



# Impact Report 2023

# Community Legal Centres Queensland members

1. ADA Law
2. The Aboriginal Family Legal Service Qld (AFLSQ) Maruma-li-mari
3. Basic Rights Queensland
4. Bayside Community Legal Service
5. Brisbane North Community Legal Service
6. Cairns Community Legal Centre
7. Caxton Legal Centre
8. Central Queensland Community Legal Centre
9. Environmental Defenders Office Queensland
10. First Nations Women's Legal Services North Queensland
11. Gold Coast Community Legal Centre
12. HUB Community Legal
13. Institute for Urban Indigenous Health
14. Knowmore
15. LawRight
16. LGBTI Legal Service
17. Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre
18. My Community Legal
19. North Queensland Women's Legal Service
20. Pine Rivers Community Legal Service
21. Prisoners Legal Service
22. Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion
23. Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
24. Refugee and Immigration Legal Service
25. Suncoast Community Legal Service
26. TASC Legal and Social Justice Services
27. Tenants Queensland
28. Townsville Community Legal Service
29. Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service
30. Women's Legal Service
31. YFS Legal
32. Youth Advocacy Centre



# Welcome from our President and Director

We are proud to present the Community Legal Centres Queensland Impact Report 2023.

It tells the story of the dedication, resilience and unwavering commitment to advancing access to justice and championing the rights of individuals and communities that is at the heart of Queensland's 32 Community Legal Centres.

In a world where legal challenges can be daunting and the barriers to justice seem insurmountable, Community Legal Centres continue to provide access to quality legal services regardless of a person's background.

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 through providing legal education, and by working with government and other bodies to improve unfair laws and processes.

Throughout the pages of this report, you will discover the significant impact Community Legal Centres have made over the past year. You will read stories of individuals whose lives have been transformed through our legal advocacy, education programs and community outreach initiatives. You will see the results of our collective efforts to promote fairness, equity, and social justice in communities around Queensland.

As the peak body, Community Legal Centres Queensland provides a voice for the sector. We lead and support 32 independent Community Legal Centres to deliver quality and accessible services to people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

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 Centre Queensland staff and volunteers in coordinating, gathering, and analysing the data for this report.

As we reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past year, we are also setting our sights on the future. Our commitment to our mission to lead and support Queensland Community Legal Centres remains steadfast and we are more determined than ever to create a more just, equitable and inclusive Queensland for all.

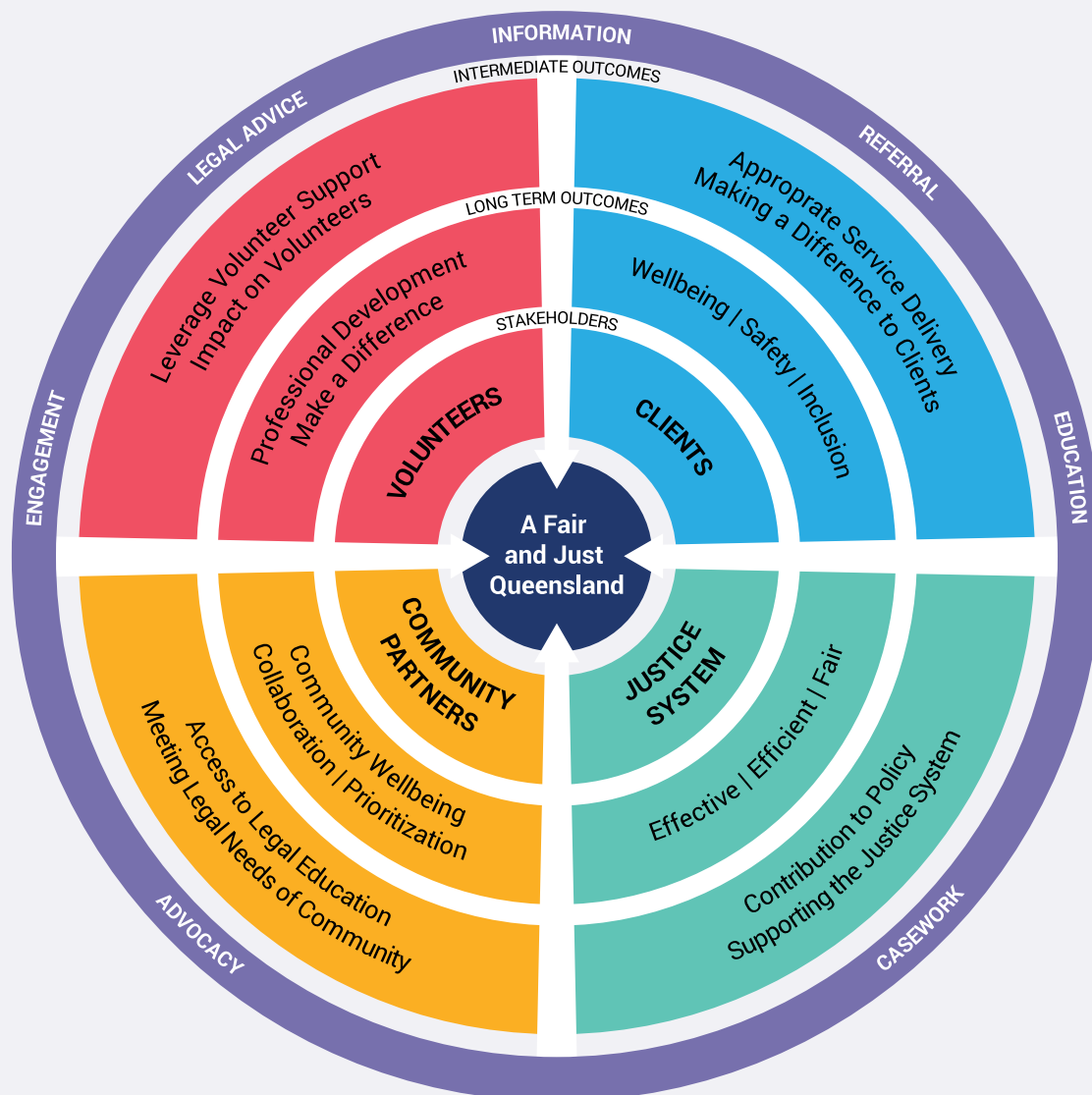
**Elizabeth Gallagher, President and Rosslyn Monro, Director**



*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 owners of the land in and around Brisbane and pay respects to their elders, past and present.

# 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.



“

*This remarkable service provided me with the support and guidance I desperately needed, instilling a renewed sense of hope and the strength to carry on.*

”

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

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

# Impact on clients

Community Legal Centres make a difference to a diverse range of Queenslanders's lives everyday. By tailoring services to people and communities, Community Legal Centres contribute to the long-term impacts of people having decreased stress, improved financial wellbeing, increased personal safety and greater social inclusion.

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 holistic and wraparound services.

- 93% of clients said they would recommend the organisation to other people
- 90% of clients said they know where to get help if they have another legal problem in the future
- 96% of clients said staff listened to their legal problem in a friendly and respectful manner
- 92% of clients said staff helped them understand how to deal with their legal problem and provided them with options.



What our clients are saying:

“

*“(My lawyer) was a wealth of knowledge and put my mind at ease on the matter I came in for. Excellent advice. Excellent people skills. I feel confident in returning here for any advice on legal matters, this is a fantastic resource for low-income earners who cannot afford legal advice.”*

*“The legal person was very patient and understanding even though my English is not very good. She's very politely asked me questions. I really appreciate and happy with the service. Thank you very much for your help.”*

*“The information I received was helpful in making me understand a bit of the process and the next steps in a really difficult situation.”*

”



“

*The legal staff were very professional, friendly and easily approachable. They helped me understand my problem and assisted me in dealings with no bias towards me or my currently situation.*

”

# About our clients



**37%**  
of clients have **no or low income**



**56%**  
of clients in **rural, regional and remote areas** are experiencing **domestic and family violence**



**74%**  
of clients indicated that they are experiencing **financial disadvantage**



**3 in 5**  
**clients (55%)** are living with a **disability on no or low income**



**9%**  
of clients identify as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**



**1 in 2**  
**(46%)** clients with a **disability** experience **domestic and family violence**



**63%**  
of clients are **women**



**1 in 4**  
**(22%)** clients seeking help from rural, regional and remote areas identify as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander** people



**1 in 4**  
**(26%)** clients have a **disability or mental illness**



**7%**  
of clients are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing **homelessness**



**3 in 5**  
**(64%)** of **women** seeking assistance are experiencing **family and domestic violence**



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



Women are **2.8 times** more likely than men to be **homeless** when seeking help from a Queensland Community Legal Centre

Notable differences since our last impact report in 2021:

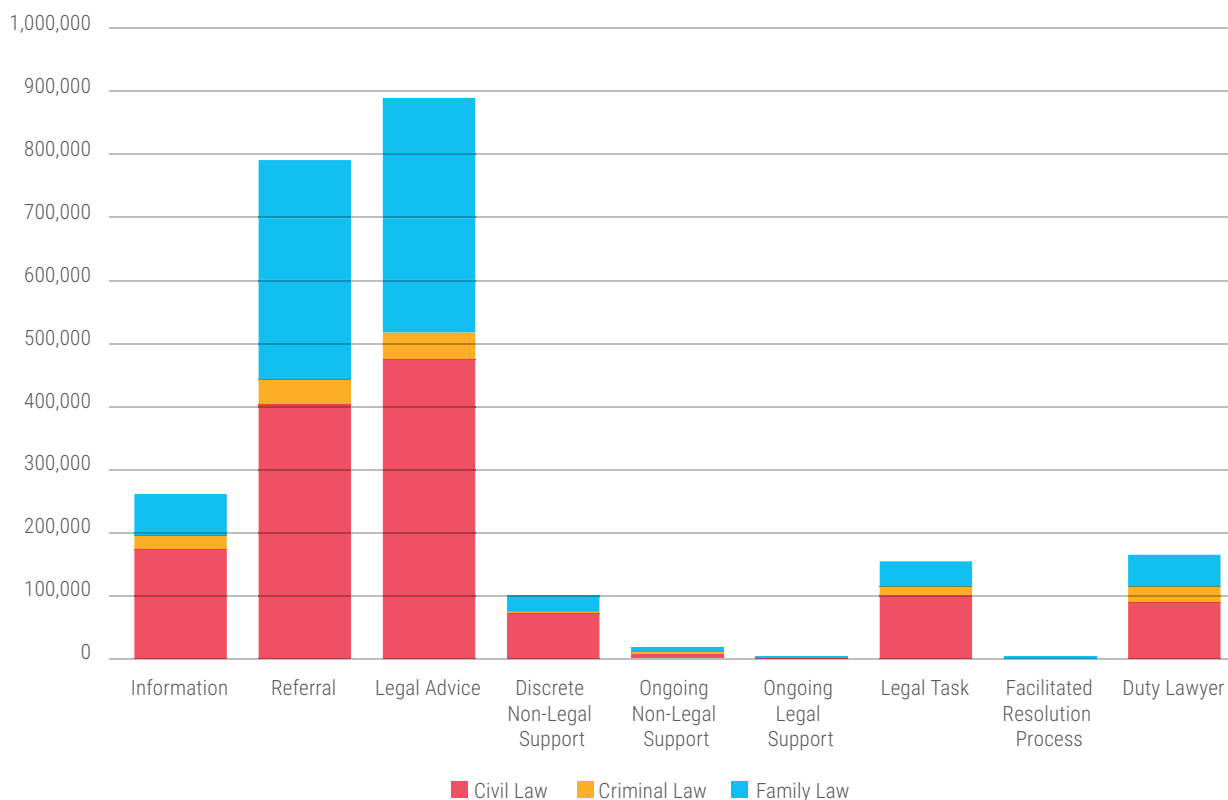
- More clients indicating they are experiencing financial disadvantage
- Increase in clients with a mental illness or disability

*\*These statistics are drawn from the national client database CLASS from the period of 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023.*

# 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.

## What services did we deliver this year?



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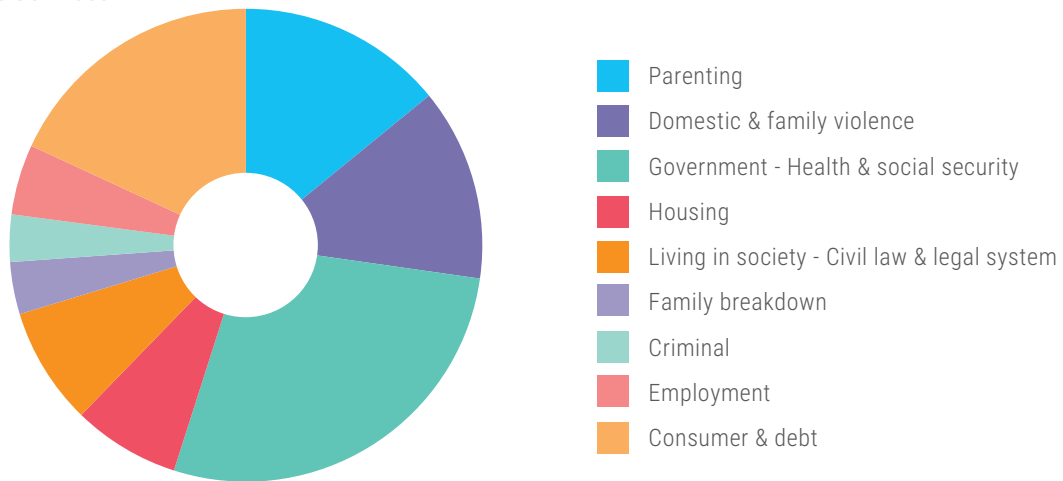
*I was taken care of. My needs were met at a caring level. I was extremely comfortable the whole time. I am happy with the Community Legal Centre services, and it made me feel like a human being and not just a number.*

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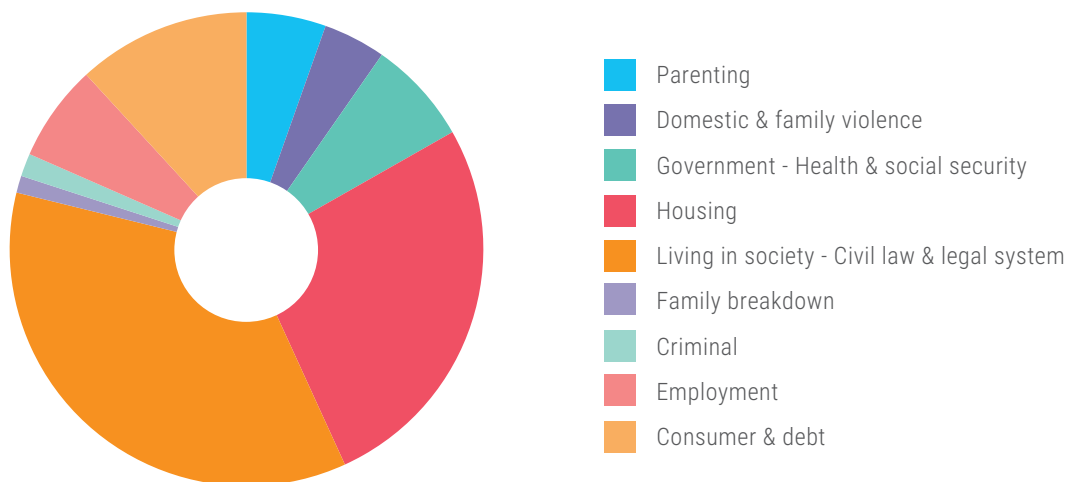


## What legal problems did we help with this year?

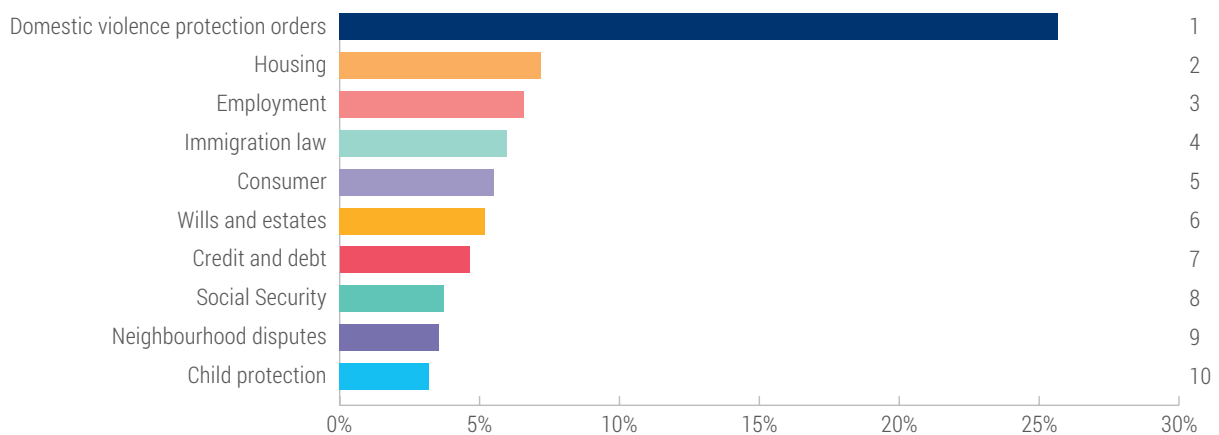
### Discrete Services



### Representation Services



### Top 10 Civil Law Issues in 2022-23



# How we deliver our services

Queensland communities need a range of diverse service models to meet the existing and emerging legal needs.

Community Legal Centres like **Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service** and **Brisbane North Community Legal Service** are co-located with their local neighbourhood centre, **Bayside Community Legal Centre** regularly visits the islands in Moreton Bay to provide services while **Gold Coast Community Legal Centre** operates out of various office locations to make services more accessible. Here are just a few examples of how Community Legal Centres adapt their services to meet the needs of their community.

## Inclusive Services

It is important that communities can access safe and inclusive Community Legal Centres that provide legal assistance in an environment that is welcoming, valuing and respectful of diversity. **LGBTI Legal Service** is a Rainbow Tick accredited service. Compliance with the Rainbow Tick national quality framework recognises LGBTI Legal Service's commitment to safe and inclusive practices and service delivery for the LGBTIA+ community, meeting six rigorous standards of organisational capacity, workforce development, consumer participation, a welcoming and accessible organisation, disclosure and documentation and culturally safe and acceptable services.

## Integrated Services

Community Legal Centres have long recognised that many people's legal issues are connected to or compounded by other social and economic challenges and that the best supports address all these challenges holistically. Critically, Community Legal Centres recognise the impacts of trauma and discrimination on a person's capacity to access justice. **Caxton Legal Centre** take a human rights approach to providing services in discrimination, employment, consumer, family, domestic violence, coronial, criminal and elder law. With lawyers and social workers working in a holistic multi-disciplinary model, skilled workers respond to, and support challenges driven by hardship, trauma, distress and health concerns while addressing legal issues.

## At the door of the Court

Many Community Legal Centres provide courthouse-based services through duty lawyer services. **Mackay Regional Community Legal Service** provides regular duty lawyer services for domestic and family violence matters at the Mackay Magistrates Court. Duty lawyer services ensure that people listed at the court are informed of their options, whether applying for a

protection order or responding to an application and are informed of the court processes. Duty lawyer services are also able to identify other related legal issues and provide referrals for additional support.

## Partnering with the local legal community

The local legal profession is an important service multiplier for Community Legal Centres that provide volunteer advice programs. **Suncoast Community Legal Service** has over 100 volunteer lawyers and 40 receptionists who dedicate their time and skills to meet the need for free legal advice on the Sunshine Coast. Without partnering with the local legal community, Suncoast would not be able to provide over 3000 legal advices to its community.

## Specialist services

**Townsville Community Law's** Veterans' Legal Service was launched in April. This new service will improve veterans' access to legal assistance, including legal issues experienced by veterans during their transition to civilian life. The service will also help with legal issues experienced by veterans as a consequence of their service and assist with access to veterans' statutory entitlements.

## Outreach

Community Legal Centres are located throughout Queensland, with regional centres providing services across large areas. Outreaches are critical to expanding the geographical reach. **Central Queensland Community Legal Centre** covers an area more than 208,000 square kilometres. By working in partnership with local regional agencies it not only provides services to people in the Rockhampton area, but also to Biloela, Emerald, Gladstone and Mt Isa. Partnerships with local services ensure that appropriate referrals and support are provided to local people who need access to legal help.

# Making a difference to clients

Community Legal Centres Queensland coordinated a survey of 1,489 Community Legal Centre clients in May 2023.

Our aim was to survey 25% of Queensland Community Legal Centre clients over a period of a month (between 1 and 31 May 2023). We received 1,489 responses and, according to the whole of sector client database Community Legal Assistance Service System (CLASS), 5,886 clients received services during May. We reached more than a quarter (25.38%) 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 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 survey results indicate high levels of strong agreement or agreement to 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 survey results indicate high levels of strong agreement or agreement to 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.



What our clients are saying:

“

*“I don’t usually get legal advice over the phone, so I wasn’t sure whether it was going to be a comfortable experience, but it was pretty good.”*

*“I would love it more if there was a service like this available in regional areas (like where I live). There are people who are accessing healthcare that would benefit from a service like this one.”*

*“The legal staff were very professional, friendly and easily approachable. They helped me understand my problem and assisted me in dealings with no bias towards me or my current situation. I would definitely use them again if I needed Legal Advice or Legal help again in the future.”*

”



“

*“The person I spoke with listened to me and was knowledgeable about my situation. They provided me with realistic steps that I could implement myself to follow up.”*

”

## Client stories

The stories of Aleasha, Lila, Sally, Nigel, Claire, Eli, Ahmed, Amy and Susan profile Community Legal Centre's representation work and provide a powerful insight into the impact of the work of Community Legal Centres. There are hundreds of stories just like these. *(All names have been changed to protect the identity of the clients.)*



### Protections from unscrupulous lenders

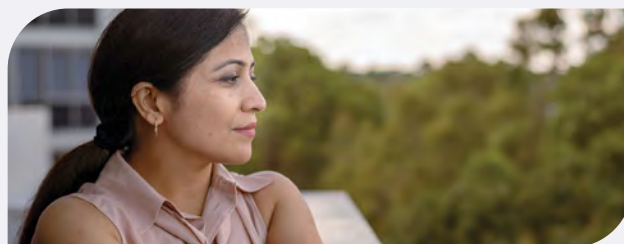
Lenders are required to do certain checks before lending money to ensure that a loan is affordable and appropriate for the consumer's needs. When lenders don't properly perform these checks, it's the vulnerable members of our community, who are often in financial stress, who suffer the most.

Aleasha, an Aboriginal woman, is a solo parent of four children. Aleasha relies on Centrelink payments for daily basics and essentials for herself and her children. Aleasha purchased a used car from a local car dealership with the assistance of a car loan. Over the course of two years the car had many problems that cost Aleasha over \$3,000 to repair.

The weekly loan repayments were automatically deducted from her bank account and made it difficult for Aleasha to meet the essential costs for her family, causing her financial and emotional distress. Aleasha was advised by her financial counsellor to seek free legal assistance from the Cairns Community Legal Centre.

A **Cairns Community Legal Centre** solicitor reviewed the checks the lender made into Aleasha's financial position before the loan was confirmed and discovered that there was no way Aleasha could have comfortably met the repayments without suffering financial hardship. On this basis, the Centre argued that she should not have been offered the car loan and successfully negotiated a loan reduction as well as a reduction in the weekly loan repayment amounts.

As a result of the Centre's intervention, Aleasha could afford to keep the car and repay the remaining amount of the loan in a way that is stress-free and affordable for her family.



### Understanding Coercion and Control in relationships

When women experience domestic and family violence and relationship breakdown, the legal issues multiply. Misidentification of a victim as the perpetrator is also a significant issue that has enormous consequences for the victim survivor.

Lila was in a violent relationship and was charged with breaching a Domestic Violence Protection Order. Her family support worker referred her to HUB for legal assistance.

**HUB Community Legal's** lawyers spent time with Lila to understand her situation and identified she was in fact the victim of domestic and family violence and in urgent need of protection. The lawyers found Lila's partner was perpetrating a pattern of serious coercive control placing Lila at serious risk of harm, in addition to the systemic abuse she was now facing due to the Domestic Violence Protection Order against her.

HUB's lawyer helped Lila obtain a final Domestic Violence Protection Order against her partner, protecting her safety and well-being. With the lawyer's assistance and advocacy, Lila also had the criminal charges against her dismissed based on the recognition that she was the victim of domestic and family violence rather than the perpetrator.

As a result of HUB's assistance, Lila's life changed significantly. She has been given some legal protections, accessed support to leave her abusive relationship, and had her criminal charges dismissed.



### A life free from financial stress

People who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness typically experience multi-faceted trauma, in addition to financial and social challenges, which compound barriers to services, supports, and change.

Sally, a single mother of three children, was experiencing homelessness when she attended one of LawRight's Community Health Justice Partnership locations and met with one of their pro bono lawyers.

Sally relied on Centrelink payments and was living with a number of physical and mental health conditions. She sought help regarding a significant debt with a car finance provider.

**LawRight** and its pro bono lawyers negotiated with the provider over multiple months. The provider conceded it did not follow responsible lending requirements and the loan should never have been made to Sally in the first place.

The negotiations resulted in a sizeable waiver of the amount still owing under the loan and the provider allowing her to keep the car.

Sally was overjoyed at the outcome and sent the following to LawRight: "The team at Lawright literally saved my life! Back in 2016 I was suicidal, homeless and in debt with no way out. It was a very dark time. They have had my back for six years now and words cannot explain how much the unwavering support has helped me become the person I am today with next to no debt, and life skills that I would not have gained anywhere if not for them."



### Standing up for people's rights

Community members who live with disability or disabilities can be vulnerable to manipulation by large corporations, such as insurance companies.

Nigel, a pensioner in his 80s, was involved in a motor vehicle accident and did not have insurance.

Nigel began receiving letters from the other driver's insurance company demanding that he pay them over \$2,000 for repairs to the other driver's vehicle.

Nigel had a hearing impairment so had difficulty hearing the insurance company when they phoned him to discuss the matter and did not have access to email or a computer. These factors also made accessing legal services and responding to the insurance company incredibly challenging and stressful for Nigel.

**Pine Rivers Community Legal Service** provided Nigel with advice regarding his options. While going through the documents provided by the insurance company, including an invoice for the repairs, the PRCLS solicitor noticed that the other driver's car was damaged at the front, while Nigel's had been damaged at the rear. This indicated the other driver had not been following Nigel at a reasonable distance, which supported what Nigel had explained.

PRCLS helped Nigel write to the insurance company to request further details regarding the accident and claim, and that they cease all debt collection activity. PRCLS also assisted Nigel to convey to the insurance company that the damage reported in their invoices was consistent with the other driver being at fault.

The insurance company ceased correspondence and ended recovery action against Nigel.



## Legal Assistance for Young people

A disproportionate number of young people in the youth justice system have suffered from adverse experiences and social disadvantage such as poverty, exposure to family violence and significant trauma.

When 14-year-old Claire sought assistance from YFS Legal she was under a long-term guardianship order and was diagnosed with autism and complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Claire had never been to Court before.

Police had attended Claire's home where she was found to be visibly upset and damaging property. Due to her past experiences, Claire was highly anxious about being physically touched, so she felt uncomfortable and nervous when the police approached her. Police ended up physically restraining Claire, which prompted a trauma-response for her where she kicked out. The police then charged her with assault. Police were not aware of Claire's past experiences or background, nor that she had a Safety Plan in place regarding her post-traumatic stress disorder.

**YFS Legal** assisted Claire in attending a Protected Admissions Interview which enabled her charges to be diverted away from the Court. She was cautioned by the police for the charges and received a warning not to commit further offences.

YFS Legal supported Claire to liaise with Child Safety officers and carers so that a more detailed Safety Plan could be developed to assist her when she was experiencing a difficult time. With Claire's consent, this Safety Plan was provided to police so that they would be more understanding of her needs in any future incidents.



## Supporting cultural practices

Sorry Business is an important period of mourning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that involves responsibilities and obligations to attend funerals and participate in other cultural events, activities, or ceremonies.

Eli is an Aboriginal man who was imprisoned in North Queensland due to a parole suspension.

**Prisoners' Legal Service** was contacted by a Cultural Liaison Officer on behalf of Eli because his uncle had passed away and the funeral was scheduled for the following week. Eli's uncle was his primary father figure and he needed to attend the funeral and engage in Sorry Business to meet his cultural obligations as well as to support his grieving.

PLS made urgent submissions to the Parole Board Queensland (PBQ) seeking reconsideration of Eli's parole suspension which would enable him to attend the funeral and engage in Sorry Business. The PBQ urgently reconsidered the decision to suspend Eli's parole however instead decided to cancel his parole order, meaning he would not be released. PLS made further urgent submissions.

The PBQ reconsidered and decided to lift the cancellation and re-release Eli back onto parole. He was released the day before the funeral and was able to attend and engage in Sorry Business.

PLS' knowledge and understanding of cultural obligations and Sorry Business ensure it acted urgently in this matter for Eli to best support him and reduce the risks of further disconnection from his family and community at such an important time.



### Advocating for autonomy and independence

Ahmed, a 75-year-old widower, was living alone in his own home until a health event resulted in a hospital admission. When Ahmed was admitted it appeared he was struggling to retain information and seemed confused. Hospital staff were concerned about Ahmed's safety and wellbeing if he returned home, particularly as he did not appear to have a strong support network. The hospital made an application to QCAT seeking the appointment of the Public Guardian and Public Trustee, with the aim to move Ahmed into aged care accommodation. Ahmed had been opposed to this and wanted to return to his home.

The hospital social worker referred Ahmed to ADA Law for advice regarding the Public Guardian and Public Trustee. ADA Law helped Ahmed to understand his situation. He was a recent widower and hadn't needed help at home. Ahmed also didn't understand the support services he had been offered at the hospital, hence his refusals. At Ahmed's request, Ahmed's friends had not come to the hospital, as he didn't wish to trouble them, parking was expensive, and he was especially concerned with the COVID risks if they were to come to see him.

**ADA Law** helped Ahmed respond to the QCAT application and attend his hearing. Ahmed was able to explain to QCAT how his network supported him, how he had set up direct payments for bills, and that his home had been modified for his wife, so was mostly suitable for him to return to it. The tribunal was able to dismiss the applications, leaving Ahmed to focus on his recovery and prepare for his return home.



### Navigation of complex welfare systems

Amy contacted **Basic Rights Queensland** about her Centrelink debt of \$10,000. Centrelink had stated that Amy had been overpaid because she had not reported her partner's fortnightly income.

Amy did not know she was required to report her partner's income to Centrelink. She was receiving intensive medical treatment during the period when she was overpaid, which had significantly affected her capacity to engage with Centrelink and understand her reporting obligations.

BRQ assisted Amy with obtaining the medical evidence to support an appeal of the initial Centrelink demand and provided a submission to Centrelink's Authorised Review Officer advocating for the debt to be waived due to these special circumstances. The Authorised Review Officer exercised their discretion to waive Amy's debt in full.





### **Housing crisis and domestic and family violence**

Women fleeing domestic and family violence face many challenges including access to financial support and housing. The housing crisis has compounded these difficulties, resulting in too many women and children living in insecure and unsafe accommodation, or remaining in abusive relationships.

Susan was pregnant and living in a tent with four children all aged under six. Susan was unable to access refuge accommodation when she left her violent partner. Susan had limited access to Centrelink payments as she was not an Australian citizen and her former partner alleged she was dishonest with Centrelink. Susan assessed that her best prospects for housing and employment was to return to her home country where she had more support.

Susan sought assistance from **Women's Legal Service** for an urgent application to the court for an international relocation. As a result of the assistance Susan was able to get an urgent final hearing at the court so that she could get an urgent resolution for herself and her children.

What our clients are saying:

“

*I am very grateful for this service. Every time I have received legal advice it has been of an extremely high quality with wonderful, educated professionals, who assist me incredibly.*

*I have found the centre and the legal assistance to be very professional and helpful. My situation has not been resolved as of yet, but the staff have continued to support me. Thank you!*

*“My advocate described me and my hardships in a way that made me feel brave and respected.”*

”



“

*“I appreciate the service so much, especially for people on a low income. The lawyer was caring and explained things in a way that I could I understand.”*

”

# Impact on community

Working with the community is a critical to the impact of Community Legal Centres. Engagement with community partners and the broader community increases access to legal information and education and ensures there is a more 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 2023 there were more than **1738** CLE activities delivered throughout Queensland.

**487** CLE resources were developed by centres.

The top three areas of civil law for CLE are:

1. Discrimination
2. Domestic violence protection orders
3. Wills and estates

The top three areas of family law CLE are:

1. Domestic and family violence
2. Divorce de-facto separations and/or annulment
3. Family law property

The top four audiences for CLE include:

- Clients
- Community organisations
- Community groups
- Government agencies

## Law Rap Drum Circles

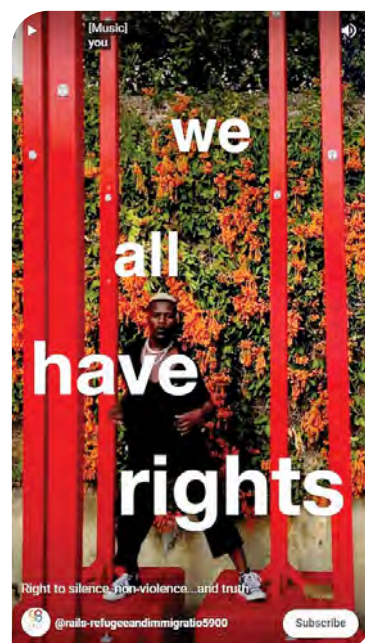
'Law Rap Drum Circles' brings law to community through rhythm, rhyme, and song. People sit in circles playing hand drums and sing and talk about everyday law problems.

This innovative project is a partnership with **RAILS (Refugee and Immigration Legal Service)** and the Queensland African Communities Council, funded by Legal Aid Queensland CLE Collaboration Fund.

Music and drumming are used as they entertain, engage, and connect community on an equal level and promote communication, good health and shared identity.

The drum circle law dialogues so far have led to increased legal knowledge of law, some referrals for legal advice, and three original songs recorded, filmed, and shared on You-tube, Tik Tok and local chat sites.

Collaboration with local artists has led to a popular artist from South Africa dancing to two of the songs and sharing the key legal messages wider.





## Dating App Safety

**North Queensland Women's Legal Service** launched a series of video resources on dating app safety aimed at women returning to, or new to, the dating scene. The project was funded the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and involves a collaboration between the Creative Arts, Law and Criminology disciplines at CQ University and the North Queensland Women's Legal Service.

The short videos take a two-pronged approach:

1. To provide information about what can be done to prevent technology-facilitated violence and harassment (TFVH); and
2. What can be done if a woman has been the victim of TFVH.

The videos specifically focus on things like unsolicited sexualised photos, distribution, or threats to distribute intimate images, harassment or ongoing unwanted contact, misuse of apps to stalk victims and sexual assaults when meeting up.

## Supported Decision-Making Guide

Created by **Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (QAI)** and **ADA Law**, the *Supported Decision-Making: Helping people to make their own decisions* guide, provides practical advice for people when making decisions about accommodation, services, and healthcare.

It also provides guidance for people who may be supporting others to make some of these key decisions.

It is hoped that the guide will be particularly useful in Queensland hospitals, where many unnecessary applications for guardianship and administration appointments originate.



## Keeping Mob safe online

With the digital domain rapidly becoming the main space where we operate in the modern world, understanding and knowing how to use the internet (digital literacy) is now an important necessity for individuals to fully participate in society.

This is especially crucial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who may face cultural or language barriers which make navigating the internet safely challenging.

During Ochre Ribbon Week, **Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (QIFLVS)** launched its new e-safety website. The e-safety guide aims to educate and raise awareness on the dangers of the internet and how to avoid them.

## My Life, My Voice

The My Life, My Voice online portal was developed by **TASC** to resource and support advocates who are advocating on their own behalf.

Within the guide are a variety of resources for self-advocates, including templates of how to write a letter advocating for yourself and self-advocacy quick links relevant for a range of different circumstances.

The resources support individuals to speak up for themselves about what they need to help create positive change in their life.

## 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: **95% agreed**
- Q2: I will use the information I've learned in my workplace / to help my clients: **89% agreed**
- Q3: The information was presented in an engaging style: **89% agreed**
- Q4: The webinar handouts / PowerPoints were helpful (if provided): **91% agreed**
- Number of webinars: **17**
- Number of registrations (total): **3057** (1600 attended live)
- Number of views of on-demand webinar recording: **1939**
- Average number of registrations per webinar: **180**
- Percentage of registrants from CLCs: **52%**
- Percentage of registrants from private legal profession, government agencies, community organisations and academia: **48%**
- Registrations from Brisbane/metro areas: **48%**
- Regional, rural and remote registrations: **26%**
- Interstate registrations: **26%**

We covered a wide range of topics including:

- Technology, innovative practices and demand management
- Ethical practice, including conflicts of interests and mandatory reporting
- Sustainable leadership, governance and funding
- WHS, psychosocial hazards and supporting staff
- Values based messaging and communications
- Human rights, anti-discrimination and sexual harassment
- Civil and administrative law including employment changes, NDIS appeals and motor vehicle accidents
- Working with diverse client groups, including people with disability and First Nations communities.

## Comments from webinar participants:

“

*“A really good, practical session with loads of little gems of wisdom to take away.”*

*“Great job and thank you very much for shedding some light on such complex issues.”*

*“The resources that were provided after the session were outstanding! The quality was fantastic and so useful!”*

*“The format was engaging and dealt with real life scenarios which meant they were educational and relatable.”*

*“The whole webinar. Very good integration of the amendments presented in a way that can be practically considered and applied in the workplace.”*

”

What our clients are saying:

“

*“The person I spoke with listened to me and was knowledgeable about my situation. They provided me with realistic steps that I could implement myself to follow up.”*

*“I liked that the centre asked for my pronouns and gender identity during the intake. I liked the volunteer lawyer I got – he was frank about what he was able to do and not able to do, he was very friendly. I was able to get a resolution quickly.”*

*“The information I got from my lawyer was very helpful and the information I got was clear to understand. She was open and respectful, and I feel empowered me to finish this legal battle.”*

”

## Impact on the justice system and laws

Community Legal Centres contribute to effective policy and laws 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 (elected, departmental, statutory agencies and government services) and other legal assistance services.

### Effective policy and practice

During the 2022-23 financial year, Community Legal Centres took part in more than **696** law reform projects and **3291** stakeholder engagements.

Law reforms topics included:

- Environment
- Domestic and family violence
- Discrimination
- Legal services/getting legal help
- Australian legal system
- Guardianship for adults
- Domestic violence protection orders
- Employment
- Wills and estates
- Health
- Sexual assault and related offences
- Immigration law
- Mental health.





## Advocating for stronger not tougher youth laws

Community Legal Centres Queensland along with eight other Community Legal Centres including **Youth Advocacy Centre, Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Centre** and **YFS** wrote a submission in response to the Strengthening Community Safety Bill. In its submission, Community Legal Centres Queensland called upon the Queensland Government to genuinely engage and consult with experts in the field, including Community Legal Centres and First Nations communities and community-controlled organisations, to protect the rights of children, victims of crime and the broader community, and to immediately address the inhumane treatment of children who are currently being detained for weeks on end in Queensland watch houses.

## Community Legal Centres stand for the decriminalisation of public drunkenness

**Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service** along with **Caxton Legal Centre** and the **Institute for Urban Indigenous Health** appeared before the Queensland Parliamentary Community Services and Safety Committee to support the decriminalisation of public drunkenness and begging in Queensland. QIFVLS had provided submissions to the Inquiry which raised concerns about the approach that the Government takes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



people when trying to reduce public offences. QIFVLS advocated for a co-responder model which would see police assisted by health and allied health professionals and a First Nations community member.

## A Right to Learn

**Youth Advocacy Centre (YAC)** and **Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (QAI)** are part of a community coalition that have launched a campaign, "A Right to Learn". The coalition is calling on the Queensland Government to conduct an inquiry into the use of school disciplinary absences in Queensland State Schools, as students with disability receive 46% of all short-term suspensions, despite only being about 17% of the Queensland school population.

## Landmark win for climate and human rights

In a landmark win for climate and human rights, a Queensland court found that Clive Palmer's proposed Galilee Coal Project should be rejected. **Environmental Defender's Office (EDO)** with clients, Youth Verdict and The Bimblebox Alliance, fought long and hard to stop the mine from destroying culture, climate and wildlife. Youth Verdict's First Nations-led case was the first time a coal mine has been challenged on human rights grounds in Australia. This was also the first time an Australian court has heard evidence on-Country against a coal mine and according to First Nations protocols.



## 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. As part of its advocacy, Tenants Queensland joined other key community and government stakeholders at the Queensland Housing Summit.

# 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:

“

*“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.”*

”

## 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.



PO Box 12102, George Street,  
Brisbane/Meanjin QLD 4003  
07 3392 0092  
[communitylegalqld.org.au](http://communitylegalqld.org.au)