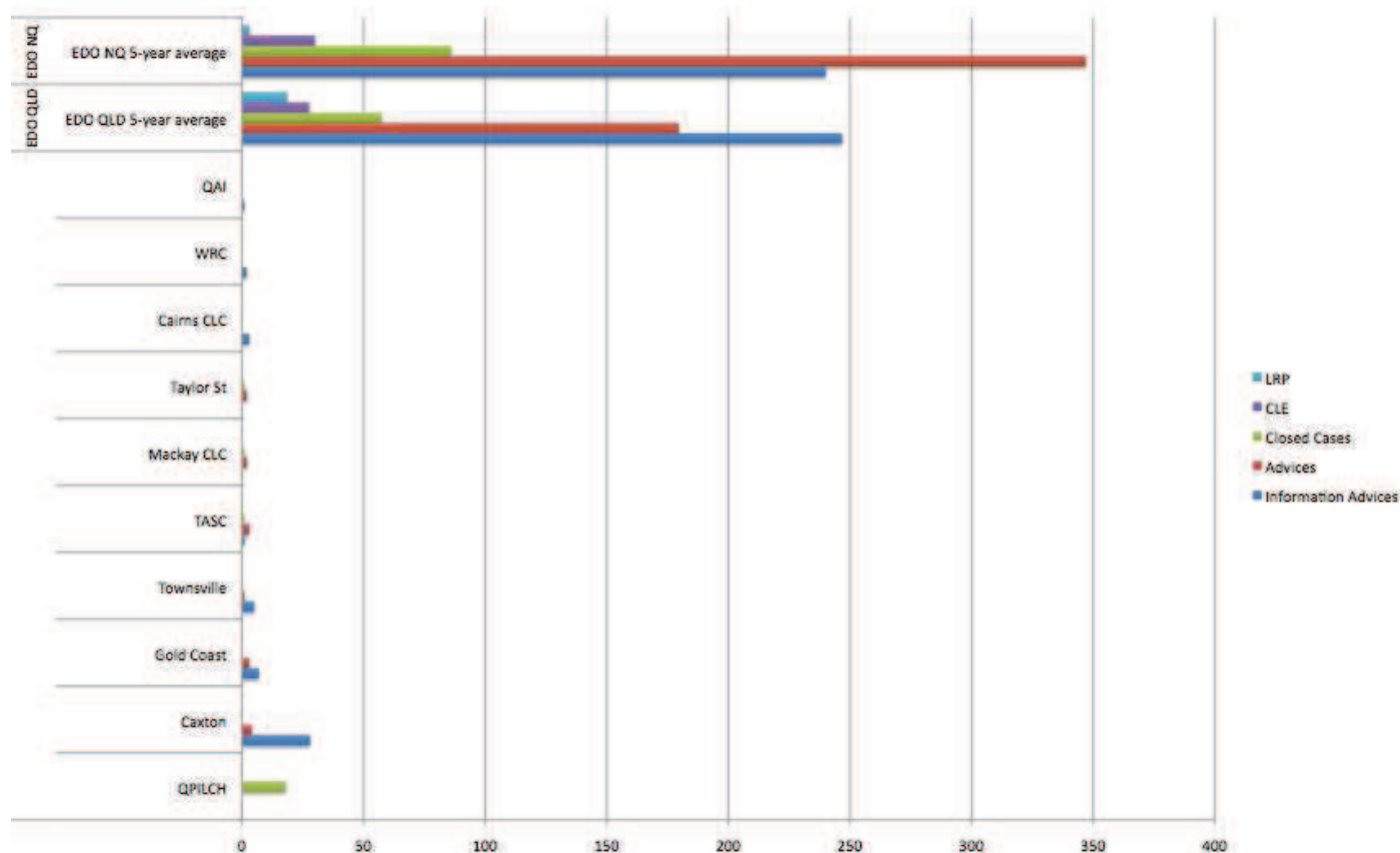


Environmental law

Conversation starter: Jo Bragg (EDO)

Environmental law and litigation is a broad and complicated field. The EDOs produce **specialist publications** such as the *Community Litigants Handbook* or more recently the *Mining and Coal Seam Gas Law Community Guide* and numerous factsheets on individual topics. These help clients help themselves to a point and also make our legal advice service efficient, as they deal with common problems. EDOs also **run major Court cases** in the Planning and Environment Court, the Land Court and the Federal Court. Generalist centres do not have the expertise to run cases or to advise on such a wide range of legal areas and thus specialist EDOs are needed. This is reflected in the CLSIS statistics, which indicate that generalist CLCs refer environmental law matters to the specialist EDOs:



In 2012/13, EDO Queensland's legal advice and casework clients come from 56 localities spread over rural, regional and urban localities, and EDO NQ assisted clients in 27 areas. Environmental educational workshops or educational presentations were run by EDO Qld in Toowoomba, Roma, Chinchilla, Dalby, Emerald, Gold Coast and Brisbane. EDO Qld and EDO NQ cooperated to provide an educational presentation at Chillagoe to Northern Gulf attendees and plan more joint work.

For environmental matters there are vulnerable groups throughout the State, often poorer people with health and wellbeing problems (eg noise, coal dust, pollution) due to living in or near industrial areas or sites marked for major developments. Other clients are prepared to take on larger public interest cases, eg protecting groundwater, to help the welfare of the community.

The income levels of EDO legal advice clients show that they are in vulnerable groups. Those clients cannot afford private legal advice to help with matters that affect their communities in the public interest. The EDOs surveyed individual clients for the five months since March 2013, with the majority of EDO Queensland (60%) and EDONQ (62%) of individuals surveyed had no income or less than \$35,000 per annum. Similarly, 88% of EDO Queensland and 50% of EDONQ organisational clients surveyed had either no income or less than \$35,000 per annum.