



**Women's
Legal
Service
NSW**


ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



 **WOMEN'S**
LEGAL SERVICE NSW

Women's Legal Service NSW

would like to acknowledge the Wongal and Burramattagal people who are the traditional owners of the land on which we work.

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, wavy lines made of small dots in yellow, orange, blue, and pink, spanning the width of the page below the text.

CONTACT US

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LTD

Trading as Women's Legal Service NSW

PO Box 206

Lidcombe NSW 1825

Administration line: 02 8745 6900

Fax: 02 9749 4433

Email: reception@wlsnsw.org.au

Web: www.wlsnsw.org.au

Office hours: 9:00am–4:30pm

(Monday to Friday)

Telephone advice services:

Women's Legal Contact Line:

8745 6988	1800 801 501
Mondays	9:30am–12:30pm
Tuesdays	1:30pm–4:30pm
Thursdays	9:30am–12:30pm

Provides free confidential legal information advice and referrals for women in NSW with a focus on family law, domestic violence, sexual assault and discrimination.

Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line:

8745 6999	1800 810 784
Mondays	1:30pm–4:30pm
Tuesdays	9:30am–12:30pm
Thursdays	1:30pm–4:30pm
Fridays	9:30am–12:30pm

Provides free confidential legal information, advice and referrals for women in NSW with a focus on domestic violence and Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders.

First Nations Women's Legal Contact Line:

8745 6977	1800 639 784
Mondays	10:00am–12:30pm
Tuesdays	10:00am–12:30pm
Thursdays	10:00am–12:30pm

Provides free confidential legal information, advice and referrals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in NSW with a focus on domestic violence, sexual assault, parenting issues, family law and discrimination.

Working Women's Legal Service: 8745 6954

Tuesdays and Thursdays by telephone appointment.

Provides advice, referrals and pro bono assistance to women discriminated against at work by reason of gender, pregnancy, caring responsibilities or experiencing sexual harassment.

Warm referral call-back service:

Wednesdays and Fridays.

Outreach advice clinics:

Blacktown	every second Friday Phone: 9831 2070
Liverpool	every second Thursday Phone: 9601 3555
Penrith	every second Tuesday Phone: 4721 8749

Local Courts domestic violence duty work:

Mt Druitt	once a month on Monday
Penrith	once a month on Tuesday
Blacktown	once every two months on Wednesday

Family Relationship Centres:

Blacktown	once every six weeks
Penrith	once every six weeks

Women's Correctional Centres:

Silverwater once a month

Community Legal Education:

Ask LOIS – A legal on-line information service for community workers: www.asklois.org.au

Enquire about training and education for your organisation: cle-request@wlsnsw.org.au

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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

This year, like the last, has been overshadowed by the impact of the COVID pandemic, surges in demand and continuing uncertainty about the additional funding we so desperately need to meet the needs of women in NSW.

In spite of these circumstances, our staff, volunteers, and Board members continue to provide excellent and dedicated work to address the legal needs of women throughout NSW.

My thanks to the Board members: Louise Goodchild, Alexandra Richardson, Emma Palmer, Sheridan Emerson, Lisa Pusey, Bronwyn Penrith, Ella Rowe and Courtney Robertson.

Thanks to Renata Field, who did not nominate for another term, and welcome Lisa Pusey, who joined the Board in May 2021.

On behalf of the Board I would like to acknowledge the members of the Aboriginal Women's Consultation Network: Aunty Elsie Gordon, Anusha Duray, Tina West, Monique Wiseman and Aunty Bronwyn Penrith. Thanks to the contribution of these wonderful women we can improve the cultural appropriateness of our services for women across NSW.

There are also many pro bono solicitors and barristers who provide great assistance to our staff and clients. Thank you all for your support.

To all those who have contributed to the work of Women's Legal Service NSW, the Board extends its gratitude. To the staff, I thank you for your dedication and your tireless efforts to better the lives of women. I also want to note the strong worthy leadership of Helen Campbell, Executive Officer and Pip Davis, Principal Solicitor over these troubled times – thank you for managing responsibility with such integrity and commitment.

Denele Crozier, Chairperson



WLSNSW STRATEGIC PLAN 2021–2027

Vision

- Access to justice and a just legal system for women in NSW, as all women are entitled to a society that respects their human rights.

Purpose

- Women's Legal Service NSW works from a feminist perspective to promote access to justice for women in NSW. We seek to promote women's human rights, redress inequalities experienced by women and to foster legal and social change through strategic legal services, community development, community legal education and law and policy reform work. We prioritise women who are disadvantaged by their cultural, social and economic circumstances.
- We focus on areas of law that most directly have a gendered impact on women. This includes domestic violence, sexual assault, family law, care and protection, and discrimination.

5 Priority Areas

The five priority areas of service delivery for Women's Legal Service NSW are:

Policy and Law Reform

- Influence reform of policy, legislation and legal processes that affect the rights and limit the lives of women, particularly those most disadvantaged in their access to justice.

Community Legal Education and Community Development

- Promote women's understanding of the legal system, their rights and avenues for the resolution of their legal problems. Undertake community development initiatives to achieve this purpose, particularly for those women most disadvantaged in their access to justice. Develop the capacity of service providers working with women to assist their clients appropriately with legal problems.

Improving the Lives of Individual Women

- Targeted and effective legal services that best meet the unmet needs of the most disadvantaged women in NSW. Strategic casework selected within our capacity that promotes women's human rights and supports assistance for those women at greatest disadvantage.

Enhance access to justice for, and self-determination by, First Nations women

- Provide a specialised and culturally safe First Nations Women's Legal Program, with respect for First Nations decision-making and a commitment to supporting community empowerment.

Infrastructure, Sustainability and Organisational Support

- Maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of Women's Legal Service NSW infrastructure to sustain and support the service delivery priority areas.

What we intend to achieve:

1. Women will be safe from violence.

We prioritise services for women experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault. We will practice within a sexual, domestic and family violence informed and trauma-informed framework.

2. Women will be supported to take control of their own lives.

We assist women to make decisions about their families and care for their children.

We support women who have been discriminated against on grounds of gender, race, marital status and caring responsibilities, and who have experienced sexual harassment.

3. Women will be resourced to make choices.

We will work collaboratively with other services to offer holistic responses to our clients' needs.

We will use systemic advocacy to enhance our clients' access to justice.

4. Our services will be inclusive of all women.

We will provide services in a manner that is inclusive of the needs and interests of all women, including First Nations women, women of all cultures and races, women in regional rural and remote areas, older women, young women, criminalised women, homeless women and women at risk of homelessness, LGBTI Q+ women and women with disabilities. Our services are available to all persons who identify as women, non-binary and gender diverse who have been adversely impacted by patriarchal structures and practices.

Our service provision will take into account the cross-cultural and intersecting issues that may compound the experience of disadvantage.

Our services will be accessible for women with disabilities.

5. Sustainable Development Goals.

This Strategic Plan accords with the United Nations "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" goals for gender equality, access to justice, and peaceful inclusive societies. (Goals 5,8,11,16)
sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

PERSONNEL DURING 2020–2021

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Denele Crozier	Chairperson
Alexandra Richardson	Treasurer
Sheridan Emerson	Secretary
Bronwyn Penrith	AWCN Representative
Louise Goodchild	Emma Palmer
Courtney Robertson	Ella Rowe
Renata Field	(to 25 November 2020)
Lisa Pusey	(from 5 May 2021)

ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S CONSULTATION NETWORK

Aunty Elsie Gordon	TAFE NSW, Dubbo
Anusha Duray	Aboriginal Projects Co-ordinator, Coffs Harbour
Tina West	Aboriginal Health Service, Central Coast
Bronwyn Penrith	Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Women's Centre
Monique Wiseman	Homelessness NSW

STAFF

Management:

Helen Campbell	Executive Officer
Pip Davis	Principal Solicitor
Gabrielle Craig	Assistant Principal Solicitor
Kim Ly	Management Accountant

First Nations Women's Legal Program:

Dixie Link-Gordon	Senior Community Access Officer
Yasmine Khan	Community Access Officer
Gail Thorne	Community Access Officer

Community Legal Education:

Jessica Raffal	Community Legal Education Officer (on parenting leave)
Chloe Wyatt	Community Legal Education Officer (locum from October 2019)

Law Reform:

Liz Snell	Law Reform and Policy Co-ordinator
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Financial Counselling:

Tracy Konc	Financial Counsellor (October – November 2020)
Lody Stewart	Senior Financial Counsellor (from April 2021)
Kat Lane	Former Principal Solicitor, Financial Rights Legal Service (casual)

Social Worker:

Evelyn Chan	(from May 2021)
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Solicitors:

Pip Davis	Principal Solicitor
Gabrielle Craig	Assistant Principal Solicitor
Karen Mifsud	Senior Solicitor (First Nations Women's Legal Program)
Amy Power	Solicitor (First Nations Women's Legal Program)
Carolyn Jones	Senior Solicitor
Kellie McDonald	Senior Solicitor
Rishika Pai	Senior Solicitor (from October 2020)
Cecilia Lee	Solicitor (on leave until March 2021)
Rosetta Lee	Solicitor
Mari Vagg	Solicitor (until December 2020)
Jessica Hannam	Solicitor (on leave from February 2021)
Julie Howes	Solicitor (on leave September 2020 to June 2021)
Amelia Purcell	Solicitor (until January 2021)
Fern Hoang	Solicitor (until June 2021)
Hannah Muller	Solicitor (until December 2020)
Madeleine Causbrook	Solicitor (from October 2020)
Alex Vaughan	Solicitor (from February to June 2021)
Amy Schneider	Solicitor (from March 2021)
Martine Lappan	Solicitor (from March 2021)

Administrative Staff:

Daryna Ieth	Administrative Information and Referral Officer (on parenting leave from May 2021)
Madolyn Hollins	locum from April to July 2021
Nieshanka Nanthakrishnakumar	locum from December 2020
Kuny Chhor	Data and Reporting Officer

Consultants and contractors:

Chloe Wyatt	Foundation co-ordinator
Alan Wong	Stanfield IT
Kate Turner	Counsellor
RDVSA	Trauma-informed practice support
Sigrid Herring	Cultural support counsellor (FNWLP)
Daria O'Neill	Fundraising Consultant

VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

We would like to thank all our students and volunteers who give their time to help us to serve our clients. We appreciate your work.

Ruby Catsanos	Brianna Hammerschmid
Samiha Assim	Vanie Cardinio
Daria O'Neill	Tara Pentwyn-Thomas

EVENING ADVICE SERVICE VOLUNTEER SOLICITORS

Lucy Adams	Lori Middlehurst
Kirstie Barfoot	Amanda Syme
Kat Ironside	Andrea Veitch
Melinda Winning	Jennifer Crocker
Rebecca Haynes	Allysha Merrett
Lucinda Aboud	Felicity Tighe
Michele Worner	

PRO BONO PARTNERS

Individual legal practitioners and firms continue to assist our clients by giving generously of their time providing pro bono services. We value their contribution and acknowledge the difference they make to our ability to respond to unmet legal need in the community.

Colin Biggers & Paisley

Special thanks to Colin Biggers & Paisley who have provided us with a range of in-kind, pro bono, legal research on victims support and victims rights and financial support through its CBP Foundation and the generosity of its staff. The CBP Foundation aims to promote and protect the rights of women and children and has made WLSNSW one of its priority clients.

Stephen Thompson and his team provided invaluable pro bono advocacy on our behalf to negotiate a dispute resolution with a communications service provider.

Victims Support Projects with Colin Biggers & Paisley and Baker McKenzie

We continue our partnerships with Colin Biggers & Paisley and Baker McKenzie to enable their solicitors to act as WLS NSW volunteers to undertake victims support casework. This partnership has increased our capacity to represent clients in making applications.

Ashurst

Thanks very much to Ashurst for bono law reform research including on coercive control, financial abuse and culturally appropriate family court reporting.

Clayton Utz

Thanks for pro bono assistance, particularly in relation to GIPA applications.

Barristers and Solicitors

Michelle Yu	Frederick Jordan Chambers
Karen Shea	Frederick Jordan Chambers
Savitha Swami	Frederick Jordan Chambers
Louise Goodchild	Frederick Jordan Chambers
Tim Hammond	Samuel Griffith Chambers
James Leaver	Samuel Griffith Chambers
Tracey Stevens	Maurice Byers Chambers
Maria Gerace	Maurice Byers Chambers
Sandrine Alexandre-Hughes	6 St James Hall Chambers
Carolina Soto	Soto Chambers
Sarah McCarthy	PG Hely Chambers
Matthew Varley	Nine Wentworth
Heather McKinnon	Bryant McKinnon Lawyers
Belinda Li	International Social Services

WLS NSW FOUNDATION REPORT



Foundation Committee

Helen Campbell	WLS Executive Officer
Chloe Wyatt	WLS Foundation Coordinator
Klara Major	The Law Society Journal
Lee-May Saw	Barrister
Jenna Lincoln	Legal Associate
Courtney Robertson	WLS Board Representative
Melissa Marshall	Department of Communities and Justice (Until March 2021)
Janet Loughman	Retired WLS Principal Solicitor (joined September 2020)
Daria O'Neill	Fundraising Consultant (joined March 2021)
Amy Power	WLS Staff Representative (joined April 2021)
Madeleine Causbrook	WLS Staff Representative (joined April 2021)

Key achievements for the WLS NSW Foundation in the last 12 months include:

Foundation Events

Feminist Legal Perspectives Seminar Series 2020–21



Monthly professional development and networking seminars that focus on recent publications; current advocacy and reform issues; or the latest academic research relevant to a feminist legal perspective.

These seminars create awareness of WLS NSW work, build collaborative relationships with supporters and compatible community organisations, as well as raising awareness of issues affecting women.

A total of 689 people engaged with WLS by registering for one of these seminars.

The seminars all took place via Zoom as we were not able to return to in-person events at Colin Biggers & Paisley due to COVID-19.

The 2020–2021 Program:

July 29th *Between Two Countries: family law child abduction disputes across international borders*, Suzanne Christie, Barrister; Rosa Saladino, Solicitor, Hague Convention Legal Practice – 135 registrations

September 9th *The New Normal in Family Law: current inquiries, reforms and the future*, Catherine Spain, Family Law Barrister; Deena Palethorpe, NSW Young Lawyers Family Law Committee; Dr Felicity Bell, Research Fellow, UNSW Law – 135 registrations

November 11th *Exploring the Impact of Self-Representation in Family Law Proceedings Involving Allegations of Family Violence*, Miranda Kaye and Dr Jane Wangman, UTS Faculty of Law – 70 registrations

March 10th *Troll Hunting*, Ginger Gorman, Author and Journalist – 88 registrations

April 14th *How the frontline DV workforce in Australia kept connected to their clients during the pandemic*, Patricia Cullen, UNSW – 72 registrations

May 19th *Achieving Accountability: The role of restorative justice in the context of domestic and sexual violence*, Thea Deakin-Greenwood, Founder & Practice Lead, Transforming Justice Australia – 106 registrations

June 16th

How can we achieve justice for women in prison?, Gloria Larman, CEO, Women's Justice Network; Nicole Yade, Manager, Lou's Place; Carolyn Jones, LEAP Solicitor, WLS NSW – 83 registrations

We record the seminars and make them available online via Vimeo:

vimeo.com/wlsnsw

Virtual Wine Time



In December we held a virtual wine tasting fundraiser event. Supporters were invited to get together with friends in their own home and tune into the guided wine tasting via Zoom. The tasting packs, consisting of 5 wines and nibbles, were pre-ordered and delivered the day before.

There were 38 participants in 9 groups, many of whom have become regular donors in other appeals and activities.



Impact of COVID-19 PANDEMIC

We were unable to run the Bright Spark Awards for 2020. The seminar series was disrupted but where possible we delivered presentations via Zoom.

Marketing and Communications

Electronic Direct Mailing

The emailing list currently contains 1,438 active subscribers which is an increase of 210 contacts this year. In addition to regular event invites and reminders, we sent two newsletters, a Christmas appeal and an EOFY appeal.

Donor communications

We sent a personalised thank-you by post or email to every donor this year, along with a gift tote bag to major donors.

Social Media

Foundation events and appeals are promoted on WLS Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter pages with registration links included and presenters tagged to increase reach.

Fundraising

In this financial year we raised \$69,485 and incurred costs of \$16,451, generating a total income of \$61,145.

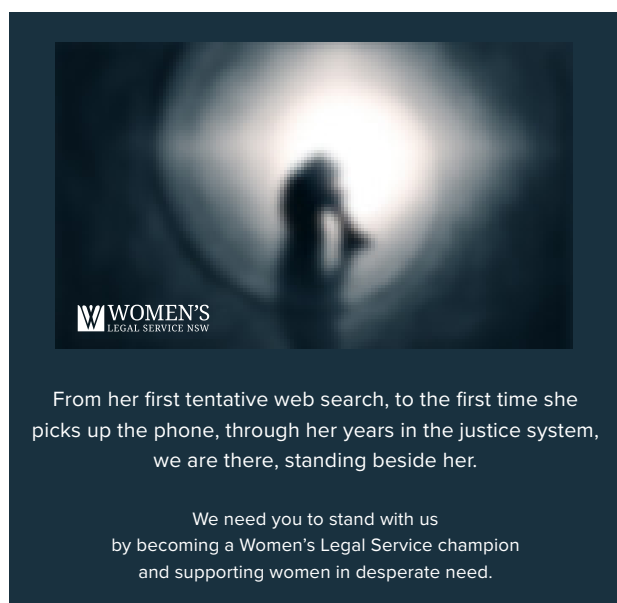
We switched from GiveNow to a new donation platform called Benojo, for several reasons. The fees are lower, and Benojo offers a one-stop-shop for event registrations, online donations and community giving campaigns, thereby retaining our supporters in one place.

Seminar Series – total \$4,865

Donaldson Law continued to sponsor the Seminar Series in 2021 providing \$3,000. Special thanks are extended to Marguerite Donaldson and Jacqueline Townsend for this partnership. The Seminar Series received \$1,865 in donations and had no expenses.

Fundraising Appeals – total \$7,944

We ran special appeals for Christmas and for the End of Financial Year. The Christmas campaign focussed on the increased demand for our services as a result of COVID -19 and the EoFY campaign focussed on raising money for our microsite project.



Community Supporters – total \$60,674

Through regular communications such as event invites, social media campaigns, newsletters and appeals, we attracted a greater number of online donors and community supporters:

Online donations and monthly givers = \$28,374

Netball NSW = \$8,053

C3 Church = \$20,000

Colin Biggers & Paisley = \$4,247

We developed community fundraising relationships with Netball NSW and the C3 Church at Carlingford, who both selected WLS NSW as charity partners for their fundraising drives. Some staff attended the Indigenous Round of the Netball NSW finals at Olympic Park.



Staff members Karen Mifsud, Pip Davis, Gail Thorne and Amy Power at the Netball final

Ways to Support Our Work

Help women in crisis to access justice: <https://hub.benojo.com/connect/org/wlsnsw/donate>

- Become a regular giver
- Make a one-off gift
- Nominate us for your workplace giving
- Attend an event
- Join our mailing list
- Follow us on Socials

TRIBUTE TO ELAINE EVANS



Elaine Evans 28.12.1936 – 26.02.2021

Elaine Evans was a trailblazer for women's legal services in Australia and the inaugural winner of the Law and Justice Foundation's Justice Medal in 1999.

Elaine played a pivotal role in shaping the establishment of women's legal services across Australia, including Indigenous women's programs within those services. Many of the projects she was involved in went on to become models for women's legal services, including;

- An outreach service that provided legal information on family law and family violence to Aboriginal women in Western NSW,
- *Quarter Way to Equal*, a report on access to legal services for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- The Macleay Valley Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Project, and
- An outreach project to Sydney's greater west, providing legal advice and assistance to areas of greatest need.

Elaine's philosophy was to target the most disadvantaged in our society. She often said that if we could make the legal system a better, easier place for Aboriginal and non-English speaking women to navigate, the system will be more accessible to all women.

Three decades later, the legacy of the contribution of people like Elaine, working at the frontlines of providing legal services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in her community, is reflected in the valuable work of women's legal services that continues every day across the country.

Her family obituary revealed that Elaine left school at 15 and returned to further her education at 40, which proved a boon to the women of NSW.

Highlights of Elaine's work at Women's Legal Resources Centre (now Women's Legal Service NSW) 1990–1999

Making legal advice accessible for disadvantaged women:

- Launched 1800 phone number for affordable calls from rural areas
- Obtained funding for a TTY line for deaf women
- Established new outreach services in women's health centres

Community Legal Education Initiatives:

- Do it yourself divorce kit
- 2SER women and violence series of radio programs
- Lesbians and the Law – A Practical Guide
- Women and law course for community workers
- Joint resources with the family court for Aboriginal and CALD women

Extending services for Aboriginal women:

- Legal education program extended to Aboriginal women
- Women out West project – working with Aboriginal women in remote communities
- Established NSW Aboriginal Women's Resources group
- Fly in fly out lawyers for the Family Violence Prevention Legal Service at Walgett

Research and advocacy projects:

- *Quarter Way to Equal* – Analysis of the challenges facing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women
- Conference presentation on Women out West
- Strategies to address subpoenas for sexual assault counselling records
- Law Society conference presentation on Quarter Way To Equal

Building the sector:

- Management Committee of Combined Community Legal Centres Group
- Supported the establishment of women's legal services in every state

Elaine was also a passionate advocate for her community in Western Sydney. Her passion for justice for all made her a very active member and supporter of the Labor Left, Board member of Parramatta Hospital (1984-88), Councillor on Parramatta City Council (1987-91), Board member on Parramatta Park Trust (2001 -11). She was a vigorous defender of Parramatta Park and an advocate for the establishment of women's refuges and shelters for homeless young people.

Her legacy endures in the work of Women's Legal Service NSW.

Helen Campbell
Executive Officer

ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION

Our work providing legal advice and representation to clients over the year has been as busy as always. It has been a difficult year for clients and services alike due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted the ways in which we were able to provide services at the start of the financial year in July 2020 until around November 2020 when we returned to some normality in service provision, and again at the end the financial year in June 2021. Its impacts continued of course beyond the period of this report and those impacts still face services, clients and staff alike as at the time of writing this report.

This year we assisted 1,853 clients, provided 2,571 legal advices, undertook 443 legal tasks and represented women in 597 cases.

Our advice lines remain in high demand with callers from across Sydney and around the State. To increase our capacity to meet demand and using some one-off COVID funding, we increased our advice line sessions this year by adding an extra three advice sessions each week. Our face to face advice clinics have also continued with full or almost full bookings each session, but COVID restrictions meant most of these appointments were by telephone advice until later in 2020 when we started to provide some face to face services again.

Demand for representation always exceeds our capacity, so we prioritise casework services for those clients who are most disadvantaged and likely to struggle navigating the legal system without legal representation.

Over the year, we have acted for clients in the Local Court, District Court, Supreme Court, NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Federal Circuit Court of Australia and the Family Court of Australia. We have acted in apprehended violence order matters, name change applications, adoption order matters, victims support matters, discrimination matters, national redress scheme matters, parenting matters, divorce matters, property settlement matters, care and protection matters, police complaints, breaches of duty of care matters, privacy matters and defamation matters.

State-wide telephone advice services

We provided state-wide telephone advice services for family law, sexual assault, domestic violence and care and protection legal advice, discrimination in employment advice, and advice for Aboriginal women through our designated First Nation's Women's Legal Contact Line.

Evening advice service

This service returned in March 2021 after being suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and we thank Collin, Biggers and Paisley for their continued support through the use of their offices.

Apprehended Domestic Violence Order duty work

We attended local courts in Western Sydney to appear for women in Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) matters and provide associated advice. During the year solicitors attended Mt Druitt, Penrith and Blacktown Local Courts on a regular basis as part of the Legal Aid NSW Domestic Violence duty scheme and at other metropolitan courts in individual matters.

Outreach advice clinics in western Sydney

We provided fortnightly face-to-face legal advice through three outreach advice clinics in Women's Health Centres in western Sydney at Liverpool, Penrith and Blacktown. We also provided a weekly outreach at Bonnie's Support Services in south west Sydney.

Our First Nations Women's Legal Program provided outreach advice clinics for Aboriginal women at various locations in Western Sydney.

Legal Assistance at Family Relationship Centres

We provided monthly advice clinics and lawyer assisted family dispute resolution in family law matters through Family Relationship Centres at Penrith and Blacktown (operated by Relationships Australia). We also represented clients in Lawyer Assisted Family Dispute Resolution at other Family Relationship Centres and in Legal Aid conferences. As a specialist women's legal service, we are able to use our expertise to represent clients in complex cases involving violence.

Legal Education and Advice in Prison (LEAP) for Women

We continued our LEAP for Women Program in the Sydney metropolitan women's prisons, providing legal advice, casework and referral services and non-legal support and casework in partnership with Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre and Western Sydney Community Legal Centre. We also assisted clients in the eight women's correctional centres across NSW via our free call number on the Corrective Services NSW Common Auto Dial List.

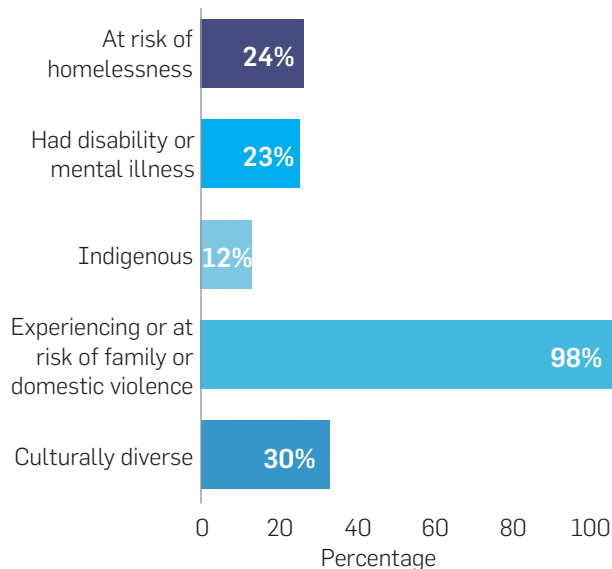
This year was particularly challenging with clients unable to have face to face contact with children and family or LEAP staff due to COVID-19 restrictions. Clients also experienced high levels of stress, with delays in accessing COVID-19 vaccinations and spending regular, lengthy periods in quarantine each time they entered or were transferred to a prison. LEAP for Women also received an increase in referrals due to the opening of the new private Clarence Correctional Centre and via referrals from the newly established Department of Communities and Justice co-located child protection caseworkers.

LEAP staff are concerned about an increase in applications for the adoption of children of women in prison and rising numbers of criminalised non-citizen women having their visas cancelled and facing permanent removal from Australia. WLS NSW does not receive additional funding to provide this service and it remains a high priority need in terms of access to justice.

Working Women's Legal Service

We continued to provide an advice and representation service in relation to discrimination on the basis of sex, pregnancy, breastfeeding, carer/family responsibilities and sexual harassment in employment. WLS NSW does not receive additional funding to provide this service and we have been greatly assisted by our volunteer solicitor Ruby Catsanos every Tuesday and Thursday. This has ensured we can continue to provide this important service.

Client characteristics



Examples of our legal casework

Advocacy with respect to the policing of domestic violence and abuse

Poor policing response

A client called our Domestic Violence Advice line in distress, having recently separated from her abusive husband of 18 years. She remained in the family home with their thirteen-year-old daughter and disabled ten-year-old son. The lengthy history of violence included strangulation attempts, physical assaults resulting in hospitalisation and permanent physical disability, use of weapons, staging of dead animals and stalking. Since separation, services to the house were cut off, random items appeared on the property and our client's car tyres were slashed. We identified the family as being at imminent and high risk of potential lethality.

We connected the family to various support services, in particular, to arrange urgent safety measures to secure the house. We also contacted the local Domestic Violence Liaison Officer (DVLO) to organise taking the woman's statement, with a view to Police taking out an urgent Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) for her and her children's protection. The DVLO reluctantly sent out a Police Officer after much convincing and responding

to questions as to why no report had been made until now, how the issue would be better resolved via WLS NSW representing our client in family law parenting orders and warnings that in the absence of “recent” physical violence (which we were trying to prevent), an ADVO was likely not possible. The Officer relayed a similar sentiment to our client, who in her desperation, said she was terrified the father would kill the kids. The Officer replied, “If he wants to kill you, he will do it anyway and an ADVO won’t stop him”.

We wrote to the Local Area Commander, outlining the inadequate police response and requesting an urgent ADVO and an investigation into criminal offences committed by the father. Our service persistently followed up the matter until a restrictive ADVO was in place and an accompanying investigation opened. The Executive Officer of the District ultimately issued an apology on behalf of the Superintendent and NSW Police and undertook to investigate all officers involved for misconduct. The family is now engaged with multiple services and doing well.

Police complaint

Our client experienced serious domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by her partner including physical and sexual assaults as well as threats of further violence. Our client made a number of reports to her local police station but police consistently refused to take any action. We wrote a letter of complaint on behalf of our client to the Local Area Commander and we were successful in getting the police to take out an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order on our client's behalf. Police also issued an apology to our client and took disciplinary action against the police officer in question.

Apprehended Domestic Violence Order matters

Severity appeal to the NSW District Court.

Our client was charged with common assault (domestic violence related) arising out of an incident involving her teenage son. Our client instructed that she had asked her son on multiple occasions to pick up his clothes from the floor and when he refused to do so, she grabbed him on the arm and flicked him once with a bra strap. Our client's husband witnessed this incident and assaulted her. An adult son called

the police and reported our client. Police attended and took a statement from our client's husband. Police failed to take our client's version of events into account, nor the extensive history of physical, verbal and emotional abuse perpetrated by the husband against our client. Her adult son also had a history of perpetrating violence against our client.

In the Local Court, our client consented to an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) for a period of two years and indicated to the court her intention to plead guilty, but that she disputed the facts alleged against her. We represented our client in making representations to police to have the facts amended and our representations were successful. We further represented our client at the sentencing hearing in the Local Court.

We sought advice from Counsel with respect to the sentencing submissions made on behalf of our client and obtained a character reference and counselling report. Unfortunately, the Court did not accept our submissions that it was open to the court to not record a conviction and discharge our client under a Community Release Order (CRO) pursuant to s 10(1)(b) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 NSW (CSPA) and instead, she was convicted and directed to enter into a CRO for a period of 12 months. The CRO required our client to continue to engage in counselling sessions for such period as her psychologist thought necessary.

In light of this, we agreed to represent the client in a severity sentence appeal in the District Court. Counsel was briefed to advise and appear. The District Court accepted Counsel's submissions and discharged the client pursuant to s 10(1)(b) of the CPA and directed her to enter into a CRO for a period of 12 months (commencing from the date the first CRO was made). Our client was very pleased with this outcome.

Defend ADVO

We represented a client in defending a private Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) application. Our client was the victim of long-term domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by her husband. Notwithstanding the fact that he was the primary aggressor, he filed a private (non-police initiated) application for an ADVO after our client retaliated during an argument. We prepared her

statement and appeared on her behalf at Bankstown Local Court, and we were successful in persuading the husband to withdraw his application. No ADVO was made against our client.

Change of name application

Our client was the victim of serious domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by her ex-partner. They had one child together. Our client separated from her ex-partner a number of years prior to approaching us for advice and had since re-partnered and had two more children to her new partner.

Our client's two youngest children had our client's surname but her eldest had his father's surname. Our client indicated that this was causing significant distress to her eldest child. We represented our client in an ex-parte application to the District Court to change the eldest child's name so it was the same as his siblings. The Application was successful and the child's name was changed.

Family law litigation

(further case examples are contained in the First Nations Women's Legal Program Team report)

Hague application

We commenced urgent family law proceedings on behalf of a young Aboriginal mother whose daughter had been retained overseas by her father. The case has had two reported judgements, known as *Lynch & Hagen* [2020] FamCA606 and *Lynch & Hagen* (No. 2) [2020] FamCA727.

The mother and the father are the parents of a child born in 2016. The mother and child are Aboriginal and the father is Norwegian. In 2018, when the child was two years of age, the parents and the child moved to Norway. In January 2020, the mother left Norway and returned to Australia, initially for a planned visit to her family, leaving the child with the father because he had refused the mother taking her to Australia. In February 2020, the mother wrote to the father stating she was not returning to Norway. The proceedings in relation to parenting are on foot in both Australia and in Norway.

The mother sought orders for the return of her daughter to Australia to live with her, and in her application, she argued:

1. the child is habitually resident in Australia, notwithstanding she is currently living in another country; and
2. in the event that the Australian Court finds that the child is not habitually resident in Australia and therefore does not have jurisdiction to hear the application, that the Family Court of Australia make a request under Article 9 of the *Hague Convention on Jurisprudence, Applicable Law Recognition Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of a Child* ("The Convention") that the Norwegian Court agree to transfer jurisdiction to the Family Court of Australia because it is better placed to determine the best interests of the child.

In relation to the second aspect of the Mother's case, it was submitted that:

- The child's circumstances are unique and unusual as the child is an Australian Aboriginal child.
- Australian common law has established that the Crown has a unique obligation to protect Aboriginal people.
- The Australian Courts have a unique and positive obligation of protection to the child to ensure her best interests are met; the Australian Courts are in a unique position to assess this, incomparable and unparalleled to any other jurisdiction; the Australian Courts are compelled to determine this case due to the Crown's unique obligation to protect Aboriginal people; and this obligation cannot or in the alternative should not be ceded to another jurisdiction.

On 24 July 2020, the Family Court of Australia delivered its first judgement and declared the child is habitually resident in Norway.

On 3 September 2020, in its second judgement, the Court determined the Australian Court (being the Family Court of Australia) is better placed to determine the best interests of the child in this particular case. Her Honour, Justice Rees in *Lynch & Hagen* (No. 2) [2020] FamCA727 stated at para [53]:

I accept that a court in Norway might have regard to the jurisprudence which has developed in Australia in relation to Aboriginal culture and societies but sitting behind that jurisprudence

is a singular body of expertise derived from generations of evidence of the experience of Aboriginal people themselves, and of anthropologists and social scientists. It is that evidence of which the Norwegian Court might not be aware and in relation to which there might not be available experts to give evidence.

This decision has set a precedent in

Australia. Pivotal to this decision is that the child is an Aboriginal child. It recognised Australian Aboriginal people's unique culture and status within Australian society.

The Australian Central Authority has transmitted the request for jurisdiction to the Norwegian Central Authority. Jurisdiction is not ceded until consent is given by the other country's authorities. The matter is now being heard in Norway's Court, where it too will assess whether the Australian Courts are better placed to determine the best interests of the child. We await the outcome of the Norwegian Court.

This case was recently discussed at the World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights.

Urgent application

We represent a client in an application for parenting orders. Our client was in a violent relationship, with violence perpetrated against both her and the children. She has young children, few supports and limited English language skills. On separation, the father withheld one of the children. While we were able to negotiate the return of the child before commencing recovery proceedings, concerns for the safety of the children and the father's ongoing threats to retain the child again, meant we agreed to represent the client in proceedings.

Urgent interim orders were made that provided for the children to live with the mother and spend supervised time with the father.

Lawyer assisted Family Dispute Resolution

Our client was subjected to domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by her ex-husband. The parties have one child from the relationship, aged 1 year. The father had not spent time with the child since July 2020 following an incident of domestic violence. We assisted our client in a shuttle legally assisted

family dispute resolution at a Family Relationship Centre. The parties reached an interim agreement allowing the father to spend supervised time with the child and for the parties to return to family dispute resolution after 6 supervised contact visits.

Children's Court matters

Unacceptable risk posed by the father

We represented an Aboriginal mother in care proceedings. We had previously represented this same client in Federal Circuit Court of Australia proceedings during which we argued that the violence perpetrated by the father against our client and in front of the children, allegations of sexual abuse by the father against the children, and the father's drug use and unstable mental health meant that there was an unacceptable risk to the children should they spend time with him. The family law matter ultimately settled with consent orders on the first day of the four day hearing.

Eighteen months later, the Department removed our client's children from her care due to concerns regarding our client's mental health and drug use.

We represented our client in the care and protection proceedings. Our client conceded that there were no realistic prospects of restoring the children to her care at this stage however our client sought no time for the father on the basis of his unacceptable risk. This issue went to a contested hearing where ultimately there was agreement by consent that the father posed an unacceptable risk to the children.

The matter was then set down for a further five day hearing on the question of time for both parents. Further orders with respect to the father's time were agreed by consent at a dispute resolution conference held on the first day of the hearing

Restoration application

Our client, a young Aboriginal mother, first made contact with WLS NSW when she was pregnant and incarcerated. Her baby was removed at birth. We maintained connection with her post release and until such time as she was ready to commence restoration proceedings and we agreed to represent her in her application.

Whilst our client ultimately conceded she was not yet in a position to have her son restored to her care, we were able to help negotiate a Care Plan that provided for liberal contact between our client and her son with only limited supervision. Hopefully this will mean that she is able to maintain a positive relationship with her son and will be in a good position to run a successful restoration application in the future.

Restoration application

We represented an Aboriginal mother whose child was removed in 2016 after concerns regarding her drug use. She filed a section 90 application seeking restoration and while the report does not recommend restoration to our client, an Aboriginal worker has now been appointed to the case to explore the cultural needs of our client and the child. In the meantime, our client has been spending an increasing amount of time with her child including overnight visits. While our client remains hopeful for restoration, she is arguing in the alternative, for an ongoing meaningful relationship with her child with significant time.

Restoration application

We act for a young Aboriginal woman seeking restoration of her 5-year-old child who has been in foster care since birth. We filed a section 90 application in January 2020. In December 2020, DCJ agreed to long term orders which transition the child out of care back to our client's care over a two year period. The matter is ongoing however given that our client's application is supported by the Department, we anticipate these will be the orders made by the Court.

National Redress Scheme applications

We act for a number of Aboriginal women in their applications to the National Redress Scheme (NRS) arising out of abuse while they were children in care in an institution. In all but one application, the NRS declined to make a compensation payment, arguing that the clients had received "relevant prior payments" (being payments from the Victims Compensation Tribunal and civil settlement sums) which meant they were ineligible for a payment under the Scheme. We agreed to act on a review of the decisions and argued that the NRS had erred in determining the civil claim monies as being "relevant

prior payments." We argued that the civil payments were for claims in negligence on the part of the State for their failure to protect, rather than for the sexual abuse itself, and a beneficial approach should be taken to the purpose and objective of the National Redress Scheme.

Unfortunately, decisions on review to date have confirmed the initial decision ie that the civil damages are a relevant prior payment.

Supreme Court adoption

We represented a mother in Supreme Court adoption proceedings relating to her children aged five and three. The children were removed from her care due to allegations of domestic violence and abuse, including an injury to one of the children. Our client was subsequently charged with assault relating to this child and incarcerated but has always maintained that the father of the children was responsible. She is a young parent, with an intellectual disability and complex trauma from violence during her childhood.

Our client opposed the adoption, but orders were made that the children be adopted by their current carers. This case highlights how quickly adoption matters are now proceeding. Within a month of removal, the children were already allocated to case management for adoption and the adoption proceedings were filed less than two years after removal and before our client had been released from custody or had the chance to address any of the risk factors.

Victims Support matters

Internal review application for grievous bodily harm

We represented our client in a successful internal review application. Our client was the victim of domestic violence and abuse by her partner over many years. The violence included a number of physical assaults as well as an attempted strangulation with an electrical cord. At first instance, Victims Services only awarded our client a Category D recognition payment of \$1,500. We argued on review that the client suffered psychological injury such that she had suffered grievous bodily harm and on review, she was

successful in obtaining a category C recognition payment of \$5,000.

External review application restitution

We filed an application in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) on behalf of a client opposing an order for restitution. The initial provisional order for restitution was sent to our client via post in 2018, to an address where she had no mailbox and could not receive mail. Our client instructed that she did not receive the provisional order for restitution and/or had no knowledge of it.

We were acting for this same client in an application to Victims Services for a recognition payment for an unrelated act of violence. Victims Services served us with the confirmation of restitution order in mid-late 2020 and advised us the matter was being referred to Revenue NSW for enforcement. We wrote to Victims Services to advise our client had not ever received the provisional order for restitution and on this basis, sought to have the provisional order properly served, the referral to Revenue NSW halted and our client afforded the opportunity to respond to the provisional order for restitution once served. Victims Services refused our request and confirmed they intended to proceed with the referral to Revenue NSW. The legislative provisions allowed for Victims Services to serve the provisional order by post and there is no obligation to prove service had actually been effected. We made an application to NCAT to dispute the order for restitution on the basis of a failure to afford our client procedural fairness. Moreover, the order for restitution was made against our client in the context where she had been the primary victim of violence. After years of suffering abuse perpetrated by her ex-partner, our client retaliated with violence as a one-off incident and was convicted for the offence, leading to this order for restitution.

Our client filed an application which explained that she'd never received the provisional order for restitution, along with police, court and medical records that showed she was the primary victim of on-going domestic violence and abuse. We also filed written submissions and asked for the matter to proceed to an urgent interim hearing seeking an order restraining Revenue NSW from proceeding with enforcement. A day prior to the interim hearing,

Victims Services agreed to file consent orders that revoked the confirmed order for restitution and subsequent referral to Revenue NSW, agreed to re-serve the provisional order for restitution and allowed our client the relevant limitation period to lodge an objection from the date she was re-served the provisional order. On this basis, the NCAT proceedings were withdrawn.

The provisional order has been re-served to our client and we have lodged her objection accordingly. We await the outcome to the objection.

Internal review application for grievous bodily harm

We represented our client in a successful internal review application. Our client was subjected to domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by her husband. There were two serious incidents of violence; one incident resulted in our client suffering amnesia and subsequent loss of memory over the period of a decade and the second incident resulted in bruising over her body from being assaulted by both her husband and her roommate. As a result of the violence, our client suffers Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. We assisted our client with her initial application for a recognition payment and she was only awarded a "Category D" payment of \$1,500. We submitted an internal review application and successfully argued the injuries amount to grievous bodily harm. In December 2020, she was awarded a "Category C" payment of \$5,000.

External review application on act of violence and injury

We represented our client in an application to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) for external review of her application for a recognition payment. Initially and on internal review, Victims Services dismissed her application for failure to prove act of violence, not believing she had been sexually assaulted at all and had simply made up the complaint to try to defend charges laid against her in an unrelated matter.

The application related to a sexual assault perpetrated against by a stranger. Immediately after the assault, our client fled the house where she was assaulted, taking the perpetrator's car to get to

hospital. She attended hospital in a drug affected and distressed state and police were called. Our client was subsequently charged with a number of offences, all of them related to an incident which took place in unrelated circumstances in the week prior to the sexual assault, except for a charge related to steal motor vehicle, being the car she took to escape the perpetrator and get to hospital.

In their decision making, Victims Services referred to minor and inconsequential inconsistencies in the statement she gave to police on the night of the assault and one month later when she reported again, and made assumptions that police would not have charged a person who took a vehicle to escape an assault. Victims Services also took the other unrelated offences into account and asserted she was an unreliable and non-credible complainant of sexual assault.

In NCAT we argued there was ample evidence to support a finding to the civil standard of sexual assault (act of violence) and that there was also ample evidence to show that she had a serious bodily injury in the nature of a psychiatric / psychological injury as either a direct result of the assault or which exacerbated a pre-existing injury. The Tribunal Member agreed and awarded our client a category B recognition payment of \$10,000.

Internal review application injury

We assisted our client with filing a victims support application for a recognition payment for domestic violence and abuse perpetrated by her ex-partner in March 2018. Victims Services dismissed her application in August 2020 as there was no supporting evidence of injury. This was because our client had difficulty attending counselling because counselling in correctional centres ceased due to COVID-19. In November 2020, we filed an application for an internal review and provided a statutory declaration affirmed by our client detailing the effect of the domestic violence. In March 2021, Victims Services awarded our client a category C payment of \$5,000.

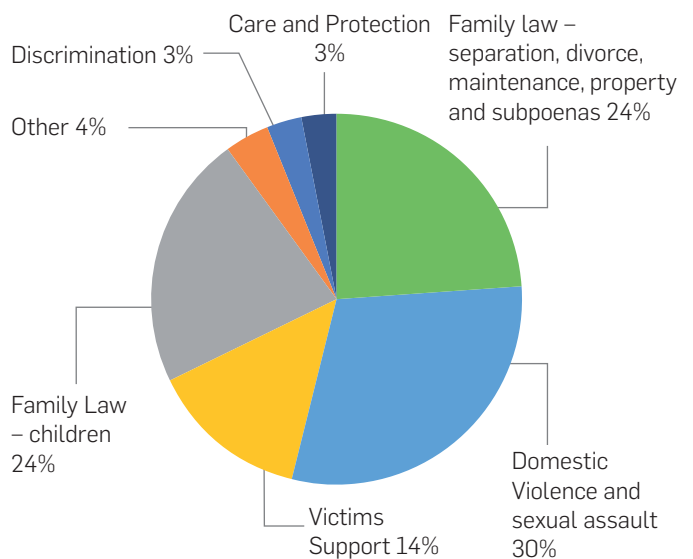
Discrimination

Sexual harassment proceedings in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT)

We represented a woman in a complaint of sexual harassment in the Anti-Discrimination NSW and, when it didn't settle at conciliation, in proceedings in NCAT.

Our client was employed as a labour hire employee in a factory and throughout her employment, she was continually sexually harassed and sexually assaulted by a number of fellow employees. Our client reported the conduct to the labour hire company and her place of employment, but they each failed to take her complaints seriously. After filing in NCAT, the parties participated in a further conciliation and the matter settled with the respondents agreeing to pay her \$60,000 for her pain and suffering.

Areas of law in which we assisted women



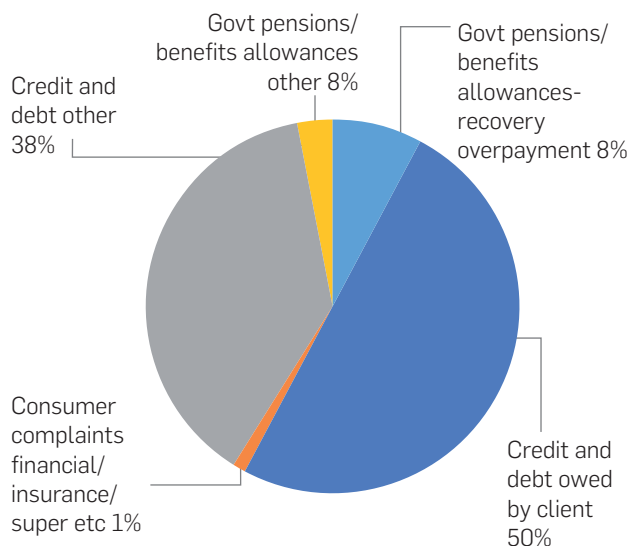
Financial counselling service

In 2020, WLS NSW was successful in obtaining funding for a financial counselling service for women affected by sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse, providing us with another opportunity to provide a holistic service to our clients. The financial counselling service is an integrated part of the legal practice and operates in a collaborative service delivery model with referrals both to the financial counsellor from solicitors and vice versa and, in some matters, involves a solicitor and the financial counsellor working alongside each other addressing different aspects of the client's legal issues. Senior solicitor Kellie McDonald is the solicitor working most closely with the financial counsellor and is appointed as a nominated person for the service.

After some initial challenges with recruitment and a period of support by Kat Lane, former Principal Solicitor at Financial Rights Legal Service, our new financial counsellor Lody Stewart commenced at WLS in April 2021. Lody is a very experienced financial counsellor and comes to us from the Financial Rights Legal Centre where she worked for many years as a financial counsellor. She has also worked as a financial counsellor at knowmore community legal centre. Lody's experience working in community legal centres and with vulnerable clients who have experienced domestic and family violence and abuse, combined with her financial counselling skills, makes her a great fit for WLS NSW and we are very excited to have her as part of the team. Lody has hit the ground running by opening a number of files for existing clients of the legal practice.

In one matter, we were successful in reducing a client's credit card debt from \$9,000 down to \$4,000. However, after agreeing to this reduction and a payment schedule, the creditor continued to contact our client about the debt and even though we were representing her, in breach of the Debt Collect Guidelines. We complained to the credit provider about this, and they agreed to waive the existing \$4,000 debt and offered our client a further \$5,000 compensation for the distress caused.

Financial Counselling



Social Worker service

Similar to other services working with women experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, WLS NSW experienced the surge of women seeking support within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase of complexity of women's situations due to its impacts. WLSNSW sought to assist clients with their intersecting legal and social support needs and applied for a grant to provide a social work service within a holistic and trauma-informed model. WLS NSW is thrilled to introduce the social work service which sits alongside the existing legal practice, First Nations Women's Legal Program and financial counselling service to assist women to access a wraparound domestic and family violence support service.

Evelyn joined WLS NSW in May 2021 and brings with her experience as a social worker within the NSW domestic and family violence sector as a crisis worker, caseworker, court advocacy worker and information and referral officer. We have spent time

developing policies and procedures for the service and addressing the issue of mandatory reporting within a legal practice. Evelyn provides social work support to women who have experienced, or are experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, with a focus on information and referral following an initial social work assessment. Within an initial social work assessment, Evelyn can discuss and provide support around the client's experience of violence; children; housing; Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders; employment and/or financial situation; immigration concerns; mental health; and drug and/or alcohol support needs. Evelyn applies an intersectional framework to her social work intervention and addresses support needs relating to women who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; CALD; have a disability; young and older; and/or LGBTIQ+. Evelyn works in partnership with the client to discuss a safety and risk assessment and create a safety plan, highlighting the client's strengths and resistance to the violence. She is able to provide short-term case-coordination support and short to medium-term casework support beyond information and referral support as required and in balancing her capacity. Evelyn is accepting internal referrals from WLS NSW caseworkers and has already provided social work advice to a number of clients and opened a few files for ongoing casework. She has provided training for the team on the types of support she can provide within the service and for clients and is excited about providing a holistic, trauma-informed service at WLSNSW to clients seeking socio-legal assistance.

FIRST NATIONS WOMEN'S LEGAL PROGRAM

Staff

Dixie Link-Gordon	Senior Community Access Officer
Yasmine Khan	Community Access Officer
Gail Thorne	Community Access Officer
Karen Mifsud	Senior Solicitor
Amy Power	Solicitor

Aboriginal Women's Consultation Network

Aunty Elsie Gordon
Aunty Bronwyn Penrith
Tina West
Anusha Duray
Monique Wiseman

Monique joined the AWCN this year. She is currently the Senior Aboriginal

Homelessness Project Office with peak body Homelessness NSW. Monique brings a wealth of knowledge and connection to communities across NSW having worked in the sector for over 10 years.



AWCN members Monique Wiseman, Tina West, Aunty Bronwyn Penrith, Anusha Duray and Aunty Elsie Gordon

Change of name to First Nations Women's Legal Program

In January 2021 the Indigenous Women's Legal Program changed its name to First Nations Women's Legal Program. A digital enhancement strategy accompanied the roll out of the new brand and look.



Summary of 2020–2021

The First Nations Women's Legal Program (FNWLP) strives to provide and maintain a comprehensive service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women alongside our colleagues within Women's Legal Service NSW (WLS).

On every rural trip, we meet with local community women and NGO service providers. Respectfulness when visiting any community across the state, caring with empathy and sharing knowledge to women and community groups is used with community legal education awareness.

The engagement of women accessing legal justice for their basic human right to be safe can more than often be a really challenging journey, where family, community and authority become the biggest barriers. Revictimisation is a genuine fear leading to isolation, separation and child removal. The First Nations team regularly engage with at least two generations of women from the same family.

The impact of traumatic experiences leads to so much disempowerment for women. Ensuring there is an appropriate service provider involved alongside WLS NSW is a priority in our casework.

Whilst working in this sector FNWLP staff have access to culturally appropriate supervision and attend training and information events throughout the year.

WLS NSW has supported our initiatives within the community to lead and partner with other groups including Domestic Violence NSW Aboriginal Steering Committee, Breaking Silent Codes for First Nations women, University of NSW Gendered Violence Research Network, and Homelessness NSW. Always our focus is on the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It is important that our ability and contribution as Aboriginal women workers is recognised for our role in eliminating violence in Australian society.

The First Nations Women's Legal Program delivers services to meet the legal needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including a focus on supporting victims of violence. We provide culturally appropriate legal advice, casework, and education. We address issues including domestic violence, family law, child protection, discrimination and victims support. We support community organisations such as Baabayn in early intervention and access to justice. We support mothers of infants at risk of removal.

We provide face to face and telephone advice at our office in Lidcombe, and at Emerton, and at Blacktown Local Court. Outreach has been provided upon request at Macarthur Gateway, Kari Out Reach, Miller Community Health, and Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Due to the impact of COVID-19, outreaches and rural visits were very limited. We continue to support clients by phone, at home and community visits, and provide court support even when the court proceedings are conducted remotely.

We have worked on maintaining connection and accessibility for our community via our social media sites Facebook, Instagram and Twitter sharing all First Nations messaging for Safety Support awareness. We use social media to promote our advice line service.

For staff, during these COVID-19 times there have been many restrictions on access to cultural supervision, which is very important to us. Fortunately, we have had some of our external supervision by phone and in the office. This has included participation

in 'understanding personal trauma stress' related to COVID-19 lockdowns, a session with Counsellor Sigrid Herring.

Issues arising in the community due to COVID-19:

Health: women not reporting sexual assaults, not being able to see a doctor, inadequate telehealth for dealing with major health issues with potentially life-threatening consequences. Women can't talk to a doctor in confidence on the phone. Not getting referrals for breast scans.

Homelessness: inappropriate temporary accommodation with shelter only being offered for two days at a time despite a large injection of extra funds being made available as part of the response to COVID-19.

Courts: Not making Aboriginal staff available despite having committed to doing so. First Nations women attending court not knowing where to go or who to talk to, not getting a just outcome.

Cultural care plans: Office of the Children's Guardian consultation regarding family is culture. Mis-identification of Aboriginal children and other identity issues, identity fraud, creates difficulty for the child. First Nations Women's Legal Program screens clients using the statutory criteria and does not mis-identify clients.

First Nations Women's Legal Advice Line

The advice line been busy with a number of women calling for advice around family law, care and protection, domestic violence, victims support, workplace and neighborhood disputes.

Court support for WLS Clients:

Online support has been provided with Family Law clients and in Care and Protection matters.

Blacktown Court: the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service has been disrupted due to COVID, but generally is provided bi-monthly.

Case Studies

The First Nations team has been working on some complex and challenging family law and child protection cases and getting some good results.

Application in Indigenous list for sibling

We commenced proceedings in the Indigenous list at the Federal Circuit Court in Sydney on behalf of a young Aboriginal woman seeking parenting orders in relation to her younger brother. Our client initially engaged with our service when she was still under the age of 18 years, however it wasn't until she became an adult that she had standing to commence proceedings.

Our client currently lives in NSW with her maternal grandparents. The mother also lives in NSW. Our client's brother (the child), lived in Western Australia with the father at the time proceedings commenced. The family had a protracted, complex history of family violence and this resulted in our client being removed from her parent's care by child welfare services when she was a child. She was restored for a brief period to her parents' care in early teenagehood. Initially, our client, along with the mother, father and her brother resided in NSW, however, when our client was restored to her parent's care, the mother and father moved with our client and her brother to WA.

Due to on-going violence and abuse in the home, our client fled from WA back to NSW to live with her maternal grandparents. The mother, father and child stayed in WA. A few years later, the mother and father's relationship ended, and the mother also fled back to NSW. The child remained with the father in WA. Our client had not seen her brother for several years because the father isolated him from all his close and extended family. In 2019, the father obtained parenting orders for the child and there was no mention in the orders about time our client could spend with and/ or communicate with her brother.

When we commenced proceedings, we filed numerous subpoenas to gather evidence about potential risks to the child in the father's care. The evidence gathered showed the child was frequently exposed to on-going violence in the father's home. We sought for the matter to be listed for urgent interim hearing.

The father opposed our client's application and raised the following:

1. The matter should be transferred to WA;
2. The matter did not meet the *Rice v Asplund* threshold; and
3. There was no risk to the child in the father's care.

We argued that the issue of unacceptable risk should be determined and sought orders for the child to live with our client in NSW and for the matter to remain in the Indigenous list in Sydney.

At the interim hearing in late 2020, the Court found an unacceptable risk to the child in the father's care. However, the Court also expressed concern that the child would be exposed to risk should he be ordered to live somewhere unfamiliar to him and with a person with whom he'd had limited contact with for several years. The child had also expressed strong views against moving to NSW.

Orders were made for the child to come to NSW for a four week period over the Christmas break. The matter was listed for further interim hearing and parties were ordered to participate in a child inclusive conference. At the second hearing, and on the basis of further evidence before the court, the Court accepted that the child would be at an unacceptable risk if he were to live with the father and he was ordered to live with our client in NSW on an interim basis.

Our client was incredibly pleased with this outcome. Our client spent the Christmas period re-establishing her relationship with her brother. They've enjoyed bike riding, canoeing, boating and playing in the park and backyard together.

The matter will remain in NSW and an Independent Children's Lawyer has been appointed.

Since then, we have negotiated further orders to restrict communications between the child and the father given the findings of the court that the way in which the father was communicating with the child was disruptive to the child's sense of security. The father also perpetrated recent acts of violence against our client, resulting in police

applying for an Apprehended Violence Order for our client's protection. At a recent further interim hearing, we obtained orders for parental responsibility and we were also able to obtain orders giving authority for our client can make day-to-day decisions for the child including medical and educational decisions and orders that provide for the father to only have limited supervised communication with the child.

Recovery orders in Indigenous list

We acted in a matter where our client, a First Nations woman, is mother to two children with different fathers. Both children were withheld from the mother while spending time with their respective fathers in school holidays. The fathers alleged the mother was using drugs and that the mother was unable to properly care for the children.

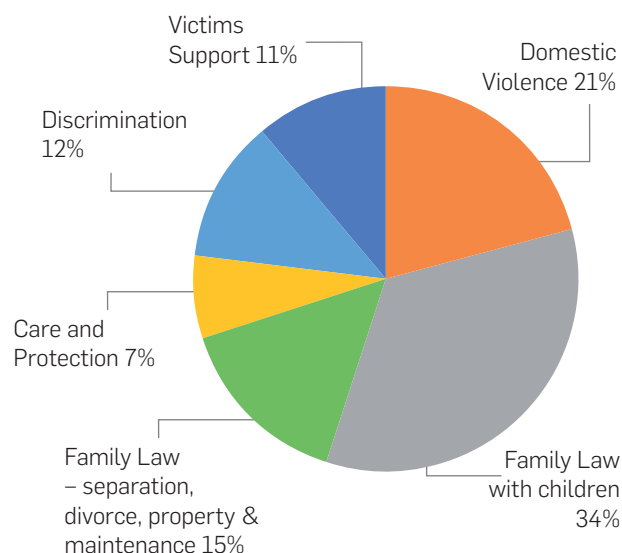
We commenced recovery proceedings for one child and obtained interim orders for time with the mother. Shortly after those orders were made, the father gave the care of the child to the child's maternal aunt and the mother spent time with the child under her supervision.

The father of the other child filed for orders that the child live with him on a permanent basis. While there were interim orders for the mother and maternal aunt to spend time with the child, the father did not facilitate the time consistently, and failed to allow the child to spend time with the maternal family. A number of interim applications were filed by the maternal aunt and the mother to enforce the time with the mother and maternal aunt.

There were a number of mediations over the course of the proceedings, but a settlement was unable to be reached.

The matters were ultimately listed for a final hearing. A week before the hearing, the second child was given into the care of the maternal aunt. On the day of the hearing there were complex negotiations between the mother, maternal aunt and the two fathers, together with an Independent Children's Lawyer, resulting in consent orders that the two children live with the maternal aunt with the children spending time with their mother and respective fathers in a way which maximised the time the children spent together.

Legal issues



Regional Visits:

It was good to go back after a long year of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

Upper Mid North Coast Rural Trip February 2021

- Grafton, Nambucca Heads, Bowraville and Macksville (Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl nations)

Our first meeting was with the Clarence River Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Service, where we were welcomed by Nav (manager), Kelly (residential worker) and Jade (outreach worker). We had a discussion about coercive abuse, talking about their experiences with clients coming through to the service in particular with First Nations women. In relation to coercive and controlling behaviour from perpetrators of domestic and family violence, how they aim to respond as a service to support First Nations women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence from a rural perspective in a culturally supportive manner.

In particular the importance of recognising the various types of spiritual abuse that is often overlooked as a lived experience of many of their clients. Of equal importance is the need for services to

recognise the cultural imperatives of our clients and respond accordingly. One such important aspect is to recognise, respect and acknowledge the integral link for clients to "Country" and support clients through policy, procedure and action in ensuring that if denied or minimised through practice can also be seen as Spiritual abuse by the "System". The best way to explain the spiritual impact to non-First Nations people is "being off Country is like having extreme home sickness" the impact of this very deep sense of yearning to be with one's Country while recovering from the trauma of domestic and family violence is a factor in the client's recovery process, when off Country.

- **Gurehlgam Corporation – Clarence Valley Specialist Homelessness Service**

Sharon is the specialist homelessness worker at Gurehlgam. Sharon works collaboratively with Clarence Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Service assisting Aboriginal women to secure safe and sustainable housing. The service provides small amount of brokerage depending on the woman's needs. It delivers medium term case managed support to assist in securing and maintaining their tenancies.

- **Nambucca Heads**

At Ngurrula Aboriginal Corporation Family Safety Services, we met with Kim Jarrett (Support Services Officer). Kim supports Aboriginal women who are victims of domestic and family abuse. Kim facilitates a women's behavioural change program. The program encourages the women to be empowered and to raise awareness of domestic family violence.

- **Bowraville**

At Mimi Aboriginal Corporation we met Aunty Ruth Walker and manager Patricia Walker.

We have visited Mimi on our past trips. It was nice to drop by to announce our new name change also to showcase our new resources. Mimi is an information hub to the community and local services providers i.e., Interrelate, New Horizons and Legal Aid.

- **Macksville**

At Lifetime Connect – Family Support Services we met the new coordinator Liz Yazbec and her colleagues. Lifetime Connect Family Support is

a community-based service for parents and kids; including Shark Cage – creating safe boundaries, and learning to recognise unhealthy relationships and acknowledging boundary violations; Triple P – The Positive Parenting Program. It aims to prevent problems in the family, school, and community before they arise, and treat behavioural and emotional problems in children and teenagers.

Love Bites, speak out 4 Kids and Bringing Up Great Kids, and Court Support Advocacy.

Michelle Hines (Aboriginal DV Specialist/Family Worker Family Support Services) attends Macksville court to provide support and assistance to women.

Lower Mid North Coast Rural Trip February 2021

- **Kempsey, Taree & Forster (Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti, Worimi and Biripi nations)**

It's always nice to visit the staff at Many Rivers Family Violence Prevention Service, especially catching up with the women's group. We spent a few hours yarning with the women. We yarned about coercive control and their understanding of it through an Aboriginal women's lens. The women didn't know the meaning of "coercive control" and spiritual abuse until we broke it down with examples of controlling behaviour. They strongly voiced their opinions around language barriers and for the terminology to be more simplified when discussing and addressing issues with Aboriginal peoples around such matters.

These are some of the issues raised by the group when a woman reports a domestic violence incident to police:

- They felt not believed by the officer when making the report
- Police are encouraging women to not take out AVOs due to the perpetrator's past and present convictions
- Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee meetings (PACC) are closed meetings, only certain people in the community can attend
- Police need more cultural awareness, be responsive to calls and be more accountable.

Alison Morris who facilitates the group would like us to come back to deliver a workshop to the women.



Gail, Kirsten, Belinda and Dixie at Biripi

Also, our resources were popular and more were requested.

- **Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre**

We met with Kirsten (practice manager) and Belinda (social wellbeing worker) and the meeting went well. They were keen for our service to go back do workshop with women in their community.

- **Forster/Tuncurry**

At Tobwabba Aboriginal Medical Service (Social Wellbeing Unit), we had a meeting with Lena, Stephanie, and Marcus Rowsell. We talked about our program and showcased our resources. Their program is to reduce the incidence and impact of family violence in the Aboriginal community through the implementation of the Aboriginal Family Health Strategy, which delivers a mix of individual and family support focused activities, initial crisis support, advocacy and referral to other services and broader community development and education strategies, with a focus on prevention and early intervention.

Far North Coast Rural Trip March 2021

The majority of time we spent on the Far North Coast it was pouring down rain. Despite the poor weather, we met with a lot of women and support services.

- **Tabulam – Bundjalung & Widjabal nations**

Our first visit was Tabulam and Jubullum's Aboriginal Village. Tabulam is a quiet rural town, population of 470, 48kms north of Casino. Tabulam has very limited services for community most of the locals would



Gail and Dixie with staff at the Aboriginal Medical Service Forster

travel to Casino to access services. Then we drove out to Jubullum Aboriginal Village and left a few of our information packs at the Aboriginal Lands Council.

Casino

At Casino Momentum Collective neighbourhood centre we met Irene Green (Aboriginal Domestic Violence Worker) and Stacey Close (staying home safe worker). They provide a service assisting women, aged 16 years and over, with or without children, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to domestic and family violence.

They offer support for short and long-term needs which includes crisis accommodation in Women and Children's Refuges and safe rooms across Northern NSW and support to stay safe at home. They loved our information and resource packs.

- **Bulgarr Nagru Aboriginal Medical Centre**

We briefly introduced ourselves to Ruth Powis (social worker) at Bulgarr Nagru and provided our resources. Ruth was pleased to hear about our service.

- **Buyinbin Aboriginal Corporation**

At Buyinbin we met with Suzanne Roberts and briefly chatted Suzanne and left our flyers and resources. Buyinbin is an information hub for the community and also provides affordable housing to Aboriginal community.

- **Lismore – Bundjalung & Widjabal nations**

At Lismore Base Hospital we met Lillian Khan (Aboriginal Liaison Worker). Lillian provides education



Gail and Yasmine with members of the Momentum Collective

and support to Aboriginal patients and their families/ carers communities and other organisations. Lillian was impressed with our resources. We left a few of our resources and information packs with her.

- **Women Up North**

Bulgama Bihyn Aboriginal Women's & Children Refuge and Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service. Women Up North provides social transitional housing throughout Northern Rivers to assist women and their children who have experienced family violence and abuse. Jillian Knight – Smith (Manager/Executive Officer) said since COVID-19 there had been zero rentals due to people migrating from Melbourne and Sydney purchasing properties. It made it extremely hard to provide a service to their clients around their housing needs. Bulgama Bihyn Aboriginal Women's Refuge has a handful of Aboriginal women and also staffed by Aboriginal women. They work closely with Women Up North.

At Bugalma Bihyn, which means "Safe Place" we met Bec Tehner (Team Leader) and Portia Walker-Fernando (caseworker). They are the new workers at Bugalma Bihyn and were happy to meet with us.

Peta Walker (Aboriginal specialist worker) with WDVCS is also new to her role. Peta provides support at Casino, Ballina, Lismore, Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads courts.

Some concerning issues raised by workers were around police responding to domestic violence



Gail and Yasmine with the staff at Women Up North Housing

incidents. Police need more training around dealing and responding with women who are victims of domestic violence. Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs) are not building bridges with community and Police. Racism is also being experienced when applying for rentals through local real estates. We promoted Ask LOIS, and our resources were popular on the day.

- **Bunjum Aboriginal Corporation**

Kylie Toomey above from Momentum Collective works closely with Aunty Nancy Walke at Bunjum Aboriginal Corporation. The programs and services Bunjum provides to the community include; Bunjum social housing , Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare and Family Centre, Changing Ways – family relationships counselling , and Family Liaison Officers for Work Development Orders. Other programs they provide to community are Culture matters, Early Links and Ability Links.

- **Jali Aboriginal Lands Council**

We dropped by Jali Aboriginal Lands Council and left our resources at reception.

New England rural trip June 2021

- **Tingha Family Centre Multi Purpose Centre**

We spoke with Kaz the Nurse manager about our service and what we provide. Kaz was very grateful and said she will put our resources in the waiting room.



Strong Aboriginal Women banner Gunnedah

- **Pathfinders Inverell**

We spoke with 2 workers regarding our service they said they will email our flyer around to all their staff and put our resources in their waiting room.

- **Armajun Aboriginal Health Service Glenn Innes**

We spoke with the Aboriginal Health worker some of the issues are lack of services also spoke about our resources and what we can provide and also assist with.

- **Armidale**

At Armajun Aboriginal Health Service we met with a client and also spoke with staff regarding our service and dropped off our resources.

At Armidale Neighbourhood Centre we spoke with the receptionist and dropped off our resources.

We popped into North and North West Community Legal Centre and spoke with the acting principal solicitor.

- **Gunnedah**

We presented a Strong Aboriginal Women workshop with the Education Centre Against Violence.

We attended Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council with around 15 women being community workers and few grandmothers who had care of grand children. Some of the issues discussed included domestic violence, family law, issues with police response to domestic violence and child sexual assault. We also discussed coercive control and some of the services in Gunnedah.

Legal Information and Training Event Forbes April 2021

We participated in a two day community education event in Forbes, hosted by the local Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service, Binaal Billa. Other participating service providers were Wirringa-Baiya



Amy Power, Gail Thorne and Karen Mifsud present at Forbes

Aboriginal Women's Legal Service, Western NSW Community Legal Centre, Legal Aid and Revenue NSW. The event was attended by nearly thirty people. We presented information about family law. Other sessions covered child protection and victims support.

Outreach

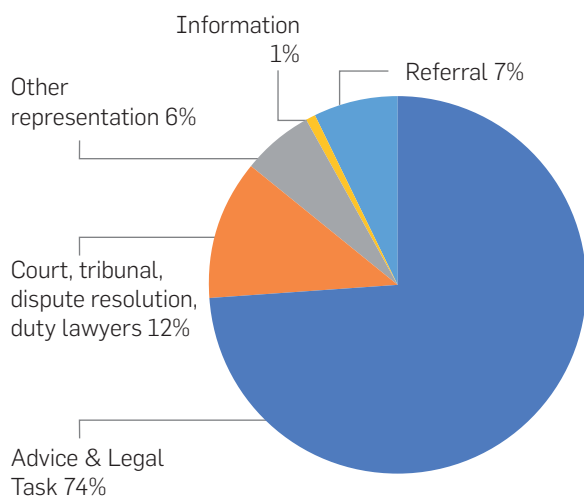
BaaBayn Aboriginal Corporation

Baabayn (Ancestral Woman) was founded by five Aboriginal elders from Western Sydney. Their purpose is to connect with individuals and families in a welcoming environment, providing them supports and links to services that help them heal from the past and nurture their sense of confidence and pride in the future. The group has strong knowledge of the

community and has built contacts within and outside the community.

We frequently work with Baabayn throughout the year and provide a regular outreach service. In addition we have contributed to a range of special events and collaborations.

Client services



Conferences and Events

NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC has been put back to November where we will celebrate the NAIDOC women's lunch with the 2021 theme Heal Country!. In our commitment to safety of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women our celebration will commence on the start of 16 Days of Activism of Gender based Violence.

We attended Ochre Ribbon Day at Wirringa-Baiya on 19 February 2021.

Breaking Silent Codes Brisbane March 2021

Dixie Link-Gordon attended the Breaking Silent Codes Forum in Brisbane. The Breaking Silent Codes project originated in August 2018 when the UNSW Arts and Social Science School, Women's Legal Service NSW and the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence sponsored and hosted a unique forum of 42 Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Pacific Islander women. The Brisbane Forum supported women as they exchanged the ways in which community, religion, authority and family creates silences around sexual assault and family violence. There are many injustices



experienced by Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Pacific Islander communities. For a long time, it has seemed all other matters of injustice are more important than the sexual and family violence in communities. Women experience this as a silencing of issues which are important to their spiritual and physical wellbeing. The Breaking Silent Codes project's book and website www.breakingsilentcodes.com.au/showcases over 40 women's stories accompanied by the powerful and captivating portraits taken during the forum by human rights photographer Belinda Mason. The project is the beginning of a First Nations women's movement across Australia and the Pacific. It was initiated by Dixie Link-Gordon.



Dixie with participants at the Breaking Silent Codes Forum.

Meetings and consultations

Online Meetings:

- Domestic Violence NSW Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee
- Department of Communities and Justice Bail Act Monitoring Group
- Community Legal Centres NSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program
- Family is Culture Report – Cultural Working group
- City of Sydney Inner City Domestic and Family Violence Interagency
- University of Technology Sydney International Women's Day Panel



Dixie Link-Gordon with members of the Domestic Violence NSW Steering Committee

Out of Office Meetings:

- Homeless NSW – Breaking Silent Codes
- Visit to Aboriginal Health women's Group
- Child protection conference

Law Reform

We contributed to the WLS NSW submission to the Inquiry Into High Level Of First Nations People In Custody And Oversight And Review Of Deaths In Custody in September 2020.

Gail, Yasmine and Carolyn gave evidence to the Parliamentary Inquiry emphasising the need to consider the circumstances for Aboriginal women.



Gail, Dixie, Yasmine and Senior Solicitor Carolyn Jones at Parliament to give evidence

We participated in consultations and presented evidence to Parliament in the Inquiry into coercive control.

We hosted a meeting with the Disability Discrimination Royal Commission in our office.

ADVOCACY FOR CHANGES TO LAW AND LEGAL PROCESSES

Law Reform Highlights 2020–2021

Why we need a proper consultation on responding to coercive controlling violence and abuse

Coercive and controlling violence and abuse is harmful and unacceptable and is endemic in so many relationships. It is important that we all get better at identifying and responding to this abuse across all legal and social support systems – sexual violence, domestic and family violence, family law, care and protection, housing, victims support, immigration, income support.

Over the past year we have undertaken extensive research on the issue of whether or not to further criminalise coercive controlling violence and abuse in NSW.

Given our extensive experience over more than a decade of working with criminalised women whose criminalisation stems from being misidentified as the primary/predominant aggressor we are committed to raising and addressing unintended consequences of any reform.

We reached out to colleagues from Women's Aid UK and Rights of Women UK and Professor Sandra Walklate to learn more about the experience in the UK where legislation to criminalise domestic abuse was introduced in 2015. We also reached out to Scottish Women's Aid, Children 1st and domestic abuse prosecutors and police in Scotland. Legislation to criminalise domestic abuse was passed in Scotland in February 2018 and took effect from 1 April 2019.

Scotland's legislation is described as "gold standard". It is our view that Scotland also deserves that descriptor for their extensive consultation process including with NGOs and victim-survivors (over years) and their comprehensive implementation plan. Work on cultural change relating to policing of domestic abuse commenced years before the consultation process started and they seem to have excellent checks and balances in responding to domestic abuse within police and also between police and prosecutors.

The focus of our advocacy to date has been on the need for a comprehensive consultation process. The context in Scotland is very different to NSW. Extensive consultation, including with First Nations women

and communities, women with disability, refugee and migrant women and communities, LGBTIQ+ communities, criminalised women and victim-survivors and their advocates is crucial in NSW.

As part of our advocacy about the need for extensive consultation we published an opinion piece: *Why we need a thorough consultation process on how to effectively address coercive controlling violence*.

We participated in the NSW Joint Select Committee Inquiry on Coercive Control and appeared before the Committee to give evidence. We advocated for the need for community education and a common language that people can understand, including through introducing a definition of domestic and family abuse in our Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) legislation.

We expressed fear that further criminalisation is viewed as the panacea to a system which is currently working in ways that fall well short of how it could and should be working. We fear adding new law to a system which needs significant reform will not result in the change we all so desperately want to see. We acknowledge that universally the women with whom we work are seeking a better policing response to sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse. We called for further consultation.

While this consultation takes place, we call for urgent action with a focus on:

- cultural reform in the policing of sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse and an accountability framework to address systematic racism. There needs to be greater transparency through regular independent auditing of policing of sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse. Regular audits can highlight gaps in police responses and identify steps that will be taken to improve policing and ultimately the safety of the survivors of such abuse. Reflective practices and commitment to ongoing improvement helps build community confidence and trust in police.
- immediate injection of significant additional funds to properly respond to sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse – for specialist sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse services and other specialist services, specialist legal services, for the broader social support services

system; as well as for primary prevention to stop sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse at the start

- common language and understanding of sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse (starting with a definition in our AVO legislation)

We have also been advocating that the lapsed Domestic Violence Reforms Consultation Group be re-established to discuss coercive controlling violence and abuse. This group includes a range of government agencies, NGOs and legal bodies working in the area of sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse.

The case for increased funding of specialist women's legal services

Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) this year has focused on raising the profile of the importance of specialist women's legal services.

The managers of women's legal services across Australia jointly wrote to the Chair of the House of Representatives Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence outlining the need to properly fund specialist women's legal services.

WLSA also secured the pro-bono services of Jim Stanford, Director of the Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute, to undertake a national costing model which found Women's Legal Services across Australia need an additional \$25 million a year to help those currently at risk of violence.

Changes to Victims Support Scheme

We have continued to be concerned and greatly disappointed by the Commissioner of Victims Rights focus on efficiency at the expense of a victim-survivor centric and trauma informed response to victim-survivors of crime in NSW.

A review of changes to Victims Support, including survivors being forced to collect their own evidence to support their Victims Support claim within a limited timeframe, was conducted by Victims Services in March 2021. We made a submission to this review.

At the time of the changes, the Department of Communities and Justice secretary, Michael Coutts-Trotter acknowledged "the change is not broadly supported" and "we will work with various voices in



Women's Legal service staff at the Women's March 4 Justice Rally 15 March 2021

the sector to undertake a review of this change six months down the line and if it is creating the kind of problems people fear, we will be open about it."

Despite repeated requests, submissions to the review as well as the review report have not been published. Non-Government organisations have continued to raise concerns with the Attorney General's office and the Commissioner of Victims Rights.

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

We have been engaging with the Disability Royal Commission in response to a number of Issues papers.

In our submission focused on the experience of First Nations People with Disability, we acknowledge First Nations peoples' experiences of structural violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation perpetrated by State actors through harmful and racist Government policies and practices since invasion.

This, in combination with further harmful Government action, inaction or insufficient action, has resulted in impairment for many First Nations peoples.

The trauma often manifests as a severe psychosocial disability which impacts on every aspect of a person's life and on their family's life, including across generations.

We argue Governments must be held accountable and also responsible for reparations and healing.

Improving protections for domestic violence survivors renting in NSW

As of 11 December 2020, the list of 'competent persons' who can provide a declaration as evidence of domestic violence to support a victim-survivor to end their tenancy immediately in circumstances of domestic violence in NSW has been expanded to include:

- a broader range of health practitioners;
- registered social workers;
- an employee of a government agency that provides child welfare services;
- an employee of a non-government agency receiving government funding to provide services relating to:
 - domestic violence or sexual assault,
 - refuge or emergency accommodation,
- a counsellor approved under the Victims Support Scheme;
- a person prescribed by future regulations

These reforms occurred as a result of the collective advocacy of many, including victim-survivors, Women's Legal Service NSW, the Tenants' Union of NSW and Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Services, homelessness peaks, the sexual and domestic violence sector, health peaks, disability peaks and community legal centres.

We will continue to work with the Government to advocate for a broader range of 'competent persons', including for First Nations communities, people with disability, refugee and migrant communities, LGBTIQ+ communities and regional, rural and remote communities.

Spotlight on policing of sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse

This year there have been several significant opportunities to advocate for improvements to the policing of sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse in NSW.

The coercive control inquiry is one example, as discussed above.

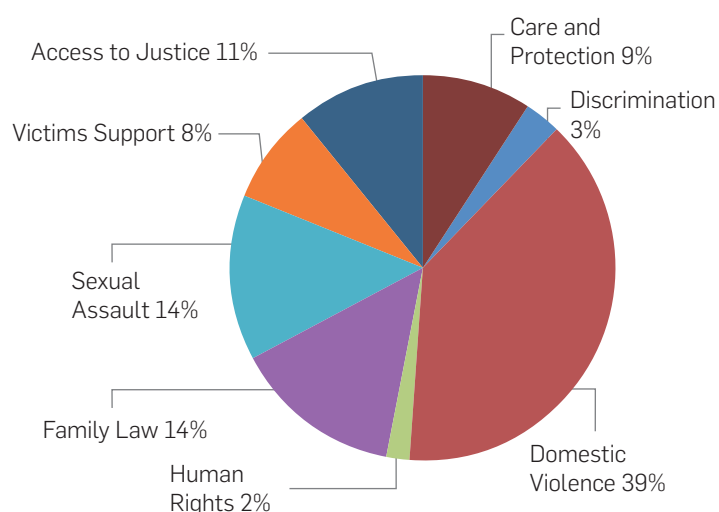
The findings of the coronial inquest into the deaths of Jack and Jennifer Edwards were published on 7 April 2021 and highlight systemic failings including by police. The coroner recommended police consider implementing an annual audit process of compliance with Domestic Violence Standard Operating Procedures and "dip-sampling" (regular random audits of police matters relating to sexual, domestic and family violence) in each police area command and publish the results. The coroner also recommended police undertake annual and comprehensive domestic violence training, including training about Domestic Violence Standard Operating Procedures. Liz Snell was interviewed by Damien Carrick from the Law Report about the coronial inquest findings. We have continued to advocate the importance of independent auditing of policing of sexual, domestic and family violence, noting that police reflecting on their practice and committing to make improvements when required increases victim-survivors' safety and helps to build public confidence and trust in police.

We also highlighted the important role of policing of sexual, domestic and family violence in our meeting with the Disability Royal Commission in response to the Issue Paper on the experiences of people with disability of domestic violence and abuse in the home. We discussed the experience of First Nations women of systemic racism within police, the prevalence of misidentification of the predominant aggressor and person most in need of protection which often leads to the criminalisation of women – and the need for further work to be done to address this issue.

We welcomed Assistant Commissioner Leanne McCusker to her new role as NSW Police Force Domestic Violence Corporate Spokesperson. We meet quarterly with AC McCusker and the NSW Police Force Domestic and Family Violence Team for discussions about improving police response to sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse.

We are also engaging with the Audit Office of NSW review on police responses to domestic and family violence. The Audit Office report is expected to be tabled in 2022.

Law Reform issues



Submissions and Hearings

- Submission to Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in response to a Discussion Paper: A Housing Strategy for NSW
- Submission to Department of Communities and Justice in response to domestic and family violence and animal abuse Consultation Paper
- Submission to House of Representatives Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence
- Contributed to Women's Legal Services Australia's Submission to House of Representatives Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence
- Contributed to NSW Women's Alliance Submission to House of Representatives Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence
- Submission to NSW Joint Select Committee: Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020
- Submission to NSW Select Committee: Inquiry into the high levels of First Nations People in custody and oversight and review of deaths in custody
- Submission to NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety: Assault on members of the NSW Police Force
- Feedback to the Department of Customer Service in response to new 'competent person' form relating to ending a tenancy early in circumstances of DV
- Submission to Independent Reviewer: Second Anniversary Review of the National Redress Scheme
- Contributed to Australia's 2020 Universal Periodic Review – NGO Coalition Fact Sheet: Gender and Human Rights in Australia
- Submission to Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Response to the experience of First Nations People with Disability in Australia Issues Paper
- Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People inquiry into the child protection and social services system
- Kellie McDonald gave evidence at a hearing before the NSW Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020
- Supplementary submission in response to Questions on Notice – Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020
- Women's Legal Services Australia's submission in response to the National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems
- Contributed to Australia's Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) NGO follow up report
- Submission to the Department of Communities and Justice in response to the Consultation Paper: Framework to prevent and respond to children with problematic and harmful sexual behaviours: Referral pathways into therapeutic treatment for children in contact with criminal justice systems: NSW and Victoria
- Liz Snell appeared before the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee on behalf of Women's Legal Services Australia to give evidence about the family courts merger Bill

- Women's Legal Services Australia supplementary submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee in response to the family courts merger Bill
- Letters to the NSW Attorney General, Minister of Police, Commissioner of Police and Commissioner of Victims Rights about ongoing concerns about the NSW Victims Support Scheme
- Submission to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice Exposure Draft of the Crimes Legislation (Offences Against Pregnant Women) Bill 2020
- Submission to Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control: Inquiry into coercive control in domestic relationships
- Philippa Davis, Dixie Link-Gordon and Liz Snell gave evidence at a hearing before the NSW Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control: Inquiry into coercive control in domestic relationships
- Submission to Victims Services Review of Victims Services changes implemented from 1 July 2020
- We supported advocacy opposing the repeal of responsible lending laws
- Submission in response to the Disability Royal Commission Issues paper on abuse in the home
- Women's Legal Services Australia submission in response to the Review of direct cross-examination ban – Family Law Act 1975
- Contributed to Women's Legal Services Australia submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Family Law Amendment (Federal Family Violence Orders) Bill 2021
- Submission to Department of Communities and Justice in response to Review of the Model Defamation Provisions
- Dixie Link-Gordon and Carolyn Jones gave evidence before the Joint NSW Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People in their Inquiry into Support for Children of Imprisoned Parents in NSW
- Co-ordinated the NGO Joint response to the Department of Communities Services consultation

on Court Appointed Questions to implement the ban on direct cross-examination in domestic violence offence and AVO related proceedings

Consultations and meetings

Some of the consultations and meetings we participated in outside of our regular committee work include:

- Meetings with the Chief Justice of the Family Court and Chief Judge of the Federal Circuit Court



Liz Snell, Dixie Link-Gordon and Pip Davis at Parliament House to give evidence to the Inquiry Into Coercive Control

and court staff about the COVID-19 list and other initiatives responding to family violence including the Lighthouse Project (risk screening, triage and case management) and Evatt List for high risk matters (pilot includes Parramatta)

- Meetings of the sub-committee of the Family Law Committee working on Best Practice Principles for working with clients experiencing domestic and family violence
- Meeting with Rosalind Croucher AM, President, Australian Human Rights Commission regarding review of anti-discrimination legislation
- Meetings with representatives from the Disability Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability to discuss issues impacting on First Nations people with disability; and abuse in the home
- Consultation with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of

People with Disability in relation to culturally and linguistically diverse women's experience of domestic and family violence

- Roundtable discussions about the implementation of the Family is Culture Report hosted by David Shoebridge MLC
- Meeting with the Medical Council of NSW to discuss sexual, domestic and family violence
- Meeting with NSW Health about their Integrated 24 Hour Domestic and Family Violence Crisis Response
- Meeting with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice to discuss the issue of arrest of domestic violence complainants
- Meeting with the NSW Bar Association about issues arising during COVID-19
- Participated in Telstra's Domestic and Family Violence Forum
- Meeting with the Australian Centre for Disability Law about their domestic and family violence project
- ANROWS and Department of Social Services Advisory Group meetings about technology facilitated abuse
- Meeting with Chief Inspector Marco Carlon of the NSW Police Force to discuss free access to vetted COPS reports for the purpose of Victim Support
- Meeting with Dr Hugh McDermott MP, Chair, NSW State Party Parliamentary Labor Party Legal Affairs Committee
- Regular meetings with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and representatives of the sexual, domestic and family violence sector
- Meeting with Patricia Cullen from UNSW as part of a research project about COVID-19 and sexual, domestic and family violence
- Meeting with the NSW Law Reform Commission about their Open Justice review and NSW Law Reform Commission Open Justice review roundtable focused on vulnerable people and victim-survivors and follow up discussions
- Meetings with Ms Trish Doyle MP in her capacity as Shadow Minister for Women, Shadow Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault and/or her advisors
- Meeting with Abigail Boyd MLC
- Meeting with the NSW Police Force Domestic and Family Violence team to discuss coercive control
- Meeting with Community Legal Centres NSW and the Audit Office of NSW about the provision of health services in custodial settings in NSW
- A range of meetings and roundtables about coercive control, including with international colleagues as well as numerous meetings with colleagues in Australia
- Meeting with the Independent Reviewer, National Redress Scheme, to discuss concerns about the National Redress Scheme
- Meeting with the Attorney General, the Hon Mark Speakman SC MP, along with representatives from Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre and Community Legal Centres NSW to discuss changes to Victims Support and the upcoming review of the Victims Rights and Support Act
- Meeting with Kate Thomas who is undertaking a PhD in domestic violence protection orders and assessing risk
- Meetings with the Audit Office of NSW to discuss possible focus for an audit relating to domestic and family abuse with follow up meetings in relation to the review of police responses to sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse
- Meetings facilitated by the Department of Communities and Justice focused on improving Apprehended Domestic Violence Order 6
- Solicitors completed an Australian Institute of Family Studies survey about non-compliance with parenting orders
- Stakeholder meeting with domestic and family violence services and academics leading research into the impact of COVID-19
- Meetings with NSW stakeholders about the need for reform to the response to sexual violence

- NSW and National Lighthouse Project stakeholders meeting
- Meetings with the NSW Police Force Domestic Violence Corporate Spokesperson, Assistant Commissioner Leanne McCusker and the Domestic and Family Violence Team, NSW Police Force
- Meeting of Women's Legal Services Australia representatives and the Attorney-General's Department to discuss the Family Law Amendment (Federal Family Violence Orders) Bill 2021
- Meetings with Joanne Yates, Advisor to NSW Attorney General and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence about access to vetted COPS reports in Victims Support claims, detrimental impact of changes to Victims Support on victim-survivors, coercive control
- Meeting with Redfern Legal Centre to discuss our work with police in response to sexual, domestic and family violence and abuse
- Meeting with then Detective Superintendent Stacey Maloney, Commander Sex Crimes and Child Abuse Squad to discuss police response to sexual violence and abuse
- Responded to the Survey about the Evaluation of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022
- We joined NGO organisations from the Victims of Crime Interagency at a meeting with the advisors for NSW Attorney General and Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault to discuss the need for consultative mechanisms with Commissioner Victims Rights and NGOs and detrimental impact of changes to Victims Support implemented since 1 July 2020
- Responded to the Survey seeking feedback about improving the family courts' website
- Meeting with the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BoCSaR) to provide input into their research project focussed on sexual violence
- Participated in the National Roundtable on Family Violence: Awareness, Education and Training for the legal profession facilitated by the Law Council of Australia

- Meeting with Dr Jane Wangmann and Prof Tracey Booth from UTS about lawyering in the context of domestic and family violence
- Participated in a roundtable about adverse costs in relation to sexual harassment matters and a roundtable about strategic litigation in sexual harassment

Media and articles

Joint Media Release: **Victim-survivor groups have no confidence in Commissioner's proposed review**
1 July 2020

- Joint Media Release: **Coronial inquest highlights police failings in responding to DV – an urgent inquiry into police response to DV is required** 16 September 2020
- Media mention: **NSW Parliament to consider new DV laws** *Canberra Times*, 18 September 2020
- Media mention: **'Incredible pressure': Thousands of women turned away from domestic violence legal services** *SMH*, 22 September 2020
- Opinion piece by Liz Snell: **Why we need a thorough consultation process on how to effectively address coercive controlling violence** 23 September 2020
- Media mention: **'Worst is yet to come': Legal services desperate for money ahead of domestic violence wave** *SMH*, 30 September 2020
- Provided comments to National Indigenous Times about coercive controlling violence
- Provided comments to Natasha Bitu from The Australian about the impact of COVID-19 on family law matters
- Media mention: **Australia is not ready to criminalise coercive control – here's why** *The Conversation*, 1 October 2020
- Letter to the editor: **Consulting on coercive control**, *Law Society of NSW Journal*, October 2018
- Media mention: **'Why don't they just leave?' Domestic violence court reforms proposed to dispel myths** *SMH*, 21 October 2020

- Media comments to ABC News about the Hague Convention and domestic and family violence
- Media mention: **Deaths in custody: David Dungay's mother tells NSW parliament 'the system is broken'**, *The Guardian*, 27 October 2020
- Media mention: **'Second-class citizens': Call for action over the Australian visa the UN says is a problem**, ABC News, 31 October 2020
- Media mention: **Sexual consent laws face overhaul to address 'freeze response'** *SMH*, 18 November 2020
- Liz Snell, 'Why we need a thorough consultation process on how to effectively address coercive controlling violence', *The Australian Journal of Community and Disability Practitioners*, Summer 2020 (p32–33) (updated and edited version of September article)
- Helen Campbell Media mention: **Hayne, de Belin trial outcomes could deter sexual assault victims from pursuing charges** *SMH*, 2 January 2021
- Liz Snell, **Strengthening protections for people experiencing sexual and domestic violence** *Law Society of NSW Journal*, 1 February 2021
- Joint Media Release: **Family Court merger opposed by 155 stakeholders including 13 retired judges**
- Joint Statement: **Passage of flawed merger bill tasks family law judges with an impossible task** 18 February 2021
- Media Mention: **'Holistic reform' key to NSW's DV response** *Bega District News*, 24 February 2021
- Media Mention: **Coercive control underpins most domestic violence deaths but making it illegal is complicated** ABC News, 1 March 2021
- Joint Media Release: **Supports to victims of crime "difficult to access" say victim-survivor groups** 5 March 2021
- Media Mention: **Barriers to justice: 'We are still governed by the idea that women lie about sexual assault'** *The Guardian*, 20 March 2021
- Media Mention: **The findings of two significant Coronial Inquests** *The Law Report*, 13 April 2021
- Helen Campbell provided media comment to *The Daily Telegraph* in response to release of BoCSaR statistics about finalised court appearances for sexual assault and outcomes
- Media Mention: **'Enormous unmet need': Women's employment legal services running on a shoestring**, *SMH*, 21 April 2021
- Media Mention: **"Massive increase" in domestic violence legal aid prompts funding call** *The Daily Advertiser*, 27 April 2021
- Media Mention: **'Massive problem' Australia is ignoring**, *Sunshine Coast Daily*, 30 April 2021
- Media Mention: **Experts still waiting for specialised rape courts 15 years after taskforce created** *The Telegraph*, 8 May 2021
- Media Mention: **More NSW Police officers charged with domestic violence as victims face ongoing problems getting help** ABC News, 10 May 2021
- Media Mention: **Women's legal help can't come soon enough**, *The Daily Telegraph* 13 May 2021
- Media Mention: **Are AVOs Worth The Paper They're Written On?** *The Quicky* by *Mamamia*, 11 May 2021
- Liz Snell provided comments to nine.com in response to Government's response to consent review, 27 May 2021
- Liz Snell provided comments to news.com about BoCSaR report about domestic violence and COVID
- Media Mention: **Sexual assaults reported to police, spike 'sharply' amid public reckoning** 9 news, 10 June 2021
- Media mention: **'Tip of the iceberg': Frontline workers say police data fails to capture increase in domestic violence**, 30 June 2021

Committees

We built alliances and worked strategically with others by participating in Community Legal Centres NSW, Community Legal Centres Australia and external committees.

Community Legal Centres NSW

- Aboriginal Advisory Group
- Care and Protection Network
- Domestic Violence and Victims Compensation Subcommittee (co-convened by WLS NSW)
- Law Reform and Policy Committee
- PII and Co-ordinators and Directors Committees
- Prisoner's Rights Working Group (co-convened by WLS NSW)
- Regional, Rural and Remote Network
- Community Legal Educators Network
- Communications and Media Network

Community Legal Centres Australia

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Network
- Human Rights Network
- Women's Legal Services Australia

Interagencies, networks and other external committees

- The Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) Practitioner Engagement Group
- ANROWS Reference Group – Misidentification of domestic and family violence aggrieved respondents
- Australian Communication Consumers Action Network
- Care and Protection Legal Advisory Group meetings chaired by Department of Communities and Justice
- Children's Court – Care Working Party (CLCNSW representative)
- Corrective Services Contact in Custody Working Group

- Domestic Violence Interagencies
- Domestic Violence NSW Reference Group – Voices for Change
- Domestic Violence Reforms Consultation Group (chaired by Department of Communities and Justice)
- Domestic Violence Review Committee of Office of Director of Public Prosecutions
- Equality Rights Alliance (as Women's Legal Services Australia representative)
- Greater Sydney Family Law Pathways Network and Parramatta Family Law Interagency
- Law Society of NSW Family Law Committee
- Legal Education and Advice in Prison Steering Committee
- Legal Information and Referral Forum
- Legal Practitioners Consultative Group of Corrective Services NSW
- LGBTIQ Domestic Violence Interagency
- National and NSW Economic Abuse Reference Group
- NSW Legal Assistance Forum Prisoner's Legal Information Team
- NSW Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Council (chaired by the Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence)
- NSW Women's Alliance
- Miranda's Place Steering Committee
- Sexual Assault Review Committee of Office of Director of Public Prosecutions
- NSW Sexual Domestic and Family Violence Council
- Trans and Gender Diverse Criminal Justice System Advisory Council
- Victims of Crime Interagency
- Women's Advisory Council of Corrective Services NSW

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

Our community legal education (CLE) program strives to increase women's awareness of the law, their legal rights and access to legal services through training seminars, workshops, webinars, conferences, stalls, websites and publications. The majority of our CLE is delivered to the legal profession and community workers with the goal of reaching more women in the community.

We undertook 54 CLE activities including 37 CLE workshops, presentations and seminars, and 17 webinars, presented across NSW to more than 1100 people.

Highlights:



Jane Wangmann and Miranda Kaye, UTS Faculty of Law with Janet Loughman, WLS NSW Foundation Advisory Committee pictured at The Law Society, Wednesday 11 November, presenting a Feminist Legal Perspectives Seminar.

We produced a service video to provide to NSW Police for inclusion in a new blended learning online training for DVLOs. The video will also be used to provide a service overview when doing CLE presentations and community outreach work. It can be viewed here:

<https://vimeo.com/539933868>

We applied for and won a grant of \$20,000 from the Social Sector Transformation Fund, run by the Department of Communities and Justice to build a new micro website. We raised a further \$8,000 in our end-of-financial-year appeal.

We were awarded \$40,000 from the same fund for 'Service delivery or models of care improvement – review and develop a mixed service delivery model that allows for improved online and face to face services'

We recorded two training presentations and provided video content for Education Centre Against Violence

(ECAV) and Family Planning NSW so that our legal education could continue being provided for intake staff as part of their regular training program, whilst face-to-face sessions were restricted due to COVID-19.

We completed a project to create a suite of master template presentations for each of our key CLE topics, as well as a set of supporting materials and resources, to streamline the process of preparing presentations that are tailored to meet the specific needs of different training requests.

We partnered with the Seniors Rights Service to provide ongoing training and support for their legal team to better assist older women experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault in residential care.

We partnered with the Disability Rights Centre Rights Service to provide ongoing training and support for their legal team who are setting up a domestic and family violence service. We provided two full day training sessions, first on Family Law and second on Domestic Violence and Care and Protection. We also provided copies of all our relevant publications. We have established a strong relationship to receive referrals or work together for more complex cases. We will be attending follow up sessions to assist and guide their team once they establish their new service. They will be presenting an Ask LOIS webinar next year.

We collaborated with Redfern Legal Centre to deliver a webinar panel presentation on best practice reporting

Reporting a Sexual Assault

What is NSW Police & Health best practice?

Listen to our panel discussion with

.....

Assistant Commissioner Stacey Maloney
Communications and Security Command, NSW Police Force

Lisa Simpson
Manager, Community DV & Sexual Assault Counselling Service, Sydney Local Health District

.....

Facilitated by:
Liz Snell, WLS NSW
Samantha Lee, RLC

Redfern Legal Centre

WOMEN'S
LEGAL SERVICE NSW

RECORDING NOW AVAILABLE

of sexual assault with Assistant Commissioner Stacey Maloney, NSW Police Force and Lisa Simpson, Manager, Community Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Counselling Service, Sydney Local Health district. It was a very successful event attracting 667 registrations. The recording was distributed afterwards.

Ask LOIS

A total of 683 people attended our monthly Ask LOIS webinars. The mailing list increased from 2,049 people to 2,189 active subscribers.

1 July: Workplace Rights for Domestic Violence Leave (46 Attendees)

Presented by Rosetta Lee – Solicitor, WLS NSW

5 August: An Overview of Modern Slavery and Anti-Trafficking Laws (47 Attendees)

Presented by Sandeep Dhillon, Lawyer and Project Manager – Anti Slavery Australia

2 September: Recent Changes to the Victims Support Scheme (136 Attendees)

Presented by Kellie McDonald – Senior Solicitor, WLS NSW

14 October: Protecting Young People From Sexual Exploitation (48 Attendees)

Presented by Fern Hoang – Solicitor, WLS NSW

4 November: Domestic Violence and Centrelink – Getting Help During Covid (84 Attendees)

Presented by Donna Flood, Solicitor, Welfare Rights Centre

3 February: Domestic Violence and Tech Abuse – the 2nd national survey (109 Attendees)

Presented by Karen Bentley – CEO, Wesnet

3 March: The Interaction of AVOs and Parenting Orders (65 Attendees)

Presented by Amy Power and Rishika Pai – Solicitors, WLS NSW

7 April: Share Your Story – women and girls experiencing violence and the Disability Royal Commission (29 Attendees)

Presented by Jacinta Harris – Solicitor, National Legal Aid

5 May: The Lighthouse Project (65 attendees)

Presented by Lisa O'Neill – National Registrar Risk Policy and Family Violence, Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia and Bianca Steele – Senior Family Consultant, Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia

2 June: Property Settlements and Spousal Maintenance (54 Attendees)

Presented by Rishika Pai – Solicitor, WLS NSW

Some feedback from Ask LOIS participants:

'I found it to be extremely useful and the experts very well versed and knowledgeable.'

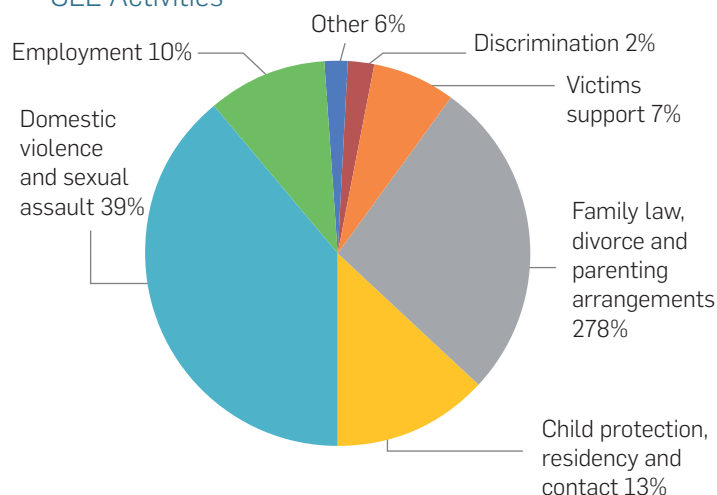
'Love the opportunities to gain professional development so easily.'

'The presentation was excellent, succinct and useful. The pace was really good and gave a really useful and understandable overview of property matters. It was presented clearly, and the speaker was very knowledgeable. One of the best property webinars I have been to, thank you so much.'

'This topic was well presented by a very knowledgeable person who was able to describe the topic well and engage the audience even virtually.'

'Brilliant information, will go a long way to helping our clients'

CLE Activities



Projects

We designed a range of new materials and resources for the rebranded First Nations Women's Legal Program (FNWLP), which includes DL Flyers, Posters, Business Cards, Fridge Magnets, Stickers, Push-Up Banners, Tablecloths, a new Facebook Header, Social Media tiles, Letterhead and Powerpoint template.



Forbes Community CLE day.

We designed a key messages campaign to boost digital engagement with FNWLP on social media. We created placards and began collecting images for the campaign, which will be shared across all platforms next year.

Digital Communications

Website:

There were 147,471 users of our website over the year. On average 78% are new users with 80% of those finding our website through organic searches. Users spend an average of 1:21 minutes on the site. Almost 60% of visits to our website are made using a mobile phone.

The most visited page is the 'What is sexual assault?' chapter of our online version of 'What is Sexual Assault' booklet. There were 50,498 views of that page this year and visitors spent an average of 4:40 minutes on the page.

Social media:

Our Twitter page followers increased from 4,767 to 5,036 this year. There were 145 tweets over the year.

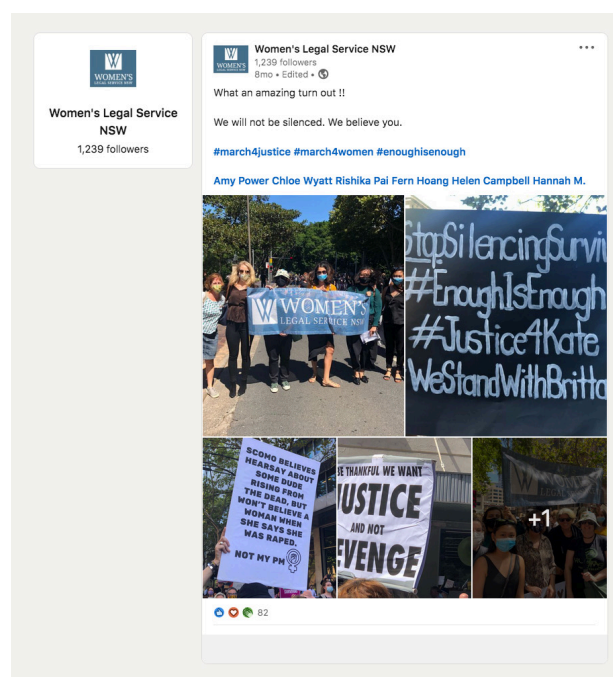
Our LinkedIn followers increased from 270 to 1054 this year. There were 127 posts over the year.

Our Facebook followers increased from 3,496 to 4,014 over the year and page likes increased from 3,563 to 3,937. There were a total of 214 posts over the year.

The CLE Coordinator began managing our First Nations Women's Legal Program Facebook Page in January. Since then followers have increased from 417 to 499 and there have been 66 posts.

We set up an Instagram page for the First Nations program in April. By the end of June, we had acquired 100 followers and shared 14 posts.

Our highest reaching social media posts for the year were our participation in the March4Justice on LinkedIn (3,442 impressions) and Facebook (1,343 reaches)



PUBLICATIONS

We provided updates for two chapters of the new edition of The Lawyers Practice Manual, published by Thomson Reuters – the Sexual Assault chapter and the Victims Support Scheme chapter

We provided an update for the Judicial Commission's 'Equality before the Law Bench Book' chapter on Women.

We worked with the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Officer at Canterbury Bankstown Council to update their website "It's Time To Talk" which replicates significant content from the GP toolkit.

We updated a number of publications that contain information about domestic violence and renting to include the expansion of the list of competent persons able to sign a domestic violence declaration to accompany a Domestic Violence Termination Notice.

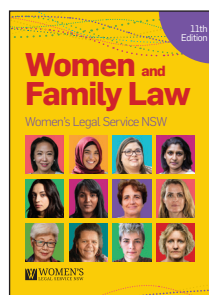
We have worked on updates to 'Sexual Assault – Your Rights and the Law', 'Just a Piece of Paper' and 'Our Dream'.

To enquire about community legal education or training for your organisation

contact: cle-request@wlsnsw.org.au

OUR PUBLICATIONS

Books



Women and Family Law (2019)

This plain-English guide to family law covers a range of topics such as divorce, children, property settlements and Apprehended Violence Orders.

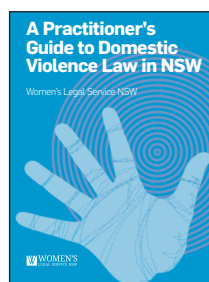
This is available for free download from our website

www.wlsnsw.org.au/resources/women-and-family-law/



A Practitioner's Guide to Domestic Violence Law in NSW (2018)

A plain-English guide to domestic violence law in NSW. Available in hard copy or for free download from our website: www.wlsnsw.org.au/resources/dv-law-nsw/



Sexual assault: Your Rights and the Law (2016)

This resource has information for women and girls who have been sexually assaulted including: What sexual assault means; Getting medical help and counselling after a sexual assault; Reporting to the police; and Legal process and your rights. Available in hard copy or for free download from our website:

Available in hard copy or for free download from our website: www.wlsnsw.org.au/resources/sexual-assault/



When she talks to you about the violence:

A toolkit for GPs in NSW (2019)

This resource has been developed to assist doctors in identifying and responding to women and children who have experienced family violence. The toolkit contains guidelines for patient care as well as some legal information for doctors such as mandatory reporting and responding to subpoenas.

Available in hard copy or from our website: www.wlsnsw.org.au/newly-updated-gp-toolkit/



Dealing with FaCS – Top Ten Tips (2016)

This resource is designed to help women and families deal with the government services in charge of keeping children safe. The main department with this job is called Family and Community Services, or 'FaCS' for short. Available in hard copy or on our website.



HELP! FaCS has removed my children (2017)

This resource is designed to help women and families deal with FaCS if their children are removed. Available in hard copy or on our website.



Our Silence is Abusing our Kids (2011)

Unique and innovative stories about Aboriginal women working locally to stop child sexual assault. The booklet contains interviews with community women and Aboriginal workers about their own efforts in their communities to protect children and support young people. Also contains vital information about child sexual assault.



Our Dream... Stopping the Violence (2015)

This information booklet is about domestic violence and the law in NSW. It is designed primarily for Aboriginal women but may also be a useful resource for non-Aboriginal service providers.



A Long Way to Equal (2007)

A Long Way To Equal gives an assessment and analysis of the legal problems and barriers to access to legal services experienced by migrant and refugee women in Australia.

Brochures and Cards



Women's Legal Service NSW Brochure

Information about all the services provided by Women's Legal Service NSW.



Women's Legal Service NSW Pictorial Brochure

This is a pictorial pamphlet with Advice Line contact numbers for Women's Legal Service NSW.



Women's Legal Service NSW Brochures in 10 community languages: Arabic, Dari, Dinka, Farsi, Filipino (Tagalog), Hindi, Kirundi, Mandarin, Tamil and Vietnamese.



Quick Guide to Working with Interpreters in Legal Settings

Checklist and Poster.



Is this Love?

A resource made for young women in reference to their relationships.



Women's Legal Service NSW Card

This is an informational card with contact details and numbers for the Advice Line contact numbers for Women's Legal Service NSW.



Indigenous Women's Legal Program Card

Contact details and numbers for Women's Legal Service NSW Indigenous Women's Legal Program.



Domestic Violence Legal Service Card

Contact details for the Domestic Violence Legal Service.



Indigenous Women's Program Fridge Magnet

Contact details and numbers for Women's Legal Service NSW Indigenous Women's Program.

Publications can be ordered from our website at:
www.wlsnsw.org.au/resources/order-publications/

TREASURER'S REPORT

I am pleased to present the 2020-21 audited Financial Statements of Women's Legal Resources Limited, trading as Women's Legal Service NSW. Our core income for services was received from the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments through the Community Legal Services Program administered by Legal Aid NSW.

In brief, funding income comprised:

- Women's Legal Resource Centre Program – \$1,848,763
- Indigenous Women's Legal Program – \$311,218
- NSW Pool 2: Bonnie Project – \$227,107
- Financial Counselling Foundation – \$42,133 (net of unearned amounts carried forward. Total funding received – \$65,000)
- COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Grant – \$19,583 (net of unearned amounts carried forward. Total funding received – \$137,251)
- COVID-19 Legal Assistance Funding – \$77,779 (net of unearned amounts carried forward. Total funding received – \$135,400)
- One off funding for COVID-19 IT assistance – \$18,000

Total expenses of \$2,788,921 exceeded total revenue of \$2,788,591 leading to a deficit of \$330 for the year.

On behalf of WLS NSW, I would like to acknowledge with thanks the continuing support provided by the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments, and to extend our appreciation to the program officers who have worked with us during the year.

I would like to acknowledge the Board's appreciation of the contribution of our staff during the last 12 months. Their professionalism and skill have been essential to effective Board management and to the strategic planning of the development of our services.

Alexandra Richardson
Treasurer



WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

General Purpose Tier 2 Financial Report (Reduced Disclosure Requirements) For the year ended 30 June 2021

Directors' Report For the year ended 30 June 2021

The directors of Women's Legal Resources Limited present their report together with the financial statements of the Company, being Women's Legal Resources Limited, for the year ended 30 June 2021 and the Independent Audit Report thereon.

Directors Details

The following persons were Directors of Women's Legal Resources Limited during or since the end of the financial year:

Names and responsibilities

Qualifications, experience and other directorships

Denele Crozier
Director – Chairperson

Appointed as a Director on 30 November 2011
RNPN, Dip. Acc, Dip. Business.
Order of Australia, Member 2017.
39 years working in the NGO Charity sector.
2001 to present – Chief Executive Officer, Women's Health NSW Peak for community Women's Health Centres. 1993–2001 Administrator, Redfern Legal Centre, 1982–1992 Health Worker, Liverpool Women's Health Centre and Administrator, Women's Health Information Resource and Crisis Centres Association. Currently involved in range of management and advisory committees including FGM Advisory Committee, NSW Ministry of Health NGO Advisory Committee, Treasurer at Australian Women's Health Network and Domestic Violence NSW.

Alexandra Richardson
Director – Treasurer

Appointed as a Director on 12 February 2020
B Commerce – University of Sydney (2007)
Grad Dip (Chartered Accountancy) – CAANZ (2010)
July 2007 to present – PwC Australia, Partner.
Over 14 years of experience supporting Australia's largest financial institutions.
Currently a partner at PwC Australia, Financial Services Assurance.

Sheridan Emerson
Director

Appointed as a Director on 7 May 2014
LLB (Hons 1), B Econ, University of Queensland
Admitted as a solicitor in 2003
Accredited Family Law Specialist – NSW Law Society
Over 18 years' experience as a solicitor. Partner at Pearson Emerson Family Lawyers, a specialist family law firm in Sydney providing advice in respect of all aspects of family law. Prior roles in commercial litigation and finance at Allens Arthur Robinson in Sydney and Linklaters in London.
Regularly presents to members of the legal profession on family law related issues Australia-wide. Accredited Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner. A NSW Law Society Accredited Specialist in Family Law and an AIFLAM accredited Arbitrator. Member of the Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia.

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

Directors' Report – (continued) For the year ended 30 June 2021

Renata Field Director	Appointed as a Director on 22 November 2017 to 25 November 2020 Master Social Work – University of Sydney BA Arts/Fine Arts – University of NSW Currently Coordinator of the NSW Voices for Change project with Domestic Violence NSW. Over 11 years of experience working in the not-for-profit and community sector. Previous roles included director of the peak body, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services NSW Inc. social worker at Delvena Women's Refuge and researcher at the Education Centre Against Violence.
Louise Goodchild Director	Appointed as a Director 30 November 2011 BA/LLB MA Admitted to practice as a solicitor in 1992, called to the NSW Bar 2005 Part time Judicial Member Administrative Decisions Tribunal 2010–2013. Barrister, over 16 years experience; prior experience over 20 years including: Law lecturer at University of Western Sydney and University of Technology. Principal Solicitor and Project Co-ordinator National Youth and Children's Law Centre, Legal Aid, Aboriginal Legal Service, Cape York Land Council.
Emma Palmer Director	Appointed as a Director on 6 May 2015 PhD, LLM, LLB/BCom (Fin) UNSW Senior Lecturer at Griffith Law School, Griffith University. PhD awarded by UNSW Law in 2017. Research Assistant for two Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Projects at UNSW Law 2012–2017. Practical Legal Training at Women's Legal Service NSW 2012–13. Senior investment analyst at Macquarie Bank 2006–2011. Admitted as a lawyer in New South Wales. Research interests include international criminal law, international humanitarian law, human rights and social justice, transitional justice, responsible investment, infrastructure governance, criminal law, and gender legal and policy issues in international and domestic law.
Bronwyn Penrith Director	Appointed as a Director on 21 November 2018 Diploma of business, Indigenous Governance Registered Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner NSW Legal Aid Mediators Panel Current – Director, Burbangana Consultancy Group and DV NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group. Previous – Chair, Mudgin-gal Aboriginal Women's Centre and NCOSS Seven Sisters
Lisa Pusey Director	Appointed as a Director on 5 May 2021 BA/LLB, University of NSW Masters of Law, University of NSW Admitted as a Solicitor in 2004. Over 15 years experience leading major research, policy and advocacy projects at the international and national level. Previous roles include at Women's Legal Service NSW, International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, the Australian Human Rights Commission, Elizabeth Broderick & Co and the Champions of Change Coalition.

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

Directors' Report – (continued) For the year ended 30 June 2021

Courtney Robertson

Director

Appointed as a Director on 13 February 2019
Master of Laws Columbia University
Bachelor of Laws, Murdoch University
Bachelor of Arts, Murdoch University
Current – Barrister, 12 Wentworth Selborne Chambers
Prior to being called to the Bar, Courtney was a senior lawyer in Gilbert + Tobin's disputes and investigations team. Courtney has both commercial and public law experience having also worked at the Department of the Attorney General and Justice in the Northern Territory and Lavan in Western Australia.
Courtney is passionate about the empowerment of women and creating an environment in which both women and men can succeed, particularly in the workplace. Courtney has extensive experience in this regard having worked at UN Women (New York) in a policy role and having provided pro bono assistance to countless women through the Refugee Advice and Rights Centre, Planned Parenthood (New York), the Top End Women's Legal Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service.

Ella Rowe

Director

Appointed as a Director on 13 February 2019
Bachelor of Political, Economic and Social Science – University of Sydney.
Graduated Juris Doctor in 2020 – University of New South Wales.
Admitted to practice as solicitor in June 2021.
Present – Lawyer, Maritime Union of Australia, Division of the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU)
Over 6 years' experience in the not for profit and community sector.
Previously volunteered with Women's Legal Service NSW and Amnesty International.

Directors' Meetings

The number of meetings of Directors held during the year, and the number of meetings attended by each director are as follows:

	Directors' Meetings	
	A	B
Denele Crozier	4	4
Sheridan Emerson	4	4
Renata Field	2	2
Louise Goodchild	4	2
Emma Palmer	4	3
Bronwyn Penrith	4	4
Lisa Pusey	1	1
Alexandra Richardson	4	4
Courtney Robertson	4	2
Ella Rowe	4	2

Where:

- Column A is the number of meetings the Director was entitled to attend
- Column B is the number of meetings the Director attended

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

Directors' Report – (continued)
For the year ended 30 June 2021

Company Secretary

Sheridan Emerson (from 21 November 2018)

Sheridan Emerson is a solicitor, Partner at Pearson Emerson Family Lawyers. Sheridan has been the company secretary of Women's Legal Resources Limited since 21 November 2018.

Contribution in winding up

The company is incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 and is a public company limited by guarantee. If the company is wound up, the Constitution states that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$20 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the company. At 30 June 2021, the total amount that members of the company are liable to contribute if the company is wound up is \$2,900 (2020: \$2,880).

Principal Activities

The principal activities of the Company during the financial year were the provision of free community legal services, including legal advice and information, education, training and resources across metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales. The Company provides free service for all women in the community, particularly for those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

There were no other significant changes in the nature of the Company's principal activities during the financial year.

Short-term Objectives

The company's short-term objectives are to:

- Work from a feminist perspective to promote access to justice for women in NSW.
- Seek to promote women's human rights, redress inequalities experienced by women and to foster legal and social change through strategic legal services, community development, community legal education and law and policy reform work.
- Prioritise women who are disadvantaged by their cultural, social and economic circumstances.
- Focus on areas of law that most directly have a gendered impact on women. This includes domestic violence, sexual assault, family law and discrimination.

Long-term Objectives

The company's long-term objectives are to:

- Provide access to justice and a just legal system for women in NSW, as all women are entitled to a society that respects their human rights.

Directors' Report – (continued)
For the year ended 30 June 2021

Strategy for achieving short and long-term objectives

To achieve these objectives, the company adopted the following strategies:

- Policy and Law Reform.
- Community Legal Education and Community Development.
- Improving the Lives of Individual Women.
- Enhanced access to justice for, and self-determination by Indigenous Women.
- Infrastructure, Sustainability and Organisational Support.

COVID-19 Assessment on Operations

The Company is primarily funded under the state and federal government via Legal Aid NSW, Community Legal Centres Program Unit. They have provided assurance that funding would continue per existing funding agreements and there would be no penalties imposed on service providers for not meeting their output targets, deadlines for the submissions of reports or other program objectives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the nearly 8 months leading up to 30 June 2021 suspended face to face programs at outreaches and court services and directed services towards delivering critical services, such as ensuring clients are still able to access services. Updated infection control systems and safety procedures have been implemented to ensure the safe resumption of programs for staff, volunteers, contractors and clients. Every effort has been made to continue normal service delivery as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so.

Auditor's Independence Declaration

A copy of the Auditor's Independence Declaration as required under s.60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* is included in page 56 of this financial report and forms part of the Director's Report.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



Director

Dated this 20th of October 2021
Sydney, NSW



Director



WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

**AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION
TO THE DIRECTORS OF WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED**

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, as the auditor of Women's Legal Resources Limited for the year ended 30 June 2021, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief there have been:

- i. No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the s60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- ii. No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

MNSA PTY. LIMITED

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Mark Schiliro

Director

Registered Company Auditor # 335255

DATED THIS 20TH DAY OF OCTOBER 2021

SYDNEY, NSW

MNSA Pty Ltd
ABN 59 133 605 400

Level 1, 283 George St
Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 2943 Sydney 2001

Tel (02) 9299 0901
Fax (02) 9299 8104
Email admin@mnsa.com.au

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Accountants Scheme,
approved under the
Professional Standards
Act 1994 (NSW)

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021 \$	2020 \$
Revenue	5	2,788,591	2,601,122
Service expenses		(138,749)	(122,336)
Occupancy expenses		(102,175)	(97,587)
Administration expenses		(142,195)	(149,470)
Employee benefits expense	12(a)	(2,393,244)	(2,219,697)
Financing expenses		–	–
Depreciation Expenses		(14,859)	(3,062)
Doubtful debt expense		2,301	5,660
Current Year Surplus (Deficit) before income tax		(330)	14,630
Income tax expense	4.9	–	–
Deficit for the year		(330)	14,630
Other comprehensive income		–	–
Other comprehensive income for the period, net of income tax		–	–
Total Comprehensive Income attributable to members of the entity		(330)	14,630

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021 \$	2020 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	2,468,375	1,965,344
Trade and other receivables	7	9,896	15,012
Other assets	8	19,580	15,617
CURRENT ASSETS		<u>2,497,851</u>	<u>1,995,973</u>
NON-CURRENT			
Property, plant and equipment	9	<u>594,834</u>	<u>521,844</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		<u>594,834</u>	<u>521,844</u>
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>3,092,685</u>	<u>2,517,817</u>
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT			
Trade and other payables	10	1,188,367	1,086,557
Other liabilities	11	467,642	65,589
Provisions	12(b)	<u>466,281</u>	<u>409,747</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>2,122,290</u>	<u>1,561,893</u>
NON-CURRENT			
Provisions	12(b)	<u>28,144</u>	<u>13,343</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>28,144</u>	<u>13,343</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>2,150,434</u>	<u>1,575,236</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>942,251</u>	<u>942,581</u>
EQUITY			
Reserves	13	145,424	145,424
Retained Earnings		<u>796,827</u>	<u>797,157</u>
TOTAL EQUITY		<u>942,251</u>	<u>942,581</u>

This statement should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 30 June 2021

Note	Retained Earnings \$	Special Reserve \$	Total Equity \$
Balance at 1 July 2019	782,527	145,424	927,951
Surplus for the year	14,630	–	14,630
Other comprehensive income	–	–	–
Balance at 30 June 2020	797,157	145,424	942,581
Deficit for the year	(330)	–	(330)
Other comprehensive income	–	–	–
Balance at 30 June 2021	796,827	145,424	942,251

This statement should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
Receipts from Operating Activities			
Grants – Commonwealth & state		2,544,583	2,633,808
Receipts from donations and others		162,347	169,211
Interest income		16,407	37,228
COVID-19 Cash Flow Boost		50,000	50,000
Payments to suppliers and employees		(2,182,457)	(2,685,196)
Net cash generated from operating activities	14(b)	<u>590,880</u>	<u>205,051</u>
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		(87,849)	
Net cash used investing activities		<u>(87,849)</u>	<u>–</u>
Cash Flows from Financing Activities		–	–
Net Cash generated by/(used in) Financing Activities		<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		503,031	205,051
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 July		1,965,344	1,760,293
Cash and cash equivalents at 30 June	14(a)	<u>2,468,375</u>	<u>1,965,344</u>

This statement should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 30 June 2021

NOTE 1: Nature of Operations

The principal activities of the Women's Legal Resources Limited (the Company) during the financial year were the provision of free community legal services, including legal advice and information, education, training and resources across metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales. The Company provides free service for all women in the community, particularly for those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

NOTE 2: General information and statement of compliance

The financial report includes the financial statements and notes of the Company.

These financial statements are general purpose financial statements that have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, Australian Accounting Standards and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board. A statement of compliance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) cannot be made due to the Company applying not-for-profit specific requirements contained in the Australian Accounting Standards. Women's Legal Resources Limited is a not-for-profit entity, a Public Company limited by guarantee incorporated and domiciled in Australia for the purpose of preparing the financial statements.

The financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2021 were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Directors on the 20th of October 2021.

NOTE 3: Changes in accounting policies

3.1 New and Amended Accounting Standards Adopted by the Entity

Initial adoption of AASB 2018-6 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Definition of a Business AASB 2018-6 amends and narrows the definition of a business specified in AASB 3 Business Combinations, simplifying the determination of

whether a transaction should be accounted for as a business combination or an asset acquisition. Entities may also perform a calculation and elect to treat certain acquisitions as acquisitions of assets.

The standards listed above did not have any impact on the amounts recognised in prior periods and are not expected to significantly affect the current or future periods.

NOTE 4: Summary of Accounting Policies

4.1 Overall Considerations

The significant accounting policies that have been used in the preparation of these financial statements are summarised below.

The financial statements have been prepared using the measurement bases specified by Australian Accounting Standards for each type of asset, liability, income and expense. The measurement bases are more fully described in the accounting policies below.

4.2 Revenue

Revenue comprises revenue from government grants, fundraising activities and sale of goods. Revenue from major products and services is shown in Note 5.

Revenue is measured by reference to the fair value of consideration received or receivable by the Company for goods supplied and services provided, excluding sales taxes, rebates, and trade discounts.

Revenue is recognised when the amount of revenue can be measured reliably, collection is probable, the costs incurred or to be incurred can be measured reliably, and when the criteria for each of the Company's different activities have been met. Details of the activity-specific recognition criteria are described below.

Government grants

A number of the Company's programs are supported by grants received from the federal and state governments.

If conditions are attached to a grant which must be satisfied before the Company is eligible to receive the contribution, recognition of the grant as revenue is deferred until those conditions are satisfied.

Where a grant is received on the condition that specified services are delivered, to the grantor, this is considered a reciprocal transaction. Revenue is recognised as services are performed and at year-end until the service is delivered.

Revenue from a non-reciprocal grant that is not subject to conditions is recognised when the Company obtains control of the funds, economic benefits are probable and the amount can be measured reliably. Where a grant may be required to be repaid if certain conditions are not satisfied, a liability is recognised at year end to the extent that conditions remain unsatisfied.

Where the Company receives a non-reciprocal contribution of an asset from a government or other party for no or nominal consideration, the asset is recognised at fair value and a corresponding amount of revenue is recognised.

Donations and bequests

Donations collected, including cash and goods for resale, are recognised as revenue when the Company gains control, economic benefits are probable and the amount of the donation can be measured reliably.

Bequests are recognised when the legacy is received. Revenue from legacies comprising bequests of shares or other property are recognised at fair value, being the market value of the shares or property at the date the Company becomes legally entitled to the shares or property.

Interest income

Interest income is recognised on an accrual basis using the effective interest method.

Sale of goods

Revenue from the sale of goods comprises revenue earned from the sale of goods such as publications. Sales revenue is recognised when the control of goods passes to the customer.

4.3 Operating expenses

Operating expenses are recognised in profit or loss upon utilisation of the service or at the date of their origin.

4.4 Intangible assets

Recognition of other intangible assets

Acquired intangible assets

Acquired computer software licences are capitalised on the basis of the costs incurred to acquire and install the specific software.

Subsequent measurement

All intangible assets are accounted for using the cost model whereby capitalised costs are amortised on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives, as these assets are considered finite. Residual values and useful lives are reviewed at each reporting date. In addition, they are subject to impairment testing as described in Note 4.7.

Amortisation has been included within depreciation and amortisation.

Subsequent expenditures on the maintenance of computer software and brand names are expensed as incurred.

When an intangible asset is disposed of, the gain or loss on disposal is determined as the difference between the proceeds and the carrying amount of the asset, and is recognised in profit or loss within other income or other expenses.

4.5 Property, plant and equipment

Land

As no finite useful life for land can be determined, related carrying amounts are not depreciated.

Buildings, plant and other equipment

Buildings, plant and other equipment (comprising fittings and furniture) are initially recognised at acquisition cost or manufacturing cost, including any costs directly attributable to bringing the assets to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by the Company's management.

Buildings, plant and other equipment are subsequently measured using the cost model, cost less subsequent depreciation and impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised on a straight-line basis to write down the cost less estimated residual value of

buildings, plant and other equipment. The following useful lives are applied:

- Building: 25-50 years
- Plant & equipment: 3-10 years

Material residual value estimates and estimates of useful life are updated as required, but at least annually.

Gains or losses arising on the disposal of property, plant and equipment are determined as the difference between the disposal proceeds and the carrying amount of the assets and are recognised in profit or loss within other income or other expenses.

4.6 Leases

Operating leases

Where the Company is a lessee, payments on operating lease agreements are recognised as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term. Associated costs, such as maintenance and insurance, are expensed as incurred. This is due to the low value asset leases.

4.7 Impairment testing of intangible assets and property, plant and equipment

For impairment assessment purposes, assets are grouped at the lowest levels for which there are largely independent cash inflows (cash-generating units). As a result, some assets are tested individually for impairment and some are tested at cash-generating unit level.

An impairment loss is recognised for the amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount, which is the higher of fair value less costs to sell and value-in-use. To determine the value-in-use, management estimates expected future cash flows from each cash-generating unit and determines a suitable interest rate in order to calculate the present value of those cash flows. The data used for impairment testing procedures are directly linked to the Company's latest approved budget, adjusted as necessary to exclude the effects of future reorganisations and asset enhancements. Discount factors are determined individually for each cash-generating unit and reflect management's assessment of respective risk profiles, such as market and asset-specific risks factors.

Impairment losses for cash-generating units reduce first the carrying amount of any goodwill allocated to that cash-generating unit. Any remaining impairment loss is charged pro rata to the other assets in the cash-generating unit. All assets are subsequently reassessed for indications that an impairment loss previously recognised may no longer exist. An impairment charge is reversed if the cash-generating unit's recoverable amount exceeds its carrying amount.

4.8 Financial instruments

Recognition, initial measurement and derecognition

Financial assets and financial liabilities are recognised when the Company becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument, and are measured initially at fair value adjusted by transactions costs, except for those carried at fair value through profit or loss, which are initially measured at fair value. Subsequent measurement of financial assets and financial liabilities are described below.

Financial assets are derecognised when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the financial asset expire, or when the financial asset and all substantial risks and rewards are transferred. A financial liability is derecognised when it is extinguished, discharged, cancelled or expired.

Classification and subsequent measurement of financial assets

Except for those trade receivables that do not contain a significant financing component and are measured at the transaction price, all financial assets are initially measured at fair value adjusted for transaction costs (where applicable).

For the purpose of subsequent measurement, financial assets other than those designated and effective as hedging instruments are classified into the following categories upon initial recognition:

- amortised cost
- financial assets at Fair Value Through Profit or Loss (FVTPL)
- equity instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)

All income and expenses relating to financial assets that are recognised in profit or loss are presented within finance costs, finance income or other financial items, except for impairment of trade receivables which is presented within other expenses.

Classifications are determined by both:

- the entities business model for managing the financial asset
- the contractual cash flow characteristics of the financial assets

All income and expenses relating to financial assets that are recognised in profit or loss are presented within finance costs, finance income or other financial items, except for impairment of trade receivables, which is presented within other expenses.

Subsequent measurement financial assets

Financial assets at amortised cost

Financial assets are measured at amortised cost if the assets meet the following conditions (and are not designated as FVPL):

- they are held within a business model whose objective is to hold the financial assets and collect its contractual cash flows
- the contractual terms of the financial assets give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interest on the principal amount outstanding

After initial recognition, these are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Discounting is omitted where the effect of discounting is immaterial. The Company's cash and cash equivalents, trade and most other receivables fall into this category of financial instruments as well as long-term deposit that were previously classified as held-to-maturity under AASB 139.

Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss (FVPL)

Financial assets that are held within a different business model other than 'hold to collect' or 'hold to collect and sell' are categorised at fair value through profit and loss. Further, irrespective of business model financial assets whose contractual cash flows are not solely payments of principal and interest are accounted

for at FVPL. All derivative financial instruments fall into this category, except for those designated and effective as hedging instruments, for which the hedge accounting requirements apply (see below).

Impairment of Financial assets

AASB 9's impairment requirements use more forward looking information to recognize expected credit losses – the 'expected credit losses (ECL) model'. Instruments within the scope of the new requirements included loans and other debt-type financial assets measured at amortised cost and FVOCI, trade receivables and loan commitments and some financial guarantee contracts (for the issuer) that are not measured at fair value through profit or loss.

The Company considers a broader range of information when assessing credit risk and measuring expected credit losses, including past events, current conditions, reasonable and supportable forecasts that affect the expected collectability of the future cash flows of the instrument.

In applying this forward-looking approach, a distinction is made between:

- the financial instruments that have not deteriorated significantly in credit quality since initial recognition or that have low credit risk ('Stage 1') and
- financial instruments that have deteriorated significantly in credit quality since initial recognition and whose credit risk is not low ('Stage 2').

'Stage 3' would cover financial assets that have objective evidence of impairment at the reporting date.

'12-month expected credit losses' are recognised for the first category while 'lifetime expected credit losses' are recognised for the second category.

Measurement of the expected credit losses is determined by a probability-weighted estimate of credit losses over the expected life of the financial instrument.

Trade and other receivables

The Company makes use of a simplified approach in accounting for trade and other receivables records the

loss allowance at the amount equal to the expected lifetime credit losses. In using this practical expedient, the Company uses its historical experience, external indicators and forward-looking information to calculate the expected credit losses using a provision matrix.

The Company assesses impairment of trade receivables on a collective basis as they possess credit risk characteristics based on the days past due. The Company allows 1% for amounts that are 30 to 60 days past due, 1.5% for amounts that are between 60 and 90 days past due and writes off fully any amounts that are more than 90 days past due.

Classification and measurement of financial liabilities

As the accounting for financial liabilities remains largely unchanged from AASB 139, the Company's financial liabilities were not impacted by the adoption of AASB 9. However, for completeness, the accounting policy is disclosed below.

The Company's financial liabilities include borrowings and trade and other payables.

Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value, and, where applicable, adjusted for transaction costs unless the Company designated a financial liability at fair value through profit or loss.

Subsequently, financial liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method except for derivatives and financial liabilities designated at FVPL, which are carried subsequently at fair value with gains or losses recognised in profit or loss (other than derivative financial instruments that are designated and effective as hedging instruments).

All interest-related charges and, if applicable, changes in an instrument's fair value that are reported in profit or loss are included within finance costs or finance income.

4.9 Income Taxes

No provision for income tax has been raised as the Company is exempt from income tax under Division 50 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*.

4.10 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and demand deposits, together with other short-term, highly liquid investments that are readily convertible

into known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

4.11 Reserves

Other components of equity include the following:

- reserves
- retained earnings include all current and prior period retained profits.

4.12 Employee benefits

Short-term employee benefits

Short-term employee benefits are benefits, other than termination benefits, that are expected to be settled wholly within twelve (12) months after the end of the period in which the employees render the related service.

Examples of such benefits include wages and salaries, non-monetary benefits and accumulating sick leave.

Short-term employee benefits are measured at the undiscounted amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled.

Other long-term employee benefits

The Company's liabilities for annual leave and long service leave are included in other long-term benefits as they are not expected to be settled wholly within twelve (12) months after the end of the period in which the employees render the related service. They are measured at the present value of the expected future payments to be made to employees. The expected future payments incorporate anticipated future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service, and are discounted at rates determined by reference to market yields at the end of the reporting period on high quality corporate bonds that have maturity dates that approximate the timing of the estimated future cash outflows. Any re-measurements arising from experience adjustments and changes in assumptions are recognised in profit or loss in the periods in which the changes occur.

Employee Provisions

Employee provisions represent amounts accrued for annual leave and long service leave.

The current portion for this provision includes the total amount accrued for annual leave entitlements and the amounts accrued for long service leave entitlements that have vested due to employees having completed the required period of service. Based on past experience, the Company does not expect the full amount of annual leave or long service leave balances classified as current liabilities to be settled within 12 months. However, these amounts must be classified as current liabilities since the Company does not have an unconditional right to defer the settlement of these amounts in the event employees wish to use their leave entitlement.

The non-current portion for this provision includes amounts accrued for long service leave entitlements that have not yet vested in relation to those employees who have not yet completed the required period of service.

Post-employment benefits plans

The Company provides post-employment benefits through defined contribution plans.

Defined contribution plans

The Company pays fixed contributions into independent entities in relation to several state plans and insurance for individual employees. The Company has no legal or constructive obligations to pay contributions in addition to its fixed contributions, which are recognised as an expense in the period that relevant employee services are received.

4.13 Provisions, contingent liabilities and contingent assets

Provisions are measured at the estimated expenditure required to settle the present obligation, based on the most reliable evidence available at the reporting date, including the risks and uncertainties associated with the present obligation. Where there are a number of similar obligations, the likelihood that an outflow will be required in settlement is determined by considering the class of obligations as a whole. Provisions are discounted to their present values, where the time value of money is material.

Any reimbursement that the Company can be virtually certain to collect from a third party with respect to the obligation is recognised as a separate asset.

However, this asset may not exceed the amount of the related provision.

No liability is recognised if an outflow of economic resources as a result of present obligation is not probable. Such situations are disclosed as contingent liabilities, unless the outflow of resources is remote in which case no liability is recognised.

4.14 Deferred income

The liability for deferred income is the unutilised amounts of grants received on the condition that specified services are delivered or conditions are fulfilled. The services are usually provided or the conditions usually fulfilled within twelve (12) months of receipt of the grant. Where the amount received is in respect of services to be provided over a period that exceeds twelve (12) months after the reporting date or the conditions will only be satisfied more than twelve (12) months after the reporting date, the liability is discounted and presented as non-current.

4.15 Goods and Services Tax (GST)

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. In these circumstances the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payables in the statement of financial position are shown inclusive of GST.

Cash flows are presented in the statement of cash flows on a gross basis, except for the GST components of investing and financing activities, which are disclosed as operating cash flows.

4.16 Economic dependence

The Company is dependent upon the ongoing receipt of Federal and State Government grants and community and donations to ensure the ongoing continuance of its programs. At the date of this report management has no reason to believe that this financial support will not continue.

4.17 Significant management judgement in applying accounting policies

When preparing the financial statements, management undertakes a number of judgements, estimates and assumptions about the recognition

and measurement of assets, liabilities, income and expenses.

Estimation uncertainty

Information about estimates and assumptions that have the most significant effect on recognition and measurement of assets, liabilities, income and expenses is provided below. Actual results may be substantially different.

Impairment

In assessing impairment, management estimates the recoverable amount of each asset or cash-generating unit based on expected future cash flows and uses an interest rate to discount them. Estimation uncertainty relates to assumptions about future operating results and the determination of a suitable discount rate.

Useful lives of depreciable assets

Management reviews its estimate of the useful lives of depreciable assets at each reporting date, based on the expected utility of the assets. Uncertainties in these estimates relate to technical obsolescence that may change the utility of certain software and IT equipment.

Long service leave

The liability for long service leave is recognised and measured at the present value of the estimated 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.

Accounts Payable and Other Payables

Accounts Payable and Other Payables represent a liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the entity during the reporting period which remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amount normally paid within 30 days of recognition of the liability.

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NOTE 5: REVENUE

The Company's revenue may be analysed as follows for each major product and service category (excluding revenue from discontinued operations):

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Operating activities		
Grants		
– Legal Aid Commission (Commonwealth)	1,348,346	1,317,252
– Legal Aid Commission (State)	1,038,741	1,029,105
– Sundry Grants	157,496	13,300
Total Grants	2,544,583	2,359,657
Other income		
– Interest received	16,407	37,228
– Donations	81,779	51,211
– Fees and contributions	44,469	47,396
– Rental income	49,900	49,900
– Sales of publications and merchandise	1,453	5,730
– COVID-19 Cashflow Boost	50,000	50,000
Total other income	244,008	241,465
TOTAL REVENUE	2,788,591	2,601,122

NOTE 6: CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

Cash and cash equivalents consist the following	2021 \$	2020 \$
Cash at bank	205,122	96,717
Cash on deposit	2,262,753	1,868,127
Cash on hand	500	500
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,468,375	1,965,344

NOTE 7: TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Current		
Trade receivables	12,197	17,313
Less: Provisions for impairment	(2,301)	(2,301)
	9,896	15,012

All trade and other receivables have been reviewed for indicators of impairment

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NOTE 8: OTHER ASSETS

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Other assets consist the following:		
Prepayments	19,580	15,617
	<u>19,580</u>	<u>15,617</u>

NOTE 9: PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Building – at cost	515,877	515,877
Plant & equipment – at cost	202,866	120,808
Less accumulated depreciation	(123,909)	(114,841)
	<u>594,834</u>	<u>521,844</u>

Details of property, plant and equipment and their carrying amount are as follows:

	Property, Plant and Equipment	Total
Cost		
Balance at 1 July 2020	636,685	636,685
Additions	87,849	87,849
Disposals	(5,791)	(5,791)
Balance at 30 June 2021	<u>718,743</u>	<u>718,743</u>
Accumulated depreciation		
Balance at 1 July 2020	114,841	114,841
Depreciation for the year	14,859	14,859
Disposals	(5,791)	(5,791)
Balance at 30 June 2021	<u>123,909</u>	<u>123,909</u>
Carrying Amounts		
Balance at 1 July 2020	521,844	521,844
Balance at 30 June 2021	<u>594,834</u>	<u>594,834</u>

All depreciation charges (or reversal if any) are included within 'depreciation'.

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NOTE 10: TRADE AND OTHER PAYABLES

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Trade and other payables recognised consist of the following:		
Current		
Trade payables	91,503	78,669
Other creditors and accruals	1,096,864	1,007,888
	1,188,367	1,086,557

NOTE 11: OTHER LIABILITIES

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Current		
Uncommitted/Unspent Funds	467,642	65,589
	467,642	65,589

NOTE 12: EMPLOYEE REMUNERATION

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Current		
(a) Employee benefits expense		
Expenses recognised for employee benefits are analysed below:		
Wages and salaries	1,950,056	1,823,473
Superannuation – defined contribution plans	189,667	175,312
Workers compensation insurance	9,036	9,150
Employee training and development	23,857	17,812
Employee benefit provisions	220,628	193,950
	2,393,244	2,219,697
(b) Employee benefits		
Annual Leave	211,963	149,919
Long Service Leave	254,318	259,828
	466,281	409,747
Non-Current		
Long Service Leave	28,144	13,343
	28,144	13,343

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NOTE 13 RESERVES

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Special Reserve	145,424	145,424
	<u>145,424</u>	<u>145,424</u>

NOTE 14: CASH FLOW INFORMATION

(a) Reconciliation of Cash

Cash at the end of financial year as shown in the statement of cash flows is reconciled in the statement of financial position as follows:

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Cash at bank	205,122	96,717
Cash on deposit	2,262,753	1,868,127
Cash on hand	500	500
Cash and Cash Equivalents	<u>2,468,375</u>	<u>1,965,344</u>

(b) Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities

Surplus (Deficit) after income tax for the year	(330)	14,630
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation	14,859	3,062
Changes in assets and liabilities		
Change in other assets	(3,963)	1,397
Change in trade and other receivables	5,116	15,320
Change in other liabilities	62,044	38,185
Change in provisions	411,344	50,247
Change in trade and other payables	101,810	82,210
Net cash from operating activities	<u>590,880</u>	<u>205,051</u>

NOTE 15: AUDITOR'S REMUNERATION

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Audit and review of the financial report	9,000	9,000
Audit and review of the financial acquittal	2,000	2,000
Other audit services	1,500	1,500
	<u>12,500</u>	<u>12,500</u>

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NOTE 16: RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Company's related parties include its Directors' and key management personnel described below.

Unless otherwise stated, none of the transactions incorporate special terms and conditions and no guarantees were given or received. Outstanding balances are usually settled in cash.

Transactions with key management personnel

Key management of the Company are the board of directors, Executive Officer and Principal Solicitor.

Key management personnel remuneration includes the following expenses:

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Total key management remuneration	324,935	296,881

NOTE 17: CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There are no contingent liabilities that have been incurred by the company in relation to 30 June 2021 or 30 June 2020.

NOTE 18: CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

There are no capital commitments that have been committed by the company in relation to 30 June 2021 or 30 June 2020.

NOTE 19 LEASES

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Minimum lease payments due		
Within one year	–	4,343
Between one and five years	–	3,981
Total	–	8,324

Lease expense during the period amount to \$4,343 (2020: \$4,343) representing the minimum lease payments.

The company leases two photocopiers under operating lease. The lease expired. There was no lease at the end of the financial year.

NOTE 20: FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT RISK

Risk management objectives and policies

The Company is exposed to various risks in relation to financial instruments. The main types of risks are market risk, credit risk and liquidity risk.

The Company's risk management is coordinated at its offices, in close cooperation with the Board of Directors, and focuses on actively securing the Company's short to medium-term cash flows by minimising the exposure to financial markets. There is no long-term financial investments.

The Company does not actively engage in the trading of financial assets for speculative purposes nor does it write options. The most significant financial risks to which the Company is exposed are described below.

Market risk analysis

The Company is exposed to market risk through its use of financial instruments and specifically to interest rate risk and certain other price risks, which result from both its operating and short term investing activities.

Interest rate sensitivity

At 30 June 2021, the Company is exposed to changes in market interest rates through bank term deposits at variable interest rates.

The sensitivity of profit and equity to a reasonably possible change in interest rates of +/- 0.75% amounting to +/- \$18,513 (2020: +/- 0.75% amounting to +/- \$14,739). These changes are considered to be reasonably possible based on observation of current market conditions. The calculations are based on a change in the average market interest rate for each period, and the financial instruments held at each reporting date that are sensitive to changes in interest rates. All other variables are held constant.

Credit risk analysis

Credit risk is the risk that a counterparty fails to discharge an obligation to the Company. The Company's maximum exposure to credit risk is limited to the carrying amount of financial assets recognised at the reporting date.

The Company's management considers that all the above financial assets that are not impaired or past

due for each of the reporting dates under review are of good credit quality.

In respect of trade and other receivables, the Company is not exposed to any significant credit risk exposure to any single counterparty or any group of counterparties having similar characteristics. Based on historical information about customer default rates management consider the credit quality of trade receivables that are not past due or impaired to be good.

The credit risk for cash and cash equivalents and short-term deposits is considered negligible, since the counterparties are reputable banks with high quality external credit ratings.

The carrying amounts disclosed are the Company's maximum possible credit risk exposure in relation to these instruments.

Liquidity risk analysis

Liquidity risk is that the Company might be unable to meet its obligations. The Company manages its liquidity needs by monitoring its forecast cash inflows and outflows due in day-to-day business. The data used for analysing these cash flows is consistent with that used in the contractual maturity analysis below. Liquidity needs are monitored in various time bands, on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis, as well as on the basis of a rolling 30-day projection. Long-term liquidity needs for a 180-day and a 360-day lookout period are identified monthly.

The Company's objective is to maintain cash and marketable securities to meet its liquidity requirements for 30-day periods at a minimum. This objective was met for the reporting periods. Funding for long-term liquidity needs is additionally secured by an adequate amount of committed credit facilities and the ability to sell long-term financial assets.

The Company considers expected cash flows from financial assets in assessing and managing liquidity risk, in particular its cash resources and trade receivables. The Company's existing cash resources and trade receivables significantly exceed the current cash outflow requirements. Cash flows from trade and other receivables are all contractually due within six months.

NOTE 21: CAPITAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Management controls the capital of the Company to ensure that adequate cash flows are generated to fund its programs and that returns from investments are maximised. The Board and management ensure that the overall risk management strategy is in line with this objective.

The Company's capital consists of financial liabilities, supported by financial assets.

Management effectively manages the Company's capital by assessing the Company's financial risk and responding to changes in these risks and in the market. These responses may include the consideration of debt levels. There have been no changes to the strategy adopted by management to control capital of the Company since the previous year.

NOTE 22: POST-REPORTING DATE EVENTS

No adjusting or significant non-adjusting events have occurred between the reporting date and the date of authorisation.

NOTE 23: MEMBER'S GUARANTEE

The company is incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* and is a public company limited by guarantee. If the company is wound up, the Constitution states that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$20 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the company. At 30 June 2021, the total amount that members of the company are liable to contribute if the company is wound up is \$2,900 (2020: \$2,880).

DIRECTORS' DECLARATION

In the opinion of the directors of Women's Legal Resources Limited:

1. The financial statements and notes, of Women's Legal Resources Limited, are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:
 - a. giving a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2021 and its performance, for the year ended on that date; and
 - b. complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements (including the *Australian Accounting Interpretations*) and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*; and
2. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the Women's Legal Resources Limited will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



Director



Director

Dated this 20th day of October 2021
Sydney, NSW



WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED
ABN 88 002 387 699

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE
MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED**
ABN 88 002 387 699

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Women's Legal Resources Limited, being a general purpose financial report, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the Directors Declaration.

In our opinion, the financial report of Women's Legal Resources Limited has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the Company's financial position as at 30 June 2021 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

Basis for Opinion

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 Company in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's *APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other 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.

Matters Relating to the Electronic Presentation of the Audited Financial Report

This auditor's report relates to the financial report of Women's Legal Resources Limited for the year ended 30 June 2021 included on the Women's Legal Resources Limited website. The Company's Directors are responsible for the integrity of the Women's Legal Resources Limited's website. We have not been engaged to report on the integrity of the Women's Legal Resources Limited's website. The auditor's report refers only to the financial report. It does not provide an opinion on any other information which may be hyperlinked to/from these statements. If users of this report are concerned with the inherent risks arising from electronic data communications they are advised to refer to the hard copy of the audited financial report to confirm the information included in the audited financial report presented on this website.

Information Other than the Financial Report and Auditor's Report Thereon

Those charged with governance are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Company's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2021, 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.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED
ABN 88 002 387 699

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE
MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED
ABN 88 002 387 699



Responsibilities of Directors for the Financial Report

The Directors of the Company are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, and for such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Directors either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Company's financial reporting process.

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 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 the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with 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 misstatements, 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 Company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Directors 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 Company'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 Company 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.

MNSA Pty Ltd
ABN 59 133 605 400

Level 1, 283 George St
Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 2943 Sydney 2001

Tel (02) 9299 0901
Fax (02) 9299 8104
Email admin@mnsa.com.au

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WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED

ABN 88 002 387 699

WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED
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**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE
MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCES LIMITED**
ABN 88 002 387 699



Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report (Continued)

We communicate with those charged with governance 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 our audit.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-45(3)(b) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* we are required to describe any deficiency, failure or shortcoming in respect of the matters referred to in paragraph 60-30(3)(b), (c) or (d) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. We have nothing to report in this regard.

MNSA PTY. LIMITED

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Mark Schiliro

Director

Registered Company Auditor # 335255

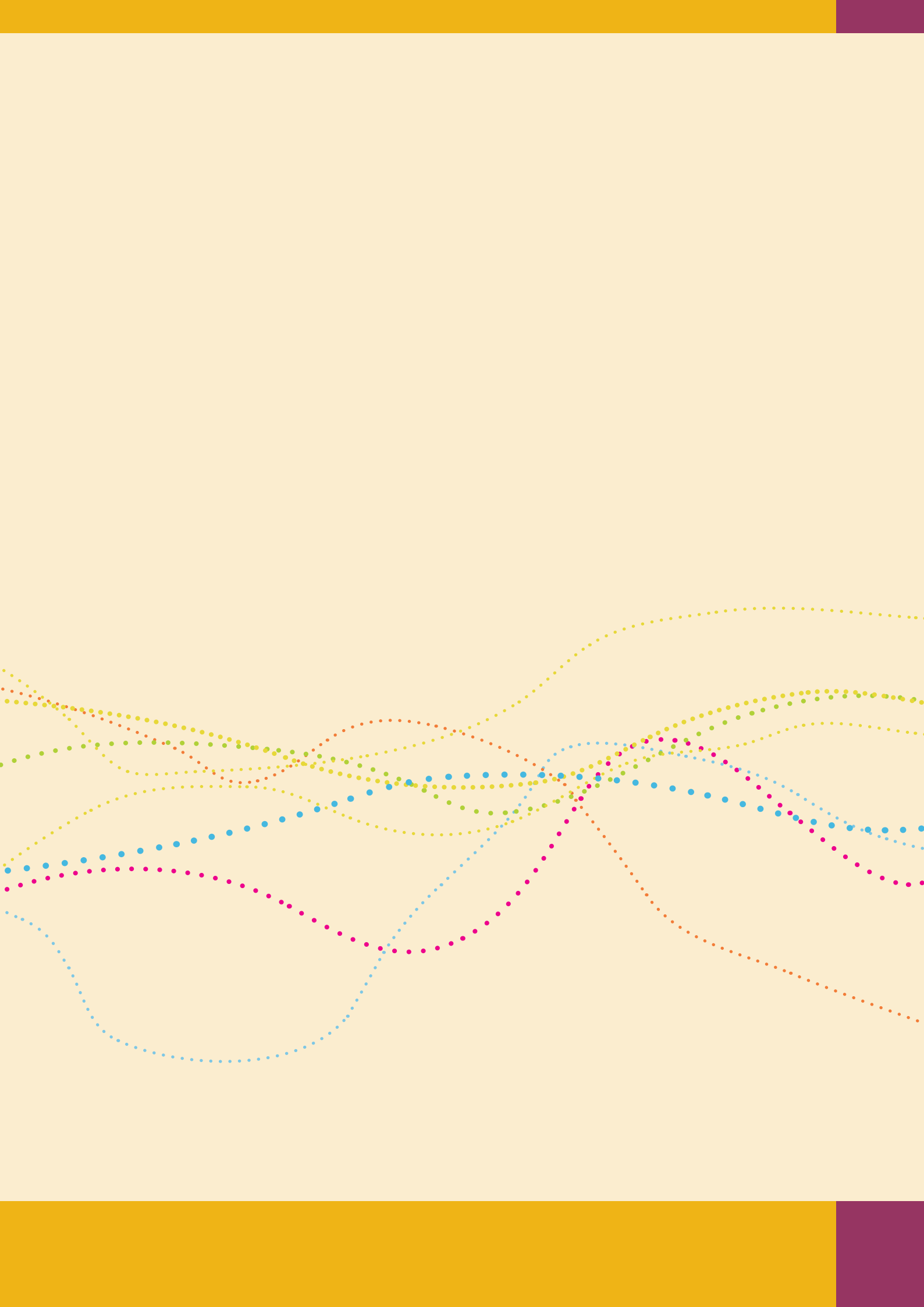
**DATED THIS 20TH DAY OF OCTOBER 2021
SYDNEY, NSW**

MNSA Pty Ltd
ABN 59 133 605 400

Level 1, 283 George St
Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 2943 Sydney 2001

Tel (02) 9299 0901
Fax (02) 9299 8104
Email admin@mnsa.com.au

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approved under the
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Act 1994 (NSW)



**With your help
we can keep our
essential advice
lines open, our
outreach clinics
running, and
support women
desperately
seeking urgent
legal advice
and ongoing
representation.**



Join others like you and help women across NSW by making a donation – no matter how large or small, every dollar helps. You can donate online at: **wlsnsw.org.au/support-our-work**

By EFT:

BSB – 082-330

Account: 56170-6265

Reference: Donation Gift

By cheque to:

Women's Legal Service NSW

PO BOX 206, Lidcombe NSW 1825

Other ways to support WLS:

Attend our events:

foundation@wlsnsw.org.au

Follow us on social media:

Twitter: [@womenslegalnsw](https://twitter.com/womenslegalnsw)

facebook.com/wlsnsw

LinkedIn: [@womenslegalservicesnsw](https://www.linkedin.com/company/womenslegalservicesnsw)

You can even buy a bag as a gift for your favourite feminist friend!

wlsnsw.org.au/support-our-work