



Impact Report 2021



Community
Legal Centres
Queensland

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Acknowledgement of traditional owners: 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 and pay respect to their elders, past and present.



Welcome from our Director and President

The Community Legal Centres Queensland Impact Report 2021 tells stories of change in our communities and presents evidence of the effect community legal centres have on their clients and stakeholders.

Queensland's community legal centres help people who cannot afford a lawyer or are unable to get legal aid. They support people with a wide range of legal problems including family and domestic violence, relationship breakdown, employment issues, debt, consumer problems and tenancy disputes. As well as helping individuals with legal problems, community legal centres work to prevent problems arising by providing legal education, and by working with government and other bodies to improve unfair laws and processes.

The 2021 report presents the work of community legal centres and the impact it has on its clients, community partners, the justice system, and volunteers. Queensland community legal centres have a significant impact on communities across the state providing:

- Appropriate and effective client services
- Increased knowledge and access to services that meet the community's legal needs
- Support to the justice system to effectively operate and make policy and practice decisions, and
- Meaningful professional experiences to volunteers.

The report highlights the positive impact on stakeholders and the work for the future to meet the legal needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged Queenslanders. The report highlights that vulnerable and disadvantage people and communities require tailored services that understand their diverse access needs. The need to continually innovate in service delivery and increase collaboration is the ongoing future challenge of a sector with finite resources.

As the peak body, Community Legal Centres Queensland provides a voice for the sector. We lead and support 34 independent community legal centres to deliver quality and accessible services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

The development of a sector impact report is no small undertaking. We acknowledge the time, effort and energy of staff and volunteers in community legal centres to collect survey data and client stories which are at the heart of this report. We also acknowledge the work and efforts of Community Legal Centres Queensland staff and volunteers in coordinating, gathering, and analysing the data for this report. It has truly been a team effort across Queensland.

Hayley Grainger, President and Rosslyn Monro, Director



Hayley Grainger



Rosslyn Monro



Our impact

The work of community legal centres in Queensland achieves intermediate outcomes for four stakeholder groups.

1. Clients

To measure the impact on the clients of Queensland's community legal centres we analysed survey results from each of our member centres and real-life stories from people supported by our centres. The client survey results and case studies demonstrate that Queensland community legal centres are providing appropriate and effective services to Queenslanders and they are making a difference to people by improving their safety, wellbeing and inclusion. Services are client and community-focussed and the overall high degree of client satisfaction indicates that Queensland community legal centres are vital social infrastructure.

Future work is required to ensure clients who have intersectional legal and other needs have increased access to wrap around services.

2. Community partners

Queensland community legal centres rely on community partnerships to increase the community's access to services and to meet their legal needs. Community partners agree that community legal education activities ensure the community has improved access to legal information and education. Without relationships with community partners, the scale and reach of community legal centres would be significantly reduced.

There is ongoing work in strengthening and extending community partnerships and collaboration to ensure appropriate referrals of clients are made to community agencies and that community agencies better understand the help that community legal centres can provide.

3. Justice system

Community legal centres are instrumental in supporting the justice system by helping clients navigate the system with the benefit of increasing the efficacy and efficiency of the system for all parties. Community legal centres inform decision-makers on how law and policy effects the community and contribute to making laws and practice fairer.

4. Volunteers

Queensland's community legal centres leverage substantial community resources by harnessing the commitment, energy and enthusiasm of hundreds of volunteers. Volunteers in direct service delivery and support roles can develop professional skills and insights into community issues. Committed volunteers also regard their volunteer contribution as an important professional obligation to the Queensland community. Community legal centre volunteers are a service multiplier that has a positive impact on both themselves and the clients. The impact of restrictions of COVID-19 health directives have had an impact on the numbers of volunteers in some community legal centres, so future resources will need to be directed to reviving volunteer programs and recruiting new volunteers.

To learn more about how community legal centres are measuring impact in their community see: communitylegalimpact.org



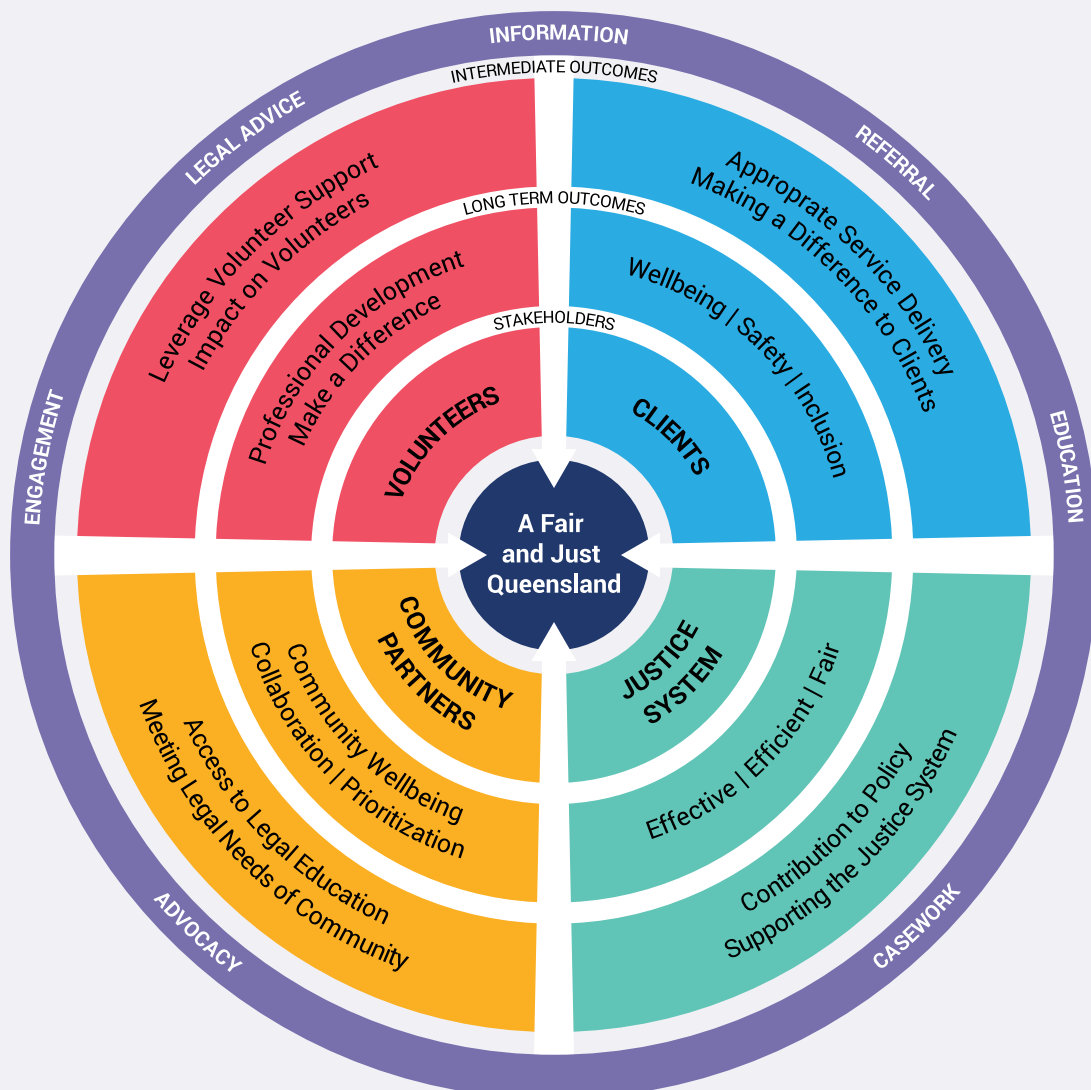


Theory of Change

Our theory of change helps us to better understand and measure the long-term changes community legal centres' activities have on the four key stakeholder groups.

In the **long term**, community legal centres' work impacts on four groups of stakeholders or beneficiaries:

- **Clients** have decreased stress, anxiety, improved financial wellbeing, improved personal relationships, increased personal safety and decreased social isolation
- **Community organisations** can collaborate better, and more effectively provide services to priority clients while the broader community experiences increased individual and community wellbeing
- **Justice system services** such as courts and tribunals expend less resources, provide fairer legal outcomes, and can improve policy and processes with better information; governments are better informed when they develop laws, legal policy and practice, and can provide effective justice service programs, and other legal assistance services function more effectively
- **Volunteers** are more able to make a difference in their community and develop their own professional skills.



This impact report tracks the progress on **intermediate** outcomes as they are:

- More immediately identifiable
- Measurable
- Based on a program logic that if we achieve intermediate outcomes they will contribute to the longer-term outcomes which are harder to measure.

The **intermediate outcomes** for the four stakeholder groups include:

- **Clients** experience appropriate service delivery which is effective in resolving issues and increasing their knowledge of their rights and responsibilities
- **Community** partners have increased knowledge and education about legal issues and increased community access to legal services
- **Justice system** is more effective and efficient as a result of community legal centre services and better informed by community views on public and legal policy issues
- **Volunteers** are leveraged to be a service multiplier and they gain professional benefit from their experience.

“

I felt very overwhelmed before arriving here as I am dealing with stuff I have never dealt with before. Having the solicitor explain things to me in such simple terms really helped. Thank you so much for your help!

”

What our clients are saying:

“

“Appreciated being able to speak to someone – legal system is very daunting without help.”

“Awesome to be able to access free legal advice in order to prevent bad situations turning worse, also for peace of mind, security and ability to move forward within the bounds of law. This is exactly what our tax dollars are for.”

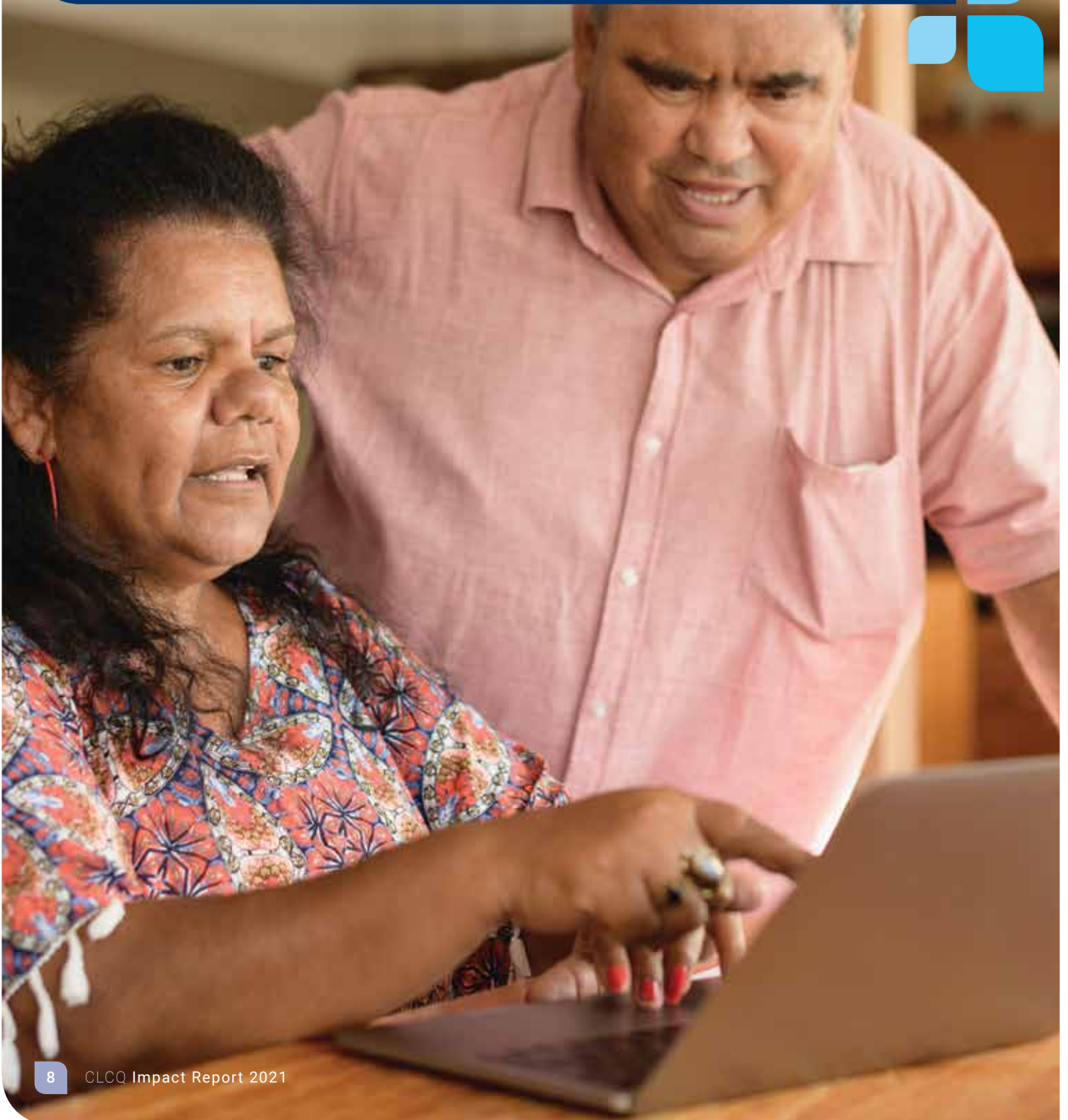
“The solicitor was absolutely amazing in assuring me that we can work through my legal issue. She was calm, informative and empathetic to my situation.”

”



1. Impact on clients

Community legal centres make a difference to a diverse range of Queenslanders' lives, everyday. By tailoring services to people and communities, the work of community legal centres contributes to the long term impacts of people having decreased stress, improved financial wellbeing, increased personal safety and greater social inclusion.



About our clients



41%
of Queensland community legal centres clients have **no or low income**



3 in 5
(59%) clients in **rural, regional and remote areas** are experiencing **family and domestic violence**



71%
of Queensland clients indicated that they are experiencing **financial disadvantage**



3 in 5
clients (59%) are people with a **disability on no or low income**



10%
of Queensland clients identify as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**



1 in 2
(48%) clients with a **disability** experience **family violence**



60%
of clients are **women**



1 in 4
(25%) clients seeking help from rural regional and remote areas identify as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander** people



1 in 5
(22%) clients has a **disability or mental illness**



Almost 6%
(5.8%) of clients are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing **homelessness**



3 in 5
(62%) of **women** seeking assistance are experiencing **family and domestic violence**



Women are **2.6 times** more likely than men to be homeless when seeking help from a Queensland community legal centre



17%
are from **rural, regional and remote areas** of Queensland

Notable differences since our last impact report in 2018:

- More services have been provided to people in rural regional and remote areas
- More clients identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and they are more likely to live in a rural, regional or remote area
- Clients with a disability are more likely to be experiencing family and domestic violence.



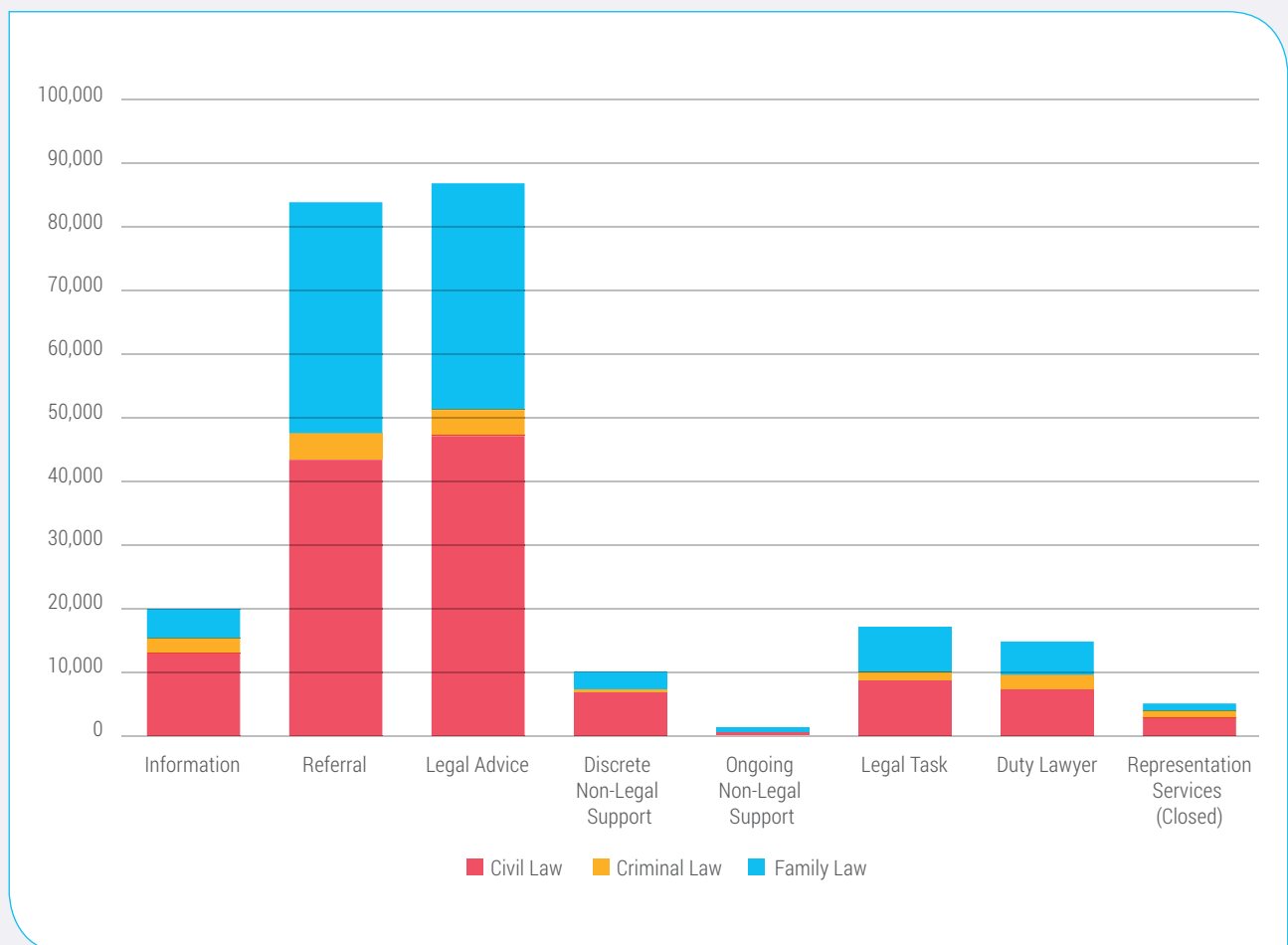
** These statistics are drawn from the national client database CLASS from the period of 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.*

Appropriate services

The majority of services provided by community legal centres were referrals and advices in civil and family law areas. The high rates of discrete services reflect the many volunteer services delivered across Queensland, which involve one-off legal advice and task assistance.

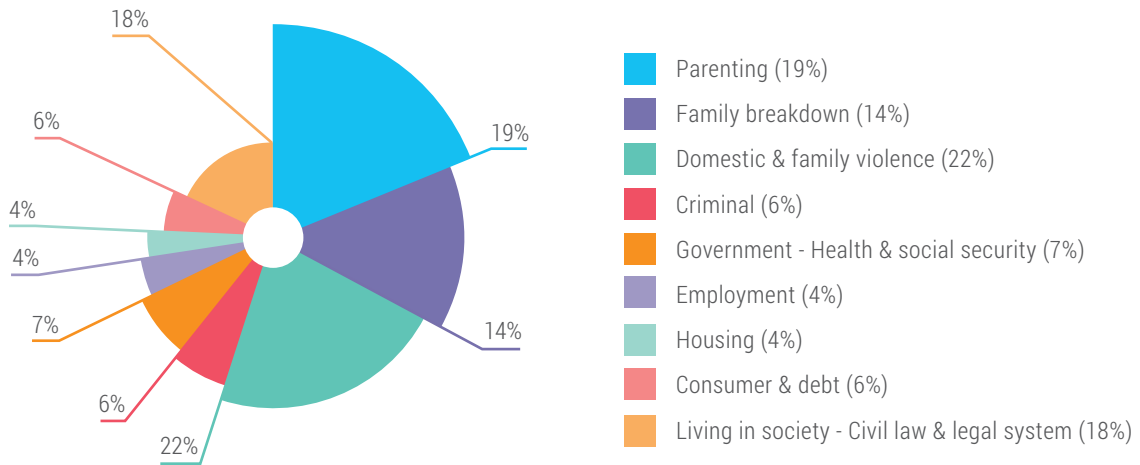
Since the 2018 Impact Report, Queensland community legal centres are delivering more services to the community with notable increases in the area of legal task assistance, duty lawyer services and holistic services through non-legal support.

What services did we deliver this year?

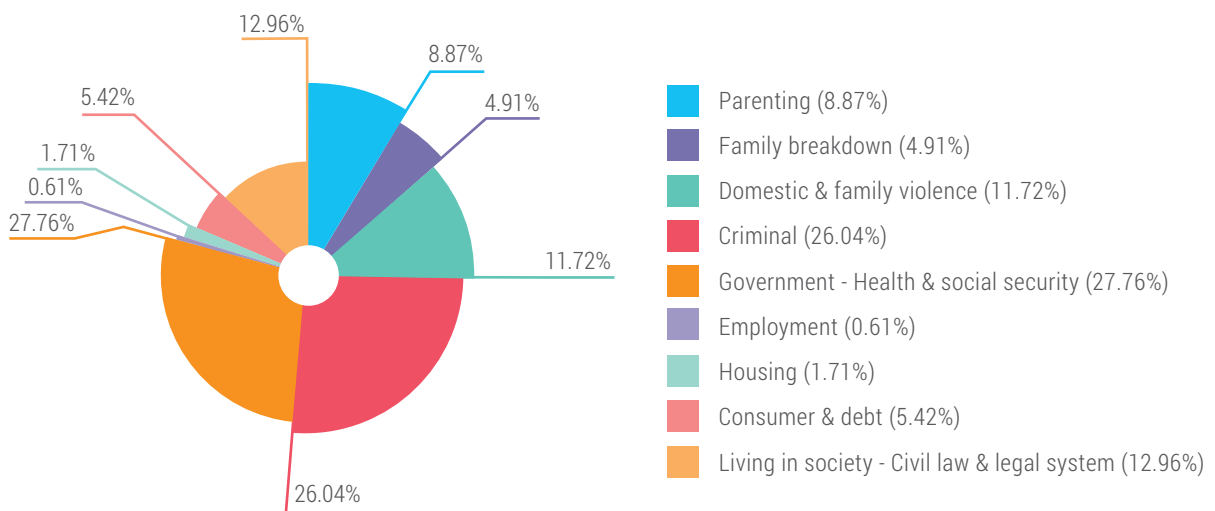


What legal problems did we help with this year?

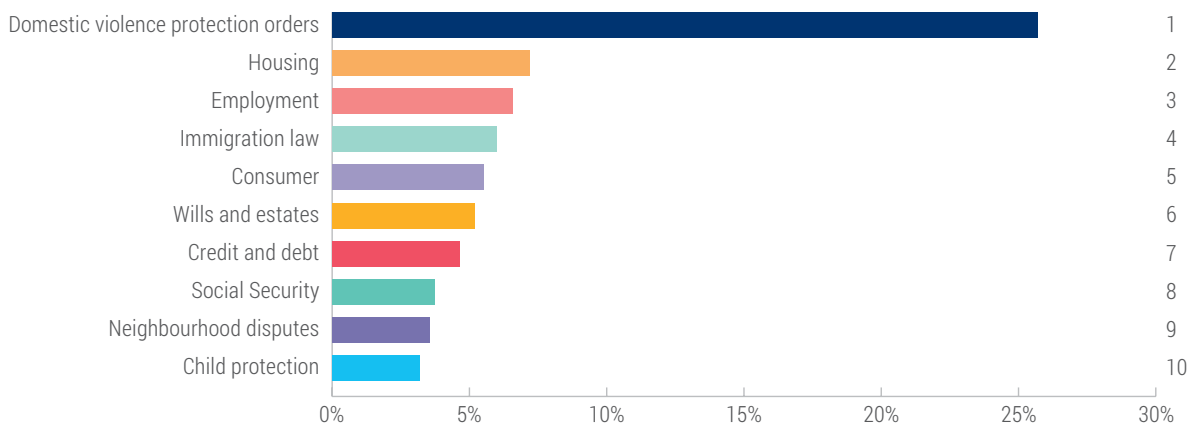
Discrete Services



Representation Services



Top 10 Civil Law Issues in 2020-22



Local services for local people

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting health-directed restrictions, highlighted the importance of local services for local people in a geographically diverse state. Remote ways of working highlighted the significant digital divide in communities, which can range from internet speed and access in regional communities, access to internet and devices in appropriate confidential spaces for legal assistance, and familiarity and comfort with accessing services digitally. Community Legal Centres are in the far north of Queensland such as **Junkuri Laka Community Legal Centre** on Mornington Island and **Goondiwindi Community Legal Service** in the far south west. Even in the metropolitan areas of the state, vulnerable communities benefit from having a trusted local community legal centre.

Early resolution

Community Legal Centres can help people resolve their legal disputes without having to go to court. **Bayside Community Legal Service** provides a facilitated dispute resolution service. Clients looking to resolve their disputes through mediation are referred to appropriately experienced mediators through its volunteer mediator panel. The mediation service involves two mediators who assist the parties to discuss and resolve the issues. While mediators can't decide the resolution, they can assist each party to identify the issues in dispute, develop options and consider alternatives to reach a mutually acceptable outcome.

Integrated services

When people have a legal problem, they are more likely to first seek advice from family, friends or a health professional, rather than a lawyer. Integrated services can better support vulnerable client groups with complex needs. The health service, **Institute of Urban Indigenous Health (UIIH)**, employs lawyers so that the healthcare teams can make referrals for legal help all under the same roof. This health justice partnership means that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people can access multiple services within one trusted community organisation.

Pro bono support

Pro bono partners are an important service multiplier for community legal centres. At **LawRight**, Pro Bono Connect has been the pro bono 'matchmaker' for the Queensland legal profession for the last 20 years. The service assesses and refers matters for full pro bono representation by a private lawyer. Once a client has been successfully referred, the pro bono firms acts in their own name and LawRight continues to support the client with referrals to pro bono barristers and community support.

Outreach

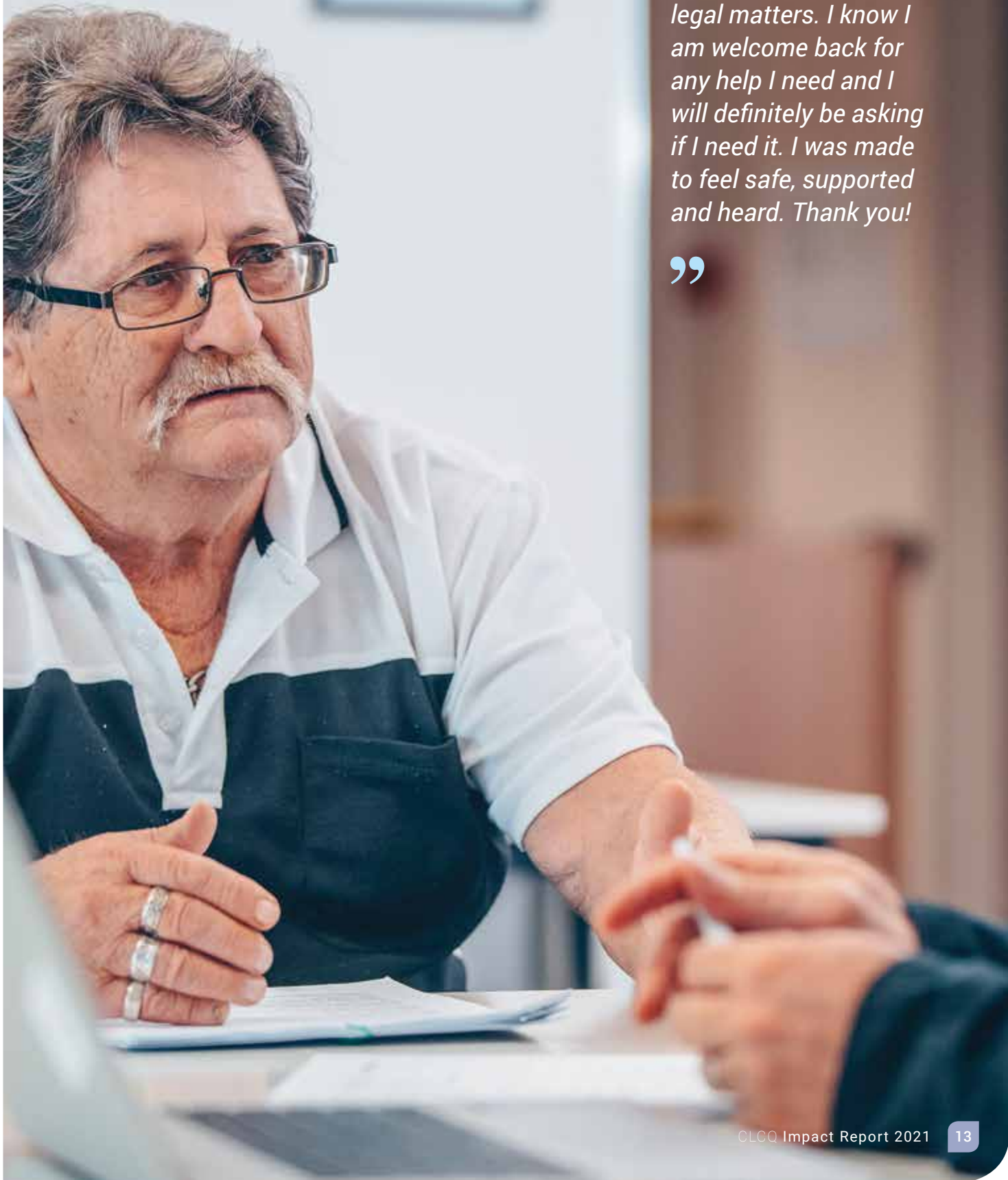
Community legal centres are located throughout Queensland, with regional centres providing services across large areas. Outreaches are critical to expanding the geographical reach. **Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre** covers an area more than 90 square kilometres. By working in partnership with local regional agencies they not only provide services to people in the Mackay area, but also to Bowen, Moranbah, Sarina and Proserpine. Partnerships with the local services ensure that appropriate referrals and support are provided to local people who need access to legal help.



“

I really appreciate your service. You were always well prepared, had great communication, welcoming, understanding, and strategic in your verbal and written interaction. It was always easy to understand the process and what to expect next. I couldn't have had any one better working with me.

”



“

I am leaving feeling empowered and that I have all the tools necessary to take on my legal matters. I know I am welcome back for any help I need and I will definitely be asking if I need it. I was made to feel safe, supported and heard. Thank you!

”



“

I am so grateful for all the help as I am not good with anything online or computer, the lawyer was amazing. They helped me through the stressful time as I was preparing my divorce. I would not have been able to manage it on my own and I didn't have the finances to pay out over \$2,000. I am so grateful for this service and help I received.

”

Making a difference to clients

Community Legal Centres Queensland coordinated a survey of 1,540 community legal centre clients, in May 2021.

Our aim was to survey 25% of Queensland community legal centre clients over a period of a month (between 1 and 31 May 2021). We received 1,540 responses and, according to the whole of sector client database Community Legal Assistance Service System (CLASS) data, 5,740 clients received services during May. We reached more than a quarter (26.8%) of clients.

The demographics of the survey sample were generally consistent with the levels of representation of demographics found in the community legal centre client population. The greatest discrepancy was in income levels, which were under-represented in the survey sample compared with the CLASS community legal centre client population data.

Analysis of the data indicated a very high satisfaction rate across the survey sample, with the average satisfaction score across all clients being three out of four.

The client survey results indicate high levels of strong agreement or agreement to survey questions that link to the **intermediate service delivery outcomes for clients**, being that they felt:

- they had their matter properly heard and adjudicated
- confident in their legal representation
- they know how to get help in the future.

The client survey results indicate high levels of strong agreement or agreement to survey questions that link to the **intermediate outcomes of positive impacts**, in that clients:

- had more knowledge of their rights and responsibilities
- had their specific issues satisfactorily resolved.

70% of clients were satisfied with the resolution of the matter for which they received assistance.

91% of clients were confident in the ability of community legal centre staff to assist them.

90% of clients had an understanding of how to deal with their legal problem and felt the community legal centre provided them with options.

86% of clients found it easy to contact the community legal centre when they first needed help.

94% of clients thought community legal centre staff listened to their legal problem in a friendly and respectful manner.

87% of clients thought information and resources from community legal centre staff were very useful.

80% of clients felt the community legal centre was able to meet their cultural and personal needs.



Our clients' stories

The stories of John, Imran, Mary, Margaret, Sonya, Tiana, Penny and Betty profile community legal centre's representation work and provide a powerful insight into the impact of the work on community legal centre on people's lives. There are hundreds of stories just like these.





Seller beware

While buyers need to beware, sellers also need to beware of ensuring they are not selling defective products. Sometimes only legal assistance can hold unscrupulous sellers accountable.

John*, who was on a limited income, bought a second-hand car through a car dealership. The car was advertised as roadworthy and in good condition, but the vehicle was delivered without a roadworthy certificate and in a dilapidated condition.

After the car failed a roadworthy inspection, John contacted the dealership and was offered an amount of compensation that wasn't enough to fix the car.

After **Central Queensland Community Legal Centre** wrote to the dealership, John received a full refund of the purchase price of the car and paid for the car to be delivered back to the dealership. A full refund meant John could buy a more reliable car to transport his children to school and he also avoided the stress of QCAT proceedings, which would have delayed any refunds.



Behaviour change for perpetrators

Keeping women and children safe from domestic and family violence requires men to be held accountable for their violence and to access support to change their behaviour.

Imran* emigrated from Iraq and was suffering from anxiety and war-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In Queensland, he was facing charges for breaching a domestic violence protection order. Drawing on their holistic approach, **HUB Community Legal** provided a range of supports to Imran to help his behaviour change. This included referral to a culturally appropriate domestic violence and post separation parenting course and psychological counselling to address anxiety and PTSD. HUB Community Legal's representation ensured that a condition of Imran's probation order was to continue to take steps to support his behaviour change and mental health conditions. HUB Community Legal also referred Imran to Relationships Australia for a linguistically and culturally diverse mediation, which was conditional upon his successful completion of a domestic violence awareness and perpetrator course.





Supporting single parents to obtain entitlements

Single parents with the day-to-day care of their children are entitled to child support payments from the non-custodial parent. When the parent who should be making payments avoids their obligations, the custodial parent is left to struggle financially.

The father of Mary's* children owed \$15,000 in arrears of child support. Despite **Wide Bay Burnett Legal Service** assisting Mary to recover the funds through Queensland's child support agency, the arrears were not paid. As a last resort, with the support of Wide Bay Burnett Legal Service, Mary filed proceedings for debt recovery in the Magistrates Court. Despite the father lodging a last-minute defence, an application for a Summary Judgment resulted in Mary achieving the outcome she wanted.

Mary was extremely grateful to receive the money, which helped her with her ongoing care of her children. She also knows where to get help if she has any similar issue in the future.



Independence in ageing

Fundamental to an older person's autonomy is having the ability to make their own decisions about their life, including where and who they live with.

After 74-year-old Margaret* was admitted to hospital after a fall. Her husband of 40 years, who also held Margaret's Power of Attorney, advocated for her to not return home and to be admitted to an aged care facility. Margaret did not want to live in an aged care facility, and it became apparent that her marriage to her husband was difficult and that he was using Margaret's hospital admission to affect a separation and keep all the assets in the relationship. **ADA Law** assisted Margaret to obtain medical reports that proved her functional and cognitive capacity and enabling her to revoke the Power of Attorney appointing her husband. ADA Law helped Margaret get legal support to separate from her husband and obtain her share of the marriage property.

Margaret is now living in a supported independent living unit in a retirement community and has been able to reconnect with her local friend network.

“

Very accurate, honest, and supportive advice. I am very satisfied with the professional and friendly level of service I received. I will be personally recommending this service.

”



Free from violence

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35 times more likely to experience domestic and family violence than non-indigenous women, according to the Queensland Government's *Not Now, Not Ever* report. They also face significant barriers in accessing the services and legal help they need. When legal services partner with local community centres it makes it easier for vulnerable women to get legal help when they need.

Sonya*, a young Aboriginal woman, went to her local community centre after her ex-partner had assaulted her and taken the two young children. Sonya was distraught as she did not know where the children were and if they were safe. Sonya and the children had all been victims of serious violence from her ex-partner.

North Queensland Women's Legal Service (NQWLS) provided urgent assistance to Sonya. NQWLS helped Sonya by preparing court documents seeking an urgent order that the children be returned to her care. By NQWLS working closely with Sonya's support worker from the community centre, it ensured that Sonya didn't have to keep re-telling her story and reliving her trauma.

The court heard Sonya's application the same day that the documents were filed, and the children were returned to her care the next day. The court also made an order that the children were to live with her and only spend supervised time with their father. This meant that Sonya and her children were safe and could live free from violence, safe in the knowledge that the children will remain in her care.



More than just a name

The reclamation of identity and privacy can be an important part of healing from traumatic experience.

Tiana* and her mother were survivors of domestic and family violence, with Tiana's father convicted of sexual offences against her. At the age of 16, Tiana wanted to be known by her mother's maiden name and to remove the daily reminder of her father. **Townsville Community Law** assisted Tiana with a name change application and sought financial support for Tiana to cover the fees for the process to re-issue her birth certificate. Tiana was also emotionally supported as she was required to contact her father as part of the process.

As a result of successfully changing her name, Tiana feels better protected from further emotional and psychological harm. The process was essential for her ongoing recovery and personal autonomy in the face of trauma.





LGBTI inclusive services

Research, although limited, informs us that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people experience domestic and family violence at the same or higher rate than their heterosexual counterparts. Despite this LGBTI people are less likely to identify their experience as abuse, report violence to the police, or seek assistance from a domestic and family violence support organisation for fear of prejudice and discrimination. Although women can access most mainstream services, these services may have little experience in working with LGBTI women and therefore may not be as inclusive, due to the language and terminology they use and may in general not offer the most appropriate support.

Penny* and her partner Nicola, separated following an escalation in both physical, verbal and psychological violence perpetrated by Nicola against Penny.

During one incident, Penny managed to flee Nicola's physical restraint of her and ran to her closest police

station. Police officers removed Nicola from the home so Penny could safely return. Penny made the decision to apply for a protection order on her own, as police did not apply for a protection order, when Nicola's domestic violence continued after separation.

The **LGBTI Legal Service** ran an inclusive and targeted service during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. Penny was given telephone advice prior to the first court date and telephone support on the day of the court event. LGBTI Legal Service prepared court material, advocated for and negotiated with the private solicitor engaged by Nicola, found a pro bono barrister agreeable to appear at a hearing and provided practical guidance on the court process.

As a result of the assistance provided by the LGBTI Legal Service, the court made a Protection Order by consent naming Penny as the person to be protected for period of four years. Penny was no longer fearful of Nicola's behaviour and was appreciative of the legal and practical support the service was able to provide her.





High pressure sales

Older people can be vulnerable to aggressive marketing tactics by companies who take advantage of their confusion, isolation and communication challenges.

Betty* was pressured into signing up to a funeral plan costing more than \$7,000. At the time of agreeing to sign the contract, Betty was alone and emotionally vulnerable as it was the anniversary of a significant date for her and her late husband. The sales agent was very persistent that she signed the plan then and there. The cooling-off period had expired once she had received the contract documentation in the mail. Betty requested the company cancel the plan but was told that she was unable to do so as she had signed a legally binding contract.

Brisbane North Community Legal Service assisted Betty to draft a letter to the funeral plan company outlining how she felt pressured to sign the contract and that the sales agent didn't ensure that she understood what she was signing. As a result of this help, the company fully refunded the money and cancelled her funeral plan. Betty now has the autonomy to find a funeral plan that suits her needs and budget, without feeling pressured.

* All names have been changed to protect the identity of the clients.

What our clients are saying:

“

“Friendly, knowledgeable staff who make you feel welcome, comfortable and assist with the highest degree of dignity.”

“I felt really reassured. The lady I spoke with was very easy to understand. It wasn't lots of legal jargon. It was like speaking with a friend.”

”



2. Impact on community

Working with the community is a critical part of the work of community legal centres. This work ensures community partners and the broader community have access to legal information and education, and by collaborating with partners there is a joined up response to meeting legal needs.



Access to community legal education

Community legal centres provide community legal education (CLE) to improve legal knowledge. Community legal education is an early intervention and prevention strategy, as it educates people about the law to help them avoid legal problems, or to seek advice early and prevent minor problems from escalating into serious legal issues.

Queensland community legal centres provide CLE to the general community, community services, community groups, organisations, schools, or other agencies.

In 2021 there were more than **972** community legal education (CLE) activities delivered throughout Queensland.

248 CLE resources were developed by centres.

The top three areas of civil law for CLE are:

1. Housing
2. Wills and estates
3. Credit and debt

The top three areas of family law for CLE are:

1. Domestic and family violence
2. Parenting
3. Family law property

The top four audiences for CLE include:

- Clients
- Community organisations
- Community groups
- Government agencies



Peace building

After deep engagement with 27 communities from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds in Brisbane, **Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)** identified a need in these communities for building a better understanding of family violence and how the law might impact them. As a result, an intensive 'peace building' family violence prevention program was co-designed with RAILS, community agencies and community leaders. The program covered understanding and communicating conflict, violence and the law; extent and causes of family violence; ways to prevent family violence; getting to know and work more effectively with key services; strengthening skills in working with abusers to promote change and accountability; and resolution and restoration of the community. The six-week program was delivered online and included the development of a leader's toolkit and a peace-building pledge. The program is already creating changes in the communities. The impacts include faith-based leaders providing support to women experiencing violence; community leaders supporting inclusive family negotiations, and closer relationships between the communities and domestic and family violence services.

Youth chat videos

Young people often do not have experience or knowledge on how to navigate the justice system and do not know about the services available to them. **Pine Rivers Community Legal Service** created easy-to-follow videos for young people called Youth Chat. The service produced two videos, one on access to justice and police powers and the other on sexting, revenge porn and tenancy. The videos were produced in response to being unable to run face-to-face workshops with young people due to COVID-19 restrictions. Young people said they found the information useful. The legal service also had positive feedback from the legal community on the use of the videos and is now collaborating with other legal services to teach them how to use the video making software.

Getting the most out of a legal appointment

Being prepared for a legal appointment can ensure a client can make the most of their time with a lawyer.

Suncoast Community Legal Service spent time over the COVID-19 lockdown working on its *Legal Information Toolkit* on family law and general law. Potential clients seeking an advice appointment with the service are directed to the online toolkits, which cover 11 family law and 17 general law topics. The users are then asked two or three qualifying questions before being shown and emailed a list of website links most relevant to their problem. Staff and volunteer lawyers report that clients who use the toolkits tend to have a better background understanding of the law and that advice appointment time can be spent helping them to decide the best way forward.

Legal information in Samoan

Young people can get in trouble because they don't understand how the law impacts their lives. **YFS Legal** works with organisations throughout the Logan area to deliver community education sessions on legal matters involving young people and families. It created legal education videos for young people to help them to understand legal terms and legal matters. The short and effective videos have been created on domestic

violence, partying safely and they recently created the videos in the Samoan language. YFS Legal created the information videos in Samoan to get cut through with the young Samoan community in Logan.

Training for the community legal sector

Community Legal Centres Queensland provides training and support to the Queensland's community legal sector. It does this through its free webinar program, annual conference, annual leadership training, and masterclasses.

We surveyed webinar participants to gather their feedback on the program.

- **Q1:** The webinar increased my understanding of this topic: **94% agreed**
- **Q2:** I will use the information I've learned in my workplace / to help my clients: **86% agreed**
- **Q3:** The information was presented in an engaging style: **89% agreed**
- **Q4:** The webinar handouts / PowerPoints were helpful (if provided): **92% agreed.**

- Number of webinars: **25**
- Number of registrations (total): **3341**
- Number of views of on-demand webinar recording: **2376**
- Average number of registrations per webinar: **139**
- Percentage of registrants from community legal centres: **51%**
- Percentage of registrants from private legal profession, government agencies, community organisations and students: **49%**
- Registrations from Brisbane/metro areas: **42%**
- Regional, rural and remote registrations: **25%**
- Interstate registrations: **33%**

We covered a wide range of topics including:

- Technology and innovative practices
- Ethics and sector related issues
- WHS and supporting community legal centre staff
- Health and mental health
- Upholding human rights
- Child protection and domestic and family violence
- Working with diverse client groups
- Consumer, social security and employment law



Meeting the legal needs of the community

Community legal centres collaborate and connect with community partners. Leveraging the expertise and support of external organisations allows centres to increase their scope and capacity to provide free legal advice and information to their clients and future clients.

Our community partners include:

- Referral agencies
- Neighbourhood centres
- Domestic and family violence services
- Housing services
- Health services
- Universities

What our community partners say

Community partners were surveyed about the impact of the work of Queensland community legal centres.

- **78% agreed*** community legal centres have contributed to the community having improved knowledge and self-confidence around legal issues.
- **91% said** they had confidence in making a referral to a community legal centre for appropriate support or advice.
- **78% indicated** they had increased competence and knowledge in making appropriate referrals.
- **53% felt** community legal centres made appropriate referrals to them. This is qualified by 34% of respondents indicating a referral to them from a community legal centre was not applicable.

“

We commend their amazing work with young women, many of whom would not otherwise have engaged in accessing essential legal advice or support!

”

* agreed and strongly agreed.

Social security advice in regional and remote Queensland

Basic Rights Queensland identified an unmet need for social security advice for people in regional and remote Queensland. Basic Rights Queensland's partner organisations reported a significant number of people do not receive social security payments because they are unable to navigate the system or experience barriers in accessing payments. Basic Rights Queensland took a place-based approach to partner with ten regional and remote community organisations to provide community legal education and prioritised access to Basic Rights Queensland support and services. Following the training sessions with Basic Rights Queensland, workers said the breakdown of complex administrative law into plain English, access to resources and prioritised access to Basic Rights Queensland's solicitors and social workers helped them to confidentially support their clients. The initial project was so successful that it has been funded as an ongoing service to regional Queensland.



Prisoners' Legal Service partner with UQ

Community legal centres partner with universities to identify system issues and raise awareness about improving them. For more than 30 years **Prisoners' Legal Service** (PLS) has provided legal services to people in prison, many of these have spent time in solitary confinement. PLS invited University of Queensland's (UQ) Professor Tamara Walsh to undertake a joint research project on legal responses to solitary confinement, to raise awareness and identify alternatives to this practice. Tamara Walsh and PLS Director Helen Blaber worked closely with PLS staff, and volunteer UQ Law undergraduate students, to complete the research project. They published the joint report *Legal Perspectives on Solitary Confinement in Queensland*, in May 2020. PLS says it could not have undertaken a project of this significance without the expertise and assistance of UQ and law students.

The report received media attention documenting experiences of people who had been in solitary confinement in prison. The increased awareness of the use of solitary confinement in Queensland's prisons has contributed to lawyers and other professionals providing evidence about their client's conditions of imprisonment to help them achieve positive legal outcomes. Criminal lawyers have since sought advice from PLS to support bail applications.

Health justice partnership gets off the ground in North Queensland

Building relationships of trust and understanding is extremely important in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. **Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service** (QIFVLS) has started a Health Justice Partnership Legal team in its Cairns office, partnering with three Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations (ACCHOs) – Mulungu Aboriginal Corporation Primary Health Service, in Mareeba, Gurriny Yealamucka Health Services Aboriginal Corporation, in Yarrabah and Mamu Health Services Limited, in Innisfail.

The first priority in this partnership has been developing relationships with the ACCHOs and the communities they service. This has involved raising QIFVLS' profile by being involved in community activities and events, such as Mareeba Community Fun Day (below).

Providing an all-round holistic service approach has proven to be effective in increasing the community's accessibility to legal services, early intervention and identification of legal issues, and a better quality of service.

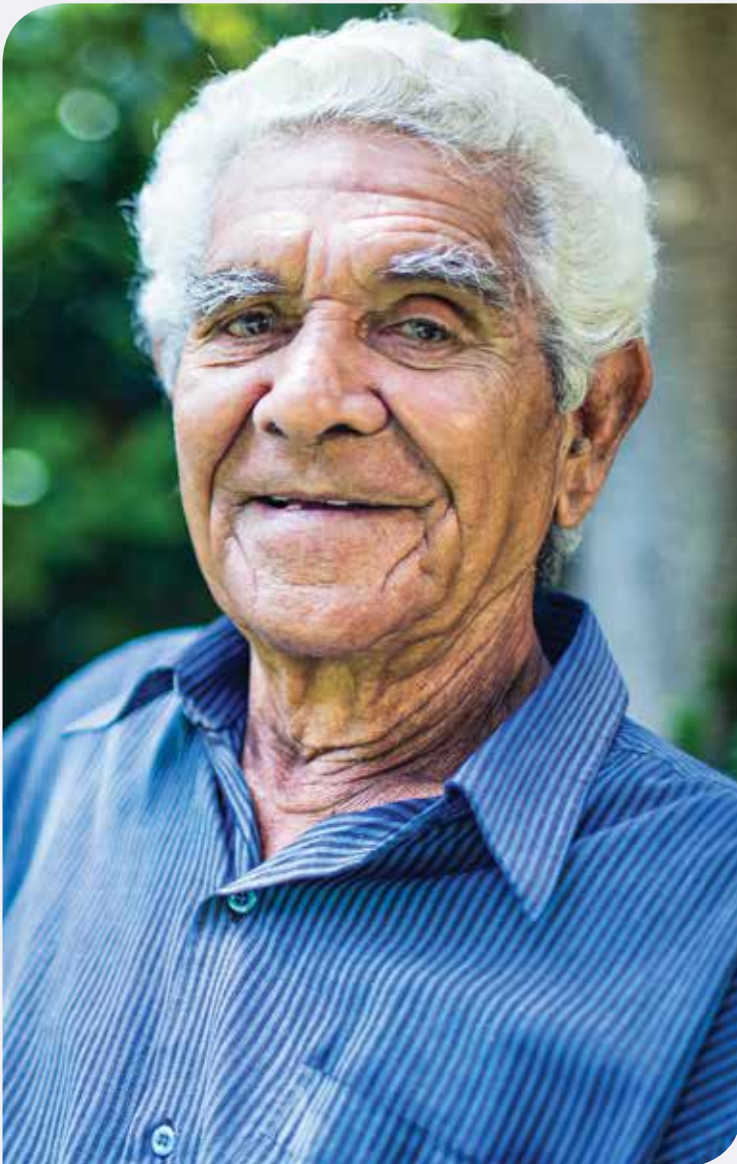
Through working with the ACCHOs, QIFVLS aim to provide a holistic legal service to clients who primarily



seek health and wellbeing support, as opposed to legal assistance or advice. It will provide a soft referral point for clients and provide opportunity for the delivery of community education to clients and stakeholders.

Partnership to provide wraparound services

Partnering with community agencies can extend the reach and services of community legal centres. **Gold Coast Community Legal Centre** and Relationships Australia (Qld) have partnered to deliver legal help to older people as part of the Elder Abuse Prevention and Support Service. By working with Relationships Australia's dedicated case manager, referrals are made to the community legal centre for individual support and help. This enables wraparound support to older people experiencing or at risk of elder abuse and improving their overall safety and independence in the community.



Our survey responses:

“

“Community legal centres provide prompt, sound service and always ready to help our service support our client base.”

“They are consistently innovating in ways to improve their processes. We value working with them to ensure that people get legal help when they need it.”

“Referrals are well met, and we value the outreach legal service. It's important to have a local service.”

“We find their support invaluable.”

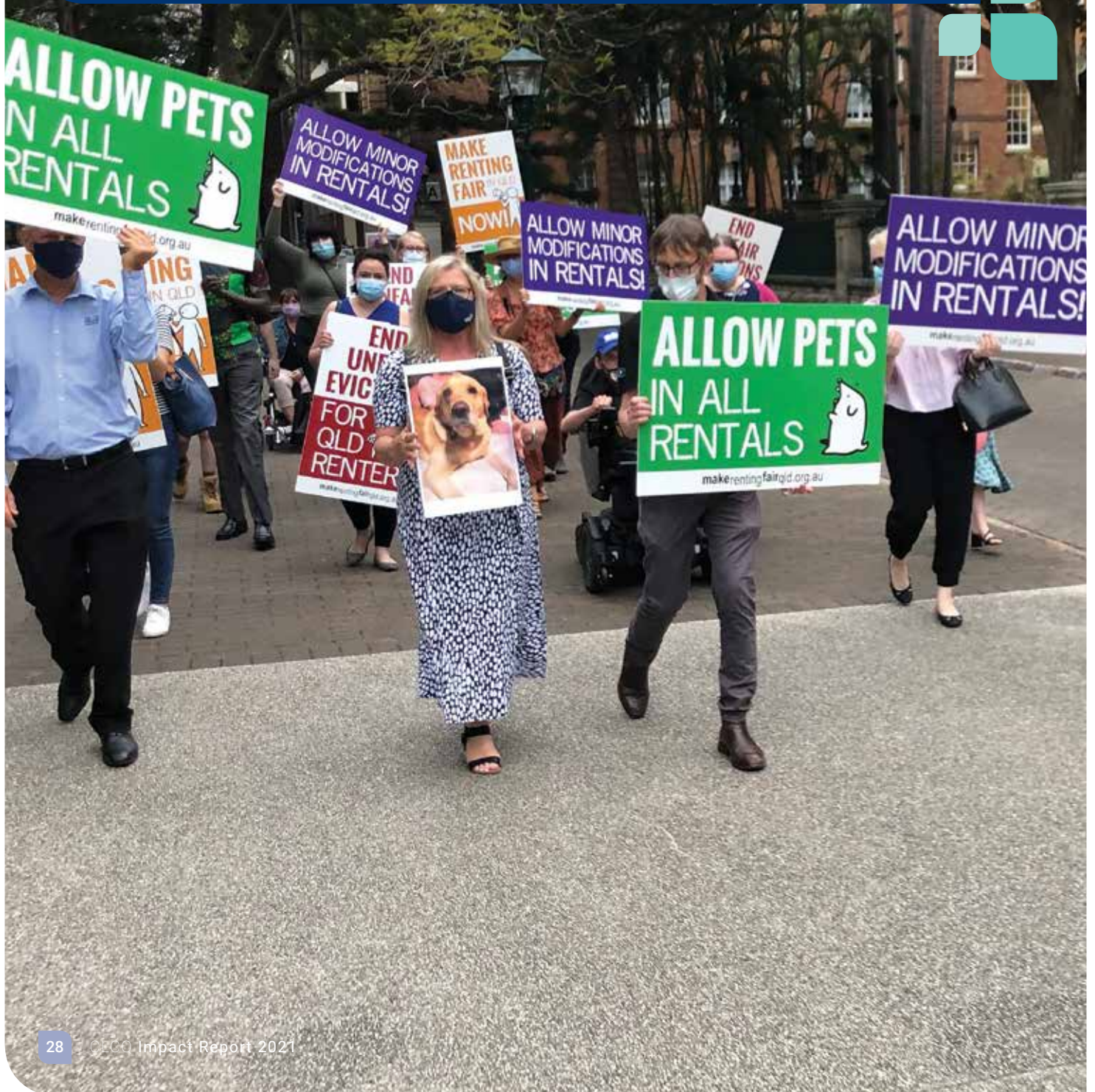
“The support, knowledge and advice they offer my clients is invaluable and always appreciated. Exceptional service.”

”



3. Impact on the justice system and laws

Community legal centres contribute to effective policy and practice to create positive change in the community. They engage and collaborate with organisations in the justice system to make them more effective, efficient and fair. Justice system partners are courts and tribunals, government and other legal assistance services.



Effective policy and practice

During the 2020-21 financial year, community legal centres took part in more than **292** law reform projects and **1,835** stakeholder engagements.

Law reforms topics included:

- Environment
- Domestic and family violence
- Immigration law
- Guardianship for adults
- Housing
- Sexual assault and related offences
- Discrimination
- Consumer
- Child protection

Being part of the solution

The COVID-19 health restrictions posed a range of health and safety concerns for people living with disability. By working closely with people with disability, **Queensland Advocacy Incorporated** (QAI) were able to quickly identify the issues and work with National Disability Insurance Agency, the Minister for the Department of Social Services and the National Disability Services, Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works and the Department of Communities on the important issues of health and safety. Due to the persistent advocacy by QAI, the Queensland government invited the organisation to assist with dissemination of public health messaging and provide feedback on health messages so they were clearer and more relevant to people with disability.

Making renting fair for all

There is no place like home and fair rental laws are at the heart of making houses into homes for renters. **Tenants Queensland** has been spearheading and guiding the Make Renting Fair campaign since late 2018 to advocate for stronger tenancy laws to protect renters. The Housing Legislation Amendment Bill was introduced into the Queensland Parliament in 2021, which included greater protections for tenants against no ground evictions, greater protections for people at risk of domestic and family violence, improving opportunities for tenants to have a pet and introducing

minimum housing standards. While there is more work to be done, Tenants Queensland, and its campaign, has unified the voices of tenants to influence law reform.

Advocating for stronger youth laws

In Queensland, children aged 10 and above can be held criminally responsible and can be locked up in detention. **Youth Advocacy Centre** has joined with other community groups, experts and organisations to campaign the Queensland Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 years old. Youth Advocacy Centre use their day-to-day work with young people to tell the important stories of the detrimental effects the criminal justice system has on the lives of young people and how this can impact their lives through to adulthood.

Affirmative consent laws

Aboriginal Family Legal Service Southern Queensland has added the important voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people calling on the Queensland Premier and Queensland Attorney-General for affirmative consent laws in Queensland. It urged the Queensland Government to do more to protect women by ensuring rape laws require people to enthusiastically consent to sex. This important issue is part of the work of the Queensland Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce that is currently considering the experience of women across the criminal justice system.

Strategic litigation to uphold human rights

Community legal centres can elevate community voices through the use of strategic litigation. A group of young Queenslanders were assisted by **Environmental Defenders Office** to argue that the proposed Waratah Coal mine would impact their human rights by fuelling climate changes that puts the futures, lives and cultures of Queenslanders at risk. By striking out the coal miner's objections, the Queensland Land Court cleared the way to consider the young people's concerns about the human rights impact of mining. By using strategic litigation, Environmental Defenders Office has validated community concerns and supported community to protect their human rights.

Supporting the justice system

We surveyed people working in the justice system to provide feedback on the work of Queensland's community legal centres.

■ 95% of respondents agreed*

Queensland community legal centres provided an effective service for vulnerable individuals and the broader community.

■ 90% of respondents agreed*

Queensland community legal centres lawyers provided high quality services to their clients.

■ 50% of respondents agreed*

Queensland community legal centres contributed to reduced incidence of non-appearances in court.

■ 75% of respondents agreed*

Queensland community legal centres' work led to increased efficiency in processing cases.

■ 85% of respondents agreed*

Queensland community legal centres work enabled them to be better informed on community views on legal and public policy issues.

* agreed and strongly agreed.

Our survey respondents came from:

- Legal Aid – 26%
- Government (justice administration) – 63%
- From a court or tribunal, including judicial officers and registry staff – 11%

Duty lawyer service in Cairns

Community legal centres provide essential duty lawyer service across the Queensland court system, helping unrepresented people navigate the court process.

A Domestic and Family Violence Duty Lawyer Service is provided that the Cairns Magistrates Court. The service is coordinated by **Cairns Community Legal Centre**, who provide duty lawyer services to men, and **North Queensland Women's Legal Service**, who provide duty lawyer services to women. This is an essential service to people in the Cairns community who cannot afford

a lawyer and for those who do not know how to navigate the courts system.

Providing services on Palm Island

Finding a Justices of the Peace (JP) is not always easy in regional and remote areas. Luckily for residents of Palm Island they can rely on **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services NQ** (ATSIWLSNQ) community development worker and cultural advisor Andrea Kyle-Sailor, who has been sworn in as a JP.

Andrea holds a law degree and is completing her Practical Legal Training. She combines this with working for ATSIWLSNQ and as an elected member of the Palm Island Council. She is a very busy woman, but she says that people on Palm Island are happy to have another Bwgcorman who is a JP. The centre's receptionist Erica Kyle has also been sworn in as a JP.



Andrea Kyle-Sailor

Supporting women in prison

Women in prison commonly have multiple forms of disadvantage and have been victims of violence.

Women's Legal Service Queensland's outreach lawyer visits women in prison to provide them with legal assistance. It has continued its important outreach service at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre and the Southern Queensland Correction Centre to provide free assistance with family law, child protection and domestic and family violence matters. This important service ensures women can participate in other legal processes affecting them such as child protection and family law matters.

Elder abuse training

The abuse of older people usually occurs in their own home by a family member. Older people usually do not want to obtain a protection order to evict their adult child. The law is clear that if the older person tells them to leave their home, and there is no tenancy arrangement, the adult child is trespassing. Police have typically under-responded to this common scenario.

Caxton Legal Centre has worked with the Queensland Police Service on an *Elder Abuse Aide Memoir*, procedures for an operating manual and elder abuse training to ensure older Queenslanders can remain living safely in their own homes.



Our survey responses:

“

“Community legal centres are an essential part of our justice system.”

“Community legal centres provide valuable legal and social support to vulnerable young people that have contact with the criminal justice system. They also fill a gap where young persons are not eligible for assistance through Legal Aid Queensland.”

“They are a great asset and support for our clients as we can make direct referrals without our clients having to navigate yet another agency.”

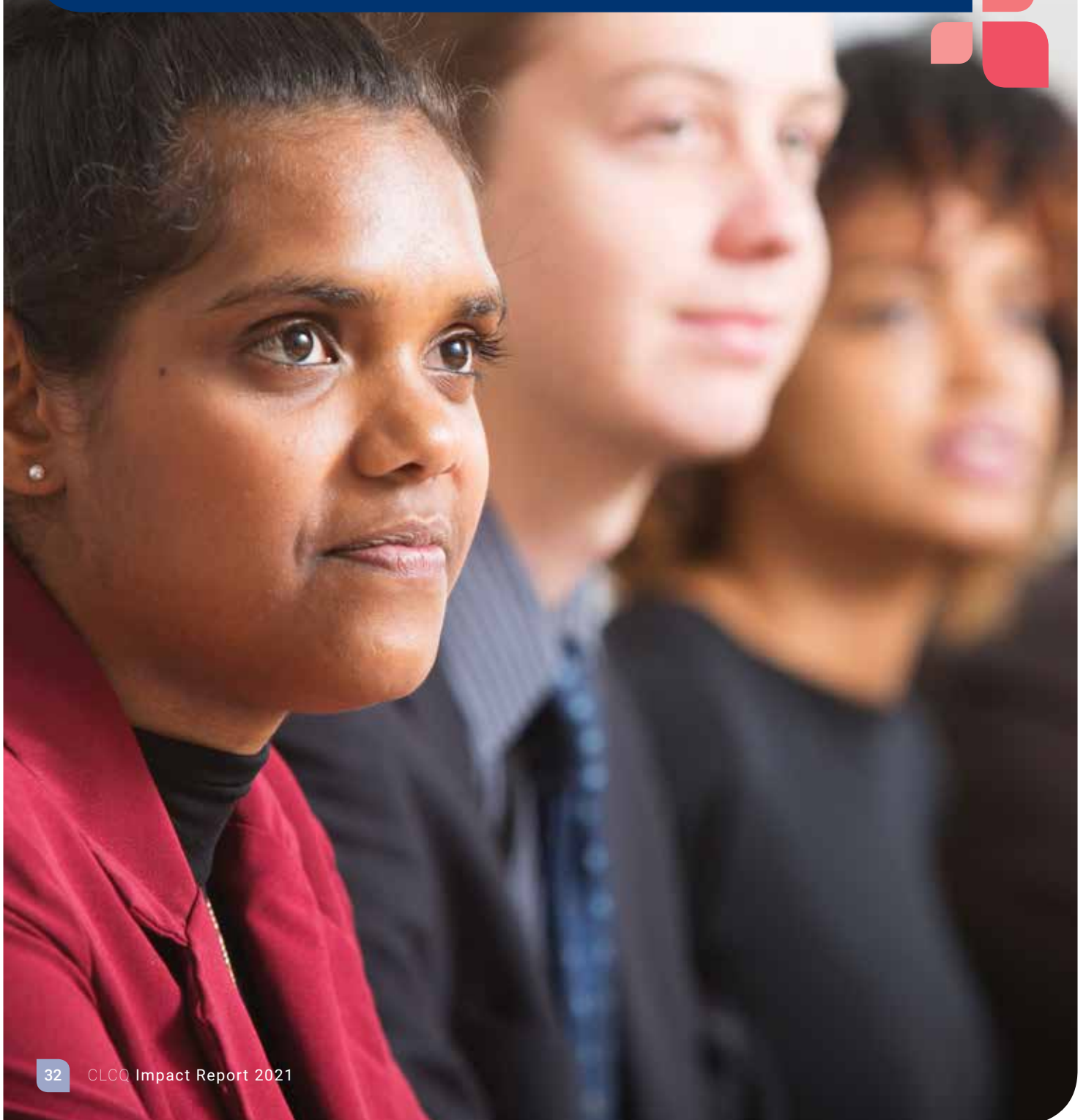
“We acknowledge the very important work community legal centres conduct with our clients. Our organisation heavily relies on the ability to refer clients for legal advice and support particularly regarding family dispute resolution and domestic and family violence issues.”

”



4. Impact on volunteers

The contribution of volunteers is crucial to support the operation of many community legal centres. When the demand for legal support largely outweighs the capacity of centres, relying on the expertise of volunteers is essential to running a service and assisting more people. Volunteers themselves can gain much-needed experience or personal enrichment by giving their time to support centres.



The types of volunteers engaged by community legal centres are:

- Undergraduate law students
- Lawyers (often pro bono)
- Law graduates
- Undergraduate social work students
- Administration volunteers
- Community legal education / community development workers
- Migration agents
- Finance officers / bookkeepers
- Fundraisers
- Communications / media volunteers

96% of Queensland's community legal centres involved volunteers in their work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on working with volunteers. Many centres have had to adjust the way they work with volunteers to keep themselves and the volunteers safe. In a survey, by Community Legal Centres Australia, Queensland's community legal centres were asked how they worked with volunteers during COVID-19 restrictions, office closures and transitions:

- **38% did not work with volunteers** during these periods
- **31% worked with volunteers** remotely
- **28% adjusted the way they worked** with volunteers.

“
Practical experience with amazing mentors to better the legal profession as a whole. They have laid the foundation for my legal career and taught me fundamental skills.
”

We surveyed 100 community legal centre volunteers to find out what they gain from volunteering their time.

The survey found that volunteers had gained both personal and professional value in contributing to the community through their work at community legal centres. The volunteers were a mix of early career volunteers and more experienced volunteers.

More than two thirds (67%) of respondents said they felt the experience of working at the community legal centre had enhanced their career prospects.

More than three quarters (76%) of respondents agreed working with the community legal centre offered them a unique opportunity to gain experience in new and different areas of law.

More than four in five (86%) said they had been able to improve their understanding of broader community issues through their work at a community legal centre.

Almost three quarters (73%) said they felt like they were able to improve their practice as a result of their experience at a community legal centre.

Average number of hours worked by volunteers

| Hours per week | | | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 - 2 hours | 3 - 5 hours | 5 - 8 hours | More than 8 hours |
| 62% | 26% | 9% | 3% |



Service reliant on volunteer support

When the demand for free legal support far outweighs the supply, community legal centres must rely on volunteering help to meet the needs of the community.

Moreton Bay Regional Community Legal Service would not exist without the valued contribution of its volunteers. The service relies heavily on volunteers with around 50 giving their time to the centre each year. The service has a group of volunteer solicitors that turn up each Monday to help with the demand from walk-in clients. The dedication of its volunteers was even more apparent to the service during the COVID-19 lockdown periods when the volunteers would give telephone advice to clients when face-to-face appointments were not possible.

Helping law students on their career path

TASC Legal and Social Justice Services has a committed pool of volunteers to assist with court support, clinics, administration, and para-legal services. TASC partnered with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the University of Southern Queensland to host law students on their placements. James Hart, a former QUT student, completed his Practical Legal Training with TASC this year. James had the opportunity to rotate around the legal teams working in family, domestic and family violence, criminal and civil law. The variety of tasks has helped him gain a better understanding of the area he wants to progress in. James said that his time as a volunteer student at TASC has been extremely rewarding, especially when it comes to helping people in the community.



James Hart

Rewarding work helping disadvantaged clients

Gaining legal experience is essential for law students looking to break into the profession. Law student Ally Smirolfo volunteers as the Deputy Coordinator at **My Community Legal**, on the Gold Coast, around 15 hours a week. She assists in coordinating the student volunteers, marketing the centre's events, and is hands on during weekly advice nights. She says working with disadvantaged clients has been an eye-opener for her and, through her work at the community legal centre, she is now more sympathetic and sensitive to those doing it tough. Her long-term goal is to work in family law, using her second degree in psychology to help disadvantaged people with their legal needs. Ally has created strong relationships and networks through her work at My Community Legal and is excited about her future in the legal profession.

“

The community legal centre has enabled me to gain invaluable legal experience in a variety of areas. It is a very worthwhile and much needed service assisting the disadvantaged.

”



Ally Smirolfo

Community Legal Centres Queensland members



1. ADA Law
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services North Queensland
3. Aboriginal Family Legal Service Southern Queensland
4. Basic Rights Queensland
5. Bayside Community Legal Service
6. Brisbane North Community Legal Service
7. Cairns Community Legal Centre
8. Caxton Legal Centre
9. Central Queensland Community Legal Centre
10. Environmental Defenders Office Queensland
11. Gold Coast Community Legal Centre
12. Goondiwindi Community Legal Service
** service ceased operation on 30 June 2021*
13. Hub Community Legal
14. Institute for Urban Indigenous Health
15. Junkuri Laka Community Legal Centre Aboriginal Corporation (off map, Mornington Island)
16. LawRight
17. LGBTI Legal Service
18. Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre
19. Moreton Bay Regional Community Legal Service
20. My Community Legal
21. North Queensland Women's Legal Service
22. Pine Rivers Community Legal Service
23. Prisoner's Legal Service
24. Queensland Advocacy Incorporated
25. Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
26. Refugee and Immigration Legal Service
27. Suncoast Community Legal Service
28. TASC Legal and Social Justice Services
29. Tenants Queensland
30. Townsville Community Law
31. Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service
32. Women's Legal Service
33. YFS Legal
34. Youth Advocacy Centre



**Community
Legal Centres
Queensland**

PO Box 12102, George Street,
Brisbane QLD 4003
07 3392 0092
communitylegalqld.org.au