



**Community
Legal Centres
Queensland**

Annual report
2019/2020



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About us

Community Legal Centres Queensland is the peak body representing the 34 independent, community-led community legal centres operating across Queensland, including rural and remote areas.

Queensland's community legal centres provide free information, legal assistance and referral, representation and casework, community education and advocacy for vulnerable clients who are facing legal and social problems.

Established in 1993, our mission is to work with our centres towards a fair and just Queensland. We help community legal centres to provide effective, high-quality services to their communities.

We help the network of community legal centres keep informed, united and relevant. We help disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the community to understand their legal and human rights, access legal help, and feel heard and respected.

We operate through a small and effective staff team of seven people, with the help of dedicated volunteers to support and develop the organisational capacity of community legal centres.

We acknowledge traditional custodians

Community Legal Centres Queensland affirms that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia and acknowledges their unique relationship with their ancestral country. In particular, we acknowledge the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, the traditional custodians of the land in and around Brisbane, where we work, and pay respect to their elders, past and present.

President's and Director's report

Welcome to the Community Legal Centres Queensland 2019-2020 Annual Report. This report provides an overview of Community Legal Centres Queensland's work in supporting 34 members to provide access to justice for thousands of Queenslanders.

It was a difficult end to the financial year with the impact of COVID-19, which will be felt across community legal centres and the communities they serve in the months and years to come. Despite the challenges of 2020, Community Legal Centres Queensland has remained committed to its vision for *A fair and just Queensland* and the work of supporting Queensland community legal centres to assist their communities.

A key focus of the year for our members was to secure funding for services over the next five years under the National Legal Assistance Partnership between the Queensland and the Commonwealth governments. Queensland is the only state to provide the security of five-year funding to the community legal sector. This made the funding procurement process at the end of 2019 critical to ongoing services in the community.

During this year, we developed the *Evidence and Analysis of Legal Need and Application Guide* resources to assist community legal centres with writing their funding applications. We also provided companion training through our *Leadership Forum* and our free webinar program.

Rosslyn
Monro
Director



While the procurement process was a diversion for the sector, it is very comforting to know that this process will not need to happen for another five years. Community legal centres can continue to focus on meeting the needs of their communities.

Highlights of our year include:

- Providing support to the sector to embed the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* in both community legal centres and in their advocacy with clients
- The delivery of the *Digital Strategy Paper: Building Digital Capacity* for the sector - providing a digital vision and road map for community legal centres
- The implementation of our *Cultural Safety Plan*, which has built key relationships in the sector and with external stakeholders
- Implementing a team-based approach to the Phase 3 National Accreditation Scheme - creating closer working relationships between the peak body and members.

All of this work is not possible without the commitment of voluntary management committee members and the hard work and dedication of the staff team at Community Legal Centres Queensland.

We said farewell to Janelle Rees, early in 2020, as she returned to her full-time PHD studies. We are very grateful for Janelle's forensic research and analysis on the *Evidence Guide* and her dedication to the *Humans Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* project. Thank you Janelle!

Early in 2020, we welcomed Kerriann Dear and Samantha Cooper to our Sector Sustainability team. Welcome Kerriann and Sam! At the end of the year, Communications Manager Cathy Baker went on a secondment to government for 12 months.

Hayley
Grainger
President



Support

We help community legal centres provide effective high-quality services to their communities.

By providing training, support and resources to our members ensures they can deliver effective services.

Free and accessible webinar program

Our well-established webinar program provided free and accessible training to our member community legal centres and other organisations in the legal assistance sector. A comprehensive schedule of webinars included topics such as Robodebt, Child Safe Practices and changes to the *Incorporated Associations Act 1981 (Qld)*.

With the impact of COVID-19 in the later part of the year, remote delivery of training became even more critical to the sector. We provided a special series of webinars to support the wellbeing of staff in community legal centres, with several expert presenters, including Black Dog Institute, Lifeworks, Jan Ungerer and Dr Mandy Neralic.

Human Rights Act training

With the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* commencing in January 2020, we delivered several resources and training for community legal centres. A specific *Human Rights Act* webinar series provided training to community legal centres on how to use the Act as an advocacy tool with their clients. A *Human Rights Implementation Toolkit* was developed to assist community legal centres to operate in compliance with the *Human Rights Act*. The toolkit provides assistance with embedding

a human rights culture in the workplace, a framework for reviewing policies and strategies for continuous improvement.

National Accreditation Scheme

Fourteen Queensland community legal centres were accredited under Phase 3 of the Community Legal Centres Australia National Accreditation Scheme. For the first time under this scheme, Community Legal Centres Queensland applied a team-based approach to the site visit and certification process, which resulted in more time spent preparing and supporting community legal centres for the accreditation process. It also increased opportunities to resource community legal centres in their improvement plan implementation.

Sector Digital Strategy

In August 2019, we commenced stage 2 of the Sector Digital Strategy, which built on the stage 1 work delivered in late 2018. With the commitment and work of the Digital Strategy Working Group, comprising of representatives across the sector, we finalised the *Digital Strategy Paper: Building Digital Capacity for the Queensland Community Legal Centres Sector*, in January 2020. This paper outlines a digital vision and roadmap for the sector, together with a suite of supporting resources and webinars. The practical resources support digital strategy work in community legal centres including guidelines, checklists, templates, resource lists and technology innovation processes.



What's next?

Continue to provide support to our members through the Community Legal Centres Australia National Accreditation Scheme.

Lead service improvement strategies on culturally safe practices, digitisation, and intake and triage systems, and processes.

Continue to assist community legal centres to implement the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)*.

Hold our annual state conference online.

Offer regular training and development opportunities, such as webinars and masterclasses to our members.

Support the sector to offer attractive employment conditions and foster worker wellbeing and resilience.

Develop the skills of the sector to establish and manage strategic relationships and partnerships.

Training for community legal centres



19

webinars delivered to the sector



2,290

people attended our webinar program



4

Human Rights Act webinars



2

member-only wellbeing workshops

Network

We help the network of community legal centres keep informed, united and relevant.

By bringing our members together, sharing best practice and building new ideas ensures community legal centres stay relevant.

New member announced

We welcomed Aged and Disability Advocacy (ADA) Australia as a new member to Community Legal Centres Queensland. ADA Australia has worked closely with Queensland Community Legal Centres over many years. We look forward to deepening those connections with our new member. We also welcomed a 'new look' national Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) as a member.

Virtual coffee with the sector

We held 15 *virtual coffees* with the sector through video conferencing. The online catch up sessions were brought about due to COVID-19 social distancing rules and the need to regularly keep in touch with our members. These regular sessions allowed community legal centres to share ideas on providing services remotely, supporting staff and volunteers and responding to emerging client needs.

Cultural Safety Action Plan

This year we developed a Cultural Safety Action Plan as the first step in a staged approach to refreshing our commitment to the advancement of reconciliation. The *Cultural Safety Action Plan 2020-2021* will be followed by work to develop and implement a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. We are grateful for the guidance and support of our *Cultural Safety Reference Group* - Candice

Hughes, YFS Legal; Avelina Tarrago, President of the Indigenous Lawyers Association of Qld; Kevin Yow Yeh, YAC; Simone Matthews, IUIH; Bino Toby, QIFVLS; and Tayla Dyer, QIFVLS.

We were recipients of a Bank Australia grant to support Cultural Safety work across the sector. The grant enabled us to provide expert specialist training at our *Leadership Forum*; individual coaching to assist community legal centres to assess their processes and practices for cultural safety; and assistance with the development and implementation of cultural safety plans.

Leadership Forum

We hosted our annual *Leadership Forum* in Cairns this year. This was a fantastic opportunity to catch up with the many staff working in the sector, take a deep dive into the procurement process and to work with the leaders in the sector on a range of challenges and opportunities.

Co-hosted conference with CLCA

We co-hosted the Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCA) conference *Power, Purpose and Possibilities* held in Brisbane, in May 2019. At the conference we also took the opportunity to harness interstate rivalry by hosting the *Mate vs Mate, State vs State* trivia night.

State conference cancelled

Due to the government restrictions imposed, we were unable to hold our planned state conference in April-May 2020. We look forward to providing an online conference next year.



What's next?

Working with community legal centres to identify priority issues on post COVID-19 recovery, sector resourcing, advocacy and law reform.

Be a platform for increased awareness and advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices on matters relating to First Nations people and communities.

Draw on accreditation insights to build knowledge and identify future priorities for capacity building in the sector.

Support community legal centres to prioritise evaluation, evidence-gathering and demonstration of impact.

National Accreditation Scheme



14

community legal centres were successfully accredited



1

new national online portal



11

site visits to community legal centres



5

team members managing accreditation

Access

We help disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the community understand their legal and human rights, access legal help and be heard and respected.

By supporting the wider community to access legal help and education creates a fair and just Queensland.

Sector funding changes

With *Community Legal Service Program (CLSP)* service agreements coming to an end in June 2020 and a new *National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP)* agreement starting in July 2020, Queensland community legal centres applied for five-year funding through the Department of Justice and Attorney General procurement process. We provided comprehensive support to the sector to prepare procurement applications that were based on the evidence of legal need in Queensland communities.

Legal need in Queensland

With funding from Department of Justice and Attorney-General, we developed the *Evidence and Analysis of Legal Need* report that summarises the evidence of legal need in Queensland, using demographic information as a proxy for legal need and based on leading international and Australian research. The report presented data that indicates the number and proportion of the Queensland population that fits into the *NLAP* priority client groups across 13 regions in Queensland.

Procurement process support

We developed an application guide and a companion webinar to provide community

legal centres with practical tips for developing a thorough, evidence-based application for the procurement process.

COVID-19 Impact

The social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic provided extra challenges to Queensland community legal centres in both providing services to the community safely and to ensuring community legal centre workplaces were flexible in moving to remote work.

We provided up-to-date information to government about the impacts of COVID-19 on both services and communities, which included:

- An increase demand for services in the community particularly in areas of employment, domestic violence, family law, elder abuse, social security and tenancy and new groups of clients seeking assistance
- An increase in the complexity and urgency in legal matters
- A loss of service multipliers including volunteers, non-government and pro bono support
- New and unique local challenges of remote service delivery
- A need to build resilience in communities and legal services
- An opportunity to integrate new working practices to enhance service delivery.

We were also able to tell the community legal centres' story of resilience:

- More than 90 per cent of community legal centres indicated that their organisation adapted to changes
- 75 per cent of community legal centres said staff managed the changes well
- More than 70 per cent of community legal centres said clients seemed satisfied with changes to services.

Updates to our website

Improvements were made to our website to upgrade the functionality of the *Find Legal Help* directory, which provides information and referrals to people seeking legal help. We also sought changes to the site to ensure that it was responsive to mobile and tablet devices.

Video series on the importance of community legal centres

We created a series of short videos for the community on why community legal centres are important. We featured some of members, volunteers and staff from Community Legal Centres Australia. We shared these videos on our social media channels.

Portable Long Service Leave

We were pleased to see the introduction of *Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL)* for the Queensland Social and Community Service sector, which includes community legal centres. We were part of the *Portable Long Service Leave Taskforce* and provided

feedback to government about the importance of *PLSL* for workers in community legal centres. From 1 January 2021, community legal centre workers will have their service recognised across the sector, rather than service limited to a single employer.

Make Renting Fair campaign

We continued to be part of the *Make Renting Fair* alliance. We attended regular meetings with the alliance to share ideas and support external facing elements of the campaign through our channels and networks.

What's next?

Maintain and foster government, member and stakeholder relationships

Actively pursue new relationships and memberships in areas that extend Queensland CLCs' profiles, resources and support bases

Work with legal assistance services in collaborative service planning initiatives under the National Legal Assistance Partnership agreement

Continue to nurture and strengthen relationship with our First Nations colleagues and stakeholders

A fair and just Queensland



44,000

individuals received help from Queensland's community legal centres



105,500

different legal issues were dealt with



179,000

services delivered to communities

Community Legal Centres Queensland's members 2019-2020 work* included:

- Giving close to **72,000** legal advices
- Assisting with over **12,200** legal tasks
- Providing over **11,300** duty lawyer services
- Appearing in courts or tribunals in almost **2,000** matters
- Assisting with **246** mediations and dispute resolution services
- Helping with close to **3,600** non-legal support services, such as social work and financial counselling
- Providing legal information and referrals on close to **80,000** occasions.

Service delivery

Due to the impact of COVID-19, in person services were not possible for almost half of 2019-20. Our members delivered:

- **50 per cent** of services by phone (34 per cent last year)
- **41 per cent** services in person (57 per cent last year)
- Remainder by letter or electronically (email and videoconference)



Client groups



67%

of clients were experiencing financial disadvantage



22%

of clients were living with disability or mental illness



47%

of clients were experiencing, or at risk of, family violence



6%

of clients were at risk of homelessness



8%

of clients were First Nations people



10%

of clients were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Success story

Isobel*, in her 50s, lives with Huntington's Disease and a wide range of impairments resulting from her disability, including cognitive, physical and communication. She was told of a plan to move her from her home to shared accommodation, which would have impacted her care.

Isobel had not been consulted, or included in any decision-making and a relocation was against her expressed wishes. She was referred to TASC National's *Advocacy and Support Centre* and met with a TASC National advocate.

Isobel was estranged from her family and under the guardianship of the Public Guardian. She also had support under her National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan.

TASC's advocate attended meetings on her behalf to ensure her wishes were articulated and prioritised in all decision making. The advocate also assisted Isobel with matters relating to her current funding arrangements under the NDIS. Isobel's funding was increased, she was able to continue with her current care arrangements and remain living in her own home.

(*name has been changed to protect identity)



*Notes

1. These figures only include 31 of CLCQ members who reported through the CLASS database in 2019-2020, therefore the true numbers of clients and services are likely to be higher than noted above
2. The COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted on the ability/capacity to deliver services as community legal centres transitioned to remote service delivery

Our members

Community Legal Centres Queensland's members

- Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services North Queensland
- Aboriginal Family Legal Service Southern Queensland
- Basic Rights Queensland
- Bayside Community Legal Service
- Brisbane North Community Legal Service
- Cairns Community Legal Centre
- Caxton Legal Centre
- Central Queensland Community Legal Centre
- Environmental Defenders Office
- Gold Coast Community Legal Centre and Advice Bureau
- Goondiwindi Community Legal Service
- Hub Community Legal
- Institute for Urban Indigenous Health
- Junkuri Laka Community Legal Centre Aboriginal Corporation
- LawRight
- LGBTI Legal Service
- Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre
- Moreton Bay Regional Community Legal Service
- My Community Legal
- North Queensland Women's Legal Service
- Pine Rivers Community Legal Service
- Prisoners' Legal Service
- Queensland Advocacy Incorporated
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service
- Suncoast Community Legal Service
- TASC National
- Taylor Street Community Legal Service
- Tenants Queensland
- Townsville Community Law
- Women's Legal Service
- YFS Legal
- Youth Advocacy Centre



Our people

Staff members

Roslyn Monro, Director
Penny Sullivan, Sector Sustainability Coordinator
Angela Hale, Operations Coordinator
Carly Hanson, Sector Sustainability Coordinator
Cathy Baker, Communications Manager
Janelle Rees, Sector Sustainability Coordinator (until March 2020)
Kerriann Dear, Sector Sustainability Coordinator (from February 2020)
Samantha Cooper, Sector Sustainability Coordinator (from February 2020)

Management committee members

Hayley Grainger (President), North Queensland Women's Legal Service
Klaire Coles (Treasurer), Caxton Legal Centre
Sue Garlick, LawRight
Candice Hughes, YFS Legal
Bill Mitchell, Townsville Community Law Inc.
George Pharmaxis, My Community Legal
Justine Silverthorne, Pine Rivers Community Legal Service
Georgina Warrington, Basic Rights Queensland (until July 2019)
Donna Georgeson, Suncoast Community Legal Service (from November 2019)

Our thanks

Thanks to our volunteers

Carrie Cormack
Grace Young
Geena Skow
Sarah Flint
Faiza Qureshi
Zach Arnold
Harry Bowers
Tania McIntosh
Stuart Moss

Thanks to our supporters

Community Legal Centres Queensland acknowledges funding from the **Queensland Government's Department of Justice and Attorney-General** and **Bank Australia**. Thank you for supporting our work.

Thank you to all our pro bono supporters and other organisation we collaborated with this year. Special mention to: Minter Ellison; Allens; Maurice Blackburn; Colin Biggers & Paisley; Holding Redlich; DLA Piper; Norton Rose Fulbright; Reimen Hii, Barrister; Clare Dart, Barrister; UQ Pro Bono Centre; For Purpose; and QUT ACPNS.

This Annual Report covers the period 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020 and was presented at the Community Legal Centres Queensland Annual General Meeting on 3 December 2020.

Community Legal Centres Queensland held appropriate insurance throughout the 2019-20 financial year. This included \$20 million in public liability insurance cover.



Community Legal Centres Queensland

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