

10th International Conference on
Public Health and Nursing

July 26–27, 2021 | Webinar

Law as a tool for healthy communities

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For up to 75% of the problems effecting people's health, the solutions sit beyond the health system. Problems like poor quality housing effecting a person's respiratory health, credit or debt issues exacerbating stress and anxiety, and violence in the home are all examples of everyday problems that effect people's health but may not be resolved by healthcare alone. Health services have become very good at recognising the impact these problems have on people's health, but they don't always have the tools to address them.

Health justice partnership is a service collaboration that is changing that. By embedding legal help into healthcare teams and settings to tackle the impact of legal problems on health and wellbeing, this approach demonstrates how we can build the capability to identify and respond to non-medical problems through the healthcare settings that people know and trust. Through this approach, new alliances are also emerging in relation to policy and system-level improvements to public health across a range of areas.

This keynote will argue for the inclusion of legal institutions and legal assistance services within our understanding of the social determinants of health, as key mechanisms to improve family health and wellbeing. It will then present a series of case studies from hospital, primary health and child and maternal health settings to demonstrate the impact of embedding legal help into healthcare teams and settings and the evidence of systemic change that is emerging from the international movement for health justice partnership.

Biography

Tessa is the founding CEO of Health Justice Australia, established in 2016 as the national centre of excellence for health justice partnership. She has a PhD in Sociology and Law from the London School of Economics. Originally a criminologist, she has worked in health, criminal justice and human rights organisations in Australia and internationally. She was previously Deputy CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service and was the inaugural Fulbright Professional Scholar in Nonprofit Leadership, the report of which was published as *Lead or be left behind: Sustaining trust and confidence in Australia's charities*. Tessa's PhD on the detention and release of mentally disordered offenders was published as a book, *Protecting the Public? Detention and Release of Mentally Disordered Offenders* by Routledge in 2010. She is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors; on the Advisory Committee of the Sydney Institute of Criminology; the Board of Gondwana Choirs, the leader in Australian choral performance; and plays ultimate .

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