

Community
Legal Centres
Queensland

Disaster Resilience Project

Final Report - April 2024

Acknowledgement of Country.....	2
Project aims and objectives.....	3
The Community of Practice.....	4
Summary of Project Activities.....	5
Climate and Disaster Justice Learning Exchange.....	6
Webinar Series.....	7
Workshops and forums.....	9
One-on-one training for CLCQ members.....	11
Resources and Checklists.....	13
Policy and law reform.....	14
Partnerships and stakeholder engagement.....	15
Key Achievements.....	16
About us.....	17

Acknowledgement of Country

Community Legal Centres Queensland pays our deepest respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the land in Australia, and recognises their continuing connection to land, water, and culture.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations peoples and commit to fostering a culture of learning and working together in the spirit of reconciliation and access to justice.

Community Legal Centres Queensland further acknowledges the harm of extreme weather events on First Nations peoples who have contributed the least to climate change yet bear the full force of its impacts. We recognise that climate change is an ongoing legacy of colonialism, and that centring First Nations wisdom about care for Country and community must be central to our work.



Project aims and objectives

In April 2023, Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ) received funding to deliver a 12-month Disaster Resilience Community of Practice and Sector Capacity Building Project (the Project).

The Project was jointly financed under the Commonwealth/State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018 and administered by the Queensland Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE).

The Project's high-level objective was to support the knowledge and capability of CLC lawyers, staff, volunteers and organisations to deliver targeted and effective place-based legal support across all phases of the disaster cycle.

Underneath this overarching objective, key Project aims were to:

- Build a Community of Practice for Queensland CLCs to quickly and effectively respond to the legal needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities which arise at all stages of disaster.
- Support CLCs to ensure their own organisational processes and practices support their internal resilience when responding to disaster legal needs.

- Build resilience through preventative legal work to mitigate harm to people and communities to help reduce the burden on government-led responses.

CLCQ also identified two additional 'stretch' Project aims:

- Build literacy on basic climate science so that CLCs have a better understanding of how climate change impacts will affect their community (either place-based, or thematic).
- Lay the foundation for developing an overarching Strategy for Disaster/Climate Resilience for CLCs in Queensland, and nationally.

CLCQ determined some guiding principles for this Project.

The first principle was that First Nations expertise must be at the heart of our response to the climate crisis.

Second, that climate change exacerbates inequality and injustice across our social, legal, economic, and political systems. And third, that the best assurance against harm from climate change is deep and drastic greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

These principles shaped the narrative for how CLCQ approached the task of capacity building its members through this Project.



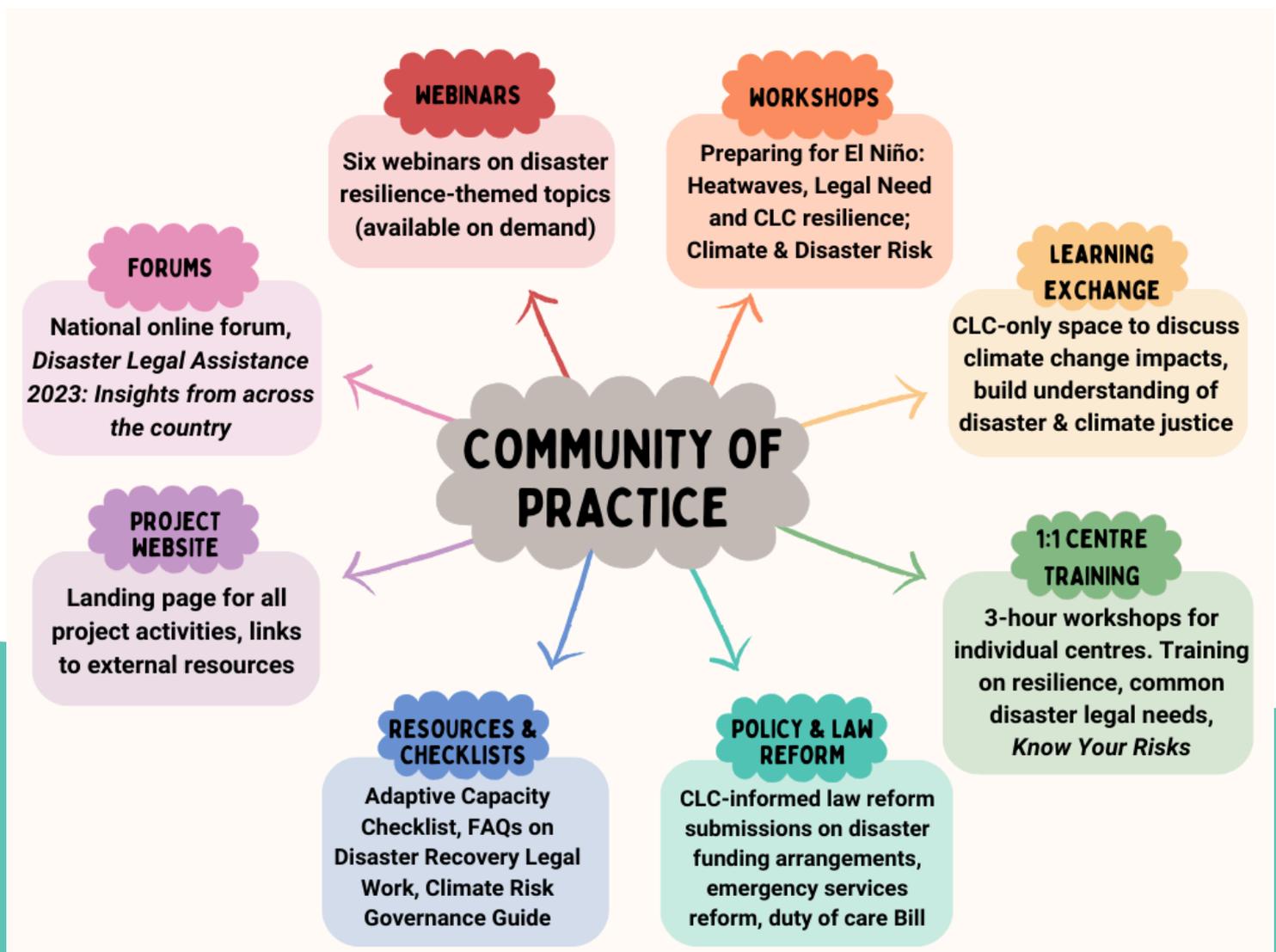
The Community of Practice

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are learning exchanges that bring together groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do. Through regular interactions, they learn from one another to deepen their knowledge and practice.

CoPs have differing levels of participant engagement; the objective is to create a variety of ways for people to collaborate with one another to foster learning and relationships. A sense of 'aliveness' and inclusion are important CoP features (Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

The Project took an intentionally broad approach to building a CoP for its members.

As this report shows, an array of activities were offered over 12 months to maximise opportunities for member participation and engagement. Although one of those activities is entitled a 'Learning Exchange' – this itself was not the CoP. The Learning Exchange was just one method of engaging members on issues relating to disaster and climate resilience from across a whole suite of CoP activities including webinars, workshops, trainings and resources.



Summary of Project Activities



8

Local disaster management group engagements



7

Online webinars and forums



4

Policy and law reform submissions



11

Training resources created



6

Offered one-on-one training to CLC members



7

Learning exchanges hosted



4

Conference workshops and presentations

Climate and Disaster Justice Learning Exchange

CLCQ created a Learning Exchange as an informal online space for CLC staff to gather and discuss how climate change is impacting their work, and to steadily build a collective understanding of disaster and climate justice.

The Project Coordinator facilitated the discussions which were led by those in the room.

There was no set agenda, rather the Learning Exchange was an opportunity for community legal staff to join a monthly peer networking space.

As time progressed, a small, steady audience of regulars attended the Exchange with other one-off attendees attending when interest and workloads permitted.

The largest gathering occurred in late January, shortly after the Boxing Day tornado and severe storms impacting areas of Brisbane and the Gold Coast, and ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper and subsequent rainfall/flooding in and around Cairns.

Seven facilitated Learning Exchanges were held across the Project lifespan, with a total of 25 CLC staff attending from 10 community legal centres. The audience included a mix of senior leaders (CEOs and principal solicitors), lawyers, advocates, social workers, and financial counsellors. The Project Coordinator adapted some insights from Exchange conversations into a learning resource, FAQs on Disaster Recovery Legal Work, with additional input from regular Exchange attendees.



"Thank you for including us in the [Learning Exchange] this week. Since meeting with you all, we have come up with a plan on really diving into the disaster recovery space and will be out visiting some of the Recovery Hubs next week and seeing what issues there are and what gap we can fill from there. So thank you for including us because it has sparked this initiative / made us see where we can go with it a bit more."

Webinar Series

The Project delivered six webinars over the 12-month period on disaster resilience-themed topics of interest to community legal centres.

External speakers were invited to present on their areas of expertise, as well as the Project Coordinator internally developing and delivering content on disaster management law.

Each event generated an on-demand resource now available to watch on YouTube.

Date	Webinar Title	Presenter/s	Description
25 July 2023	Disaster Management Law 101	Monica Taylor, Climate Resilience Coordinator, CLCQ	Overview of Queensland disaster management law and arrangements. Legislative authority, functions, concepts of shared responsibility, disaster justice and human rights in disasters.
9 Aug 2023	Supporting Communities Affected by disaster: Insights, challenges and tips	Dr Kate Brady (The University of Melbourne and Australian Red Cross)	Overview of how disasters affect individuals and communities, and how this informs the work of community legal centres.
4 Oct 2023	Stuck in the Heat: Climate Justice Case Study	Grace Dudley, Kimberley Community Legal Service	Overview of the Stuck in the Heat project – methodology, recommendations, and progress towards improved housing for public housing residents living in the Kimberley region of WA.
1 Nov 2023	Community Volunteers: Risk and Liabilities for Community-Led Disaster Response	Hopgood Ganim, Caxton Legal Centre	Presentation about gaps in legal protection for 'Good Samaritan' community volunteers who respond to disasters in Queensland, and proposed law reform.
16 March 2024	Disability, Disaster, and the Law	Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion & Queenslanders with Disability Network	Presentation about legal considerations for PWD at all stages of the disaster cycle. And the P-CEP tool (Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness) to help PWD plan their support needs when disasters strike.
26 March 2024	DFV, Gender and Disaster	Gender and Disaster Australia	Presentation about the evidence and strategies for identifying, addressing and eliminating gender-based violence in disasters.

WATCH OUR ON DEMAND WEBINAR

Community volunteers: Risk and liabilities for community-led disaster response

presented by
Jacob Currie, Hopgood Gamin
Lawyers & Jacqui Cavanagh,
Caxton Legal Centre



WATCH OUR ON DEMAND WEBINAR

Stuck in the Heat: Climate Justice Case Study

presented by Grace Dudley,
Systemic Change Advocate
Kimberley Community
Legal Service



WATCH OUR ON DEMAND WEBINAR

Domestic violence, gender & disasters: Evidence & issues

Presented by
GENDER AND DISASTER
AUSTRALIA



Audience metrics indicate growing interest and momentum in the webinar series over time.

Audience composition also reveals a sizable proportion of organisations in attendance were from outside the Queensland CLC sector and included disability, mental health, financial counselling and domestic violence services, as well as a broad range of government agencies, regional councils, emergency services, private law firms and representatives from the university sector.

The webinar series therefore supported the intended outcome of assisting community partner organisations to be better resourced to identify legal problems, and more confident in making referrals to community legal centres.

"This was an excellent awareness-raising exercise. While not in the CLC/legal environment, helping professionals such as counsellors who need to be aware of, and perhaps assist, vulnerable clients to consider their preparedness for disasters."

(Webinar participant, Disability, Disasters and the Law)

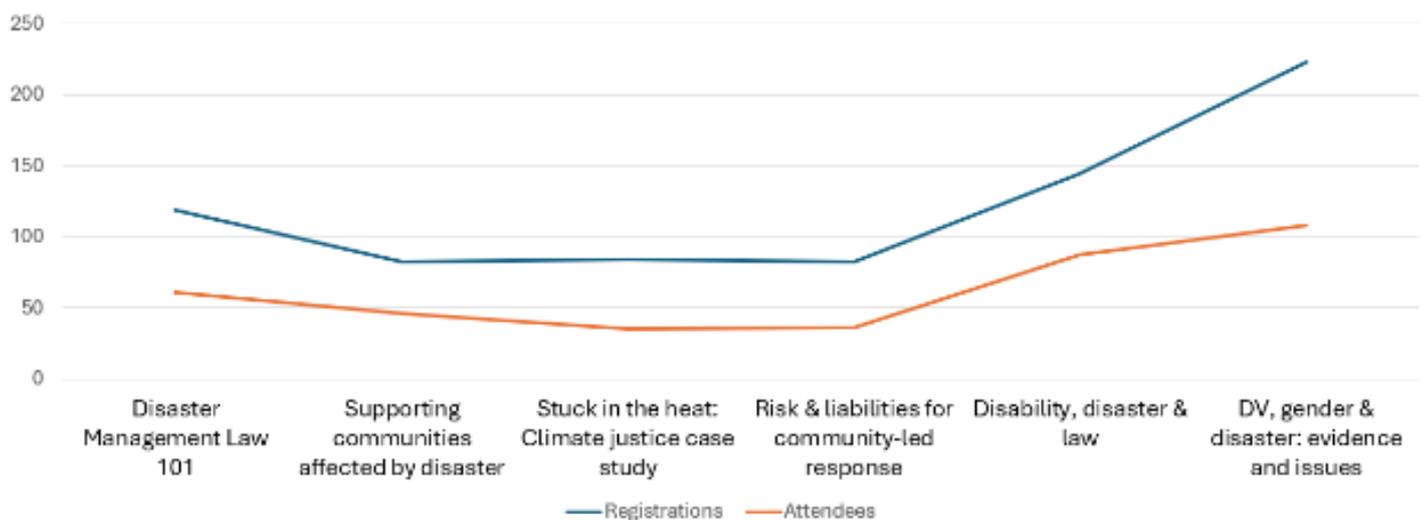
"I found the summary of disaster related legislation and the discussion around natural disaster injustice [helpful]." (Webinar participant, Disaster Management Law 101) ."

(Webinar participant, Disability, Disasters and the Law)

"Learning about Secondary Stressors [was very useful]. Being in Lismore, part of the community is just feeling those secondary stressors, and others are just coming out of shock and starting the systemic procedural processes that were introduced in the first instance after the flood."

(Webinar participant, Supporting Communities Affected by Disaster)

Disaster Resilience Webinar Series – Audience Registrations & Attendees



Workshops and forums

The Project delivered a suite of in-person and online training workshops for the benefit of the Queensland community legal sector.

CLCQ used its various membership engagement platforms to offer these sessions, allowing it to keep costs to a minimum whilst leveraging existing networks.

- 2023 State Conference (1 June) – in person training workshop, Preparing for El Niño: Heatwaves, Legal Need and CLC resilience. Attended by approximately 30 people, this interactive workshop was designed to prompt thinking and scenario planning around extreme heat.
- 2023 Leadership Forum (9 November) – in person training workshop on Disaster, Climate and Risk, co-presented with The Climate Risk Group Ltd and Community Legal Centres Australia. The workshop audience was comprised of approximately 40 CLC leaders from around the state. All (100%) participants said they increased their understanding of disaster and climate risk, (55% 'strongly agreed' and 45% 'agreed'), all thought the information was presented in an engaging style (62% 'strongly agreed' and 38% 'agreed').

- National online forum Disaster Legal Assistance in 2023: Insights from around the Country (29 November). This national event was co-hosted by CLCQ and the Federation of CLCs Victoria. It shared knowledge from various state jurisdictions about disaster legal assistance. Speakers from around Australia delivered short presentations on many topics about disaster legal help in 2023. This event drew a national audience, and it focused on the distinctive contribution of CLCs in disaster legal assistance. After the event, CLCQ compiled a [summary](#) and overview detailing key themes and issues discussed, as well as audience engagement/evaluation.

"Having speakers from different states was fantastic. And it was useful to explore different approaches to both preparedness activities and disaster response approaches."

- 2024 State Conference (to be held on 21-22 May) – finally, this Project will host a live panel on Disaster & Climate Justice at the upcoming 2024 CLCQ Queensland conference. Guest speakers from the National Indigenous Disaster Resilience Program, Sweltering Cities, and the Environmental Defenders Office will discuss different theories of change in achieving disaster and climate justice for clients and communities.



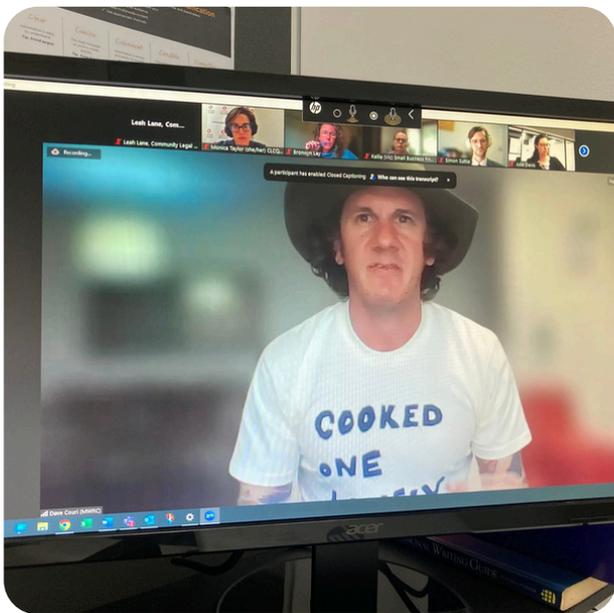
CLCQ Leadership Forum 2023

Disaster legal assistance in 2023: insights from CLCs across the country

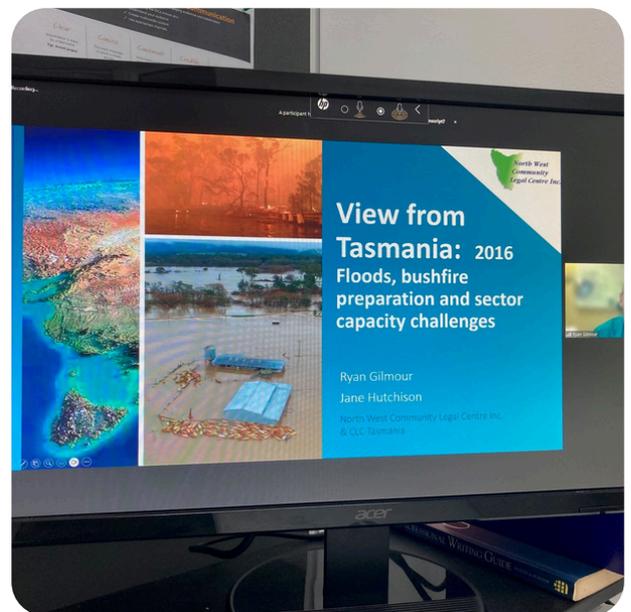
This online forum is an opportunity to share and reflect on disaster legal assistance over the past year.

Join us for a series of short presentations, and have your questions answered.

 **Wednesday, 29 November 12noon -3:00pm**



Dave Couri, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre



[Click here](#) to for a summary of the “Disaster legal assistance 2023: insights from CLCs around the country” forum

One-on-one training for CLCQ members

At the project midway point, a decision was made to invest time and resources into offering bespoke, one-on-one disaster resilience training to individual CLCQ members.

It was thought that this would be a particularly useful way to reach regional CLC staff, and foster connections with local disaster management personnel.

The Project Coordinator designed a 3-hour workshop based on adult learning principles, with each trainee receiving an individual training handbook tailored to their Centre and region.

Training was interactive, allowing participants an opportunity to share their thoughts about: climate change and extreme weather events; the concept of 'resilience' (as it relates to themselves, their workplace and the clients they support); ingredients for being disaster prepared; common disaster legal needs; and effective models of legal service delivery following a disaster.

In the final hour of the workshop, a representative from the local Council attended to deliver a Know your Risks session to participants.

Community legal sector	Disaster management sector
Central Queensland Community Legal Centre	Rockhampton Regional Council
Cairns Community Legal Centre	Australian Red Cross Emergency Services personnel
Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre	Mackay Regional Council
The Advocacy and Support Centre (TASC) Legal and Justice Social Services	Ipswich City Council
TASC Legal and Justice Social Services	Toowoomba Regional Council
Suncoast Community Legal Service	Sunshine Coast Council



Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre



Central Queensland Community Legal Centre

Staff were invited to complete a pre-training survey to ascertain pre-existing knowledge.

Of the 32 individuals who opted to take the survey, 87% (n=28) had not previously undertaken any disaster or climate resilience training.

One-on-one training for CLCQ members was a Project activity highlight.

Its success is reflected in the level of active participation and positive survey feedback results.

Overall, more than 60 CLC staff and volunteers participated in disaster resilience training, ranging from Board members, intake staff, social workers, lawyers, operational staff, law student interns and senior leadership.

Aggregated survey feedback reveals that all (100%) participants increased their understanding of disaster resilience, and all (100%) felt that they will use the training in future work.

What particularly resonated with individuals was the opportunity to engage with local disaster management personnel:



TASC

*"Great idea to invite [staff name] from Council, it was very informative. Thank you."
(Mackay Regional CLC participant)*



Cairns Community Legal Centre

*"The whole presentation and guests from Council – very useful."
(TASC Toowoomba participant)*



Suncoast Community Legal Service

Resources and Checklists

This Project developed a series of resources and checklists to help build the capacity of CLCQ members to become more disaster prepared and resilient.

- Disaster & Climate Resilience Webpage – this [project landing page](#) describes project activities and provides links to external resources to support CLC organisational resilience. A full list of webinar recordings is also available from this page.
- Climate Resilience and Adaptive Capacity Checklist – a self-assessment and reflection tool for Queensland community legal centres was created to support their organisational resilience. It is [available](#) from the project website.
- FAQs on Disaster Recovery Legal Work – Tips and Advice from Queensland CLC practitioners – a helpful resource that collates advice by and for Queensland community lawyers who deliver disaster recovery legal work. This will be uploaded pending desktop publishing.
- Climate Risk Governance Guide for Queensland CLCs (in process) – this significant resource is being produced on a pro bono basis by climate governance experts within a national law firm. The Guide will step CLCs through the context and regulatory landscape for developing climate resilient business models. It will explain the imperative for CLCs to anticipate how climate and nature related risks will affect their clients and ability to provide services.
- Template Business Continuity Plan – CLCQ developed its own business continuity plan for extreme weather events and will make it available to the sector as an example for member centres to modify.

Policy and law reform

This project took place during a period of significant law reform on areas of law impacting climate and disaster resilience.

The Project Coordinator drafted CLCQ law reform submissions to assist governments in their consideration of proposed changes from an access to justice and human rights perspective.

Wherever possible, views from CLCQ members were incorporated into the following submissions:

- Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) Review, led by the National Emergency Management Agency
- Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications, Inquiry into the Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023
- Queensland parliamentary inquiry into the Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill. CLCQ was subsequently invited to give evidence at the Inquiry. CLCQ's submission and statements were extensively cited in the Committee's [final report](#) recommending passage of the Bill into law.

The project also sought out opportunities to publish short form pieces on extreme heat across legal and community sector channels.

The intention was to communicate the important role of the community legal sector in supporting disaster and climate resilience. Queensland Law Society and the Queensland Council of Social Service published the following articles and blogs:

- Legally preparing for heatwaves, Queensland Law Society (25 October 2023)
- Heatwave injustice: human rights impact of extreme temperatures QCOSS (6 March 2024)

Engaging in policy and law reform was not an original project objective, however CLCQ decided to expand the Project scope to contribute to these timely, relevant developments in law and policy.



Partnerships and stakeholder engagement

An opportunity arose early on for the Project to offer scholarships to First Nations CLC staff to attend the inaugural National Indigenous Disaster Resilience Summit held in Brisbane on 21 August 2023.

This enabled our First Nations workforce to connect with other communities and organisations, and spark ideas for future disaster resilience project activities.

Stakeholders beyond the community legal sector included:

- disaster management personnel
- private law firms through their pro bono programs
- the Inspector General for Emergency Management through its early career research forum
- the Australian Red Cross,
- Neighbourhood Centres Queensland, and QCOSS

The Project Coordinator represented CLCQ in various networks including the Queensland and Commonwealth Disaster Legal Assistance Working Groups/Forums, and the Queensland Evacuation Facilities Working Group.



National Indigenous Disaster Resilience Summit



North Queensland Women's Legal Service

Key Acheivements

This Project attained broad reach across CLCQ membership. By the end of the 12-month period, 80% of CLCQ members had directly engaged in the project.

As already identified, one-on-one training was a Project highlight. This activity enabled CLCQ to offer individualised support to regional members that would not otherwise have had the time to focus on disaster resilience. It also brought together the community legal and disaster management sectors for cross-sector learning and collaboration.

The webinar series succeeded in generating new knowledge and resources and helped build the profile of CLCs across the disaster management space. A further project highlight was the ability to leverage the pro bono contribution of private entities including the Climate Risk Group Ltd, and law firms Minter Ellison and HopgoodGanim Lawyers.

“Disasters are now such prevalent and consistent occurrences in Australia, it would be great to see the consistent and stable funding of existing, specialised disaster services as a permanent fixture within the Australian community legal services field. This would support a proactive, solid framework of readiness with experienced staff who are able to provide appropriate, confident and knowledgeable responses to natural disasters.” (Webinar participant)

CLCQ would like to thank project funders the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, the Commonwealth Government, and the Queensland Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (funding administration) for making this work possible.

About us

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

Queensland's community legal centres provide free information, legal assistance and referrals, representation and casework, community education and advocacy to people experiencing disadvantage who are facing legal and social problems.

Established in 1993, our vision is to work with our centres towards a fair and just Queensland.

Our mission is to be a voice for the sector and to lead and support Queensland CLCs to deliver quality and accessible services to vulnerable and disadvantage people and to bring about change for individuals and communities.

Our objectives are 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



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