said.

"It's really important for us to have a strong Aboriginal workforce and we do we have a really strong and committed Aboriginal workforce."

"And it's really important to us because nearly 20 per cent of our clients are Aboriginal so we want our workforce to, to also represent our client base."

Ms Hitter declined to comment on Ms Christian's individual claims.

In July, one month after the racism claims were aired, Legal Aid NSW launched Project Respect

The project aims to ensure staff can share their experiences in a safe and meaningful way, strengthen workplace culture and improve training for managers.

**Story by Rachel Stringfellow**



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