



Publisher

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Our Staff



Terri King
Principal Solicitor



Robert Bucksath
Junior Solicitor



Sandy Watt
Coordinator



Bailie Rolff
Administrative Assistant

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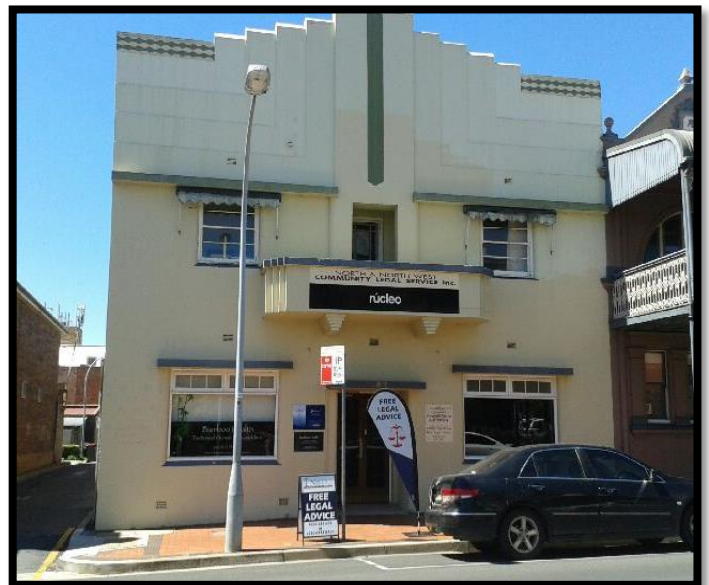
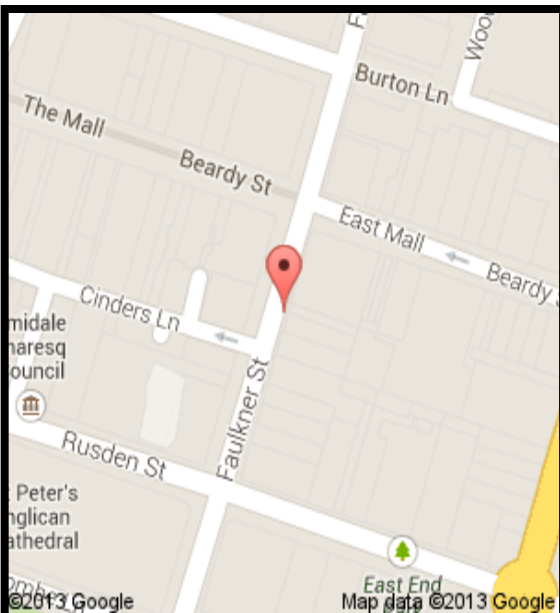
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Follow us on twitter

Our office hours are 9.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 5.00pm

MONDAY to FRIDAY



Find us at our Outreach locations:-

TAMWORTH	Tamworth Community Centre Cnr Peel and Darling Streets TAMWORTH	INVERELL	Inverell Court House & Linking Together Cntr INVERELL
	Coledale Community Centre 2B Kenny Drive TAMWORTH	GLEN INNES	Community Info Cntr 268 Grey Street GLEN INNESS
GUNNEDAH	Community Service Centre 80 Marquis Street GUNNEDAH	WALCHA	Walcha Comm Hub Fitzroy Street WALCHA
NARRABRI	Neighbourhood Centre 8 Doyle Street NARRABRI	TENTERFIELD	Tamworth Comm. Cntr Cnr Peel and Darling St TENTERFIELD
WEE WAA	Wee Waa Library 106 Rose Street WEE WAA	QUIRINDI	Quirindi Health Centre 195 George Street QUIRINDI
MOREE	Moree Library Cnr Balo and Albert Streets MOREE	GLEN INNES	Glen Innes Correctional Centre GLEN INNES

Who do we help?

Our goal is to give assistance to anyone who is having difficulties accessing, or is unsure how to access the legal system.

If you:-

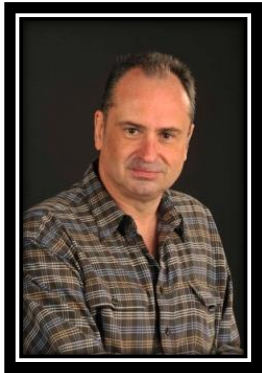
- Are not sure of your legal rights and responsibilities
- Are not sure where to go for assistance
- Are unable to pay for advice from a private solicitor



We can help with:-

- Family Law issues (excluding property settlement, maintenance, monetary matters)
- Domestic Violence
- Consumer Complaints
- Credit and Debt issues
- Discrimination
- Employment Law
- Criminal Law
- Victims Compensation
- Wills, Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardianship
- Neighbourhood Disputes
- Probate
- Apprehended Violence Orders

Our Board



Mr Paul Sattler *BA(Hons) LLB(Hons) (NE)* – Chairperson

Mr Paul Sattler was admitted as a Solicitor in 2004 and in practice specialised in criminal law. He joined the University of New England at Armidale in 2007 where he teaches and researches in the area of criminal law, particularly as it relates to evidence law. He continues to practice as a Solicitor and was a contributing editor to the Lexis Nexis Concise Australian Legal Dictionary (4th ed, 2011) and co-author of “Eburn and Hayes Criminal Law and Procedure in NSW” (4th ed, 2013). Paul is the President of the Senior Common Room at Drummond & Smith College at UNE.



Ms Kathy Padgen – Secretary

Ms Kathy Padgen was born in England and arrived in Australia in the early 70’s. Kathy has a strong sense of community and has worked in the fields of Adoption, Disability and Welfare for young and old. Kathy is a retired Public Servant working to benefit children and single mothers. She is currently the Station Manager/Public Officer of the Armidale Community Radio Station. Kathy has a strong sense of community justice and involvement.



Dr Kip Werren *BFA/LLB(Hons), PhD(WSU)* – Treasurer

Mr Kip Werren has been part of NNWCLS since 2012. Kip is a lecturer in the School of Law, University of New England. Kip has practised and continues to practise as an Accountant and a Lawyer principally in the areas of commercial law, conveyancing, asset protection, estate planning, business structures, and taxation. Kip has completed a PhD dissertation titled Utilising Taxation Incentives to Promote Private Sector Funded Conservation.



Mr Harold Ritch – Board Member

Mr Harold joined our Board in 2012. He has over 20 years experience in Government Contracted Services in the welfare sector. Harold is passionate about “making a difference to the lives of those we service”. He has served on the Board of the National Employment Services Assoc, Ascent Group and convenor of the Rural, Remote and Indigenous Services Special Interest Group. Harold is the Project Manager Economic Development, Tourism & Marketing at the Armidale Regional Council.



Ms Bronwyn Pearson – Board Member

Ms Bronwyn Pearson is currently Director and Principal Consultant with Pinnacle People Solutions, an independent consultancy offering human resource management advice and services to regionally based small to medium enterprises. Bronwyn has over twenty years' experience providing strategic and operational human resource advice and solutions to the public and private sectors, combined with postgraduate qualifications in human resource management and Certified Professional Member status with the Australian Human Resources Institute (CAHRI).

As part of senior roles in human resource management and governance management, Bronwyn has had experience in strategic HR, change management, employee relations, workforce planning, performance management, organisational development, policy, negotiation, mediation, coaching and specialist recruitment. She has also provided consultancy to the public and private sectors and has been successful in securing and managing several government funded projects, both from single and multi-institution perspectives.



Ms Bronwen Jackman – Board Member

Ms Bronwen Jackman is a legal academic at UNE School of Law. Bronwen lectures in evidence law, employment law and property law. Her research interests include international environmental law and property law.

Bronwen has extensive experience in community organisations within the New England area including the former Armidale Women's Shelter and Women's Centre. She has experience on management committees such as the Women's Shelter. After taking a leave of absence from academia a few years ago Bronwen assumed the position of Coordinator of the Armidale Domestic Violence Advocacy Service funded by Legal Aid. This position

allowed her to assist women in domestic and personal violence situations and to assist them through all the processes relating to obtaining orders and going to court. It was a position that allowed Bronwen access to local magistrates, police and court personnel. Bronwen has a commitment to social justice and a specific commitment to her community.

Our Purpose Statement ...

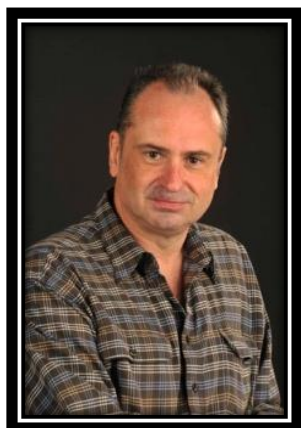
- to provide advice, assistance and support to people in the North and North West region of New South Wales who have least access to the legal system and the least power to help themselves
- to provide our services in a manner that increases people's understanding of the law and their legal rights
- to deliver these services in a way that respects each individual
- to provide community education with the aim of increasing people's knowledge and understanding of the law and their legal rights
- to be responsive to the needs of the community we serve

Our Objectives ...

- to increase access to the legal system and policy development for people from traditionally disadvantaged sectors of the population
- to help clients to be better informed of their legal and social rights and responsibilities and the options available to them
- to refer clients to other legal and non-legal services when our services are not able to assist them with their issue
- to work towards a more just, equitable and accessible society for all people
- to ensure staff in our services will maintain high standards of professional conduct and service

Farewell and Thank You!

It was with much regret that the close of this financial year saw the resignation of two much loved and very much appreciated Board Members.



Paul Sattler joined our Board on 15th September 2009. As a lecturer and researcher of criminal law at the University of New England, and fulfilling the position of President of the Senior Common Room at Drummond and Smith College at UNE, we were very fortunate that Paul offered his spare time to our Service and serving on our Board.

Paul has certainly been an active member of our Board since joining. In 2010 Paul was Treasurer; in 2011 he was Secretary and in 2013, after the passing of our founder and Chairperson Jenny Crew, Paul filled the casual vacancy of Chairperson from May 2013 until the AGM in October 2013 where he was elected and accepted the position of Chairperson. Paul remained as our Chairperson until his resignation.

Paul always made himself available, outside of Board Meetings, to attend the office as the Board representative when our Service had guests from Community Legal Centre NSW, Legal Aid NSW and other Government organisations. We were always thankful for his operational input.



Harold Ritch joined our Board on 15th March 2012. Harold spends his working days as the Project Manager in Economic Development, Tourism & Marketing at the Armidale Regional Council. Harold brought to us extensive experience of overseeing governance, having served on many Boards in our community.

Harold took on the Acting Treasurer's position in June 2014 after the resignation of our Treasurer until the following AGM in November 2014. Harold made himself available every week for completing financial transactions and made many impromptu trips across town to assist with monetary transactions. Nothing was ever too much trouble for Harold.

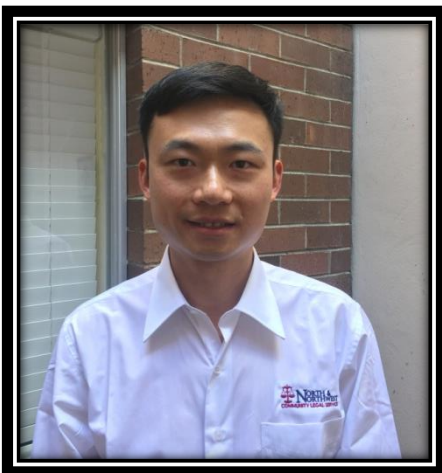
In April 2015 Harold was the first of our Board Members to ever have participated in a RRR Roadshow for Community Legal Centres. This was held in Broken Hill and on all reports, he was an outstanding representation of our Service and our Board.

To both Paul and Harold, we would like to thank you for your years of dedication and support to the staff. Your last year of service certainly tested the resilience of your commitment and your openness and approachability in times of hardship. You both certainly proved yourselves as steadfast Board Members and for the free giving of your time we are truly thankful. We all wish you every success in your next venture and ask that you don't become strangers; you will always be a part of the North & North West Community Legal Service extended family.

Welcome Aboard!



At the end of this year, as we said goodbye to Paul and Harold we also farewelled Robert Bucksath, our Junior Solicitor, and saw him off to Sydney to pursue his next goal. With these departures we welcomed to our team two new Solicitors in Stanley Tao and Elliot Lloyd and a new Board Member, Ms Bronwen Jackman.



Stanley Tao

Stanley joins us from Sydney and comes with experience in Community Legal Centres. Stanley has a passion for employment law and consumer complaints.

Elliot also joins us from Sydney and has had previous work experience with Legal Aid NSW. This is Elliot's first position as a practising Solicitor.



Elliot Lloyd



Bronwen Jackman

We have been very fortunate to have Ms Bronwen Jackman join our Board. Bronwen is a legal academic at the University of New England lecturing in evidence law, employment law and property law. You would have read in Bronwen's Board Profile at the beginning of this report that she has extensive experience in community organisations within the New England and we are certainly looking forward to a long association with Bronwen.

Snapshot of North & North West Community Legal Service Inc.

The North & North West Community Legal Service Inc (NNWCLS) was officially opened by Rt Hon Ian Sinclair in Armidale on 22 April 1996.

History

The Service began in April 1993 when Jennifer Crew began the Armidale Community Legal Service run solely by volunteer solicitors from Armidale. In 1995 Jennifer Crew, Ted Wright, and Rhonda Weinand began research and consultation with the community to establish the need for a funded Community Legal Centre to service the whole New England & North West regions of NSW. The resulting submission to the Commonwealth Government was successful and the North and North West Community Legal Service Inc was created.

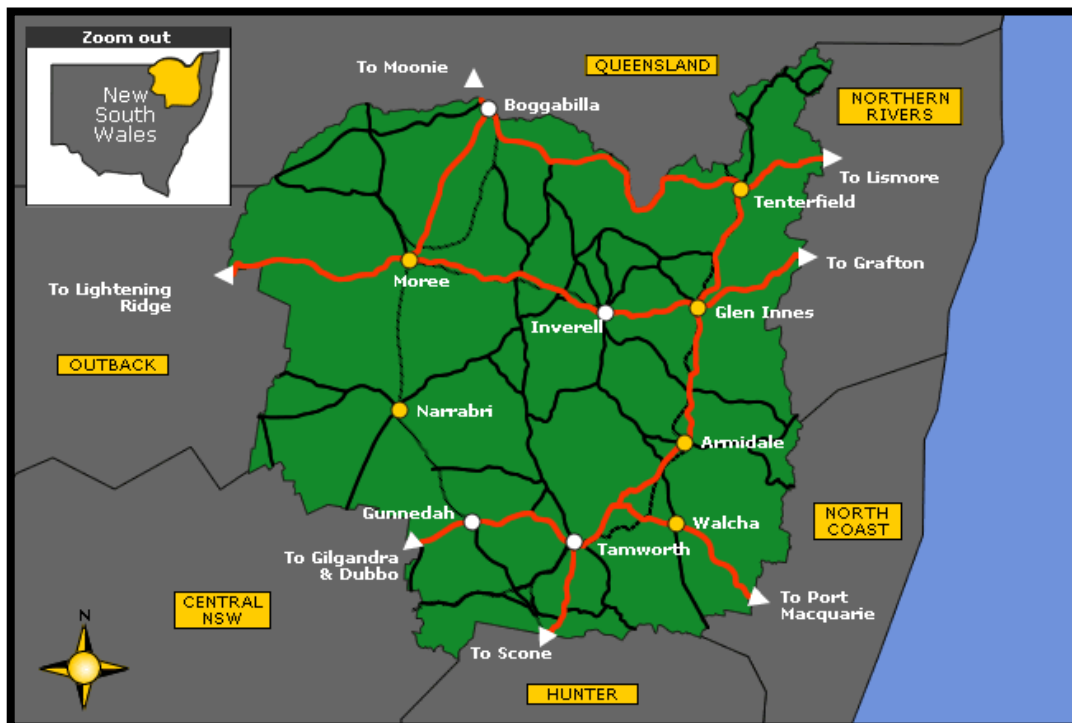
In April 2002 the Service became the auspice for the Northern Regional Tenant Resource Service (NRTRS) and in October 2002 became the auspice for the New England and Western Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service (NEWTAAS). The sudden growth in the Service required it to relocate from shared accommodation in the Armidale Neighbourhood Centre to its own premises in the Minto Building. It also opened offices in Dubbo and Broken Hill for the tenancy service, both co-located with the Community Legal Centres in those cities.



From July 2004 to September 2005, the NNWCLS took on the temporary auspice of the Western Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, with offices in Dubbo, Broken Hill and Bourke. In April 2005, the NNWCLS became the auspice for the Armidale Community Cottage.

In September 2005, the Western Aboriginal TAAS was handed over to an Aboriginal organisation, Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise to auspice, and in January 2006, the Northern Regional Tenant Resource Service self-incorporated to become an independent Service, Northern Links.

In May 2007, the North & North West Community Legal Service re-located to new premises in a more central position in the CBD and close to the Court House which has proved most successful. NEWTAAS remained at the Minto Building. From 1 July 2010, NEWTAAS also successfully self incorporated. We remain closely affiliated with Northern Links and NEWTAAS.



Geography and Demographics of Our Region

The Legal Service covers the New England and North West regions of New South Wales with our office based in Armidale. We provide advice and support to a population base of approximately 176,200 people over an area of 98,000 square kilometres. This represents 10% of New South Wales. Our Legal staff travel considerable distances on a regular basis giving face-to-face appointments to clients through our Outreach Program. We also offer telephone appointments when face-to-face appointments are not possible for clients. This is assisted by our free call 1800 number to ensure accessibility for everyone in our region.

The regions we service are extremely diverse, although all are rural centres with agriculture generally comprising the major industry. In the New England, education (tertiary and secondary), beef cattle and wool growing predominate, whereas the north western regions are cotton and wheat growing areas. The western and far western areas have extensive grazing and food growing industries with mining also playing a major part. Tourism is a fast growing industry across all the regions, especially in the northern coastal areas.



While the coastal regions are experiencing a boom in population growth, the regions west of the dividing range have static or declining populations.

Indigenous Australians comprise a much higher percentage of our population than the state average. For example in the New England and North West regions the 2011 Census, provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, show people of aboriginal descent comprise 9% of our population as against the state average of 2.5% with about 9.2% of the State's Aboriginal population living in this region.

In terms of age, our population is slightly older than the State average with 17.2% being over 65 (State average 14.7%).

Historically our regions have recorded higher unemployment rates than State or National averages.

Similarly our regions experience a much lower median income level than both State or National figures indicate. The median weekly income for a single person is 17% below the national figure on average and the median weekly income for a household is 27% below the national figure.

The percentage of one-parent families in our region is 17.3%.

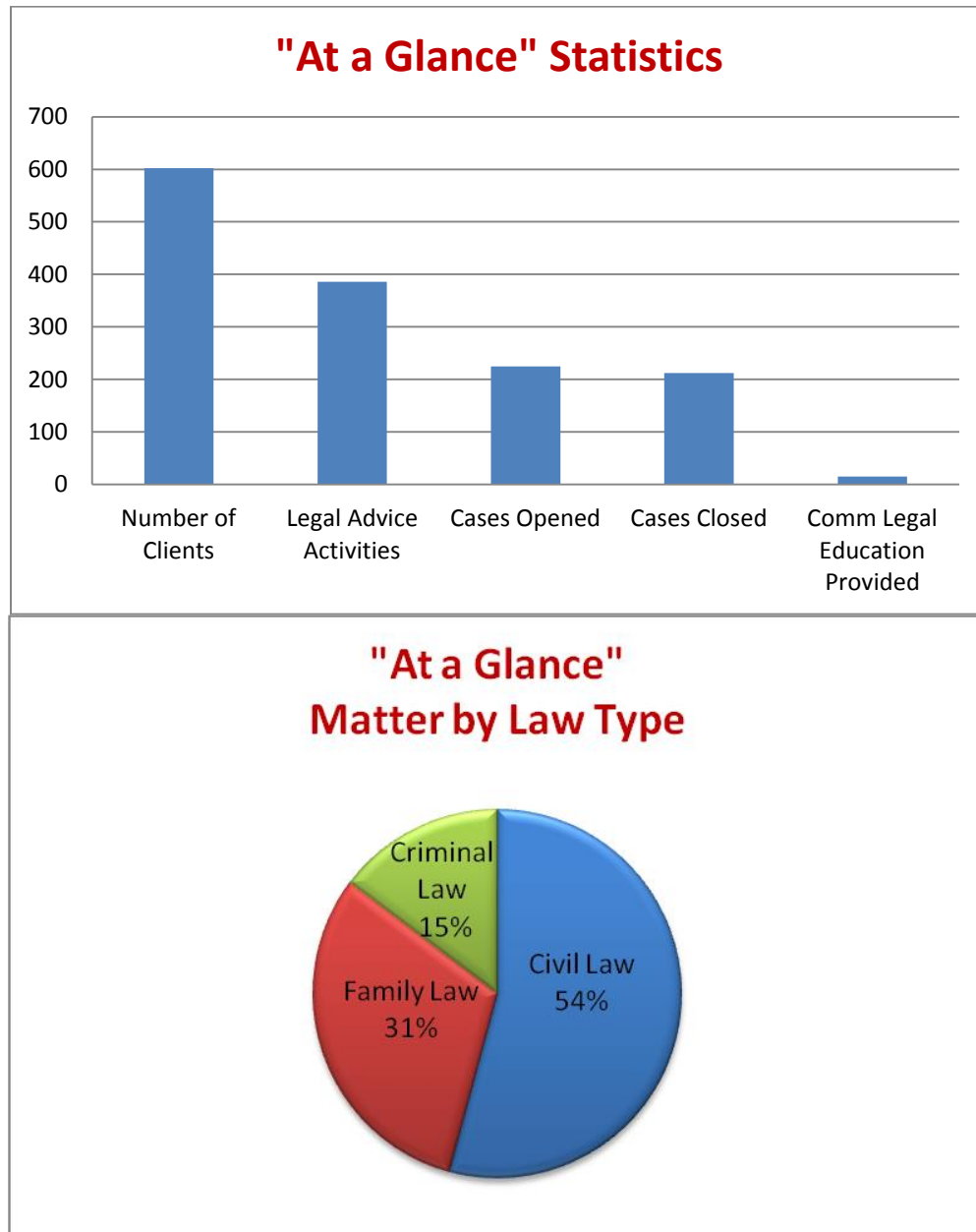
The overall picture portrayed by the 2011 census indicates that our region has lower levels of income, higher levels of unemployment, and higher levels of socio-economic and other forms of disadvantage than the national average. Our region is notable for its large indigenous population, below average educational participation and below average incomes.

From our Purpose Statement you will read that we strive to support those who have least access and the least power to help themselves. We indicate to be responsive to the needs of our community. With the above statistics in mind, we know that our Service in the North & North West region of New South Wales is well placed. We understand that these statistics would suggest the need for our Service in this area. Because of this we continue our extensive outreach and always look to further it through our Strategic Planning. We feel passionate about assisting those in most need within our Community.



"At a Glance"

This Annual Report reviews and reports on the operational activities of North & North West Community Legal Service and its performance for the financial year 2015-2016. The Report reflects our purpose to provide advice and assistance to members of our community who have least access to the legal system. "At a Glance" is intended to give a brief outline of our operations for this financial year.



TOP 5 MATTERS FOR THE YEAR

- 1) Child Contacts
- 2) Wills, POA, Enduring Guardianship
- 3) Credit & Debt Issues
- 4) Employment Issues
- 5) Roads & Traffic Offences

Acting Chairperson's Report



It has been another momentous and challenging year for the North & North West Community Legal Service. The issue of the funding of Community Legal Services (CLC's) has remained a profiled topic in another election year. Further to State and Federal governments committing to maintaining CLCs' funding at or above current levels until the end of the 2016-17 financial year, the Board has continued to develop strategies and contingencies to ensure that come the 2017-18 financial year, we will be properly resourced and funded, and thus able to maintain our services at or beyond current levels.

We undertook the complex and necessarily demanding accreditation process this year and have recently been advised we've received accreditation for the next three-year period. Our sincere appreciation to all staff and to our Coordinator, Sandy Watt, in particular, for her efforts in preparing for and coordinating this enormous endeavour.

We cover one of the largest geographical areas of any CLC in the country. We've extended our outreach service provision this year to include Quirindi and Wee Waa and continue to service our communities through providing legal services to isolated and disadvantaged members of our communities in Tamworth, Narrabri, Gunnedah, Walcha, Moree, Inverell, Glen Innes and Tenterfield.

We attracted much positive media during this past year regarding our various community engagements and services. Of particular note were the Court Liaison Service and our range of community legal education events, including speaking about the legal implications of sexting to teenagers during Youth Week, running seminars on Wills, Power of Attorney and Enduring Guardianship, and participating in the Seniors' Expo and Reclaim the Night.

We could not achieve our vision and goals were it not for an outstanding team of committed and talented professionals. It is my privilege, on behalf of the Board, to thank them all for their dedication and professionalism. We saw some significant staff changes this year, farewelling Ms Deborah Clarke, Principal Solicitor and Mr Robert Bucksath, Solicitor and welcoming Mr Elliot Lloyd and Mr Stanley Tao as new Solicitors. We were also delighted to congratulate Miss Terri King on being appointed to the Principal Solicitor role. As a Board we could not function without the comprehensive financial and Centre reporting provided by Coordinator Ms Sandy Watt and Principal Solicitor Ms Terri King and I thank them sincerely. Also, the Centre itself could not function without our highly valued administrative assistant Mrs Baillie Rolff and the assistance of our dedicated team of UNE Law Student Volunteers. A sincere and heartfelt thanks to all.

Finally, I wish to publicly acknowledge the outstanding contribution over many years of our outgoing Board Chairperson, Mr Paul Sattler, and Board member Mr Harold Ritch. Their combined efforts have been tireless, their expertise highly valued and their contribution immeasurable. A huge thanks also to my fellow Board members Ms Kathy Padgen, Secretary, Mr Kip Werren, Treasurer, and warmly welcomed new member of the Board, Ms Bronwen Jackman, Lecturer in the School of law at UNE.

Our Centre relies heavily upon the willingness of our Board members to give their time, expertise and experience to the efficient and effective governance of our Service and I would like to thank each of our Board members for their generosity in time and contribution to what is a well-balanced and conscientious governing body.

As a robust and successful CLC I look forward to another productive and positive year for the North & North West Community Legal Service.

Bronwyn Pearson

ACTING CHAIRPERSON

Principal Solicitor's Report



This last year has seen significant change, growth and a renewed passion within the Service. In my first 12 months as Principal Solicitor, I have become extremely proud of our Service, staff, and the sometimes life changing work we do for our clients.

My role at the Service gives me a unique opportunity to mentor and guide others within my profession, to challenge myself daily and to help those within our community that need it the most. The satisfaction one receives from a kind thank you, a warm hug or a sigh of relief is indescribable. I'm grateful everyday for the opportunity I have to make a difference through the work of our Service. It's easy to forget about the contribution we make and the relief our assistance can bring when it becomes our everyday. It's important that we take the time to reflect on our achievements, our strengths and milestones but also look to how we can improve.

I'm so grateful for the team I work with. We are a small supportive group that all share a passion for social justice. I acknowledge and thank our outgoing Junior Solicitor, Mr Robert Bucksath for his commitment to maintaining service delivery to clients whilst we faced significant staffing shortages. Additionally the support from our Administrative team, Ms Sandy Watt and Mrs Bailie Rolff enabled our legal staff to maintain circuits and client appointments. This last year has truly tested our strength as a team. We have all had to work outside the scope of our normal duties, and I truly appreciate the support I have received particularly from Sandy and Bailie. I sincerely thank them both for this.

Mr Stanley Tao, Solicitor and Mr Elliot Lloyd, Junior Solicitor have been welcome additions to our staff. Both solicitors have demonstrated an enthusiastic attitude and I look forward to watching them grow over the coming year.

As a generalist centre, we are often faced with challenging and left-field matter types. We do, however have our core areas of advice in which clients continue to seek assistance. The top most advised on matters this year included; child contacts, wills, power of attorney and enduring guardianship, credit and debt issues, employment issues and road and traffic offences. This reflects the varied nature of work our solicitors undertake and also the issues relevant to our catchment area. It appears that the Armidale Local Court Liaison Service has resulted in an increase in road and traffic matters. Additionally our Solicitors have been more proactive in offering our assistance to clients for wills, power of attorney and enduring guardianships. Many clients have not given thought to such issues and consequently when raised by the Solicitor they often seek a further appointment to draft such. Fines can also be dealt with in a similar manner, that being a client attending the office for an unrelated matter such as child contacts can be questioned about fines and a further appointment organised.

On reflecting on our statistics, it became apparent that we were referring a significant number of clients enquiring about probate, apprehended violence orders and neighbourhood disputes.

In response to our communities needs we amended our policies to allow our staff to provide legal advice in relation to such matters. Since doing so we have provided advice and assistance to a number of clients in each field, particularly neighbourhood disputes.

Most of the advice we provide to clients is done so in person. In fact, 79% of all advices provided were done so, face to face, by one of our solicitors. This high statistic reflects the amount of travel we undertake every month to ensure people within our catchment have an opportunity to obtain legal advice and assistance in person. We travelled a total of 27,460kms in doing so. The option of telephone advices remain essential for those who cannot attend our office or an outreach location, and for matters that need to be dealt with urgently.

Outreach remains an integral part of our service delivery. This year we were successful in expanding our outreach circuits to include Quirindi and Wee Waa. We continue to operate out of Tamworth, Walcha, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Moree, Inverell, Tenterfield and Glen Innes. The additional circuit to Glen Innes prison remains popular. Each month two practitioners visit inmates to provide civil and family law advice. In doing so, we aim to reduce the rate of recidivism.

Each outreach location operates a little differently, to cater for the local community. For example in Tamworth and Inverell we run afternoon drop-ins in centres outside of the CBD. We acknowledge the importance of strong community ties within our outreach locations, particularly with those that host us. We thank them for their ongoing support and contributions.

Our Armidale Local Court Liaison Service is a fantastic program that provides assistance to first time court users and those who are not able to afford private practitioners; who are not eligible for Legal Aid assistance. In addition to the assistance provided to clients, the Liaison Service is of benefit to the Court; freeing up time dealing with unrepresented defendants.

Additionally we continue to operate the radio program delivering community legal education on Armidale's Community Radio 2ARM FM92.1. We thank the court staff and the radio station volunteers for their assistance in allowing us to deliver these programs.

Additionally our Service remains active in local groups and community events including the Armidale Interagency, Reclaim the Night- Market Night, Armidale Domestic Violence Steering Committee, My Future My Choice Expo, Homelessness Awareness Day, the Youth Expo, Seniors Week and the University of New England Careers week to name a few. Such events are a great way to build connections with other service providers and the local community. It is not uncommon for our Service to be invited to present community legal education as a result of attending such functions.

The next twelve months will see our Service continue to grow and change. As we welcome our two new Solicitors and Legal Support Officer, Miss Bethany Richmond. We will continue to deliver a high standard of legal advice and casework to the most disadvantaged groups within our catchment.

I acknowledge and thank our Board for their support and time; particularly our outgoing Chairperson, Mr Paul Sattler, who was a constant and open support to me. I have sought assistance in varying forms from all board members at one point or another and again I thank them all for so obligingly doing so. I thank all staff and volunteers for their contributions and congratulate them on another year well done.

Terri King

PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR

Coordinator's Report



It is with pleasure that I commence my report with the acknowledgement of yet another successful year. Commencing our year in a strong financial position allowed us to fully participate in our Organisational Plan. Our team has worked tirelessly to make available to our community free legal advice and education and to participate in community events. The efforts of our Legal team has been particularly commendable this year as staffing was down to two Legal practitioners, in Terri King and Robert Bucksath, and yet our targets for a three-member Legal team were almost reached. This has been an outstanding achievement, of course attained with the synergy of a hard-working Administration team.

Courage and resilience has certainly been the ingredients that have shaped our Service this year which kept us focused on achieving our targets but more importantly, kept us focused on our founder's philosophy; to increase access of the legal system for everyone especially our disadvantaged; to work towards equality and to deliver services in a way that respects each individual.

In producing the Annual Report this year I touched base with our first Annual Report of 1997. What an inspirational report! This marked the first full reportable year with funding for our Service and I couldn't help but feel the excitement and enthusiasm that radiated from each page as the hopes and dreams of Jenny Crew, Ted Wright and Rhonda Weinand were coming to fruition after receiving initial funding. The braveness with which they and their staff faced each challenge along the way is certainly reflective in the staff and Board of today and "Access" and "Equity" have remained as catchwords within our culture. The excitement that was expressed for innovative developments in IT that they felt could one day enhance service delivery was palpable. But there was the simple truth of their belief; nothing will ever replace the crucial face to face contact and that this will always be priority. The fact that this belief within our Service remains today is just inspiring!!

Now to today: Our Service was fortunate to be one of 10 centres to receive additional Commonwealth funding this year. Some centres were instructed to use the funding for the sole purpose of restructuring and amalgamating with other centres, while other centres such as ours were given instructions to expand existing Services. While this was a welcome relief to what is always a volatile funding arena, it came with the reminder of impending funding cuts from 2017. These cuts would be affecting centres across Australia up to 30% and would see some centres cutting services. Needless to say with such future uncertainty, planning and expanding was fraught with much trepidation.

So, how did we respond? We forged ahead and opened 2 new clinics - in Wee Waa and in Quirindi - giving us now 11 Outreach locations; we raised our profile with additional advertising throughout our catchment; purchased additional signage for maximum exposure which included sign writing on our Service vehicle - "Mobile Lawyer" - to spike awareness while on location; we increased our matter types to enable us to assist more clients and reduce our referrals; we introduced an SMS appointment reminder service to lessen our "No Shows".

Responding to long term challenges reveals a lot about a team and for us it brought out our strengths and demonstrated our resilience and determination, notwithstanding our staff shortage. We made a conscience decision to strengthen our foundations leading up to these impending cuts.

The initial news from Legal Aid NSW regarding funding cuts was very precise; that funding cuts are guaranteed and to expect them. The methodology with which these cuts will affect Centres still remains unclear but what we do know to date is that funding will be allocated differently to Legal Service Providers moving forward. All funding portions ie: Commonwealth, State and PPF money will be pooled and divided amongst Centres as Legal Aid sees fit. Legal Aid will look at individual Centres and take into consideration if that Centre has other avenues for income/funding, what volunteer involvement there is and funding will be reduced if there is a large Legal Aid presence in the area. Legal Aid won't take Centres' historical statistics into account but be guided by SEIFA (Social-Economic Index for Areas) data as provided by Bureau of Statistics and favour Centres that are placed in remote areas.

Our peak body National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) and our state body Community Legal Centres New South Wales (CLCNSW) are to be commended for their leadership with effective lobbying, media releases and Government official engagement to upturn the initial announced federal budget cuts. Through their hard work and the work of all Community Legal Centres across Australia, including ourselves, pushing back on Government forced the reversal of the major cuts first announced, but unfortunately funding remains insufficient and cuts are absolute.

Legal Aid has suggested that our Service's funding cut will be "minimal" but in any language, a cut is a cut so moving forward, the outstanding resilience that we have all demonstrated this year with expanding our Service will certainly be needed come 2017 and beyond.

In a domain where assuredness is never guaranteed, acknowledging that this year marked the 40th Anniversary for Community Legal Centres in NSW is a timely reminder of the importance Centres such as ours plays in all communities. This longevity is a positive legacy of the movement first established in 1975 and a testament to the need of CLC's within our country. Unfortunately it seems the battle of funding will always be a contention for our Sector.

In NACLC's quest for high quality in governance and risk management Accreditation of CLC's was instigated in 2012. It was at this time that concerns were raised that organisations were claiming to give free legal advice which gave the impression that they were a CLC. We received Accreditation in this Phase 1 process through an extensive audit of policies and procedures to determine that we were providing a Community Legal Service in accordance with NACLC's criteria.

This year marked Phase 2 of a three-year Accreditation cycle and again through a long audit process saw our Centre being accredited again until 2019. The purpose of Accreditation, however overwhelming, is an excellent test of governance within a Legal Service and when awarded our Accreditation Certificate, the Accreditation Coordinator commended our Service on our preparation of this lengthy process and appreciated our openness and transparency through the audit.

Our Service engaged our clients' feedback again this year through a Client Satisfaction Survey for the purpose of quality improvement. This was a positive exercise in gauging all levels of client contact with our Service. The survey measured client ease in accessing our Service, treatment while engaging with us, usefulness of advice given and when receiving advice if it was easily understood. This year our lowest rating was how quickly we responded to client's enquiry, which was certainly in line with staffing levels and in line with a higher than normal demand for assistance. However, all clients who did contact our Service were given assistance with appointments or given an appropriate referral pathway. Our highest measure showed 100% of clients surveyed said that they were treated well while engaging with us and that advice was clear and useful.

Collecting any data to measure statistics is such an important tool in our organisational planning, giving an unbiased view of operations while measuring need across demographics. Our statistics played a big role in decision-making for expansion.

I was fortunate enough to attend the CLC National Conference this year which was held in Fremantle, Western Australia. What an impressive Conference! With approximately 480 attendees, the four days began and ended with plenary sessions with inspirational speakers then concurrent open sessions throughout the day for your choosing. It was a great opportunity to meet staff from other Centres and I thank the Board for their approval in my attendance.

This year we certainly had some wonderful group high lights with the involvement in the Talent Quest at the 40th Anniversary celebration; with fun group community engagement; seeing our office refurbishment through and just the general staff comradery, what a year! There's no doubt that seeing our workmate, Terri King, achieve a career/personal goal in her promotion to the Principal Solicitor role was a standout for us all. Well done Terri and congratulations!

The year certainly showed the resilience and dedication of our Board, through which their demonstrated support to each of us was received gratefully and we are truly thankful. We will certainly miss Paul Sattler and Harold Ritch as they resign from our Board this year but hope that they will always stay in touch.

Thank you to everyone who helped make my year with North & North West Community Legal Service an enjoyable and rewarding one. If the creators of that first Report in 1997, while encouraging all who were involved to "Keep an eye on the bigger picture", could see the skilled, dedicated and enthusiastic team we have today I'm sure they, like me, are proud to be a part of this Legal Service's history.

Sandy Watt

COORDINATOR

The Work of our Legal Service

We provide legal advice, information, casework and some Court representation in Armidale. The Service provides face to face and telephone appointments Mondays to Fridays in Armidale and face to face legal advice and casework through our Outreach Program and clinics.

This year we have continued our “Drop-in” clinic at the Armidale office of a Monday afternoon between 2.30pm and 4.00pm. This gives clients an opportunity to seek immediate legal advice for urgent matters. This has certainly proven to be a popular addition to our Service and a welcome relief to overwhelmed clients.

Our Outreach Circuit Program, which we continued this year, extended to Walcha, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Moree, Inverell, Glen Innes and Glen Innes Correctional Centre on a monthly basis. Tenterfield is visited on a bi-monthly basis and the need for our Service in Tamworth is such that fortnightly visits are warranted.

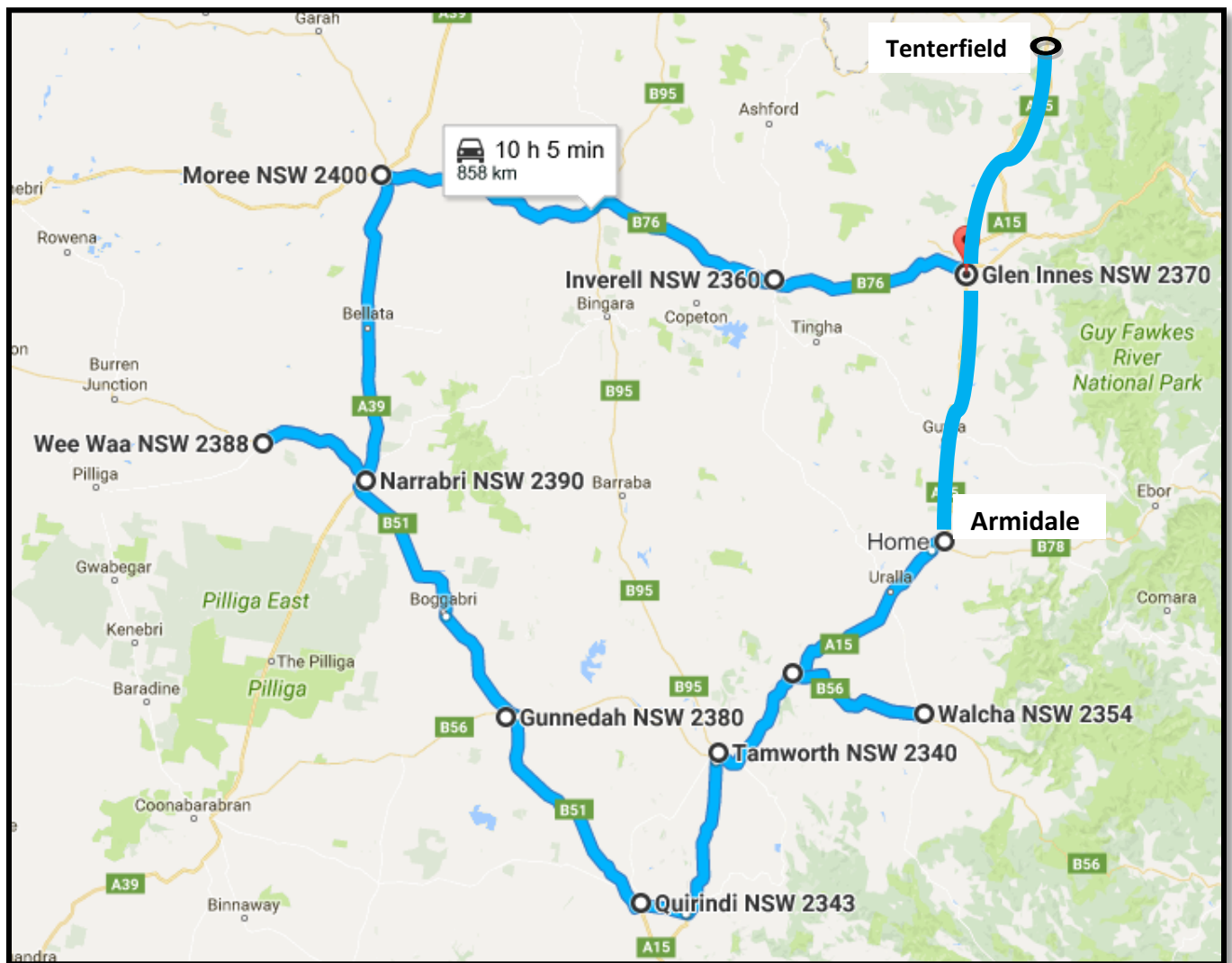
With the continuation of the above locations, this year we have extended our Outreach Program with additional Commonwealth funds. We’ve included 2 new clinics to our already 9 locations. When considering new locations we look at data relating to legal need and high-need demographic areas. This data was collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and indicated that Quirindi and Wee Waa could benefit from our Service as they rate highly across disadvantaged areas. As such we opened a clinic operating out of the Wee Waa Library and then in Quirindi operating out of the Quirindi Health Centre. Both clinics have been well received and are proving to be worthwhile additions to our already extensive outreach program.

Below is an example of our Legal Needs Analysis using data from the Bureau of Statistics Census 2011 which helps us determine the need for our Service in our catchment area and our individual Outreach locations. This research indicates all LGA’s covered in our region are of high need for legal assistance and appointment of each of our Clinics is well place.

LGA REGION	ABORIG. STATUS%	STATE %	OVER 65%	STATE %	UNEMPLOY %	STATE %	MEDIAN WAGE	STATE WAGE
Armidale	6.5	2.5	14.3	14.7	7.7	5.9	488.00	561.00
Tamworth	9	2.5	17.2	14.7	5.9	5.9	504.00	561.00
Gunnedah	11.3	2.5	18.1	14.7	6	5.9	485.00	561.00
Narrabri	10.7	2.5	15.7	14.7	5.4	5.9	520.00	561.00
Moree	20.8	2.5	12.5	14.7	6	5.9	558.00	561.00
Inverell	6.5	2.5	19.2	14.7	7.3	5.9	430.00	561.00
Glen Innes	6.6	2.5	22.9	14.7	7	5.9	404.00	561.00
Walcha	7.3	2.5	21.4	14.7	3.9	5.9	459.00	561.00
Tenterfield	6.8	2.5	20.9	14.7	6.9	5.9	377.00	561.00
Wee Waa	17.7	2.5	15.0	14.7	8.3	5.9	497.00	561.00
Quirindi	10.4	2.5	22.4	14.7	5.7	5.9	460.00	561.00

With the inclusion of these new clinics to our Outreach Program, in travel time alone, our Legal Staff spends 30 hours every month on the road just to get to their clinics. This is certainly a commitment from our Solicitors giving these community members the opportunity to have face to face appointment time for legal advice.

We travelled 27,460 kms this year!!



To maximise our exposure while on location at our clinics we ensure that our venue is well sign posted by placing our sandwich board and Service flag in prominent positions. This, along with our newly signed vehicle “Mobile Lawyer”, ensures that we are easily found. The introduction of reminder letters sent to Community Organisations a week prior to our visits has proven successful also.

We continue to advertise extensively in the newspapers of our Outreach locations, in community flyers and in community publications to maximise our exposure and ensure assistance to our catchment area is well-known.



Below are some of our Outreach office locations:-



Coledale Community Centre



Narrabri Neighbourhood Centre



Community Centre Gunnedah



Wee Waa Library



Glen Innes Correctional Centre



Tamworth Community Centre



Inverell Court House



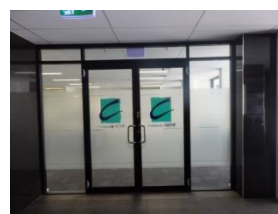
Moree Library



Walcha Community Hub



Linking Together Centre Inverell



Centacare Tamworth



Glen Innes Community Centre

Detail of Statistics for number of Clients, Advice Activities and Cases (both opened and closed) in 2015-2016

Clients

Total number of clients	602
New clients	336
Repeat clients	133
Existing clients	133

Activities

Information Activities	316
Total Advice Activities	388

Cases

Total cases opened during period (Open and New)	375
Open at period start	148
New (Opened during period)	227
Still open at period end (Ongoing)	154
Total cases closed during period	221
Minor cases closed	214
Medium cases closed	7
Major cases closed	0

Non Casework Projects

Total non casework projects open during period (Open and New)	17
Open at period start	2
New (Opened in period)	15
Still open at period end	2
Total non casework projects completed during period	15
Minor projects completed	14
Major projects completed	1
CLE projects completed	13

Duty Lawyer Services

Our Solicitors do represent clients in court on certain matters, but the Service is not currently part of the duty lawyer service.

Court Liaison Program



Our service will be assisting Armidale Local Court on criminal list days (Mondays) in a court liaison capacity. Our overarching objective is to promote access to justice in the New England community.

From a practical perspective, we will be directing court users to the Duty Solicitor and assisting them in their court experience on the day, e.g. welcome them to court, make sure they know where to go, ask if they have a solicitor etc. We may advise/represent clients in matters that fall outside of the duty solicitor guidelines, in particular, traffic matters. In no way will we be competing against the Duty Solicitor for clients and/or Legal Aid funds.

Naturally, we also aim to increase the awareness of our Service within the community and inform people that assistance can be obtained from us in areas where Legal Aid funding is generally not available, e.g. civil law matters. To this end we will have our banner on display and our brochure made available.

Community Legal Education

Community Legal Education (CLE) ranges from small presentations to workshops at community organisations in the North & North West region. This is a wonderful opportunity to increase our community's knowledge of the law and for us to share information.



In 2015-2016 our Solicitors conducted presentations as follows:-

- TAFE New England presentation to Certificate IV in Mental Health on Civil Law
- Presentation to Returned Servicemen at Armidale Services on Wills, POA and EG
- Presentation at the University of New England to the Law Students for Careers Week, educating about our Service and how rewarding it is to work for a CLC
- Presentation at the Armidale Men's Shed on Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders
- Wills, POA, EG and Family Law issues presentation at Freeman House Rehabilitation Centre
- Domestic Violence presentation at "Reclaim the Night"
- Presentation on Wills, POA & EG to the Jacaranda Seniors Group.

Participants' feedback after each presentation, by way of a confidential survey, is a great tool to ensure that the information given during each presentation was easily understood, useful and that the presenter was clear on information and gave ample opportunity for questions. Pleasingly our feedback is always positive rating extremely high across all questions asked of participants.

Community Development Work and EXPO involvement

We have again participated in community development work this year. We have attended and spoken to community interagency meetings in our regional towns and have made face to face visits to service providers and community organisations located in our outreach circuits, to work with them in addressing the legal needs of their communities.

These have included attending Interagency meetings to discuss locally how best to meet the needs of clients.

The following are Community Expo's that we have been a part of this year:-

- Orientation Week at the University of New England
- Orientation Week for International Students
- "My Future My Choice" Community Links Disability expo hosted by the Armidale Dumaresq Council
- "Reclaim the Night" evening markets in the mall
- "Age Expo" for seniors held at the Armidale Bowling Club
- "Youth Opportunity Expo" held at the University of New England
- Seniors Week at the Armidale Racecourse

Expo's are an excellent opportunity for us to meet with the community in a relaxed atmosphere. It is a wonderful introduction of our Service and staff and feedback from clients has indicated that putting a face to a name made walking through our doors, with sometimes overwhelming legal problems, an easier experience. This contact and feedback from clients is a great reminder of how intimidating seeking legal advice can be and how hesitant people sometimes are to make that first step for help. Our Service is passionate about making this process easier for clients and community engagement is the greatest way to achieve this.



Our Principal Solicitor, Terri King, is one of the main organisers for “Reclaim the Night” in Armidale and we are very proud of her introductory speech this year at Markets in the Mall. Terri, not only spoke of the history of this wonderful event that tackles domestic violence against women, but shared a moving story of her own experience with family violence. There is no greater way to connect with victims of violence than to share your own experiences and Terri’s story certainly touched us all and we commend her for her openness and passion to assist others.



Another important CLE avenue for us occurs whilst visiting Glen Innes Correctional Centre. CLE sessions are held as well as the provision of advice and casework. DVD’s prepared by Legal Aid NSW are shown to inmates to give insight into many topics such as Victims Compensation and Restitution, Family Law, Fines and Understanding the Criminal Law process, just to name a few.

Robert Bucksath continued to host our radio program *Law Matters* on 2ARM 92.1FM, the local community radio station. Robert talked on many and varied topics which have included family law, traffic and driving offences, AVOs, bankruptcy, debts, refugees, social media and human rights interests.

The radio station broadcasts to a potential audience of 30,000 people. The topics not only inform people of their rights and responsibilities but encourage them to consider perceptions of legal issues.



We also provide CLE through our web site, www.nnwcls.org.au. Fact sheets, FAQ's and links to other sites have been posted giving general information. The Service also engages with daily updates through Facebook and Twitter. We keep our followers updated with our daily whereabouts regarding circuit clinics and other interesting occurrences within our office. We also keep our followers informed of current community events and state-wide happenings in the legal and funding arena.



Law Reform

Our ability to participate in Law Reform as a Community Legal Centre remained clearer this year compared to previous years. When signing off on our Agreement with Legal Aid NSW this year again there was a clear acknowledgement that law reform could not be entered into with our Commonwealth portion of funding. Similarly, law reform relating to our Public Purpose Funding would not be permitted. Although the Agreement did state that law reform may continue with our State portion of funding.

Although these guidelines gave law reform with State funding a right of way we chose to remove such advocacy work from our Annual Targets and our Strategic Planning.

It was agreed that as our portion of funding from State was minimal ie: 4% of total funding received for the year, serving our clients through advice and casework assistance would better benefit those in need.

Access and Equity

Our Service has policies and practices in place to promote and ensure access, equity and non-discrimination for its clients and potential clients. Our primary focus is to provide legal advice and assistance to community members who have least access to the law. We offer face to face advice, phone advice, information and referral and outreach services to ensure that the needs of the community are adequately catered for. The Service's free 1800 phone number facilitates contact with our office and removes any financial impediment to such contact.

Volunteers

Our Principal Solicitor, Terri King, was responsible again this year for coordinating and securing the assistance of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers from the Law School at the University of New England. After a lengthy induction process by Terri the volunteers have assisted with research and administrative tasks. This has been of enormous benefit to busy staff and the students have gained an invaluable insight into the community legal sector. We would like to thank: -



Bethany Richmond



Bryce Wilson

Training to staff and students

Our staff attended training relevant to their type of work, be it administrative or legal. This year training included:-

- 2 x Care & Protection Legal Aid NSW Training seminars in Parramatta, Sydney
- Criminal Law Conference with Legal Aid NSW in Sydney
- Lexis Nexis Training via webinar

- Consumer Complaint Training via teleconferencing with CLCNSW
- College of Law Practice Management Course in Sydney for Principal Solicitors' of CLC's
- Mobile Lawyer Reform with Legal Aid NSW in Sydney
- Litigating in the Age of Social Media through the Law Society via webinar
- Grant Writing Seminar through NCOSS via webinar
- "How to" Accreditation webinar through CLCNSW
- North & North West Regional Law Society AGM training sessions.

Valuable training has also been provided by Community Legal Centres NSW at each of the Quarterly meetings, which are utilised by all staff. The inclusion of teleconferencing connection for our Quarterly meetings was an excellent addition this year as it allowed us to connect with these meetings and training without the tyranny of travelling to Sydney on every occasion. CLCNSW is to be congratulated for this new addition as it was a clear demonstration of their understanding of the difficulty for Regional, Remote and Rural Centres (RRR), such as ours, to get to Sydney.

Sector Involvement

During constant uncertainty for funding to Legal Service Providers acknowledging that this year marked the 40th Anniversary for Community Legal Centres in NSW is a timely reminder of the importance Centres, such as ours, plays in all communities. This longevity is a positive legacy of the philosophy first put together by our founders in 1975. Starting out with Redfern Legal Centre and now branching out to 40 CLC's in NSW shows the enormous impact and success that we have in assisting everyone. We are certainly proud to be a part of making a difference in people's lives.

To commemorate the beginning of the CLC movement, celebrations were held over 2 days in November 2015. To kick off the celebration CLCNSW hosted a Cocktail Party for all Community Legal Centres in NSW to gather at Doltone House, Hyde Park Sydney where canapés and drinks were abundant and moving speeches on CLCNSW successes were heard then music and entertainment aplenty finishing off with a silent auction.



The second day commenced with an Oration from guest speakers such as Justice Virginia Bell AC; Maha Abdo, Executive Officer of the United Muslim Women Association and a panel presentation speaking on 4 decades of CLC's.

The afternoon wrapped up this 2 day celebration on a lighter note with a Talent Show. All Centres were encouraged to present to the audience the musical talents of their staff and the group showing the “X Factor” potential came away with the winning trophy.

Of course our Service couldn’t resist this opportunity to share with everyone the special dynamics that we have within our group, notwithstanding the enormous talent of our grunge rock group “On Remand”, singing “I fought the law and the law won”.



For our efforts we came away with a “Special Commendation” which unfortunately meant that our prepared acceptance speech for a win wasn’t necessary. We certainly rated very high on the scale of self-belief but perhaps this was an over-estimation based on our real talent! In any case, the winning trophy went to The Illawarriors for their compilation of a Bob Marley themed video and a tied second place went to Ellie from Justice Connect and Meg from IARC. It certainly was a lot of fun joining in with this event that was then followed by Karaoke and farewell’s to everyone.

We had a wonderful time in Sydney participating in this celebration and the staff was thankful for the Board’s suggestion that everyone at our Service should be a part of this. We had a great time!

Case Studies

Family Law assistance for an International Student

An international student contacted our service to enquire about filing an Application for Divorce. He had only been married to his Australian bride for a week when they separated. Since she left, she had been contacting our client demanding money and threatening to have our client deported if he failed to pay.

Our client, with limited understanding of the legal system, was unsure if he had to pay her any money or if he would be forced to leave Australia before completing his studies. We advised our client in relation to separation and divorce and domestic violence.

Our client did not have an address for service or current contact telephone number for his separated wife. However, he was able to provide our office with the contact details of her parents and siblings. Consequently our office wrote to the wife's family members seeking an address for service. Luckily a response was received and our client was then able to complete an Application for Divorce. Our client employed the Sheriff to serve the Application on the wife. The Court granted our client a divorce.

Credit and Debt issues for an Indigenous Client

An elderly indigenous man approached our office after borrowing money from a finance company some years ago, and defaulting on the loan. Our client had previously negotiated a payment agreement with the creditor, but failed to comply with it. Consequently the creditor sought and obtained a garnishee order from the Local Court. The creditor served the garnishee order on our client's employer who was directed to garnish any earnings above \$484.10 per week until the amount owing was recovered.

Our client was concerned that this would not leave enough money to live on each week and did not know what to do. We advised our client in relation to the debt and assisted him in organising an appointment with a Financial Counsellor. The Financial Counsellor assessed our client's finances and drafted an affordable payment instalment plan, which was used to negotiate with the creditor.

The creditor accepted the instalment plan notwithstanding the garnishee order and our client then filed a notice of motion to pay by instalments at the Local Court. This allowed our client to make regular affordable repayments to the creditor, much to their relief.

Court Representation for a traffic offence

A young woman contacted our Service seeking assistance with a driving matter. She had consumed a few alcoholic drinks at the pub after work on a Thursday evening. She did not feel the effects of the alcohol and thought it would be fine to drive her car home.

On the trip home our client was pulled over for a random breath test by Police. The reading was slightly over the legal limit for a full licence holder. As a result, she was charged with low range PCA first offence.

Our client stated, on attending our office, that she was very worried about her matter. Of most concern to her was the likelihood of losing her job if her licence was suspended.

Our office was able to provide the client with representation at the Local Court. After submissions were made on the client's behalf, the Magistrate decided not to record a conviction.

Home visit to take instructions for a Will, POA and EG

A concerned daughter contacted our office seeking assistance in relation to her ageing parents. Her mother had recently been diagnosed with the early stages of dementia and her father had recently become bedridden from illness. The daughter was concerned that neither of her parents had drafted a valid will.

Due to the elderly clients' inability to attend our office, we provided a home visit to advise the clients and seek their instructions. In discussions with our clients, we suggested that a Power of Attorney and Enduring Guardianship documents should also be drafted.

Our solicitor's took the clients instructions in their home, and returned to the office to draft the wills and other appointments. Once completed, we returned to the clients' home to execute the documents.

Family mediation in a domestic violence environment

A single mother came to our office after receiving a letter from a Solicitor requesting that she attend solicitor aided mediation with her children's father. Our client and the children had been victim to many years of extreme violence perpetrated by the father. She had a current Apprehended Domestic Violence Order, protecting her and the children. She was fearful of having contact with him and the risk of serious harm he posed to the children.

We agreed to act on behalf of the client and organised telephone shuttle mediation. We were able to assist our client in preparing and participating in the mediation. Consequently, an agreement was reached in which the children were able to spend time with their father in a supervised and safe environment without being exposed to any risk of harm.

Support

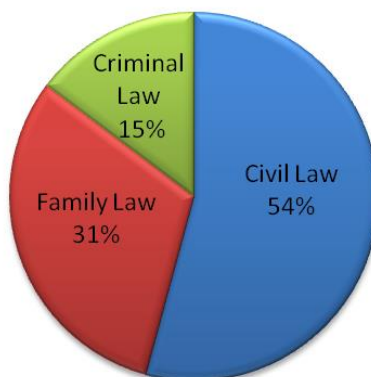
Our Service chooses to bank with Regional Australia Bank, Armidale. We have been a member of this financial institution for many years. Recently we became a member of their Community Partnership Program. This Program allows Regional Australia Bank members to select a local community group, such as ourselves, that they wish to support and in doing so Regional Australia Bank will donate 1% of the members' average annual balance to that community group on behalf of the member.

At the end of this financial year we were presented with a certificate from the Regional Bank Australia and a credit bonus deposited into our account to the value of \$2,440.33. This Program certainly is proof of the Regional Bank Australia's commitment to their members and their community. We appreciated being involved and receiving this support from our local branch.

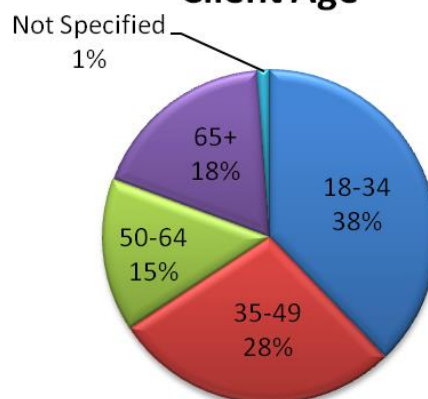


Statistics for period 2015-2016

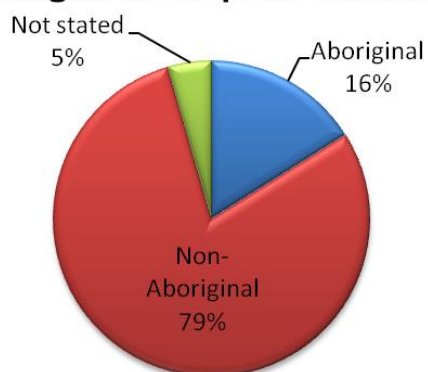
Matter by Law Type



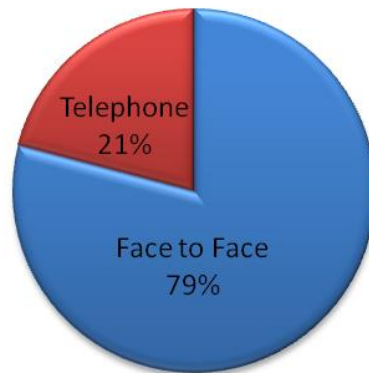
Client Age



**New Client
Indigenous Representation**



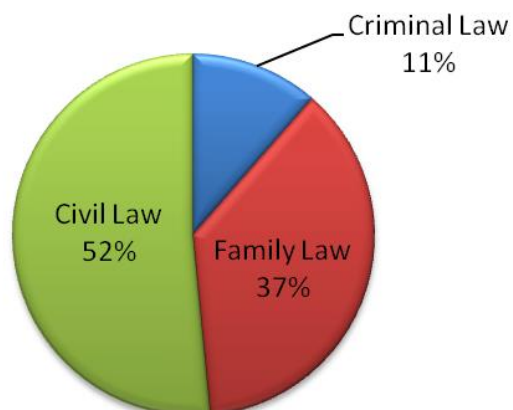
Advice Contact Type

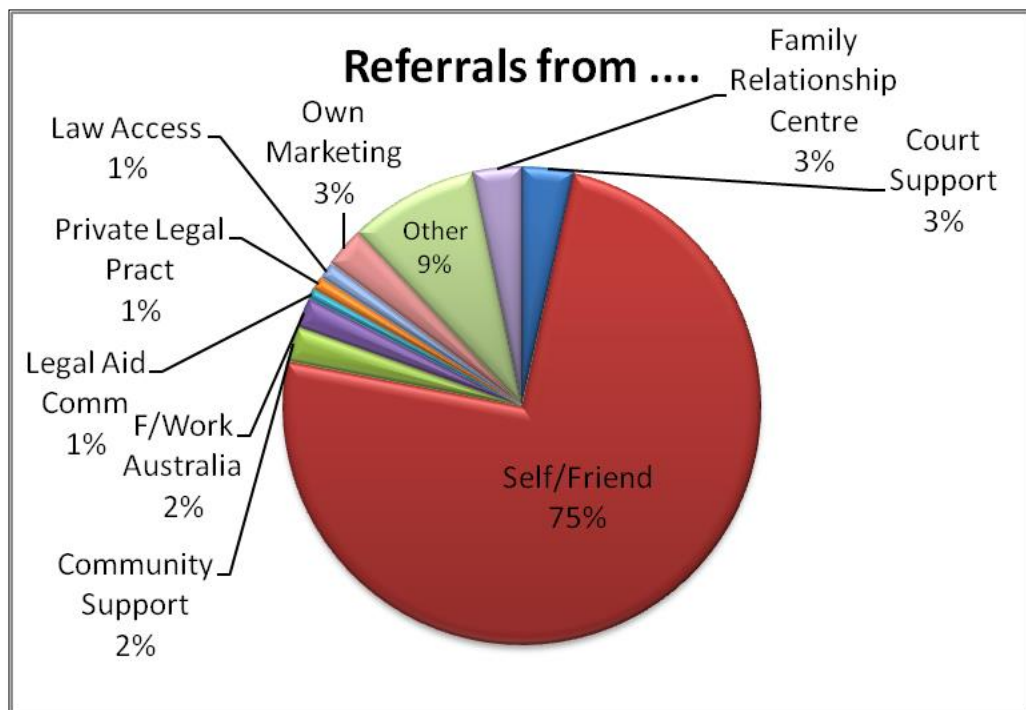
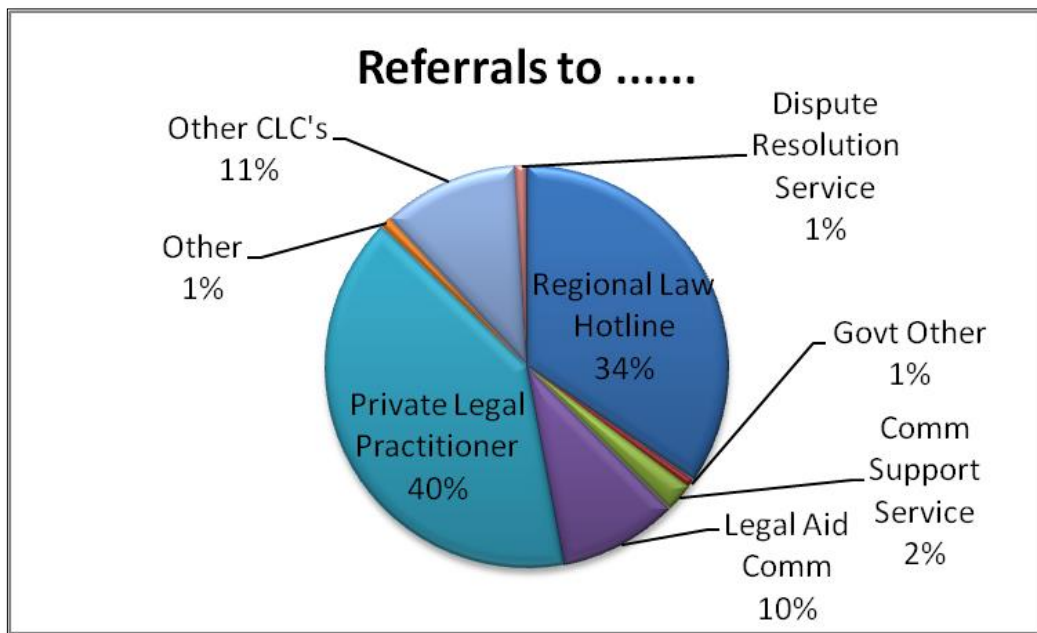


Clients Status

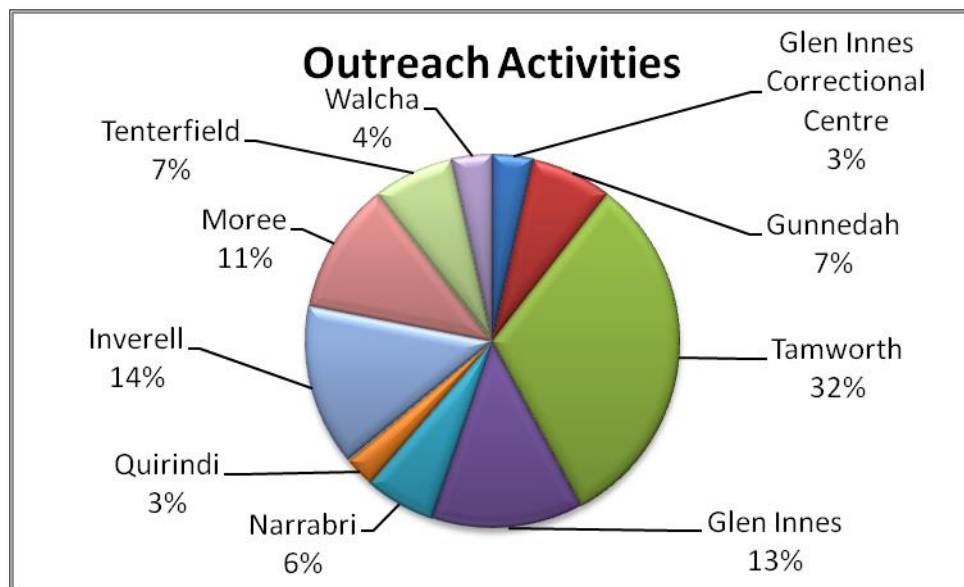


Advice by Law Type





Outreach distance travelled for the year = 27,460kms

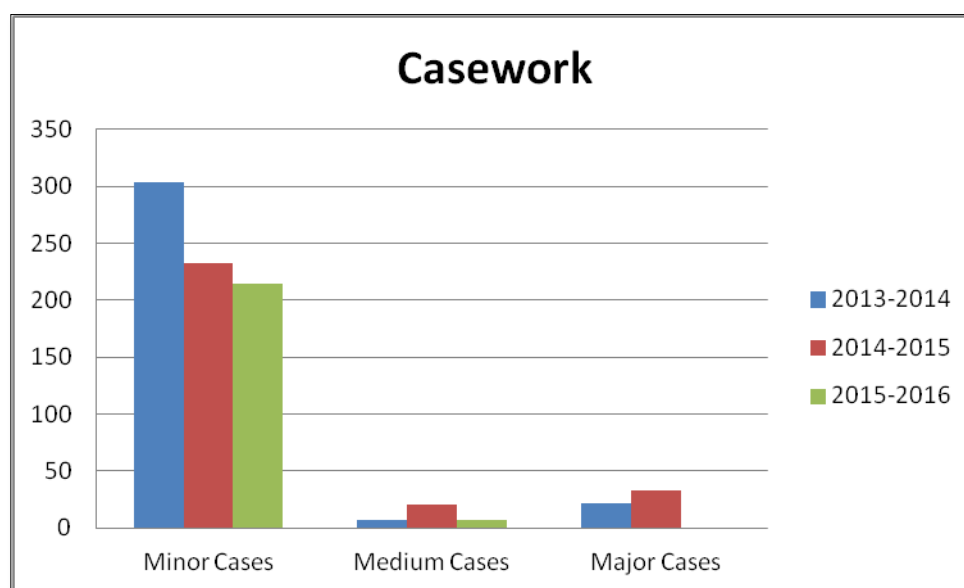


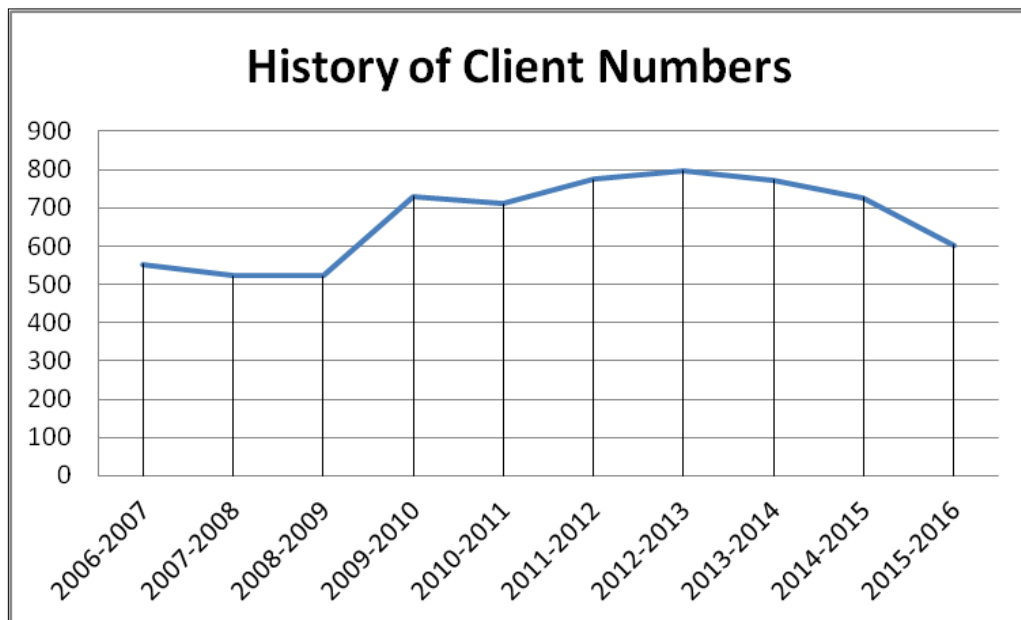
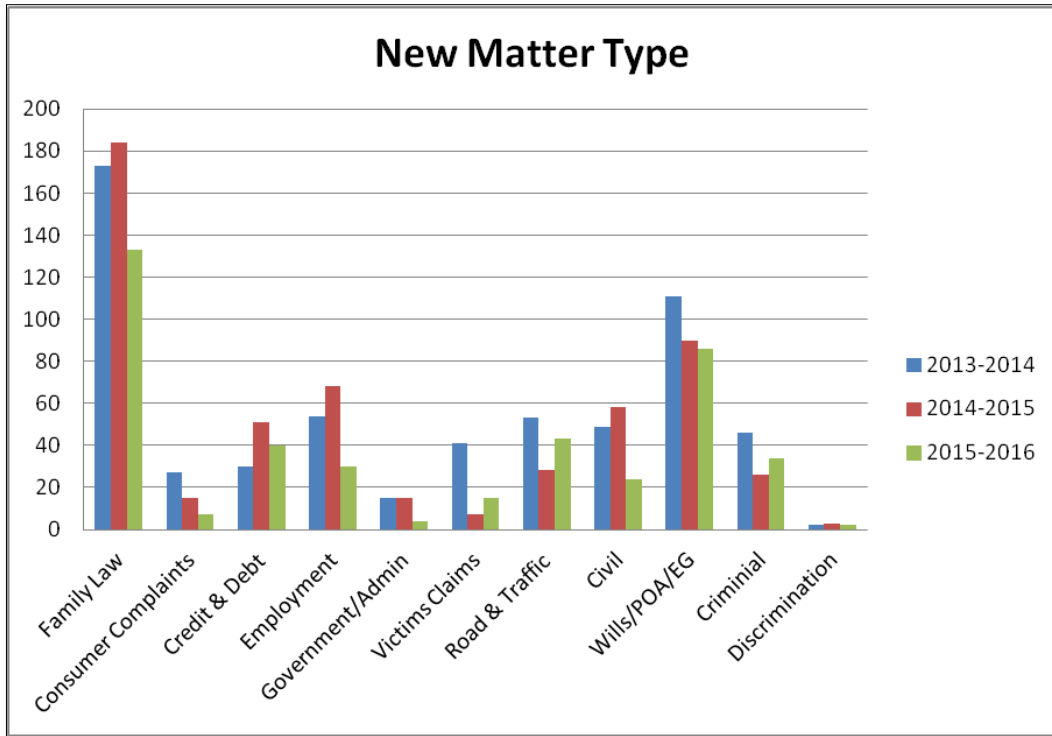
TOP 5 MATTERS FOR THE YEAR IN OUR OUTREACH LOCATIONS

- 1) Wills, POA & EG
- 2) Child Contacts
- 3) Divorce

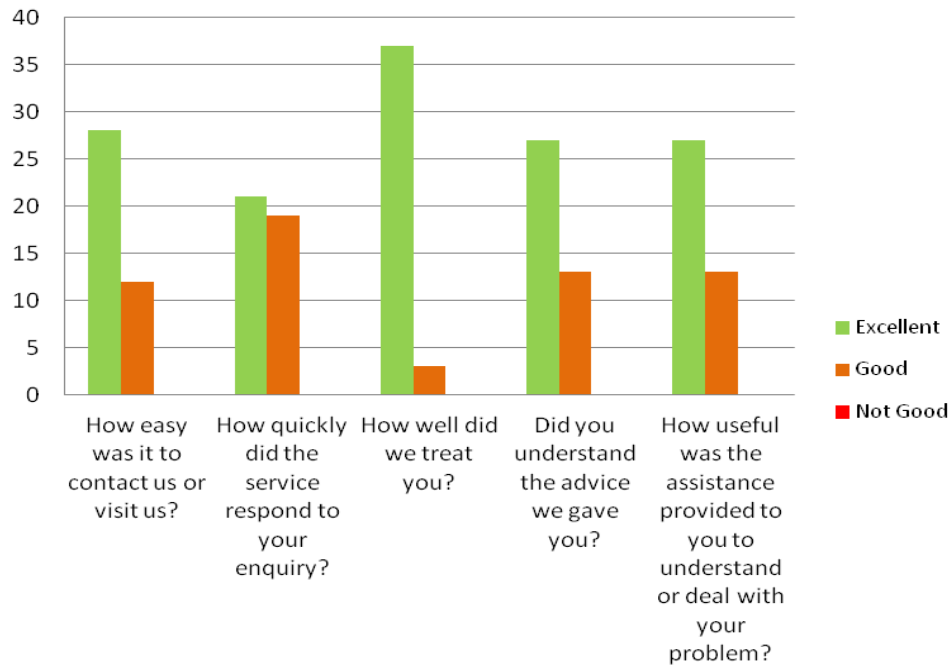
- 4) Credit/Debt Issues
- 5) Victims Compensation

Statistics - 3 Year Period Comparison

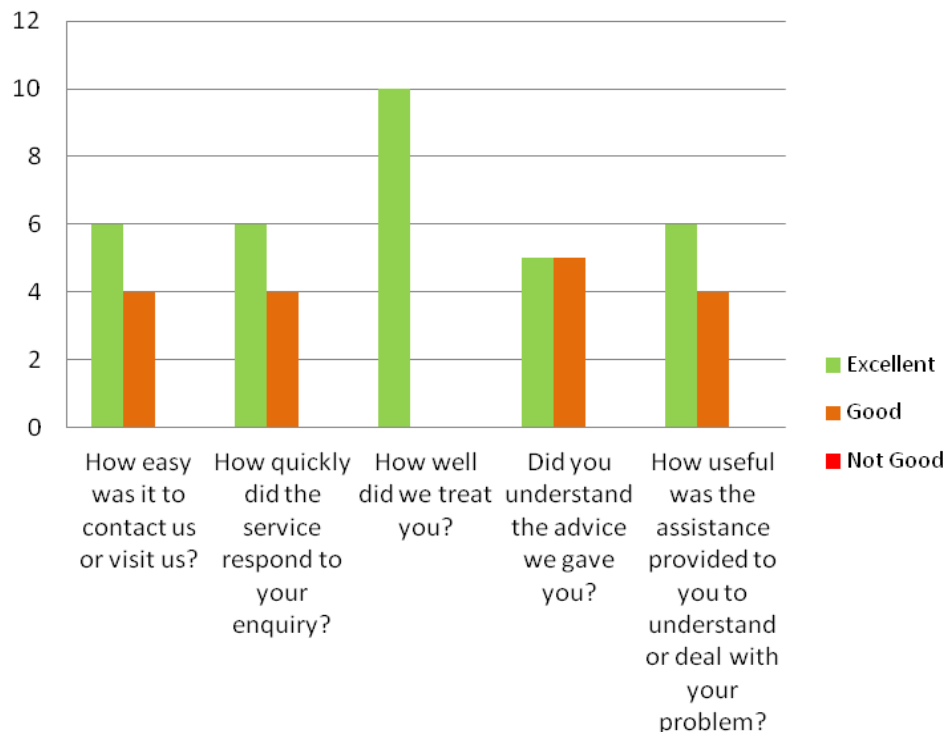




Client Satisfaction Survey 2016



Aboriginal Clients' Satisfaction Survey 2016





NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC

ABN 35 931 742 739

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2016**

