



# NORTH & NORTHWEST

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE

# Annual Report

## 2023-2024

How do we help?

Anyone living in the North and North West of NSW can access our Service for FREE legal advice and assistance

Contact details:-

Phone: 6772 8100 Freecall: 1800 687 687  
Email: [nnwcls@gmail.com](mailto:nnwcls@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.nnwcls.org.au](http://www.nnwcls.org.au)



We can assist with:

- Family Law issues  
(Excluding property settlement and child support matters)
- Power of Attorney and Enduring Guardianship
- Wills (without real property eg: a house)
- Consumer complaints
- Credit and debt issues
- Discrimination
- Employment and workplace issues





## Acknowledgement of Country

**We begin our Annual Report by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our Service operates. We would like to pay our respect to the Elders, past, present, and emerging.**

The North & North West Community Legal Service Inc (NNWCLS) acknowledges the importance of developing strong effective relationships based on mutual respect and trust with the Australian Indigenous peoples. NNWCLS is committed to ensuring that the perspectives, values and experiences of our staff, clients and stakeholders are valued, respected and acknowledged in all levels of service delivery.

NNWCLS believe that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, lands, and histories form an important basis to establish a safe and healthy environment that is sensitive towards the needs of Australian Indigenous peoples. NNWCLS is committed to creating a more inclusive and culturally appropriate environment that will ultimately create increased quality and culturally appropriate legal service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

🏠 215 Beardy Street, ARMIDALE NSW 2350

📍 PO Box 857, ARMIDALE NSW 2350

📞 02 6772 8100 or Freecall – 1800 687 687

✉ Email: [office@nnwcls.org.au](mailto:office@nnwcls.org.au)

🌐 Website: [www.nnwcls.org.au](http://www.nnwcls.org.au)

📘 Find us on Facebook



📱 Scan me



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## Welcome to our Annual Report

### QR Code instructions

With your smartphone, open your camera and hover your phone over the QR Code. Click on the tab that appears on your screen, and let the story begin.



SCAN ME

### From the team of North & North West Community Legal Service Inc

The North & North West Community Legal Service Inc is funded through the Community Legal Centres Program by the Federal Attorney General and the NSW Attorney General administered by Legal Aid NSW.

**We are an accredited member of Community Legal Centres Australia**



# Our Armidale Team



## **Principal Solicitor**

### **Terri Coleman**

Terri has a long history with the Service, initially beginning as a student volunteer, before commencing employment in 2009. She has a strong passion for working with survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual assault with long standing involvement in local committees and community events. She has a particular interest in Victims Services, Family Law and Estate Planning.



## **Solicitor/Acting Principal Solicitor**

### **Ben Graham**

Ben joined the Service after working in Private Practice since 2015. Ben believes in access to justice and procedural fairness for all members of society. He is passionate about Criminal Law, Children's Law (Care and Protection), Family Law and Succession Law. In his spare time he enjoys attending community events, camping and reading fiction.



## **Coordinator**

### **Sandy Steele**

Sandy joined the Service in 2013 after relocating to Armidale from the North Coast. Sandy feels privileged to be the Coordinator of the Service as she reports to Legal Aid NSW and CLCNSW on all the great work that her colleagues achieve throughout each year, and of this she is immensely proud. Her love of finances, statistics and reporting against targets is certainly fulfilled within her role. Sandy's favourite pass- time is playing her piano.



## **Solicitor (to 10th May 2024)**

### **Stanley Tao**

Stanley graduated from the University of Sydney with Bachelor of Laws. He joined the Service after having worked with disadvantaged clients at various community legal centres previously. He is determined to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people within our community. Stanley is passionate about Court Advocacy, Succession Law, Employment Law and Family Law. He also enjoys playing table tennis and badminton in his spare time.







### **Solicitor**

#### **Hatem Allam**

Hatem graduated from the University of Canberra with a Bachelor of Laws. Hatem is very passionate about access to justice and helping disadvantaged clients, believing that everyone should have a fair go and not be discriminated against. He enjoys supporting disadvantaged clients and being their voice. Hatem is passionate about Family Law, Employment Law, Consumer Law, Power of Attorney and Enduring Guardianship. In his spare time Hatem enjoys reading, cooking, and spending time with his family and friends.



### **Legal Support Officer and Bookkeeper**

#### **Donna Gilbert**

Donna finds the service that NNWCLS provides to the community is invaluable and also extremely rewarding on a personal level. Donna has been employed with the Service for 7 years in total and is now employed as a Legal Support Officer and also combines this position with bookkeeping. The most rewarding part of her job is assisting the Solicitors to enable them to provide the utmost professional service that the community need. Donna also enjoys interacting with the community and being able to help people in need. She sees being a team member of this much needed Service is a privilege.



### **Administrative Assistant**

#### **Natasha Macgregor**

Natasha joined the Service in 2019 under a traineeship position. After completing her 12-month traineeship she then moved into the role of Administrative Assistant. Natasha has also successfully undertaken a secondment role of Legal Support Officer for a contracted period during times of high demand on the legal team. Natasha loves her frontline work with clients, offering respect and care to everyone who connects with the Service. Natasha has a love and passion for animals and cooking.



### **Administration Trainee – Certificate III Business**

#### **Caitlin Kennedy**

Caitlin is the newest member of the NNWCLS team, having joined us earlier this year. Caitlin completed her year 11 equivalent at TAFE in 2022, while working in retail and hospitality over the past 4 years. Caitlin hopes that completing the traineeship at NNWCLS will broaden her knowledge on the legal system and help her determine her career path in the field. In her spare time, Caitlin enjoys travelling and being at the beach.





**Administrative Assistant** (rejoining the team in July 2024)

## Clare Campbell (with Pearl)

Clare and her service assistant, Pearl, were very happy to return and help us through Natasha's parental leave. Clare's broad background in administrative work has again been expanded as we settle into the new ActionStep data program. She loves working with the dedicated, skilled and caring NNWCLS team and particularly being able to welcome clients. "It's been rare privilege to work in such an important sector and gain some insight to clients with varying degrees of need, all doing the best they can with their opportunities and challenges in life, as well as the complexity and care needed to assist each of them".







Working together to assist  
everyone in our catchment





# Our Management Committee



## Chairperson

**Ms Bronwyn Pearson**

**MAICD, CAHRI, AMICDA**

Bronwyn is a distinguished Human Resources specialist with over 25 years of experience providing strategic and operational HR advice and solutions to both public and private sectors. She holds postgraduate management qualifications in human resource management and has achieved Certified Professional Member status with the Australian Human Resources Institute (CAHRI).

Her expertise spans strategic HR, change management, employee relations, workforce planning, performance management, organisational development, executive coaching, negotiation, mediation, and specialist recruitment. Bronwyn excels in helping businesses navigate complex legal requirements related to employment and people management.

Bronwyn is dedicated to supporting regional businesses in meeting their employer obligations and attracting, retaining, and developing the right staff, which she believes leads to stronger, sustainable communities.

Community involvement is central to Bronwyn's vision. She serves on the boards of several regional organisations that share her values of integrity and commitment to community. She is the Chairperson of the North & Northwest Community Legal Service Management Committee, and has served as the Employment Facilitator for the Far West Orana region under the Australian Government's Local Jobs Program. In these roles, Bronwyn collaborates with local stakeholders to develop place-based strategies that address employment challenges and provide opportunities for the unemployed or those at risk of unemployment.

Bronwyn's achievements include winning the 2015 Best New Business award from the Armidale Business Chamber, followed by the 2016 winner of the Excellence in Business Ethics award. In 2018, she won the Outstanding Business Leader category in the Armidale Business Chamber Awards and was also named the Regional Winner for Outstanding Business Leader by the New England North West Business Chamber. In 2021, Bronwyn received the Excellence in Small Business award from Business NSW and the Excellence in Professional Services Award from Women in Altitude. Most recently, in 2024, she won the Business Consultancy award at the Australian Small Business Champion Awards.





### **Treasurer**

#### **Dr Kip Werren**

**BFA LLB (First Class Hons) (UNE), Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (The College of Law), PhD (WSU), CPA of CPA Australia, Fellow of the Institute of Public Accountants, Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales.**

Dr Kip Werren has experience in professional legal practice and professional accounting practice. He continues to provide advice in the areas of business structures, estate planning, property law, corporations law and commercial law. He supports social justice and the building of strong communities through his board work and consultancies.



### **Secretary**

#### **Ms Anne Rix**

**MHS; Graduate Diploma/SW; Graduate Diploma/ED (SEC.TEACH)**

Anne Rix is the Secretary of the NNWCLS Management Committee. She has long-standing involvement with the organisation, and greatly values its work with communities throughout the region.

Anne has been employed in human services in New England North West for over 25 years and is the General Manager of New England Family Support

Service. Her qualifications include Master of Human Services Management (Charles Sturt University), Graduate Diploma in Social Welfare (NSW Rural Health Education Research Centre) and a Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary Teaching) from the University of New England.

Anne worked for the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) in Partnerships and Planning, and in Ageing Disability and Home Care. In 2010, she became Director Partnerships and Planning for the New England North West Region, working closely with NGOs across the region to implement reform in child protection, targeted early intervention, and specialist homelessness services. Anne's last role in the Department was as Principal Project Officer NDIS Transition, overseeing the transfer of ADHC clients, staff, programs, and equipment to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. After leaving public service, Anne joined Homes North as Project Manager-Transformation, facilitating the Social Housing Management transfer of FACS Housing stock and tenants from the Department to the community housing provider. During the past five years with New England Family Support Service, Anne achieved significant financial growth in the organisation and expanded the number of projects delivered by the agency, including a philanthropic partnership with Mazda Foundation to deliver a rural recovery initiative throughout NENW.



### **General Member**

#### **Dr Christine Perrott**

**BA, DipEd, MEd(Hons/medal), PhD, FACE**

Christine is a retired teacher educator passionate about social justice and protecting our heritage and natural environments. She is a volunteer with the Helping Children and Families Association (HCFA) where regular visits to at risk families with young children make clear the value of a Community Legal Service. Other volunteer commitments are Friends of the Old Teachers College (executive committee), thesis editing assistance to postgraduates and member of the Duval College Senior Common Room.

In July 2021 her third book was published, 'We Survived': Collected Memories of School Days at PLC Armidale, 1936–1964, Ed. Christine Perrott, Leschenault Press.

Her recreation pursuits include going to concerts, films, galleries and museums; travel; gardening; writing letters to The Sydney Morning Herald; fishing; intricate garment knitting; reading; and daily cryptic crossword puzzle solving.



### **General Member**

#### **Mr S Paul Akon**

**BA (USyd); LLB (USyd); Assoc M Resolution Institute**

Paul has practised law in Sydney and in regional NSW for over 35 years.

In 1969, he began his law career in Sydney as an articled clerk for two years.

In 1971, he gained admission as a solicitor. He then worked as a graduate lawyer with a large commercial firm in Sydney for five years.

In 1977, Paul started as an employed solicitor at a regional firm in Forbes, NSW. In 1978, he became a partner in that firm. He practised there, as such, for 20 years, primarily in advocacy and litigation.

In 1998, Paul trained as a mediator. For the next 12 months he was engaged in a mediation project for local government in the NSW Northern Rivers region.

In 2000, Paul took up a position for three and a half years with NSW Police Legal Services as a senior lawyer. While there, he led the Special Projects Unit. And, he received a Commissioner's Unit Citation. He was the first civilian in the history of NSW Police to receive such a prestigious award. He followed this up with 18 months at the NSW Dept of Environment as a senior legal officer. While there, Paul received recognition from the departmental secretary for rapidly and successfully concluding an enterprise agreement.

In 2006, Paul moved to Armidale. He was a locum tenens at the Armidale Aboriginal Legal Service for the first half of the year.

In July of that year Paul began as a law lecturer at UNE School of Law. Paul has been teaching there full time for the last 17 years. And, he continues to do so.





### General Member

#### Dr Guy Charlton

BA, JD, Economic, Politics and Law

Guy is an Associate Professor lecturing in Indigenous Law, Law in Context, Corporate and Business Law at the University of New England. His research interest includes comparative Indigenous Law, Corporate Law, Constitutional and Human Rights Law, and Property Law. Prior to his position at UNE he was a Senior Lecturer in Law at AUT, Auckland New Zealand where he lectured in Indigenous Law, torts, Local Government Law and property.

Guy is from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA where he practised law with Attorney Andrew Morgan as a general practitioner with Charlton and Morgan Ltd. He holds degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (BA, JD Economic, Politics and Law), the University of Toronto (MA International Relations) and Auckland University (PhD). Guy has also worked or taught units at Curtin University Law School in Perth, Western Australia and City University of Hong Kong, Auckland University and National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan.



Working together for our  
community respecting  
each individual through  
our service delivery

## Our Purpose ...

- 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

## Our Vision...

*"To give assistance to anyone who is having difficulties accessing or is unsure how to access the legal system"*



## Who do we help?

Everyone living in the north and north west of New South Wales and the New England can access our Service for free and confidential legal advice and assistance

### We can help with:



- Family Law issues (excluding Property settlement, maintenance)



- Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence matters



- Consumer Complaints
- Credit and Debt issues



- Discrimination
- Employment Law



- Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences
- Criminal Law



- Victims Services
- Wills, Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardianship



- Neighbourhood Disputes



- Probate Advice
- Apprehended Violence Orders

### We help you 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 help our  
community  
understand  
their legal and  
social rights

# Find us at our Outreach locations

## ARMIDALE (Office base location)

- » **Armidale Courthouse**

## GLEN INNES

- » **Community Centre**  
268 Grey Street  
Glen Innes
- » **Glen Innes Library**  
71 Grey Street  
Glen Innes

**Glen Innes Correctional Centre**

**Glen Innes Courthouse**

## GUNNEDAH

- » **The Creative Arts Centre**  
83 Chandos Street  
Gunnedah

## GUYRA

- » **The Guyra Hub**  
160 Bradley Street  
Guyra

## INVERELL

- » **Inverell Library**  
55-59 Campbell Street  
Inverell
- » **Linking Together Centre**  
16 Waratah Avenue  
Inverell

## NARRABRI

- » **Narrabri Library**  
8 Doyle Street  
Narrabri

## QUIRINDI

- » **Quirindi Council Chambers**  
60 Station Street  
Quirindi

## TAMWORTH

- » **Tamworth Community Centre**  
Cnr Peel & Darling Streets  
Tamworth
- » **Coledale Community Centre**  
2B Kenny Drive  
Tamworth

## TENTERFIELD

- » **Tenterfield Community Hub**  
204 Rouse Street  
Tenterfield

## WEE WAA

- » **Wee Waa Library**  
106 Rose Street  
Wee Waa

## WERRIS CREEK

- » **Werris Creek Library**  
59a Single Street,  
Werris Creek





Travelling across  
99,144 sq klms removing barriers  
to give rural communities  
access to free legal advice

# HISTORY

## 1993

**The North & North West Community Legal Service Inc was established in April 1993.**

The Service was initially known as Armidale Community Legal Service and was run solely by volunteers and lead by Jennifer Crew.

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 and north west regions of NSW. The resulting submission to the Commonwealth Government was successful and North & North West Community Legal Service Inc was created. The Service was officially opened by Rt Hon Ian Sinclair in Armidale on 22nd April 1996.

With the office based in Armidale, Outreach clinics were soon established to service the communities throughout the catchment of the New England and north and north west of NSW. The Service began as a generalist service, and continues to be today, allowing for advice and assistance to be given across a large scope of problem types.

## 2002

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 in Rusden Street Armidale. 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, NNWCLS took on the temporary auspice of the Western Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, with offices in Dubbo, Broken Hill and Bourke.



## 2005

In April 2005, NNWCLS became the auspice for the Armidale Community Cottage.

In September 2005, the Western Aboriginal TAAS was handed over to an Aboriginal organisation, MurdiPaaki 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 moved to new premises in Faulkner Street, Armidale while NEWTAAS remained at the Minto Building and from 1st July 2010, NEWTAAS also successfully self-incorporated.





PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

## 2024

After 31 years of servicing our catchment with free legal advice and assistance, the North & North West Community Legal Service continues to be a reliable and well-respected legal organisation amongst its stakeholders. We continue to be a valuable and integral link within the client services referral pathways in our catchment.

Currently NNWCLS is assisting more clients than ever before, so while our connection to our stakeholders is a vital part of our framework, it's our clients who remain at the heart of everything we do. Their positive experience, while engaging with us, is our priority. We pride ourselves on our holistic approach to our work by offering all our clients respect, sensitivity to their legal problems, and support throughout their journey with us ensuring that our values and mission remains the same year after year:

## 2017

The Service remained in Faulkner Street until October 2017 when additional funding was received, giving the Service an opportunity to expand its current staffing levels which required larger premises. The office is now located at 215 Beady Street which is in a busy area of Armidale giving great exposure to the community and easy access for clients.

With expansion in staffing levels came growth into new regions. Our Outreach Program extended to 17 clinics each month in 12 towns and is covering more distances and population base than ever before.

## 2019

In 2019, using State One Off Funding that was granted to the Service in 2017, a branch office was set up in Moree until funding completion in 2021 and its subsequent closure. This was a significant expansion of the Service's usual service delivery model, and one that provided the Moree community, and surrounding districts with high legal need, ongoing support. It was a most successful project surpassing all outcomes and goals set through strategic planning processes.

"To create a fairer, more just society by providing free and confidential legal advice and support to all"

### **Domestic and Family Violence**

Clients indicating that they were experiencing D/FV presented with the following top problem types:

- Wills, POA & EG
- Apprehended domestic violence order
- Parenting arrangements
- Divorce/Separation

### **Family Law issues**

We predominately assist clients in the Family Law space with:

- Parenting arrangements
- Divorce/Separation
- Domestic/Family Violence issues

**48% of Family Law work is with Parenting arrangements**

## **Our work at 2023 -**

### **Employment and workplace issues**

We assisted clients with unfair dismissal, ambiguous dismissal and underpayments.

**7% of our overall Civil Law work related to Employment issues**

### **Consumer Complaints**

**11% of our overall Civil Law work is for Consumer Complaints eg:**

- Disputes with insurance companies
- Refunds for products and services

### **Credit and debt issues**

We assist clients with varied credit and debt issues, including money being owed to them, money being owed by them, and bankruptcy.

**We assisted 59 clients with bankruptcy, and money owed by/to them**

### **Wills, POA & Enduring Guardianship**

These documents can be drafted for anyone living in our catchment, with restrictions in place for Wills involving real property. However, we continue to assist clients on Centrelink benefits (on a case-by-case basis) who own their own homes and find it difficult to afford to have their Will drafted.

**416 Wills, POA & EG documents drafted**



# a glance in 2024

## Traffic Offences

We represented many clients for licence appeals and traffic offences. Representations from our Service led to reduced penalties for our clients and a more positive Court experience.

**61% of our Court work was assisting clients with traffic and vehicle regulatory offences**

## Victims Support

We assist clients who have experienced an act of violence in NSW, including domestic and family violence, sexual and physical assaults, to make an Application for Support and Counselling with Victims Services.

**Victims Support can assist with counselling and financial assistance**

## Criminal Law

We assisted clients with:

- Acts intended to cause injury
  - Theft
  - Fraud
- Property damage

**11% of our overall assistance is for Criminal Law**

## Discrimination

We assisted clients with their disability discrimination complaints with Anti-Discrimination NSW and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

**We assisted 2 clients with discrimination matters this year**

## Neighbourhood disputes

We have provided a diverse range of advice and services to clients in this area, including issues related to access to property, dogs and surveillance. However, recurring neighbour complaints about noise and overhanging trees remain a consistent concern.

**2% of Civil Law advice assists clients with neighbourhood disputes**

## Apprehended Violence Orders

We helped clients apply to vary AVO conditions due to changed circumstances. Additionally, we represented clients (both applications and defendants) in numerous AVO matters. We also advised defendants to ensure they understood conditions, reducing breach risk.

**30% of AVO work was assistance in Court**

# Chairperson's Report

*It has been an honour and privilege to Chair the North & North West Community Legal Service (NNWCLS) Management Committee again this year and to be both humbled and inspired by the wonderful achievements and unswerving dedication of our staffing team.*

The Service has produced yet another outstanding year of increased services and service provision to those most vulnerable and in need in the communities we serve that span over 100,000km of our State. Increases in demand, arising from the cost-of-living crisis, as well as from those clients at risk of domestic and family violence and homelessness, have contributed to NNWCLS again surpassing our service provision targets. All this in an environment of fewer staff, ever constrained resources and growing uncertainty around the future of community legal services and funding to adequately sustain critical services. With demand higher than ever and increasing, the team has continued to deliver high quality services and I am beyond grateful for their dedication and exemplary support.

We were delighted to welcome two new members to our NNWCLS extended family, with both our Principal Solicitor Terri Coleman and Administrative Assistant Natasha Macgregor adding baby girls to their respective families this year and taking parental leave. I particularly wish to thank Ben Graham who ably stepped into the role of Acting Principal Solicitor in Terri's absence on parental leave, and to the team at large, including our volunteers, for pulling together in what has been a complex and challenging year for NNWCLS. Under Ben's stewardship, we have also seen innovations in staff training initiatives and pro bono



partnerships established to enable client referral options in areas outside the remit of NNWCLS services.

In addition to another year of exceeding expectations in terms of service provision, NNWCLS has increased its information outreach to the community through delivery of seminars, presentations and over 60 Law Matters radio program broadcasts on local community radio, enabling the service to reach even more across our vast area.

In order to provide the best governance and support we can to the Service, the Management Committee continues to advocate across agencies and governments in increasingly uncertain times, as well as ensuring we meet our governance obligations, addressing staff pay, conditions and optimisation of staffing for the future needs of the service in a climate of ongoing industrial relations legislation updates. We were delighted to welcome Associate Professor Guy Charlton to our Management Committee in March, who brings another excellent bow of legal expertise and insight to our governance team.

I applaud the work and commitment of my fellow Management Committee members to this vital Community Legal Service and thank them for their ongoing efforts and expertise.

**Bronwyn Pearson**  
**Chairperson**





Excellent governance equals  
excellent service delivery



# Acting Principal Solicitor's Report

## *A Year of Accomplishment*

Even being up against a series of constant challenges, this year has been one of notable and consistent achievement.

I want to acknowledge the hard work of our coordinator, administrative team, and solicitors, whose dedication made these achievements possible.

Reflecting on our success, it is important to recognise the dedication and resilience of our team. We had to adapt to a leaner and more focused operation, yet we remained committed to our values and continued to comprehensively assist clients with everything from civil applications to dashes to the hospital to complete last minute wills for terminal patients.

We were delighted to welcome two baby girls to the extended NNWCLS family, though this also meant their mothers took well-deserved leave, leaving big shoes to fill. Additionally, we bid farewell to our valued senior solicitor, Stanley Tao, who relocated to be closer to his family in Sydney.

The year was one marked by increased community demand, driven by the stress of rising living costs and a spike in related social issues. Despite operating with reduced staff, we exceeded expectations, maintaining the strong presence and engagement our community deserves. Client satisfaction soared, with frequent gestures of gratitude from those we assisted.

To add to it, all of this took place during a transition to a new database system. Fortunately, our admin wizards, Natasha, Caitlin and Clare, helped us stay on track.

### **UNE Law Ball**

It was an honour to speak to the UNE Law Ball about our services and for NNWCLS to be named their designated charity for the year. We hope to work with the committee of the UNE Law Students Society going into the future on a number of exciting ventures, including providing students practical experience in a Community Legal Centre.



### **Volunteer Contributions**

Volunteers have been a big part of life at NNWCLS this year. We welcomed several new student volunteers, including one from the University of Queensland (UQ) and three from the University of New England (UNE), all of whom actively participated in outreach programs and assisted with client documents. Volunteers also completed court mentions after obtaining the necessary leave to appear before our local court magistrates.

Volunteers were introduced to the legal community in Armidale and were able to build valuable connections. They have conveyed that these opportunities greatly enriched their understanding of legal practice.

To add to this, it is important to note and recognise, our volunteer solicitor, Pauline Szadanoff, who has been a constant and reliable source of assistance for us and our clients. She has become part of the family and has helped us reduce the time clients need to wait to gain legal advice.

### **Law Matters**

We have delivered over sixty (60) radio shows since the re-boot of our weekly Law Matters program, and in doing so we have built an extensive catalogue of scripts covering a wide range of topics, including divorce, family law, various aspects of criminal law, traffic issues, freedom of information, neighbourhood disputes and much more.



Our radio team has attended several training sessions, honing their skills in preparation, editing, and utilising the station's computers for scheduling.

Listeners continue to reach out to express their appreciation for these broadcasts and we look forward to continuing to deliver them.

### **Client Interaction and Outreach**

Throughout the year, NNWCLS prioritised enhancing client engagement and outreach across our extensive service area of nearly 100,000 square kilometres. Despite operating with a smaller staff, we continued to visit our usual outreach towns in person, providing essential face-to-face consultations with our solicitors.

The success of these circuits is evident in the positive feedback from clients, underscoring the critical need for accessible local legal assistance.

In addition to our regular outreach efforts, we worked to establish an in-person presence in as many towns as possible. This year, we collaborated with Gilbert + Tobin, the Aboriginal Legal Service, and Legal Aid NSW to conduct a week-long outreach focused on wills, power of attorney, and enduring guardianship for residents in Boggabilla, Moree, Toomelah, and nearby towns.

Alongside our outreach visits, we engaged with numerous community groups within our catchment, providing legal education and fostering legal knowledge within our rural communities. We also maintained strong partnerships with local community services and committees in each town, ensuring that we played a key role in delivering holistic care for our community members. One highlight was helping prepare for and participating in the Tamworth Family Law Pathways Networks' Moot Court event for local high school students try their hand at court advocacy.

### **Pro Bono Partnerships**

We have proactively expanded our pro bono referral options to ensure that clients in need can access assistance in areas beyond the scope of our services. It is incredibly important to us that vulnerable individuals receive timely and accurate legal advice, regardless of their financial situation and sometimes we need

help to achieve that.

Our pro bono partners now include *Bartier Perry, HWL Ebsworth, Hall & Wilcox, and Sparke Helmore.*

### **Staffing Training Initiatives**

Ongoing professional development continues to be integral to expanding our staff's expertise. Through our partnership with BenchTV, we have equipped our solicitors with access to thousands of hours of continuing legal education, ensuring they stay at the forefront of legal knowledge. Building on this we held a special event internally focused on Wills, leveraging BenchTV's extensive resources.

We collaborated with Intercity Legal Centre to complete specialised employment law training. We also attended CLCNSW Quarterly talks and went to training sessions hosted by the NSW Law Society, Legal Aid NSW, and other quality organisations.

### **Team Building**

This year, we held a variety of staff bonding activities to strengthen teamwork and maintain morale in trying times.

We kicked off in January with an Australian celebration, followed by Lunar New Year bowling in February, and an Easter catch-up in March. April featured a fun game of "Articulate!", and May saw a festive Cinco de Mayo celebration. As the year continued, we enjoyed a Quoits tournament in June, a NAIDOC Week film in July, and office mini-golf tournament in August. September brought a chocolate-filled birthday celebration for Hatem, with more fun planned for Halloween!

These activities not only provided a once-a-month much needed break from the stresses of heavy caseloads but strengthened morale.

### **APS**

It has been a pleasure to fill the role of Acting Principal Solicitor in what has been an extremely difficult but also very good year for the Service.

**Benjamin Graham**

**Acting Principal Solicitor**

# Coordinator's Report

## Individual commitment to the group effort

This is what makes a team work, and this is the secret to our Service's ongoing success year after year.

Thank you to my workmates for bringing dedication to your position every day. You are all valued members of this Service and without your individual commitment we could not have achieved what we have this year in our group effort.

Year after year we surpass our targets, which is an incredible feat as no 2 years of operation are the same. We see changing legal need trends, shifts in demographic vulnerabilities, and national crises that affect our catchment. Our knowledge of our catchment and our flexible work practices are our greatest assets in meeting targets. While our focus is always on our clients, and they remain at the heart of everything we do, each year brings new challenges or, as we see it, new opportunities.

### Statistics, Trends and Outcomes:

Our challenge this year was simply keeping up with demand as we are seeing more people than ever before walk through our doors. This year we provided 2,392 client services which is 37% over and above our target. This increase clearly demonstrates that our targets we set each year are not limits we put upon our work, but rather goals to achieve and then exceed wherever possible.

While target numbers were surpassed so too were the percentages on individual demographics, demonstrating that we are connecting with the most vulnerable within our catchment. Let me explain: Nationally, it is reported that domestic and family violence assaults have increased, and the cost-of-living crisis is unmanageable for most families. Our own statistics on demographic vulnerabilities support these alarming trends. We reported a 15% increase in our work with at-risk D/FV clients now sitting at 39% for our NLAP funding category clients, while our overall D/FV percentage (that includes our new Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence funded clients) increases our work in



this area to an incredible 47%.

Similarly, our clients at risk of homelessness rose by 8%, now showing 20%. These alarming figures demonstrate we are moving and shaping our Service to meet current need, and we are connecting with our most vulnerable demographic trends as reported nationally.

Also, an interesting shift in trend this year to our problem types for D/FV clients was their updating of documents such as Wills, POA & EG. This was an interesting swing to the usual problem types for clients indicating a risk of D/FV that is typically ADVO, child contacts, parenting plan and divorce/separation. As education on Wills and estate planning is our most popular topic of community education, we must assume that our sessions informing of the importance of these documents (particularly during a change in relationship circumstances) is well-received and understood.

### What do our clients say:

While tracking our statistics measures our volume of work, our Client Survey process tracks our quality of work. This Survey allows us to follow the life-cycle of clients through our organisation, and provides us with valuable, unbiased insights into our operations. Our Surveys, as always, were collected on a probability approach, rather than a census approach.

This year we learned that our staff's interaction with clients was of a high standard for both



interpersonal engagement and legal services provided, and that the well-being of clients was improved after meeting with our Solicitors. And impressively, 100% of clients surveyed indicated they would recommend us to their friends and families while clients' heartfelt, additional comments at the end of the Surveys were wonderful reminders that we are a lifeline for most of our clients and, although we track our statistics to ensure we meet our targets, it's our clients' positive experiences that are our overall goal.

### **The best view is from the hump in the middle:**

This year represents the middle of our 3-year funding cycle. It's an excellent vantage point, service-delivery-wise, to track trends from the previous year, build on practices that were put in place to meet demand, and then keep up momentum, with flexibility, to the end. Our learnings that D/FV and homelessness were on the rise led us to tease out of atypical client appointments a risk that may otherwise have gone unquestioned. Then our holistic approach and strong connections to other service providers enhanced those client appointments resolving issues that may otherwise have fallen through the cracks.

On a comparative exercise, viewing and tracking demand increases at this time of the funding cycle, compared to the previous 3-year funding cycle, saw some remarkable increases ie:

- Legal Advices – 19% increase
- Other Representations – 31% increase
- Court/Tribunal – 135% increase
- Legal Tasks – 148% increase

This hump year too saw the Sector looking into the financial future of CLC's and determined that some serious advocating for funding was required as the current National Legal Assistance Program agreement is to expire in June 2025 with no clear support from Government moving forward. A *"Save Community Legal Centres: End the funding crisis"* campaign was established seeing our peak bodies fielding a strong team during a huge week of engagement at Parliament House in Canberra. Altogether the team met with 11 Senators, 30 MP's, 6 Ministerial/ Parliamentary advisors, and

held press conferences with independent MP's, and Senators for the Greens, ALP, Liberal Party, and The Nationals. This incredible campaign resulted in an ongoing commitment from Commonwealth with new money coming into our Sector. Congratulations to all involved on this successful campaign!

### **Rounding up:**

Before another busy year closed out, we were rewarded with positive feedback during onsite visits from CLCNSW and Legal Aid NSW. When referring to our Service they said we are "a strong-performing Centre", and while visiting other services in our catchment they passed on that we are "clearly a well-loved Service". This is commendable feedback from our Peak and Administrator and my teammates are to be congratulated.

### **In closing:**

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank Ben Graham for leading us through the most part of this year as Acting Principal Solicitor. Your skills of balancing a heavy workload, while leading by example, are to be commended. Thank you!

Farewelling Stanley Tao this year came with much sadness, but memories of my time working with Stanley are some of my favourite times with the Service. I wish Stanley every success in his new endeavours.

Thank you to our Management Committee that has seen us through a particularly busy year. Your support and championing of the Service is unwavering and for this we are truly grateful.

To our fabulous team: You make every day at work a joy. You all work so hard which makes my job of reporting our work to Legal Aid NSW so much easier, as I am so incredibly proud of what you all achieve.

Your individual commitment to the group effort is incredible! Congratulations!

# **Sandy Steele**

**Coordinator**

# The Work of our Legal Service

**The North & North West Community Legal Service Inc is a free and confidential legal advice and assistance service.**

From our office based in Armidale we provide legal assistance and support to people living in the New England and the north and north west region of NSW. We help those who have least access to the legal system and the least power to help themselves. This help includes legal advice, information and some court representation. We aim to help clients to be better informed of their legal and social rights and responsibilities and of the options available to them.

We also operate an extensive Outreach Circuit Program throughout our catchment, supporting a population base of approximately 185,560 people over an area of 99,144 square kilometres.

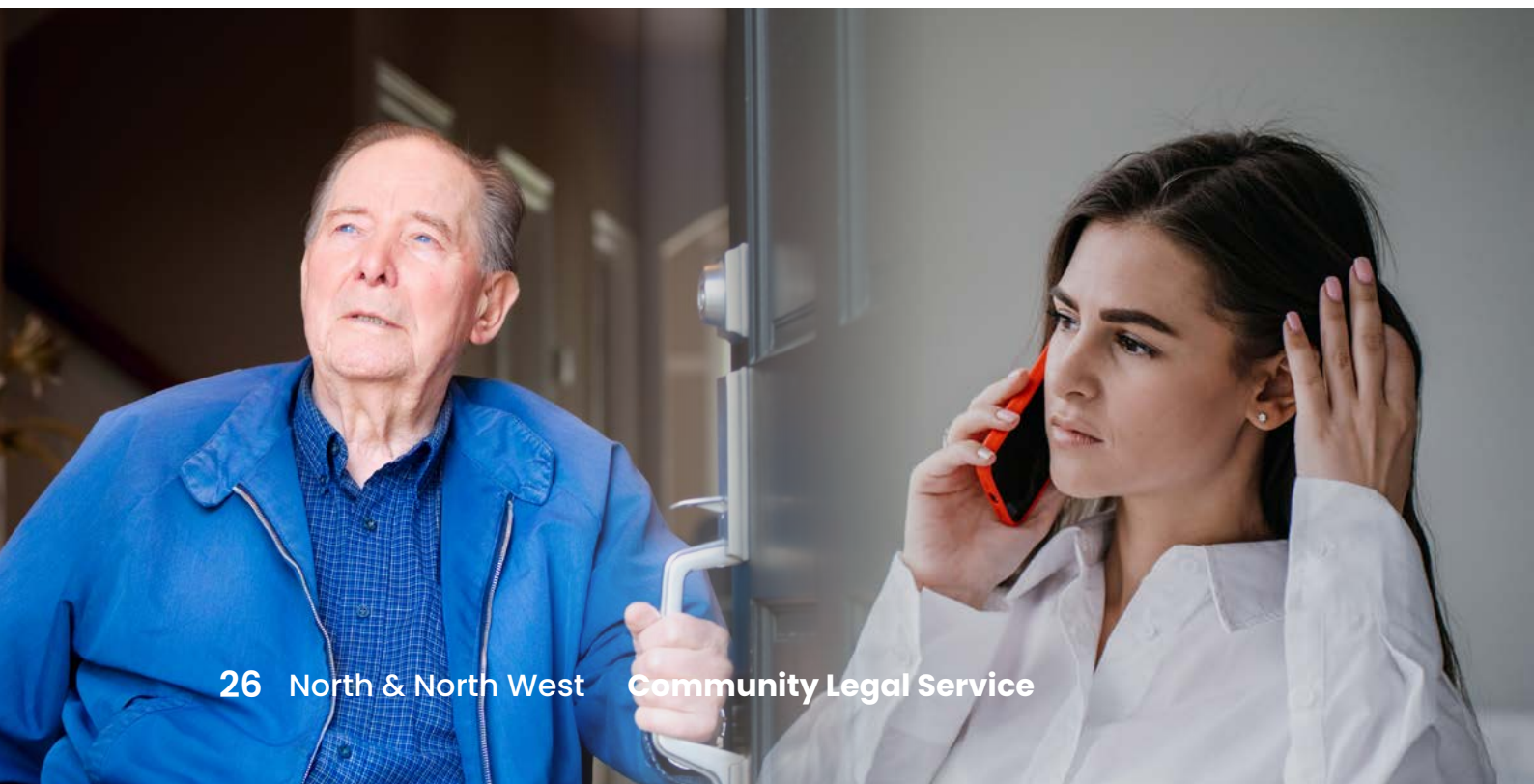


Every month our legal staff spends up to 39 hours in travel time alone to service our catchment. We have monthly clinics

in Werris Creek, Quirindi, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Wee Waa, Inverell, Glen Innes and Tenterfield. We operate bi-monthly clinics in Guyra and at the Glen Innes Correctional Centre, while our clinic in Tamworth is run on a fortnightly basis. Providing 2 clinic venues whilst visiting Tamworth, Inverell, Glen Innes and Moree ensures ease of accessibility to residences at either ends of these towns.

However, when face to face appointments aren't possible for clients, we offer telephone appointments to everyone in our catchment taking away any possible barrier that may impede our communities' opportunity to receive legal assistance. Furthermore, home, hospital, or nursing home visits are made available to our most vulnerable clients ensuring accessibility for everyone.

In addition to our Outreach Program, we operate a Court Liaison Program in Armidale every Monday on list day and in Glen Innes each month on list day.





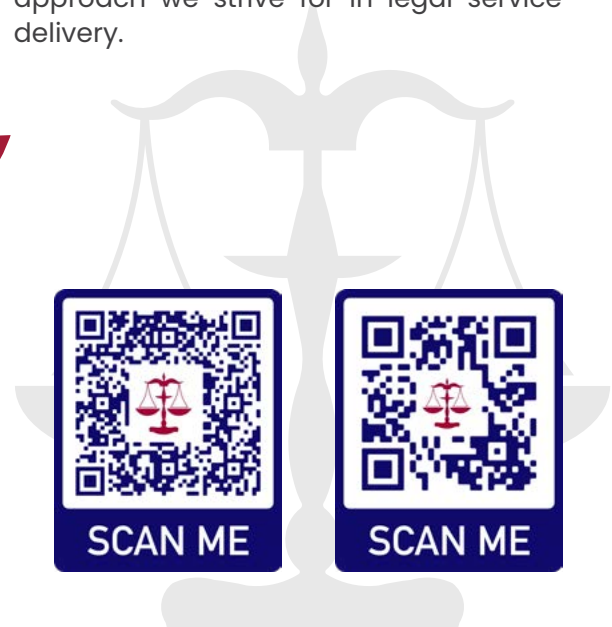
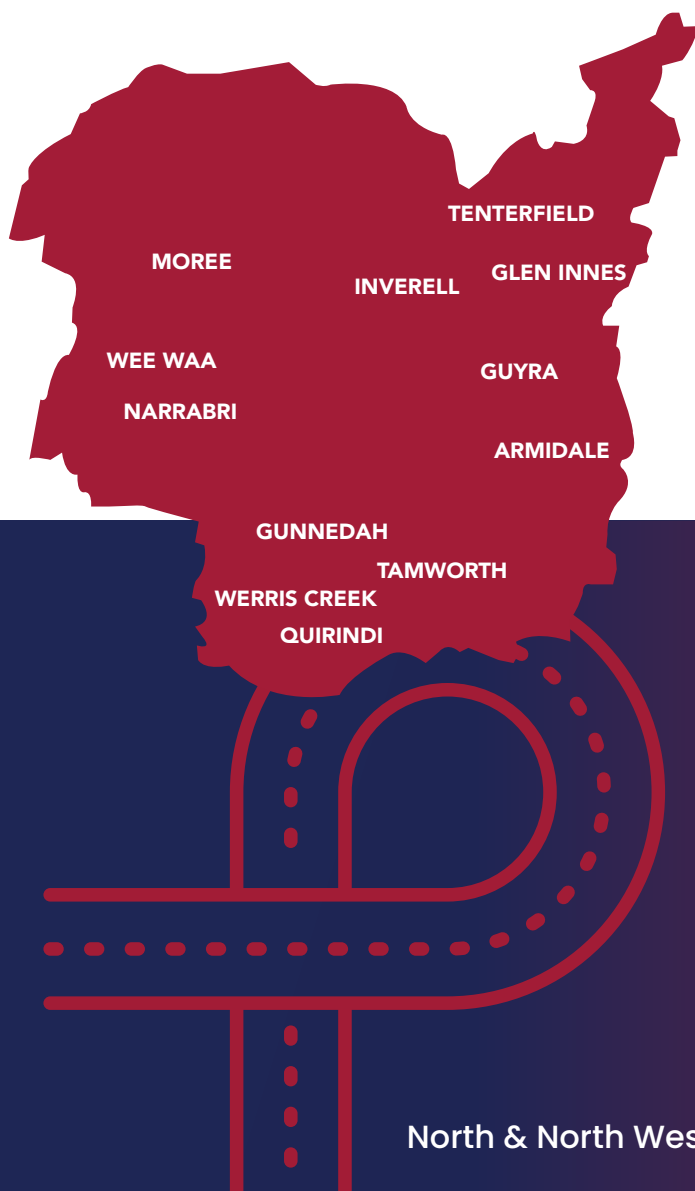
NNWCLS has expanded significantly since 1993 and when considering Service growth, much consideration is given to the vulnerable demographic of our regions as well as indications of high domestic and family violence statistics in communities. We ensure that, for these regions, we have a prominent presence and an accessible location, while maximising promotional exposure keeping everyone well-informed of the work that we do. Stakeholder feedback also forms a large part of this research as we work collaboratively with other organisations to maximise services for our clients while strengthening referral pathways throughout our catchment.

Expanding into vulnerable communities is paramount as we've recognised that legal problems are particularly

prevalent among socially disadvantaged groups and may be elevated for people with multiple types of socioeconomic disadvantage, as our catchment statistics suggest.

Research indicates that it is more likely that people experiencing multiple disadvantages are also experiencing multiple legal problems, confirming that our Generalist legal service is a perfect fit for our catchment.

In addition to advice and representation services, we also offer legal education sessions to our communities and groups. Our aim to increase people's knowledge and understanding of the law and their legal rights demonstrates the holistic approach we strive for in legal service delivery.



**TRAVELLING**  
up to  
**40,673** kms   
this year

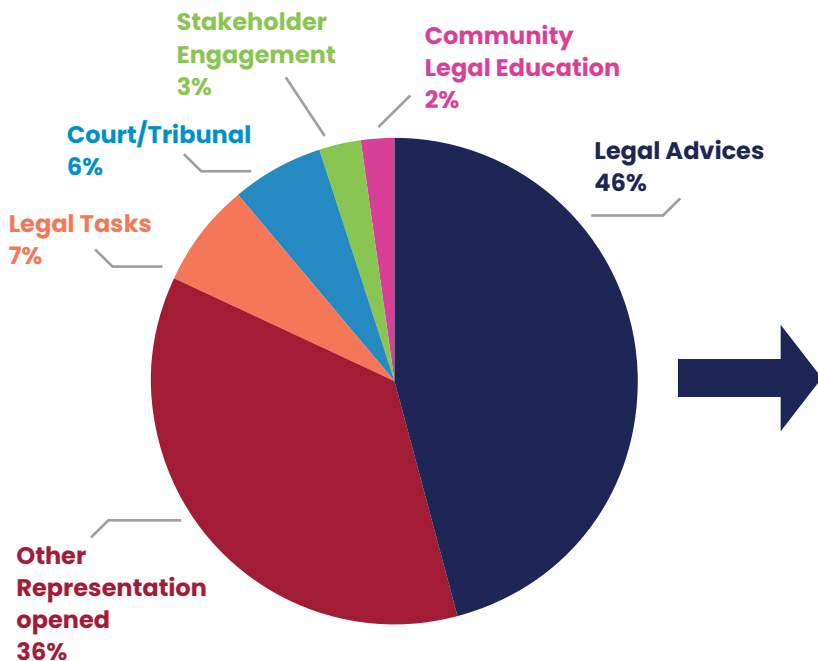
# Our Statistic Profile for 2023/2024

National Legal Assistance Program Funding

# 829

Clients

## Service delivery snapshot:



## Client Demographic:



**49%** Female  
**51%** Male



**98%** experiencing financial disadvantage



**19%** Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



**29%** reported a disability or mental illness



**20%** at risk of Homelessness



**39%** experiencing Domestic violence

## Service delivery drill-down:

Legal Advices  
 **652**

Representation Opened  
 **512**

Representation Closed  
 **429**

Legal Tasks  
 **86**

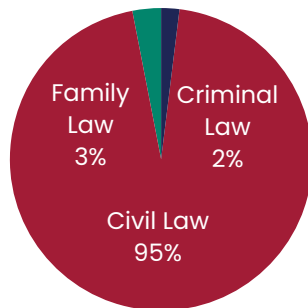
Court/Tribunal  
 **73**

Stakeholder Engaged  
 **52**

Legal Education  
 **49**



## Representation Services given by Law Type...



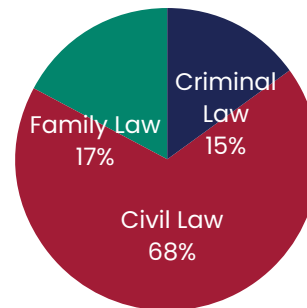
### Top problem within Law type:-

**Family Law** – Divorce/Separation

**Civil Law** – Wills and Estates

**Criminal Law** – Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences

## Advices given by Law Type..



### Top problem within Law type:-

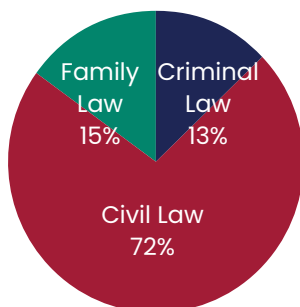
**Family Law** – Parenting arrangements

**Civil Law** – Wills and Estates

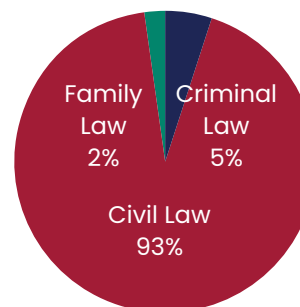
**Criminal Law** – Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences

## Demographic drill-down on Law types

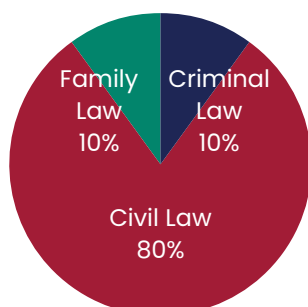
### Indigenous Australians



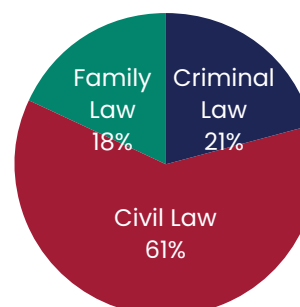
### Older Clients (65+)



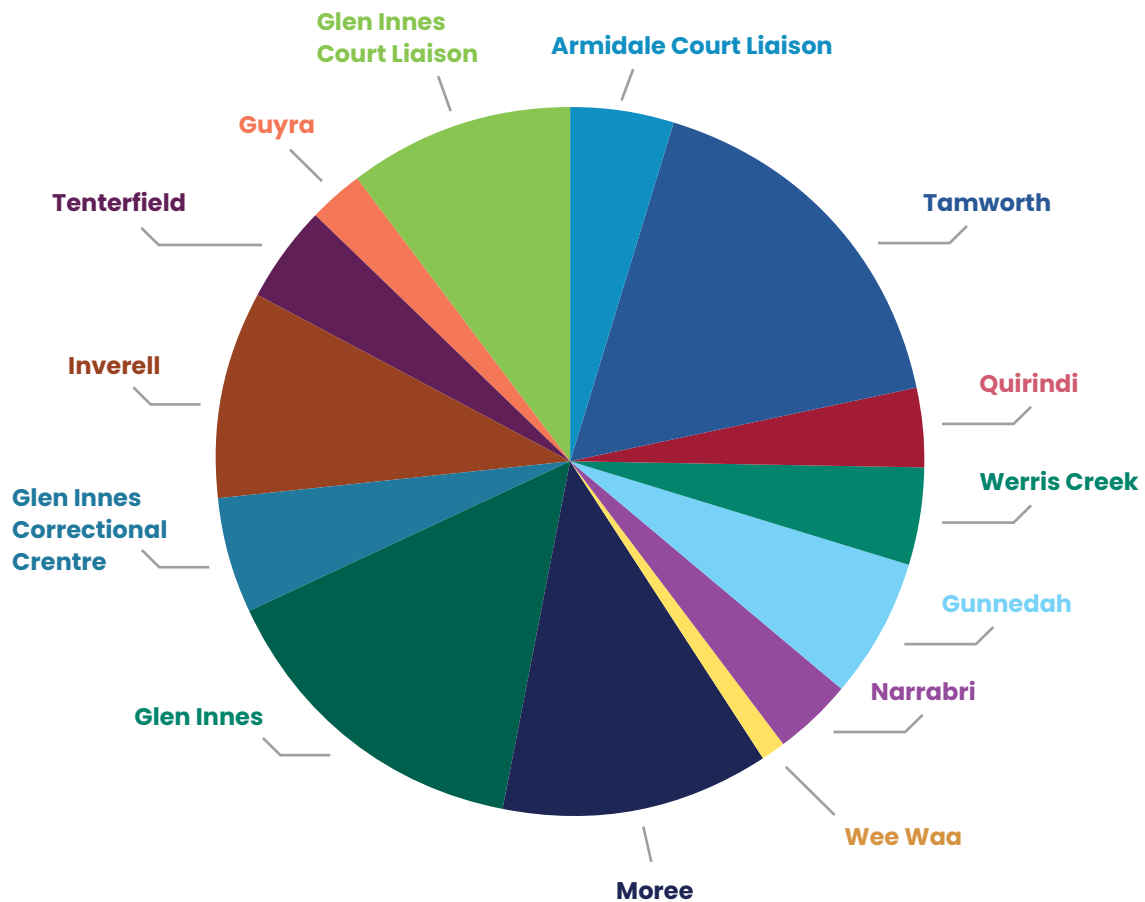
### Disability Indicated Clients



### Homelessness Risk



# Outreach Program drill-down:



## Top 10 problem types of total clients

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Will, Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardianship | <b>6</b> Divorce/Separation  |
| <b>2</b> Road traffic and motor vehicle offences        | <b>7</b> Consumer issues     |
| <b>3</b> Family or domestic violence orders             | <b>8</b> Parenting Plan      |
| <b>4</b> Employment Law issues                          | <b>9</b> Adult Guardianship  |
| <b>5</b> Child Contacts/contact orders/ residency       | <b>10</b> Credit/debt issues |



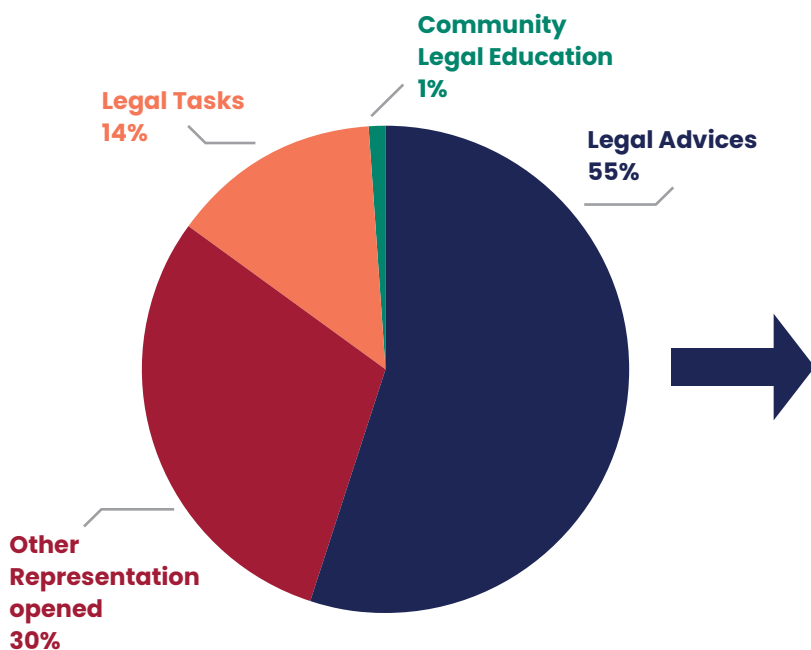


# Our Statistic Profile for Domestic, Family & Sexual Violence Funding

# 240

Clients

## Service delivery snapshot:



## Client Demographic:



**79%** Female  
**21%** Male



**98%** experiencing financial disadvantage



**15%** Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



**24%** reported a disability or mental illness



**11%** at risk of Homelessness



**55%** experiencing Domestic violence

## Service delivery drill-down:

Legal Advices  
 **197**

Representation Opened  
 **108**

Representation Closed  
 **45**

Legal Tasks  
 **50**

Legal Education  
 **5**

Smartphones Provided (WESNET Dafe Connections)  
 **6**

# Sector-wide results of 41 Community Legal Centres in NSW for 22/23

# 53,354

Clients

## \*Sector-wide results

## \* NNWCLS results for same year



**55%/56%** Female  
**44%/44%** Male  
**1%** Other/unknown



**74%/99%** experiencing  
financial disadvantage

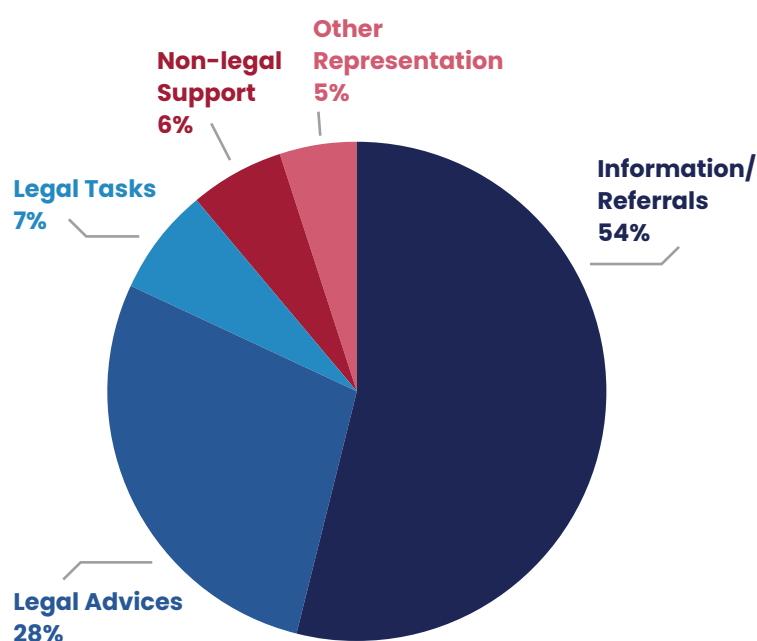


**9%/19%** Identified as  
Aboriginal or Torres  
Strait Islander

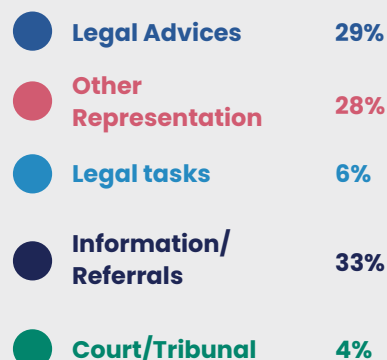


**24%/24%** experiencing  
domestic or family violence

## Service delivery snapshot of all CLC's in NSW:



### North & North West Community Legal Service 22/23 at a glance





# Court Liaison Program

This Program sees Stanley Tao attending the Armidale Local Court each Monday on criminal list day. While Ben Graham attends the Glen Innes Local Court monthly on list day.

Our overarching objective of our Court Liaison Program is to promote access to justice in our catchment.

From a practical perspective, our Solicitors direct court users to the Duty Solicitor and assist 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. Our Solicitors may advise/represent clients in matters that fall outside of the duty solicitor guidelines or for those who cannot afford a private practitioner.

Consultation with our Stakeholders during our Strategic Planning process indicated that defendants of ADVO's would benefit from education about their Orders to reduce any risk of breach. This education has become an important part of this Program as an increase in breaches is reported through the NSW Recorded Crime Statistics in our region.



## Of the matters that we assisted through these Courts:

- **60%** - traffic and vehicle regulatory offences
- **34%** - Domestic violence protection orders
- **6%** - Other Civil Law problem types



# Community Legal Education

Community Legal Education (CLE) is an important part of our yearly Strategic Planning. The purpose of CLE is to increase our community's knowledge of particular areas of law that would be specific to their personal needs, or to their organisation's upskilling.

Our Solicitors are passionate about educating our community. In addition to valuable information gained from each CLE session, these workshops also become a great introduction of our Practitioners. Participants become comfortable through an interactive method of education and feel confident to make contact with our Service, having already met our Solicitors.

## Some of the CLE's for this year included:

- Will, Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardianship to:
  - » Carers & Caring Group – Narrabri
  - » Armidale Golf Club Men's Group – Armidale
  - » Werris Creek Library Group – Werris Creek
  - » Seniors' Info Day – Armidale
  - » Carers & Caring Group – Armidale
  - » What can you do for our mob? – Armidale
  - » Tenterfield Bowling Club Community Group – Tenterfield
  - » Glen Innes Showground Women's Group – Glen Innes





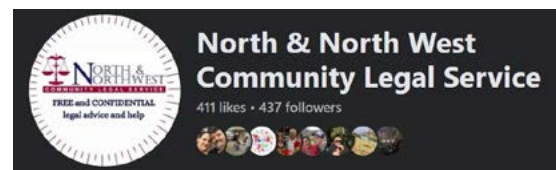
A mode of CLE that is unique to our Community Legal Centre is our radio program "Law Matters". Our Solicitors host this program on 2ARM 92.1FM every week. The Solicitors talk on many and varied topics which include Family Law matters, Consumer Law Matters, traffic and driving offences, ADVO's, domestic and family violence issues, neighbourhood disputes, bankruptcy, debts and human rights interest.

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 listeners to consider perceptions of legal issues.

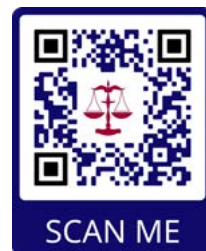
Now that 2ARM FM streams all their programs online, no matter where you are, you can tune in to "Law Matters".



Our Facebook activity saw an increase in reach and engagement this year. While our Facebook page promoted our work throughout our catchment it also promoted local community events and state and nation-wide commemorations. But the big winner from Facebook is the client-contact that follows when clients reach out for legal assistance having seen our posts that are relatable with a personable and friendly approach.



This Facebook activity had a flow-on effect with increased traffic to our website by up to 54%. Our website feature – "Request a free appointment", has proven to be most efficient, particularly during times of increased demand or Service enquiry outside of trading hours. From this point clients can provide a significant amount of information resulting in a swift process when our administration staff call to confirm the appointment.



Empowerment  
through  
education...

# Community Groups involvement

Our staff participate in many Interagency meetings throughout the year, either face to face or via Zoom. These meetings are such an important part of our Service's framework, as referral pathways from other organisations strengthens our communities access to free legal services. This collaborative practice enhances the work we do with our clients as we're meeting their non-legal needs also with appropriate referrals resulting in swift and positive resolutions for our clients' issues.

## This year we have participated in:

- Interagency Meetings
  - » Regional
  - » Indigenous
  - » Multicultural
- Family Law Pathways Network
- Armidale Domestic Family Violence Steering Committee
- Helping Children & Families Association
- Disaster Recovery teams
- CLSD groups
- Community Drug & Alcohol Action teams
- Closing the gap community initiatives
- Local Court Users' Forums
- Children's Court Care Working Party Group

*Our staff attended and spoke at Interagency meetings throughout our catchment to initiate discussions on how best our Service can meet clients' needs of other services*

## Moot Court – Tamworth

Our Solicitor, Hatem Allam, attended the Family Law Pathways Network (FLPN) Moot Court Event in Tamworth. Hatem was a scorer at this High School Moot Court event with (former) Judge Terry proceeding over mock proceedings. It was a fun, and educational, occasion where High Schools debated an annulment application of the marriage between youth celebrities Joe Jonas and Sophie Turner, with a special surprise witness, Taylor Swift. Hatem enjoyed being a part of this wonderful event while the FLPN was grateful for our involvement.





# Expos in our region

Participation in Community Expo's is a great, cost-effective means to promote the work that our Service does, and it's an excellent opportunity for us to meet with the community in a relaxed atmosphere. It is a wonderful introduction of our Service, 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. Our Service is passionate about making this process easier for clients, and community engagements are the greatest way to achieve this.

## This year we have participated in the following Community Expo's

- Seniors Rights Information Day Expo – Armidale
- Armidale Local Council Tornado Resilience Event – Armidale
- Family Fun Day – Guyra
- Helping Children and Families Association – Armidale
- Headspace Day – Armidale
- Life Saver Day O Week University of New England – Armidale
- Youth Expo – Gunnedah
- Community Support Hub Open Day – Armidale
- RUOK Day – Armidale
- Homelessness Expo – Tamworth



Increasing accessibility, breaking down barriers and increasing referral pathways



# Law Reform

## This year we engaged in 3 Law Reform Activities:

- Misidentification of the Predominant Aggressor
- Anti-Discrimination Act Review
- Attended the Children's Court Working Party, chaired by the President of the Children's Court, as part of the CLC delegation and participated in presenting the CLC sector's views on changes being made to the ongoing practices of the Children's Court.

## Access and Equity

Our Service has policies and practices in place to promote our work and to ensure access, equity and non-discrimination is achieved for our clients, and potential clients. Recognition of potential barriers for our demographic, and providing a solution, forms a large part of our assessment of our access and equity to our community.

### Our work removing barriers:

- Our Home Visit Policy: Elderly, disabled or very unwell clients require our legal team to visit them in hospital, at their nursing home or in their homes, to give advice or to sign or witness documents.



- We provided the Automated Telephone Interpreting Service and Auslan Services Pty Ltd, as funded by Legal Aid NSW, to our clients who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and for those clients who are deaf. This year 37% of our CALD clients received an interpreter to assist with their appointment.

- Physically accessible office spaces with ramp and lift access and wide hallways for mobility aides.

Removing barriers  
for all...



# Client Satisfaction Survey

There is no better way of keeping a purposeful check on the quality of our service we provide to our clients than through a Client Satisfaction Survey. This process provides us with an unbiased view of our work through the eyes of our clients.

This year's Survey was the second time the Survey has been standardised by the Community Legal Centres Program Unit of Legal Aid NSW and coordinated across Community Legal Centres, Australia-wide. This new coordinated approach to our Client Satisfaction Survey, while meeting the National Legal Assistance Program (NLAP) requirements, builds a robust dataset that is consistent between CLC's and between survey years.

Centres were required to survey clients they assisted during October 2023. Individual Centres could adopt the probability approach or the census approach. As we have identified the success of clients

completing a Survey is at the end of their face-to-face appointments, we opted for the probability approach.

The overall results of the Survey were positive and reflected the excellent work of Community Legal Centres across NSW. But most impressive were our Centre's results that indicated 100% of clients surveyed would recommend us to their friends and families and the well-being and levels of stress of clients, after having met with us, was made much better.

While our results were positive, we do not rest on our laurels. Quality and service improvement is always on our agenda while our Service-culture continues to be: treat all who attend our office or Outreach Clinics with respect and sensitivity. This attitude towards our clients is reflective in our Survey outcomes and these are results of which we are most proud.

CONGRATULATIONS EVERYONE!

## CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2023



We surveyed our clients to find out what they think and feel about the legal help we give them.  
We use this information to plan and improve our services.

### Who answered the survey?

All clients during the month of October 2023  
were invited to participate in the Survey



### Client experience

Over  
89%

STRONGLY agreed that:

- It was easy to contact our Service when they needed assistance
- We helped clients understand how to deal with their legal issue
- We helped clients understand their legal rights and responsibilities

22%

Aboriginal or Torres  
Strait Islander



48%

Have a disability



STRONGLY agreed that we  
took the time to listen  
to their problem

93%



Agreed they would  
recommend our  
Service to others

100%

# Volunteer Program



## Intern Law Students

Terri, Ben and Stanley worked together coordinating and securing the assistance of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers from the Law School at the University of New England.

This year we engaged more Interns than we have in many years and their contributions to our client work was well-appreciated and significant.

While assisting the solicitors with research and administrative tasks at our base office Interns also accompanied Solicitors on Outreach while also attending Court through our Court Liaison Program.

We are grateful and thank our Interns for their contribution this year.



**Hudson McAllister**



**Bethany Karnaghan**



**Tenzin Dorji**



**Linlin Zhu**

## Solicitor

Pauline Sazdanoff joined our legal team this year under the Volunteer Program. Pauline is an experienced Solicitor with a diverse background in both community legal services and private law practice across New South Wales. She has also enjoyed a distinguished career in the hospitality industry, showcasing her versatility. Pauline is deeply passionate about providing support and advocacy for those most in need and has been a wonderful addition to our legal team.



**Pauline Sazdanoff**



# Case Studies

*\*Names and personal information have been amended to ensure client confidentiality is maintained.*

## **Domestic and Family Violence – divorce**

Our client, Marlene, a vulnerable individual with significant disabilities, endured 20 years of domestic violence before finding the courage to escape to one of our outreach towns. Concerned for her safety and the control her husband still had over her life, she sought our assistance.

Under coercion, Marlene had previously created a Will that left all her assets to her husband and appointed him as her Power of Attorney and Enduring Guardian, with conditions granting him immediate control over her affairs. Now free from his influence, she was fearful of the consequences if he retained these powers.

We acted swiftly, assisting Marlene in drafting a new Will and revoking the existing Power of Attorney and Enduring Guardian documents. A crucial encouragement for her to proceed was our ability to send the revocation documents from our main office over 100 kilometres away, ensuring a vital layer of security to protect her current whereabouts.

Marlene's accounts and technology had been compromised by her husband in the past, leaving her concerned he was monitoring her activities. We leveraged our partnership with WESNET and their Safe Connections Program to provide her with a new mobile phone and essential

information on maintaining digital security going forward.

We encouraged Marlene to secure herself financially and guided her through understanding her requirements for securing a local solicitor for post-marital property matters, with a commitment to assist her with filing for divorce once these matters were finalised. She now has a solicitor working on an equitable property settlement.

Our holistic service model, encompassing bespoke legal services and strategic referrals through partnerships, was essential in safeguarding Marlene's location and collaborating effectively to secure her future.

## **Insurance company demands**

Our client, Blake, was pursued by an insurance company demanding payment for damages from a road accident involving another driver. Despite belief Blake was not at fault and there being substantial damage to his own vehicle, he felt overwhelmed by the insurer's aggressive tactics. Financially strained, Blake faced not only the pressure of the payment demanded but also struggled to afford repairs to his car, which was crucial for him to get to work.

We intervened in the situation by negotiating directly with the insurance company. Our team worked with Blake to create a brief of documents including detailed statements, photographs of the damage, and diagrams of the accident scene. This accompanied our letters to the insurer to demonstrate our client's lack of fault and highlight the extent of the damage to his vehicle.

Through our persistent efforts, the insurance company withdrew their demand for payment and agreed to cover the repair costs for Blake's vehicle. This resolution not only alleviated his financial burden but also ensured he received the compensation he deserved.

## **Unfair dismissal**

Our client, Claudia, who has a disability, faced a difficult situation when she was sent home and left in limbo, awaiting her employer's communication about her return to work. This uncertainty stretched on for months, leading to significant financial strain and forcing Claudia to rely on family support. Unsure of her legal rights, she sought our assistance.

Upon investigation, we contacted the company to address the issue. The company then claimed that our client had been dismissed and accused her of various forms of misconduct. However, they failed to provide any concrete evidence to support that a formal termination had been communicated. Claudia had not received any formal notice of termination and had not sought other employment, believing her job was still secure. She contended that the company's allegations were fabricated to avoid negative repercussions.

In response, we filed an unfair dismissal application. Through rigorous mediation and negotiation, we secured a substantial financial settlement for Claudia. This resolution provided her with essential financial support while she sought new employment.

### **ADVO against our client**

Our client, Alman, approached us for assistance with separation and divorce. Alman and his wife, both refugees from a non-English speaking country, encountered significant challenges after settling in Australia. Three months after their arrival, their relationship broke down, and the wife left the home, returning to her home country and leaving their three children in Alman's care. As a result, he had to leave his job to look after the children.

Nearly a year later, the wife returned and sought reconciliation, but Alman felt it was best to remain separated. Following his refusal, the wife made allegations to the police, which led to an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) being issued against him.

Due to his financial situation, Alman was unable to afford a private solicitor to attend Court. With the assistance of an interpreter, we supported Alman in court in regard to the ADVO. We also provided advice and assistance relevant to separation, parenting, and an application for divorce.

### **Urgent Will**

We received an urgent call from a social worker at a hospital in our area about a gravely ill patient who had been told they had little time left. The patient, Shirley, had no Will, and she was concerned that without one, there could be fighting in the family and the many other challenges that come with intestacy.

We were able to prioritise Shirley's matter and without much delay attended with her to draft a Will that reflected her wishes.

Our rapid response ensured that Shirley's wishes were honoured and provided much-needed certainty and relief. The family later shared that our efforts brought them peace of mind in an incredibly difficult time.

### **Contesting an inheritance**

Our client, Margaret, who has a disability, approached us after a family member passed away. Despite having a strong claim to inherit her loved one's estate, another individual was contesting the inheritance. We provided advice to Margaret and worked on the case, collaborating with one of our pro bono partners to advance the matter towards resolution.

### **Guardianship**

Harry came to us after his spouse lost capacity. Harry was concerned about an estranged family member who had begun interfering inappropriately, claiming authority over Harry's spouse's affairs. Wanting to prevent further interference, Harry sought our help.

We assisted with an application for Guardianship and Financial Management. Harry attended the hearing and successfully obtained the orders he was seeking in short order, ensuring peace of mind that his partner would be protected.



# All the best

## Farewell to our Solicitor, Stanley Tao



It was with a heavy heart that we said goodbye to one of our valued legal team members, Stanley Tao, in May 2024.

Stanley joined the NNCCLS family in August 2016 and fast became a dependable team member and a skilled link in the chain of our legal practice. During his time with the Service, he contributed so much to its growth and success.

Stanley was so dedicated to his position as Solicitor and was a wonderful representation of our organisation while out in the community. He loved introducing our Service to potential clients through his involvement at Expo's, while leading community education programs, and while operating his Outreach Clinics.

His passion and commitment to his clients was evident and it's safe to say that he changed the lives of so many throughout our catchment with his skill and knowledge of the legal system.

Stanley was a well-respected Lawyer at our local Court House in Armidale through his work in our Court Liaison Program on list day. Stanley's work in the Gunnedah, Narrabri and Wee Waa regions saw these Outreach Clinics go from strength to strength while his involvement in the Glen Innes Prison Program assisted so many inmates. Stanley capably led the Service during his times as Acting Principal Solicitor on many occasions, and his mentor role to junior staff and to volunteer Law Students was immeasurable.

Stanley was a friend to us all, as he shared with us his overseas travels, his love and success in table tennis, and his competitive nature and good spirits that he brought to our staff activities and team bonding events.

We wish Stanley every success in the next chapter of his life in Sydney, and we thank him for all the wonderful memories he has created in the history of the North & North West Community Legal Service.



# Highlights for the year



## Our Solicitor, Hatem Allam, gained his Practice Management Certificate

Hatem successfully completed the Practice Management course through The College of Law in Sydney. This will now allow Hatem, along with our Solicitor, Ben Graham, to be a Nominated Person and assist with supervision in the future.

Congratulations, Hatem!

## 2 more bundles of joy!

### Bundle of joy number 1.....

Our Principal Solicitor, Terri, became a Mum again to a gorgeous little baby girl. Maeve Stephanie Coleman arrived on 8th October 2023 and is happy and healthy and her big sister, Everleigh, couldn't be more excited!

Congratulations Terri and Joey!



### Bundle of joy number 2.....

Our Administrative Assistant, Natasha, also became a Mum for the second time. On 14th August 2024 beautiful little Sophie Macgregor was safely brought into the world. Sophie's big sister Alissa is loving cuddles with her new little play mate. How wonderful!

Congratulations Natasha and Andrew!





## Visit from Sarah Marland – Executive Director of CLCNSW

We had the pleasure of Sarah visiting our Centre on Thursday, 11th July 2024. It's been some time since we've had a representative from Community Legal Centres NSW visit our centre, so it was wonderful to show Sarah around our office and spend time with her sharing all the incredible work our Service and staff undertake each and every year.

Prior to visiting our office, Sarah spent time in our catchment connecting to other service providers. Sarah said that the feedback she received about our centre indicated that we are a significant link in the vital services in our region commenting that "you're clearly a well-loved service".

Sarah too shared with us all the great work that CLCNSW is doing, particularly their increased tireless work advocating to Government for sufficient and ongoing funding for the sector.

Having the opportunity to thank Sarah, face to face, for their leadership of NSW Centres was wonderful and we look forward to her next visit.



## UNE Law Ball



Our Service was named this year as the designated charity for the prestigious Annual UNE Law Ball, presented by the UNE Law Students Society. This meant that the proceeds of their silent auction, that was undertaken

during the course of the evening, was donated to our organisation, while NNWCLS was the focus of their promotion.

Our Acting Principal Solicitor, Ben Graham, and our Solicitor, Hatem Allam, attended the Ball. Ben was given the opportunity to speak about all the valuable work that NNWCLS does in our catchment. Ben reminded the Law Students in attendance the value of our Intern Volunteer Program stating that our current Principal Solicitor, Terri Coleman, first joined the Service 16 years ago as a Volunteer UNE law student, while many other Interns have gone on to own their own legal firms identifying their time with NNWCLS was an invaluable step to the development of their skills as a lawyer.

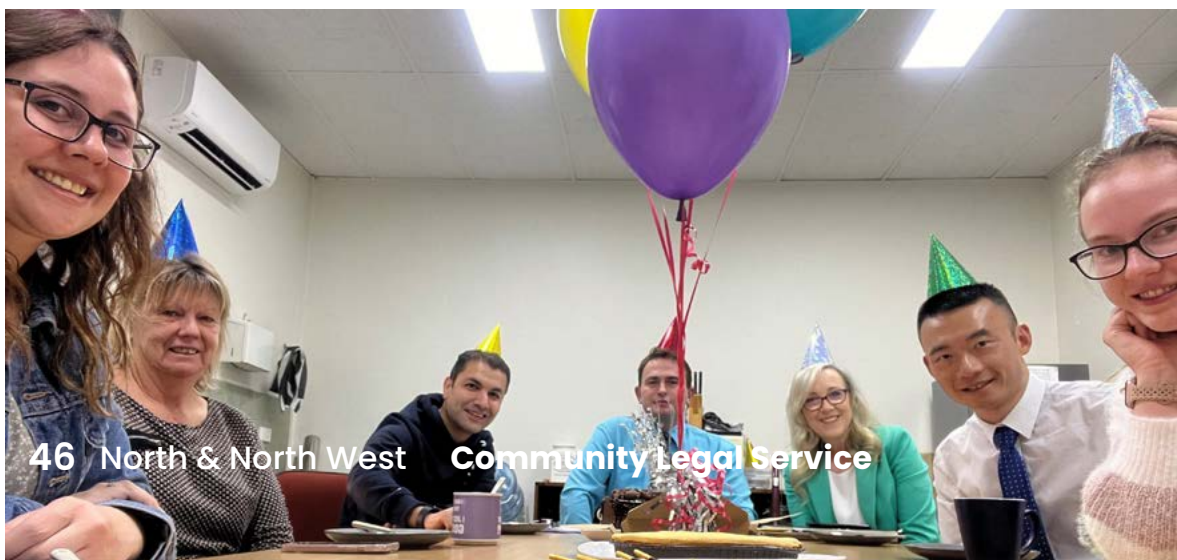
Ben and Hatem had a wonderful night, and we thank the UNE Law Students Society for the recommendation of our Service as their chosen recipient organisation.



## Team bonding moments

This year saw an intentional investment in team bonding events. While workloads for all are currently so high, the team recognised the value in fun down-time throughout the year that resulted in cohesion and support

for each other, with some interesting games and joyful expressions of competitiveness that bonded us through a high-volumed working year.





# Support

## Community Partnership Program – Regional Australia Bank



Our Service chooses to bank with Regional Australia Bank, Armidale. We have been a member of this financial institution for many years.



In 2015 we became a member of their Community Partnership Program. The Program, now supporting almost 1,900 registered groups and causes, allows Regional Australia Bank members to select a local community group, such as us, 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 and a credit bonus deposited into our account to the value of \$2,895.43. This Program certainly is proof of Regional Australia Bank's commitment to its

members and its community. We appreciated being involved and receiving this support through this Program, that in total has now allocated to the community more than \$2.75 million in donations.

## Annual Donations Program – Tamworth Regional Council

We were a successful applicant in this Donations Program this year that saw the Tamworth Regional Council contributing to the costs and promotion of our fortnightly Outreach Clinic in Tamworth. This Donations Program is aimed to support not-for-profit organisations, charities and community groups in the Tamworth LGA ensuring that their community continues to have access to vital services. The criteria for this



funding opportunity was wide and varied, demonstrating the Council's commitment to the versatility of services that would benefit their residents. We thank the Tamworth Regional Council for their recognition that NNWCLS forms an essential link in the chain of their local community's needs.



## Pro bono partnerships

### Pinnacle People Solutions

Our Service is grateful to have received pro bono support from Pinnacle People Solutions, which has involved recruitment assistance, executive coaching, risk management and general Human Resourcing support. This ongoing support

highlights the commitment Pinnacle People Solutions has in assisting regionally based not-for-profit organisations to manage their HR needs.



**PINNACLE**  
PEOPLE SOLUTIONS



### Legal firm support

We are deeply grateful to our pro bono partners for extending their support to clients with matters beyond our scope. Their commitment ensures that those in need receive timely and appropriate legal advice, regardless of financial means.



### Professional Development resource

We have been fortunate to secure the online training program, that is BenchTV, free of charge. BenchTV generously donated our Service with an ongoing subscription to their legal training activities. BenchTV helps Australian legal practitioners fulfil their annual compulsory Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by hosting online broadcasts comprising of discussions of various legal topics pertinent to the profession, and even to the general public, within the legal context. This training tool has been of significant benefit to our Solicitors in gaining their yearly CPD points.





**NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**  
**ABN 35 931 742 739**

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**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

**NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**  
**ABN 35 931 742 739**

**STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue	2	<b>905,467</b>	874,239
Other income	3	<b>(2,195)</b>	10,525
Interest revenue calculated using the effective interest method		<b>16,717</b>	1,535
Administration costs		<b>(94,621)</b>	(126,072)
Depreciation expense	4	<b>(26,847)</b>	(32,970)
Employee benefits expenses		<b>(757,219)</b>	(759,113)
Occupancy expenses		<b>(29,670)</b>	(33,524)
Other expenses		<b>(25,314)</b>	(31,276)
<b>Deficit before income tax expense</b>		<b>(13,682)</b>	(96,656)
Income tax expense	1	-	-
<b>Deficit after income tax expense</b>		<b>(13,682)</b>	(96,656)
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax		-	-
<b>Total comprehensive deficit for the year</b>		<b>(13,682)</b>	(96,656)



**NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**  
**ABN 35 931 742 739**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**AS AT 30 JUNE 2024**

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	276,983	362,821
Trade and other receivables	6	5	-
Financial assets	7	445,551	387,584
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>722,539</b>	<b>750,405</b>
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Right-of-use assets	9	357,952	366,573
<b>TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>357,952</b>	<b>366,573</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>1,080,491</b>	<b>1,116,978</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade and other payables	10	12,841	12,958
Provisions	11	251,206	271,680
Lease liabilities	12	16,258	14,160
Other liabilities	13	350	350
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>280,655</b>	<b>299,148</b>
<b>NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Lease liabilities	12	365,718	361,724
Provisions	11	8,375	16,681
<b>TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>374,093</b>	<b>378,405</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>654,748</b>	<b>677,553</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>425,743</b>	<b>439,425</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Accumulated funds		425,743	439,425
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>425,743</b>	<b>439,425</b>

NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC  
ABN 35 931 742 739

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Accumulated Funds \$	Total \$
<b>Balance at 1 July 2022</b>	536,081	536,081
Total comprehensive deficit	<u>(96,656)</u>	<u>(96,656)</u>
<b>Balance at 30 June 2023</b>	<u>439,425</u>	<u>439,425</u>
Total comprehensive deficit	<u>(13,682)</u>	<u>(13,682)</u>
<b>Balance at 30 June 2024</b>	<u>425,743</u>	<u>425,743</u>



**NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**  
**ABN 35 931 742 739**

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Receipts from customers		995,622	961,876
Interest received		16,717	1,535
Payments to suppliers and employees		(993,480)	(984,820)
Interest paid		(32,401)	(25,984)
Net cash used in operating activities	14 (b)	(13,542)	(47,393)
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Payment for investments		(57,967)	(136,257)
Net cash used in investing activities		(57,967)	(136,257)
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Repayments of lease liabilities		(14,329)	(18,132)
Net cash used in financing activities		(14,329)	(18,132)
Net decrease in cash held		(85,838)	(201,782)
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		362,821	564,603
Cash at the end of the financial year	14 (a)	276,983	362,821

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

**Note 1: Basis of Preparation**

In the committee's opinion, the incorporated association is not a reporting entity because there are no users dependent on general purpose financial statements.

These are special purpose financial statements that have been prepared for the purposes of complying with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and New South Wales legislation the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 and associated regulations. The committee have determined that the accounting policies adopted are appropriate to meet the needs of the members of North & North West Community Legal Service Inc.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements specified by the Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 'Presentation of Financial Statements', AASB 107 'Statement of Cash Flows', AASB 108 'Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors', AASB 1048 'Interpretation of Standards' and AASB 1054 'Australian Additional Disclosures', as appropriate for not-for-profit oriented entities.

Historical cost convention

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Critical accounting estimates

The preparation of the financial statements requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the incorporated association's accounting policies. The areas involving a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimates are significant to the financial statements, are disclosed within the relevant notes to these financials.

**Accounting Policies**

The material accounting policy information adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are set out within the relevant notes to these financials. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

**Income Tax**

The committee consider that the association is exempt from income tax under Division 50-5 of the Income Tax Assessment Act of 1997.

**Goods and Services Tax**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). in this case it is recognised as part of the cost of the acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense. Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the statement of financial position.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO are presented as operating cash flows included in receipts from customers or payments to suppliers.

Commitments and contingencies are disclosed on a gross basis.

**New or Amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations Adopted**

The incorporated association has adopted all of the new or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') that are mandatory for the current reporting period.

Any new or amended Accounting Standards or Interpretations that are not yet mandatory have not been early adopted.



NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Note 2: Revenue</b>			
Other revenue			
Government funding - AASB 1058		897,299	870,703
Other revenue - AASB 1058		8,168	3,536
Total revenue		905,467	874,239
<i>Grants - AASB1058: Income of Not-for-Profit Entities</i>			
The association receives a number of funding streams that do not contain sufficiently specific performance obligations. Where there are no sufficiently specific performance obligations present, the association recognises revenue on receipt of funds in accordance with AASB1058: Income of Not-for-Profit Entities.			
<i>Volunteer services</i>			
The association has elected not to recognise volunteer services as either revenue or other form of contribution received. As such, any related consumption or capitalisation of such resources received is also not recognised.			
<b>Note 3: Other income</b>			
Other income			
Gain on lease modification		(2,195)	10,525
Total other income		(2,195)	10,525
<b>Note 4: Expenses</b>			
Surplus before income tax includes the following specific expenses:			
Depreciation expense		26,847	32,970
<b>Note 5: Cash and Cash Equivalents</b>			
Cash at bank		276,973	362,811
Cash - other		10	10
		276,983	362,821
<b>Note 6: Trade and Other Receivables</b>			
Sundry receivables		5	-
		5	-
<b>Note 7: Financial assets</b>			
Term deposits - at amortised cost		445,551	387,584
		445,551	387,584

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Note 8: Property, Plant and Equipment</b>			
Plant and equipment - at cost		<b>64,424</b>	64,424
Less: Accumulated depreciation		<b>(64,424)</b>	(64,424)
		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Motor vehicles - at cost		<b>52,945</b>	52,945
Less: Accumulated depreciation		<b>(52,945)</b>	(52,945)
		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total Plant and Equipment		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Plant and equipment is stated at historical cost less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the items.

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis to write off the net cost of each item of property, plant and equipment (excluding land) over their expected useful lives as follows:

Plant and Equipment	15% - 25%
Motor Vehicles	25%
Office Furniture and Equipment	7.5% - 30%

The residual values, useful lives and depreciation methods are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at each reporting date.

An item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when there is no future economic benefit to the association. Gains and losses between the carrying amount and the disposal proceeds are taken to profit or loss.

**Note 9: Right-of-use Assets**

Right-of-use Land & Buildings	<b>404,934</b>	385,754
Less: Accumulated depreciation	<b>(46,982)</b>	(19,181)
	<u><b>357,952</b></u>	<u>366,573</u>

A right-of-use asset is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The right-of-use asset is measured at cost, which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability, adjusted for, as applicable, any lease payments made at or before the commencement date net of any lease incentives received, any initial direct costs incurred, and, except where included in the cost of inventories, an estimate of costs expected to be incurred for dismantling and removing the underlying asset, and restoring the site or asset.

Right-of-use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the asset, whichever is the shorter. Where the association expects to obtain ownership of the leased asset at the end of the lease term, the depreciation is over its estimated useful life. Right-of use assets are subject to impairment or adjusted for any remeasurement of lease liabilities.

The association has elected not to recognise a right-of-use asset and corresponding lease liability for short-term leases with terms of 12 months or less and leases of low-value assets. Lease payments on these assets are expensed to profit or loss as incurred.



NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Note 10: Trade and Other Payables</b>			
CURRENT			
Sundry payables and accrued expenses		<u>12,841</u>	<u>12,958</u>
		<u>12,841</u>	<u>12,958</u>
<b>Note 11: Provisions</b>			
CURRENT			
Provision for employee benefits		177,893	176,628
Provision for locum's and salaries		(283)	12,995
Provision for redundancy		<u>73,596</u>	<u>82,057</u>
		<u>251,206</u>	<u>271,680</u>
NON-CURRENT			
Provision for long service leave		<u>8,375</u>	<u>16,681</u>
		<u>8,375</u>	<u>16,681</u>

*Short-term employee benefits*

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and long service leave expected to be settled wholly within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled.

*Other long-term employee benefits*

The liability for annual leave and long service leave not expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date using the projected unit credit method. Consideration is given to expected future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using market yields at the reporting date on corporate bonds with terms to maturity and currency that match, as closely as possible, the estimated future cash outflows.

*Defined contribution superannuation expense*

Contributions to defined contribution superannuation plans are expensed in the period in which they are incurred.

*Key Judgement: Employee Benefits Provision*

As discussed above, the liability for employee benefits expected to be settled more than 12 months from the reporting date are recognised and measured at the present value of the estimated future cash flows to be made in respect of all employees at the reporting date. In determining the present value of the liability, estimates of attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation have been taken into account.

*Provision for Redundancies*

Provisions have been raised for future redundancies, despite no legal or constructive obligation existing for these expenses at balance date. This does not meet the measurement and recognition criteria of AASB 137 "Provisions, Contingent Assets and Contingent Liabilities". These provisions are charged to the statement of comprehensive income.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Note 12: Lease liabilities</b>			
<b>CURRENT</b>			
Lease liabilities		<u>16,258</u>	<u>14,160</u>
		<u>16,258</u>	<u>14,160</u>
<b>NON-CURRENT</b>			
Lease liabilities		<u>365,718</u>	<u>361,724</u>
		<u>365,718</u>	<u>361,724</u>

A lease liability is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The lease liability is initially recognised at the present value of the lease payments to be made over the term of the lease, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease or, if that rate cannot be readily determined, the association's incremental borrowing rate. Lease payments comprise of fixed payments less any lease incentives receivable, variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, amounts expected to be paid under residual value guarantees, exercise price of a purchase option or extension option when the exercise of the option is reasonably certain to occur, and any anticipated termination penalties. The variable lease payments that do not depend on an index or a rate are expensed in the period in which they are incurred.

Lease liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. The carrying amounts are remeasured if there is a change in the following: future lease payments arising from a change in an index or a rate used; residual guarantee; lease term; certainty of an extension or purchase option and termination penalties. When a lease liability is remeasured, an adjustment is made to the corresponding right-of-use asset, or to profit or loss if the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset is fully written down.

*Key Judgement: Lease Term*

The lease term is a significant component in the measurement of both the right-of-use asset and lease liability. Judgement is exercised in determining whether there is reasonable certainty that an option to extend the lease or purchase the underlying asset will be exercised, or an option to terminate the lease will not be exercised, when ascertaining the periods to be included in the lease term. In determining the lease term, all facts and circumstances that create an economical incentive to exercise an extension option, or not to exercise a termination option, are considered at the lease commencement date. Factors considered may include the importance of the asset to the association's operations; comparison of terms and conditions to prevailing market rates; incurrence of significant penalties; existence of significant leasehold improvements; and the costs and disruption to replace the asset. The association reassesses whether it is reasonably certain to exercise an extension option, or not exercise a termination option, if there is a significant event or significant change in circumstances.

*Key Judgement: Incremental Borrowing Rate*

Where the interest rate implicit in a lease cannot be readily determined, an incremental borrowing rate is estimated to discount future lease payments to measure the present value of the lease liability at the lease commencement date. Such a rate is based on what the association estimates it would have to pay a third party to borrow the funds necessary to obtain an asset of a similar value to the right-of-use asset, with similar terms, security and economic environment.

**Note 13: Other Liabilities**

**CURRENT**

Other liabilities		<u>350</u>	<u>350</u>
		<u>350</u>	<u>350</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Note 14: Cash Flow Information</b>			
(a) Reconciliation of cash			
Cash and cash equivalents		<u>276,983</u>	<u>362,821</u>
		<u>276,983</u>	<u>362,821</u>
(b) Reconciliation of cash flow from operations with surplus/(deficit) from activities after income tax expense:			
Deficit after income tax expense		(13,682)	(96,656)
Non cash flows in surplus:			
Depreciation		26,847	32,970
(Gain)/loss on lease modification		2,195	(10,525)
Changes in Assets and Liabilities:			
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		(5)	-
Increase/(decrease) in creditors and accruals		(117)	5,814
Increase/(decrease) in provisions		<u>(28,780)</u>	<u>21,004</u>
Cash flows from/(used in) operations		<u>(13,542)</u>	<u>(47,393)</u>

**Note 15: Economic Dependence**

The ability of the association to continue as a going concern is dependent upon the continuation of the following:

North & North West Community Legal Service Inc. is dependent on government funding, for the majority of its revenue used to operate the business. At the date of this report the Committee has been advised that the Domestic Family & Sexual Violence funding provided by the Department of Community & Justice will not be continued. However, the committee has no reason to believe in respect of the remaining government funding that the government will not continue to support North & North West Community Legal Service Inc.

**Note 16: Contingent liabilities**

The association had no contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2024 and 30 June 2023.

**Note 17: Commitments**

The association had no commitments for expenditure as at 30 June 2024 and 30 June 2023.

**Note 18: Related Parties**

Key Management Personnel

Key management personnel compensation	<u>594,135</u>	<u>496,728</u>
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The totals represent the remuneration paid to key management personnel (KMP) of the organisation.

Other Related Parties

Transactions between related parties are on normal commercial terms and conditions no more favourable than those available to other parties unless otherwise stated.

Receivable from and payable to related parties

There were no trade receivables from or trade payables to related parties at the current and previous reporting date.

Loans to/from related parties

There were no loans to or from related parties at the current and previous reporting date.



NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Note 19: Auditors' Remuneration</b>			
During the financial year the following fees were paid or payable for services provided by Crowe Audit Australia, the auditor of the association:			
Audit of the financial statements		<b>8,250</b>	7,400
Other allowable services		<b>1,500</b>	1,500
		<b>9,750</b>	8,900

**Note 20: Events After the End of the Reporting Period**

No events have arisen since the end of the reporting period which significantly or may significantly affect the operations of the association, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the association in future financial years.

**NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**  
**ABN 35 931 742 739**

**STATEMENT BY THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

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The committee have determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the committee the attached financial report:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of North & North West Community Legal Service Inc as at 30 June 2024 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that North & North West Community Legal Service Inc will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:



Treasurer

  
Chairperson

Dated: 16 October 2024

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF  
NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**

**ABN 35 931 742 739**

**Report on the Audit of the Financial Report**

**Qualified Opinion**

We have audited the special purpose financial report (the financial report) of North & North West Community Legal Service Inc. (the Association), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the statements by members of the committee.

In our opinion, except for the possible effect of the matter described in the basis for qualified opinion paragraph, the accompanying financial report of the Association is in accordance with the Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (the ACNC Act), including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of the Association's performance for the year ended on that date; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1, the *Associations Incorporation Act NSW 2009* and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

**Basis for Qualified Opinion**

Attention is drawn to Note 11 in the financial statements 'Provision for Redundancies'. The recognition of this liability does not meet the recognition criteria as prescribed in AASB 137 "Provisions, Contingent Asset and Contingent Liabilities" and as such is a departure from the standard, we are therefore qualifying our opinion in respect of provisions and associated employee benefits expenses.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

**Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting**

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the Association's financial reporting responsibilities under the ACNC Act. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

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**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF  
NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**

**ABN 35 931 742 739**

**Other Information**

The committee is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information contained in the Association's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2024 but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

**Responsibilities of Management and the Committee for the Financial Report**

The Committee of the Association are responsible for the preparation of the financial report and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the needs of the members and the *Associations Incorporation Act NSW 2009* and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and for such internal control as the committee determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the committee are responsible for assessing the ability of the Association to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the committee either intend to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

**Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the committee.

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**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF  
NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**

**ABN 35 931 742 739**

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during the audit.

**CROWE AUDIT AUSTRALIA**



**Kylie Ellis  
Partner**

Registered Company Auditor (ASIC RAN 483424)  
134 Taylor St  
ARMIDALE NSW 2350

Dated: 18 October 2024

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**DISCLAIMER  
TO THE MEMBERS OF  
NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**

**ABN 35 931 742 739**

The additional financial data presented on pages 17 - 20 is in accordance with the books and records of the association which have been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in our statutory audit of the association for the financial year ended 30 June 2024. It will be appreciated that our statutory audit did not cover all details of the additional financial data. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on such financial data and we give no warranty of accuracy or reliability in respect of the data provided. Neither the firm nor any member or employee of the firm undertakes responsibility in any way whatsoever to any person (other than North & North West Community Legal Service) in respect of such data, including any errors of omissions therein however caused.

**CROWE AUDIT AUSTRALIA**



**Kylie Ellis**

**Partner**

Registered Company Auditor (ASIC RAN 483424)

134 Taylor St

ARMIDALE NSW 2350

Dated: 18 October 2024

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**NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC**  
**ABN 35 931 742 739**

**DETAILED INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

<b>LEGAL SERVICE</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Government funding		
Commonwealth funding	595,092	581,477
NSW state funding	302,207	284,226
Service generated income	19,963	15,596
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>917,262</b>	<b>881,299</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<u>Salary &amp; Wages</u>		
Salaries and wages	595,009	604,276
Superannuation contributions	67,060	63,248
	<b>662,069</b>	<b>667,524</b>
<u>Salary Related Expenses</u>		
Provision for annual leave	(10,935)	3,329
Provision for long service leave	(4,239)	7,424
Provision for relief wages	(262)	908
Provision for redundancy	(8,460)	6,141
Staff training	306	3,874
Staff recruitment	695	-
Staff labour hire	-	44,848
Workers compensation insurance	2,963	2,429
	<b>(19,932)</b>	<b>68,953</b>
<u>Other Operating Expenses</u>		
Accounting and finance fees	11,325	11,326
Communications	5,202	6,746
Depreciation expense	26,847	32,970
Insurance	12,867	14,114
Interest - ROU assets	32,401	25,984
Office overheads	18,306	21,928
Library, resources and subscriptions	12,148	10,268
Other premises costs	13,751	15,500
Programming and planning	8,806	17,002
Rent	2,139	1,746
Repairs and maintenance	1,502	3,709
Minor equipment	-	268
Travel	16,902	26,645
	<b>162,196</b>	<b>188,206</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>804,333</b>	<b>924,683</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>112,929</b>	<b>(43,384)</b>

NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC  
ABN 35 931 742 739

DETAILED INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

DOMESTIC, FAMILY and SEXUAL VIOLENCE FUNDING	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Income</b>		
NSW state funding	-	-
<b>Total Income</b>	-	-
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<u>Salary &amp; Wages</u>		
Salaries and wages	94,609	20,484
Superannuation contributions	10,604	2,151
	<b>105,213</b>	<b>22,635</b>
<u>Salary Related Expenses</u>		
Provision for annual leave	6,397	-
Provision for long service leave	2,000	-
Staff training	1,473	-
	<b>9,870</b>	<b>-</b>
<u>Other Operating Expenses</u>		
Accounting and finance fees	500	-
Communications	1,000	-
Insurance	300	-
Office overheads	3,000	-
Library, resources and subscriptions	443	1,845
Other premises costs	1,250	-
Programming and planning	1,900	29
Travel	3,200	-
	<b>11,593</b>	<b>1,874</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>126,676</b>	<b>24,509</b>
<b>Deficit</b>	<b>(126,676)</b>	<b>(24,509)</b>

NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC  
ABN 35 931 742 739

DETAILED INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

OTHER INCOME		
	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<b>Income</b>		
Legal Aid additional funding	-	5,000
Service generated income	<u>2,727</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>2,727</u>	<u>5,000</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<u>Other Operating Expenses</u>		
Programming and planning	1,174	-
Rent	<u>1,489</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>2,663</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<u>2,663</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Surplus</b>	<u>64</u>	<u>5,000</u>



NORTH & NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE INC  
ABN 35 931 742 739

DETAILED INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

OTHER INCOME	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Income		
SSTF funding	-	-
Total Income	-	-
Expenditure		
Other Operating Expenses		
Office overheads	-	817
Library, resources and subscriptions	-	32,946
Total Expenditure	-	33,763
Deficit	-	(33,763)



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