

# Supporting Community Legal Centres

Community Legal Centres Queensland is the peak body representing the 32 independent, community-led Community Legal Centres operating across Queensland, including rural and remote areas.

Established in 1993, our mission is to work with our centres towards a fair and just Queensland. We work with Queensland Community Legal Centres to:

- continually improve organisational sustainability and service quality
- increase the accessibility, profile, and resourcing of the sector
- to unite around common objectives to bring about change.

## Objective 1: Work with Queensland Community Legal Centres to continually improve organisational sustainability and service quality

**2023 Conference: Respect, Connect, Reflect:** The 2023 Community Legal Centres Queensland State Conference saw more than 200 delegates from around Queensland and further afield gather for two days of thought-provoking presentations around the theme, *“Respect, Connect, Reflect”*.

**National Accreditation Scheme:** This year saw Phase 4 of the National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) commence. The NAS, owned by Community Legal Centres Australia and administered in Queensland by Community Legal Centres Queensland, ensures that all accredited Community Legal Centres meet the rigorous 17 key standards and associated requirements.

**First Nations Sector Strategy Project:** Community Legal Centres Queensland started a project to develop a First Nations strategic framework for the CLC sector in Queensland. Centring the voices of First Nations people is a key principle of the project, and the first conversations held were with our community-controlled organisations. We are deeply grateful for the conversations that have been held so far sharing their expertise, experience, and wisdom with us. We look forward to launching the strategy in the first half of 2024.



**Leadership Training Project:** Community Legal Centres Queensland delivered a bespoke leadership development training program for the sector. The program aimed to develop skills in management and leadership, build and maintain high performing teams and create successful futures. The program ran across three two-day sessions with 15 leaders graduating from the inaugural program.

**Climate and Disaster Resilience Project:** This 12-month project has been:

- Building a community of practice for Queensland Community Legal Centres to quickly and effectively respond to the legal needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities that arise at all stages of disaster;
- Supporting Community Legal Centres to ensure their own organisational processes and practices support their own resilience when responding to disaster legal needs;
- Building resilience through preventative legal work to mitigate harm to people and communities; and
- Delivering opportunities for engagement and networking, some online resources and tools, workshops, webinars and training.



**Trauma-Informed Practice Training:** Community Legal Centres Queensland hosted two trauma-informed practice training options for the Community Legal Centre sector.

Trauma-Informed Practice for Frontline Practitioners was presented by Women's Health & Equality and empowered participants to recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma and to expand their knowledge of therapeutic trauma informed practice tools.

Best Practice & Evidence Legal Assistance Forum Masterclass for First Contact Staff was presented by Penny Gordon & Associates and focused on skills for managing challenging communication interactions and how team members can keep themselves resilient. This session was targeted to Community Legal Centre staff who are deal with initial client enquires such as those answering phones, staffing helplines or undertaking reception/ intake duties.

What our 2023 Conference attendees are saying:

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*“The space provided in the tracks to treaty session and the opportunity to hear from all of the Aunties in the room was such a privilege.”*

*“All the presentations and presenters were great – I learnt a lot and found the sessions rewarding.”*

*“Everyone was well prepared and knowledgeable in their subject areas. The Community Legal Centres Queensland facilitators introducing the sessions were inclusive, approachable, and professional.”*

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## Objective 2: Work with Queensland Community Legal Centres to increase the accessibility, profile and resourcing of the sector

**First Nations Employee Network:** The First Nations Employee Network was established in 2020 and continues to grow and develop, providing critical support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the sector across Queensland. This network supported by the First Nations staff at Community Legal Centres Queensland also gives valuable insights and input into the strategic work of Community Legal Centres Queensland in our work across Indigenous initiatives, focusing primarily on providing a positive, confidential, and supportive environment.

**Community Legal Centres Queensland First Nations Reference Group:** The Community Legal Centres Queensland First Nations Reference Group provides advice and guidance to Community Legal Centres Queensland and the sector about working for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This includes sharing insight and wisdom about what it means to work in ways that are culturally sensitive and appropriate for First Nations peoples, how to ensure that the views and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are considered and included in our work, and helping us to understand the expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders of Community Legal Centres.



The First Nations Reference Group is made of a number of leaders within our sector, all of whom identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. It has met formally four times during the past 12 months, including an in-person gathering in Brisbane. Over the course of the year, the Reference Group has provided valuable advice and on a wide range of matters, including the Voice to Parliament and our work towards development of the First Nations strategic framework for the sector.

**Human Services Indexing Project:** Funding for Queensland's community services relies on indexation, which acknowledges that the costs of delivering services will change over time. A report by The University of Western Australia's Professor David Gilchrist, commissioned by QCOSS and a number of community service peaks including Community Legal Centres Queensland, recommends an indexation rate of 5.82% in the Queensland state budget for 2023-24.

The report demonstrates that the current method of calculating indexation is not fit for purpose for the community services sector in Queensland. The method used does not correspond to the costs incurred by community services and continues to result in inadequate levels of indexation being applied to funding. The creation of a sector specific indexation rate was a key recommendation in the report, and one that would appropriately reflect real community service organisations' operations and costs.

### **Modelling good practice as an Employer of Choice:**

During 2022, we seized the opportunity as a values-based organisation to provide benefits and certainty for our workers, helping to attract and retain good staff, as well as helping to create a culturally and physically safe, supportive, inclusive and flexible work environment.

Our union delegate, Carly Hanson, worked closely with pro bono lawyers and union officials to draft a template Enterprise Agreement with above Award conditions and options, which formed the basis of discussions with the staff team and our log of claims.

After negotiations with Community Legal Centres Queensland's Management Committee, we lodged our Enterprise Agreement with the Fair Work Commission, and in December 2022, our first Enterprise Agreement was approved. This template has been made available to Community Legal Centre members across Queensland (and interstate).



### Objective 3: Work with Queensland Community Legal Centres to unite around common objectives to bring about change

#### Women's Legal Services Collaborative Planning

**Project:** Community Legal Centres Queensland led a collaborative service planning project along with Clarity Consortium and three women's legal services:

**Women's Legal Service Queensland (WLSQ), North Queensland Women's Legal Service (NQWLS) and First Nation's Women's Legal service (FNWLSQ, formerly ATSIWLSNQ).** The project identified strengths, priorities, gaps and potential opportunities for collaboration.

**Statement on the Voice to Parliament:** After careful consideration and talking to the Community Legal Centres Queensland First Nations Reference Group and our other First Nation colleagues, Community Legal Centres Queensland released a statement supporting the Yes campaign on the Voice to Parliament.

Community Legal Centres Queensland recognises and respects the diversity of First Nations communities and peoples' views on the enshrinement of First Nations voice in the Australian Constitution.

Community Legal Centres Queensland supports the Yes campaign of the Voice, as it is the most available and practical pathway to the other elements of the Uluru Statement of the Heart: Treaty and Truth. Community Legal Centres Queensland recognises and respects



that it is people who will vote in the referendum, not organisations, and that Community Legal Centres Queensland supports a yes position while respecting the right of our member organisations and its people to support different positions.

**Path to Treaty Bill:** In consultation with the Community Legal Centres Queensland cultural reference group, Community Legal Centres Queensland submitted to the Parliamentary Community Support and Service Committee on the Path to Treaty Bill. The submission supported the treaty process, highlighting that reform to laws that negatively and disproportionately impact on First Nations people cannot be ignored in any process that seeks to progress healing and reconciliation.

#### What's next in 2023-24:

- Launch the Sector First Nations Strategy
- Hold the inaugural Community Legal Centres Queensland First Nations Employee Network event
- Roll out a sector work force survey to inform Community Legal Centre employer of choice work and systems advocacy
- Continue to build a community of practice to support resilience in Community Legal Centres and their communities impacted by disasters
- Provide members with targeted and affordable training, including Leadership Development Program
- Support members in their continuous improvement journey under the National Accreditation Scheme
- Consult with members and provide strategic advice to the National Legal Assistance Partnership Review
- Provide support to members on the business transition on CLASS replacement
- Promote the work of Community Legal Centres and their impact on the community.