

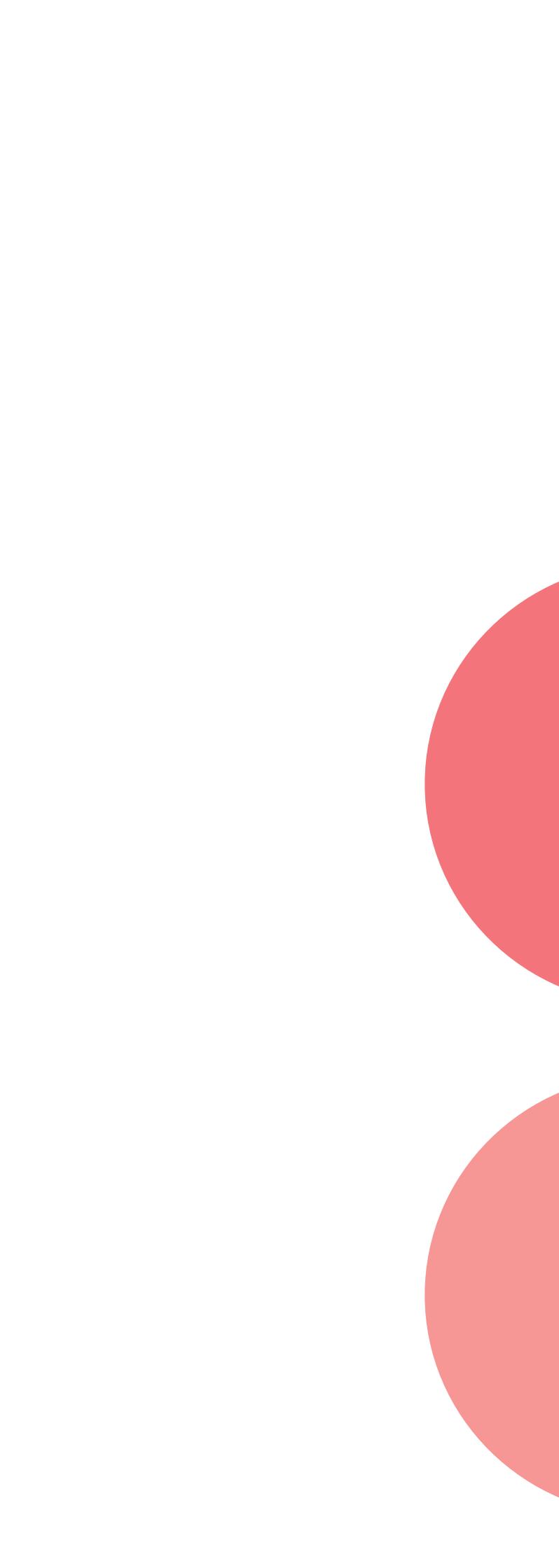
Annual

report

2016/2017



**Community  
Legal Centres  
Queensland**



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# About us

## Overview

All Australians understand and value the idea of a 'fair go' – that everyone should be able to access justice and fairness, regardless of the size of their bank balance, where we live, or the circumstances we face. This is brought into sharp focus when a person has a legal problem. However, most people feel that getting legal help will be too expensive or hard, and ignore their legal problems. This often leads to additional legal problems which affect their health, family and homes.

Community legal centres are independent, community-run organisations that aim to ensure legal help is available for those who need it. There are thirty-three of these organisations across Queensland, providing legal advice, information, ongoing representation and support.

In addition to these individual services, community legal centres work to prevent legal problems before they occur by educating people about their legal rights and responsibilities and suggesting ways to improve laws and practices to better protect people.

Community legal centres harness the energy and expertise of hundreds of volunteers across Queensland to ensure people get the legal help they need. Centres also collaborate with government, Legal Aid Queensland, the private legal profession and community partners to ensure the best outcomes for their clients and the system of justice in Australia.

As the peak body for Queensland's community legal centres, we worked with our members to support effective, high quality legal services for as many Queenslanders as possible. We also helped the people working in the centres remain informed and united. This annual report talks about how we did this over the period of 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

## Acknowledgement of traditional owners

Community Legal Centres Queensland affirms that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia and acknowledges their unique relationship with their ancestral country. In particular, we acknowledge the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, the traditional custodians of the land in and around Brisbane, and pay respect to their elders, past and present.

# President

This year, Community Legal Centres Queensland had to spend more time than it would have liked in having to oppose proposed cuts to community legal centre funding.

We were relieved to attend the Brisbane press conference, held by ministers Michaela Cash and George Brandis, in April, to hear that funding would continue at current levels for the next few years.

It was a great result, as it had appeared very likely that federal funding for Queensland's community legal centres would be reduced by almost thirty per cent.

Our significant effort and energy contributed to this decision. We worked with our members, other community law peaks, the private profession, unions, churches, community groups, domestic violence advocates and concerned people across the community. We met with dozens of politicians, appeared in mainstream media hundreds of times, harnessed the support of thousands of our friends through social media, and empowered hundreds of people to speak for us, and for our members, and (most importantly) their clients.

We are proud that we contributed to this result.

But imagine what we could have done if we had been able to focus on supporting legal help for everyday Queenslanders: provide training for workers in new and complex areas of law, coordinate joined-up services, measure the impact of community legal centres' work for the clients that rely on these services, use our members' experience to inform public policy and law reform processes and build stronger partnerships with philanthropy, governments, courts and other key partners.



James Farrell, Director



Janet Wight, President

As you will see from this annual report, we did these things, but this effort could have been more focused and more productive, if we had not had to spend hundreds of hours advocating to retain funding so that our member community legal centres could continue to provide legal help to ordinary people across Queensland - advocating just to maintain the status quo. And the problem is that the status quo is not good enough.

The reality is that in the last financial year, while Queensland community legal centres helped almost 60,000 people but another 55,000 people who phoned Queensland community legal centres were unable to speak to a lawyer. This means that renters couldn't find out about their rights to stay in their home, a customer couldn't get advice about their dispute with a bank, and no one could help a mum to go to court to talk about custody of the children in a family breakdown.

As we reflect on 2016-17, we look forward to the next year; without the distraction of fighting to simply maintain services, we are confident that our work can be more proactive and client-focused, and support the work of our member CLCs to provide vulnerable and disadvantaged Queenslanders with the legal help they need and the justice they deserve.

# Goal one

## Blood from a stone report

**W**e undertook a project to identify where we could save money for community legal centres in their operating budgets. The project found that there were limited opportunities for savings due to the underinvestment in spending not specifically related to providing services directly to the community. This is consistent with other research across the social and community sectors.

The project also found that the buying power of the Queensland community legal sector is an insufficient incentive for external retailers and service providers to reduce their prices. As a result, community legal centres needed to join group buying schemes covering more than just the Queensland community legal sector if they were to secure bulk-buying discounts.

While there may be limited blood that can be extracted from the Community Legal Centre Stone, there is scope for some future work such as non-legal support by pro bono law firms through structured volunteering; adding value to existing community legal centre budgets through a sector sustainability strategy; ensuring centres have access to appropriate and affordable professional development and training; and leveraging information technology projects.

## Self-evaluation tool kit

**T**his year we focused on building the capacity of Queensland community legal centres to better measure and understand the outcomes of their work in the community.

We developed a self-evaluation toolkit based on a sector-wide theory of change. The tools were designed to measure the medium and long-term outcomes for community legal centre clients, the community and the justice system. We tested the tools at three community legal centres: Basic Rights Queensland, Nundah Community Legal Service, and Townsville Community Legal Service.

The next step for this project is to further embed the tools and practices in Community Legal Centres so that we can better map the impact on the community. This will allow us to better communicate the impact of the work of Community Legal Centres and guide future development of our services.

# Support and develop the organisational capacity of community legal centres

## Collaborative service planning and tender process

In October 2016, all Queensland community legal centres were encouraged to apply for Queensland and Commonwealth Legal Assistance Service Delivery Funding which was being administered by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Under Queensland government policy and the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services, planning for legal assistance services requires evidence and analysis of legal need.

Because these principles underpinned the application process, Community Legal Centres provided resources and support to assist centres to engage with the tender process. This included producing the, 'Application Resource Guide'.

The Application Resource Guide provided help in filling out the tender application form and how to answer the questions about the quality evaluation criteria. The resource drew upon the legal needs research on targeting legal assistance to priority groups in the community. This guide provided practical guidance on each question, including sample answers to the criteria. The resource was supported by face-to-face and webinar training and individual coaching and support.

## Over the coming year we will

- Continue to support Community Legal Centres to embed evaluation and impact measurement practices
- Provide support to Community Legal Centres on how to govern and lead their organisations
- Continue to build Community Legal Centre's capacity to diversify their resource base
- Assist Community Legal Centres to undertake planning that takes into account the challenges and opportunities of their communities
- Continue to work with legal assistance colleagues and organisations.



# Goal two

## Student research projects

**W**e have valuable relationships with universities, and particularly law schools. This year, a team of students from the University of Queensland's Community Engagement Program built and delivered a public awareness campaign to raise awareness of how students can access free legal help. They researched the most effective means to market to this group and designed promotional material for us. The University also recruited a team of students to help deliver the conference and work alongside the paid staff providing administration support.

## Communications

**E**very fortnight we distributed an newsletter to our Centre Directors telling them about grant schemes, opportunities to get involved with legal reform work, training events they could attend and provided them with an overview of what was happening within the sector. We also produced a quarterly publication which was sent out to MPs, funders and decision makers talking about the work of our sector. Over the year the number of people we sent this publication to grew from 2020 to 2082.

We were active on social media and over the year saw an increase in our Facebook followers to 1,723, our Twitter followers from 1701 to 2435 and our Youtube viewers from 463 to 2701 viewers. Our social media activities gave us an opportunity to tell people on a daily basis what was happening within the sector, as well as provide a snapshot of the on-going work of Community Legal Centres Queensland.

## Community Legal Centres Queensland Conference

**I**n We ran a state conference from 8 to 9 May, 2017 at the Mantra Hotel, Surfers Paradise which saw us bring together 220 people over two days. Attendees included; community legal centre staff, government representatives, MPs, corporate lawyers and specialists in related fields such as fundraising, social work and administration. There were a variety of presentations, panel discussions and workshops ranging from communicating with Indigenous clients, new developments in legal technology through to evaluating services.

In our post event survey:

- 85% respondents said their overall experience was excellent or good.
- 89% respondents said the venue facilities were excellent or good.
- 86% said that the opportunity to network was excellent or good.
- 100% of participants said they had gained new information.

One of the highlights for the conference was the key note address by Elizabeth Alredge from the USA based group, Voices for Civil Justice. Elizabeth spoke on the need to promote the work of Community Legal Centres and equipped the group to tell the story of their centre. While in Australia, Elizabeth also spoke at the Strategic Communication Training Day which we hosted in Brisbane and Sydney. Her visit from the USA was made possible via a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation.

# Support and develop community legal centre staff, including volunteers

## Community Legal Centres Queensland workshop

We ran a workshop for Directors and Principal Solicitors at the Gardens Point Café Brisbane from 10 to 11 October, 2016. The focus of the workshop was providing the skills to advocate to decision makers. As part of the workshop, many of the community legal centre staff met with their local MP to discuss issues relevant to their constituency area. We also held a reception at parliament which was well attended by State and Federal MPs, their staff, the media, and the staff of Community Legal Centres from across the state. The reception was a chance to discuss how centres can best support the people of Queensland and the continued need for governmental investment in free legal services.

## Webinars

We were delighted to receive a grant from the John Villiers Trust to deliver our webinar program. This allowed us to increase the number of free webinars from 21 in 2015/16 to 38 in 2016/17 and increase the number of registrations from 700 to 3,703 people. This year we asked the presenters if we could record their presentation so that people could view it at a later date and this resulted in 1,408 post event downloads.

## Over the coming year we will:

- Continue to deliver the webinar program
- Run a workshop for Centre Directors which will help to grow their leadership skills
- Deliver a state conference for the sector.



Photos from the 2016 Leadership Forum

# Goal three

## Queensland Legal Assistance Forum Coordination Project

In 2016, The Queensland Legal Assistance Forum's terms of reference were dramatically revised to reflect its central role in driving collaborative service planning under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services.

As a result of this we were allocated funding for a Project Officer to provide support and coordination to the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum. Over the year the Project Officer:

- Initiated and supported three new specialist working groups to help inform service planning, demonstrate best practice, and identify agreed priorities for vulnerable client groups.
- Provided support and coordination for the development and recommendation of project proposals by its specialist working groups and Legal Assistance Forums, through collaboration with the sector.
- Endorsed a sector work plan which included six projects that are considered to have the greatest impact for state-wide collaborative service planning. A number of organisations including community legal centres and Community Legal Centres Queensland were funded to deliver these projects
- Enhanced and supported communication and engagement between the Queensland Legal Assistance Forum, its working groups and other sub-forums and stakeholders

## Evidence and analysis of legal need report

We produced a report which summarised the evidence of legal need in Queensland. We used demographic for legal need, based on leading international and Australian research. The data showed the number and proportion of the Queensland population that fits into the National Partnership Agreement's 'priority client groups', across thirteen regions in Queensland.

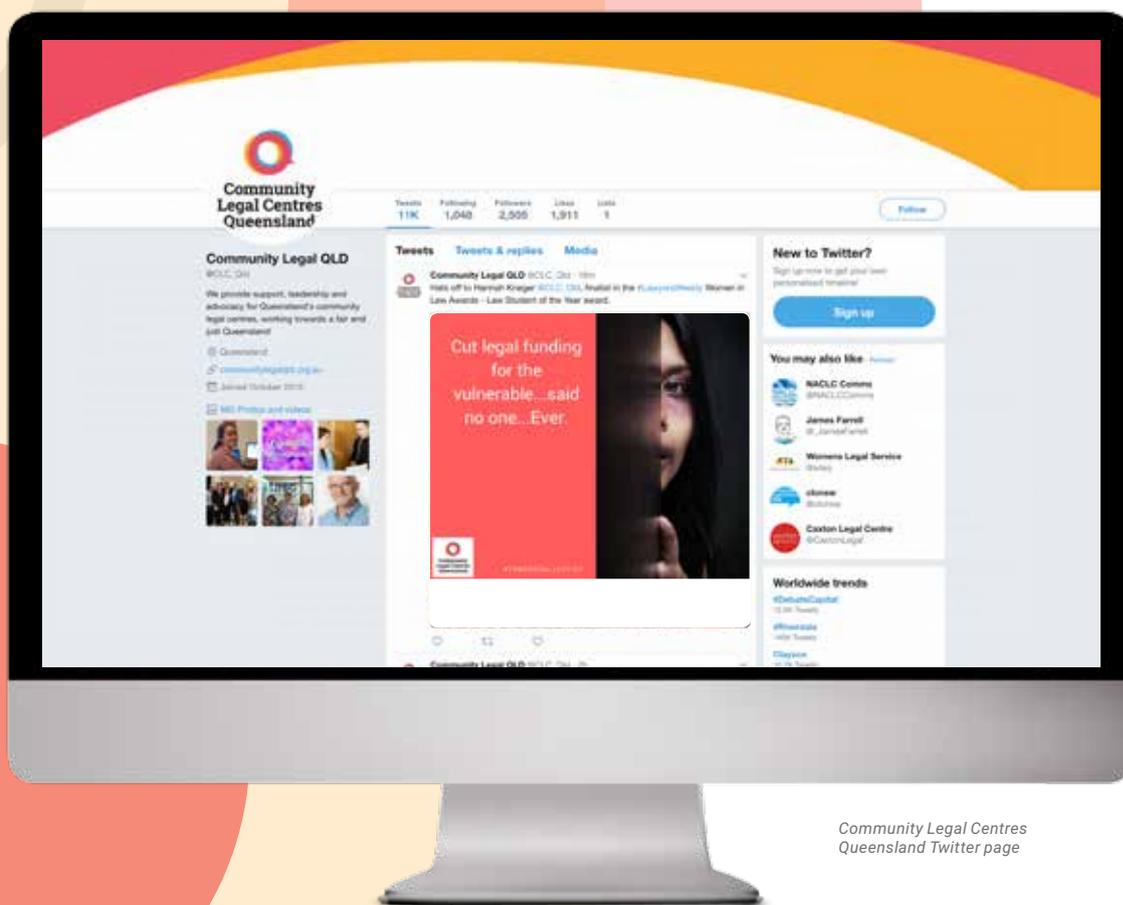
The report mirrored the Law and Justice Foundation New South Wales research, which talked about community legal centres' experiences over forty years providing legal help to vulnerable Queenslanders, and proposed strategies to make legal assistance services more appropriate and accessible.

The updated evidence and analysis of legal need was supplemented by a family law resource to assist community legal centres to correlate the National Partnership Agreement priorities in family law with the evidence of legal need research.

## Over the coming year we will

- Harness client stories
- Research into areas such as: the legal needs of people experiencing domestic violence; changes to Queensland law to further protect older people from abuse; Health Justice Partnerships in Queensland; supporting community organisations to use a Human Rights Act.

Provide targeted information to members of the public so legal needs are responded to in a timely way



Community Legal Centres Queensland Twitter page

# Goal four

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## Law reform as a frontline legal service

**T**his year we worked with our members and partners across a range of policy issues relevant to our members' work and their clients' lived experiences. This included:

- Department of Social Services Discussion Paper on National Disability Advocacy Program – in collaboration with Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, Community Legal Centres New South Wales, The Federation and the National Association of Community Legal Centres.
- Work and Development Order Consultation Paper / State Penalty Enforcement Regulator Consultation Paper – in collaboration with 15 Community Legal Centres, Not-for-profit agencies and pro bono assistance from DLA Piper
- Australian Law Reform Commission Elder Abuse Inquiry – in collaboration with National Association of Community Legal Centres and Older Persons' Legal Service.
- Domestic and Family Violence Amendment Bill 2016 – in collaboration with Women's Legal Service
- Youth Justice and Other Legislation (Inclusion of 17 year old persons) Amendment Bill 2016

## Documenting Collaborative Relationships resource

**P**artnerships and collaborative relationships are central to Community Legal Centres working effectively in their communities. This year, many centres identified the need to formalise these relationships.

To help the process, we produced a guide for Community Legal Centres to assist them to document these important relationships. The resource was undertaken in collaboration with *Justice Connect* and customised Justice Connect's Not-for-profit Law *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) factsheet so that it could be used by community legal centres to provide practical guidance on the key issues that needed to be discussed.

# Mature Community Legal Centre Queensland's role as peak body for Queensland's community legal centres

## Some of the partnerships we were part of this year

- Our staff attended Community Legal Education Legal Assistance Forum meetings, to promote cooperation and collaboration between legal service providers who are delivering and initiating community legal education activities. We also attended other specialist forums, including the Information and Referrals Forum and the Best Practice Forum.
- Community Legal Centres Queensland sat on the Queensland Law Society's Access to Justice and Pro Bono Committee and contributed to the Society's work in this area.
- Our national peak body, the National Association of Community Legal Centres continued to advocate nationally and support our work. This included overseeing the national accreditation scheme, replacing our data collection system with the new CLASS platform, campaigning for increased Commonwealth funding, and engaging in law reform on fundamental human rights and social justice issues.
- Community Legal Centres Queensland also worked closely with a number of other community organisations, statutory agencies and government departments.

## Over the coming year we will

- Work with our legal assistance sector colleagues to develop regional service plans to better understand the legal needs of the Queensland community.

# Goal five

## #fundequaljustice campaign

The Federal Government flagged that it would reduce funding for legal assistance services by 30 per cent on 1 July 2017. We knew that this cut would adversely impact the work of our members and the clients that they see. Leading up to the 2017 Federal Budget, we worked with the National Association of Community Legal Centres to deliver a communication campaign called #fundequaljustice. The primary audience for this campaign was the State and Federal Attorney General. During the campaign:

- We generated significant media coverage, including 219 news items which highlighted the work of our centres and the impact on communities if the cuts went ahead.
- We had informal meetings with eleven political journalists and told them about the work of our centres and our concerns in relation to the funding cuts.
- We met with 85 state and federal MPs to talk about the cuts. As a result of these meetings, many of the MPs took direct action including; signing a petition, writing to the State and Federal Attorney-Generals, lodging a motion or asking a question in parliament within two weeks of the meeting taking place.
- We harnessed the power of social media by posting over 3,000 items. These posts used the hash tag #fundequaljustice and saw 1.3 million people interact with our posts.

- We worked closely with our members to engage them with the campaign. Many Community Legal Centre Directors appeared in the media for the first time, and had their local MP visit their centres. They also spoke to former clients and encouraged them to speak out on behalf of the sector.
- We called on our friends and supporters and asked them to lend their support to the campaign. This resulted in the heads of the seven law societies writing an open letter. This was followed by a letter from the eight Australian peak legal bodies; the President of the Uniting Church in Australia; co-signed letter from five cross bench MPs; the Services Union, an open letter from thirty-six family violence groups, eighteen mid-size law firms, the Deans of thirty law schools and a joint letter from Tim Nicholls, Leader of the LNP and Ian Walker, Shadow Attorney-General.

## Over the coming year we will

- Continue to work with the National Association of Community Legal Centres to deliver the second phase of the #fundequaljustice campaign.

# Be a respected and leading voice for community legal centres and social justice



Queensland Community Legal Centre staff meeting with MPs in Canberra



# Goal six

## National Accreditation Scheme

**W**e continued the rollout of phase two of the National Accreditation Scheme. The Regional Accreditation Co-ordinator conducted twelve site visits to community legal centres across Queensland. Nineteen centres were re-certified for another three years. The focus of the phase two of the National Accreditation Scheme was to build on achievements made under phase one, and feedback from most centres is that they have found the review process more straightforward this time around. Most centres reported seeing real benefits of the National Accreditation Scheme process in terms of the opportunity to consider how to continuously improve systems, processes and client services.

We continue to create and share resources and information about the National Accreditation Scheme by gathering video testimonials, quotes from Community Legal Centres on their experiences, and sharing Community Legal Centre stories about that National Accreditation Scheme. The Regional Accreditation Co-ordinator will work with the National Accreditation Coordinator and Regional Accreditation Co-ordinators from other jurisdictions to develop shared resources, and to ensure consistency in the approach to the accreditation process around the country.

## Risk management and professional indemnity insurance

**A**ll our members are comprehensively audited and assessed before they can be certified as being compliant with national standards for legal service delivery. The standards cover all aspects of operations, including governance and management, all aspects of legal practice, financial accountability, risk minimisation, employment practices, physical safety and accessibility.

Our members can also access the National Association of Community Legal Centres' bulk professional indemnity insurance scheme and its associated Risk Management regime. This is a successful and cost-effective way for centres to manage both their risk and their professional indemnity insurance.

The Risk Management Guide, annual cross-checks and compulsory state professional indemnity insurance meetings help individual centres understand and manage risk in their legal practice, identify possible new risks and act to minimise risks and prevent and/or mitigate claims by clients.



# Deliver clear and transparent governance and operational management

## Policies and Procedures Manual review

**B**ecause we are funded by the Queensland government, we need to comply with the Human Services Quality Framework. This year we revised our policies and procedures. All staff were involved in this revision and the management committee endorsed the updated policies and procedures. We finalised our accreditation through the Human Services Quality Framework by self-assessment on 30 June 2017.

We have been helping drive the accreditation process in Queensland for the past five years. By updating our own policies and procedures, we are able to better understand the workload for our member centres in complying with accreditation standards.

## Over the coming year we will

- Undertake a further twelve site visits, which will complete the schedule of National Accreditation Scheme Phase two reviews.
- All centres that have already been certified will provide reports to the Regional Accreditation Co-ordinator of achievements under their agreed Improvement Plans at six monthly intervals, with the main report to be provided at the twelve month point. The Regional Accreditation Co-ordinator will review all reports and provide feedback to centres about any additional actions that may be required.

*Penny Sullivan, Regional Accreditation Co-ordinator visited a range of centres.*



# Our people

## Staff

James Farrell, Director

Cathy Baker, Communications Manager

Monica Roberts, QLAF Project Officer (until June 2017)

Rosslyn Monro, Sector Sustainability Coordinator

Penny Sullivan, Regional Accreditation Coordinator

Kirsty Mackie, Research Officer (until January 2017)

Cristy Dieckmann, Policy Worker

Hannah Krieger, Membership Officer

Jude Clarkin, Finance Officer (until January 2017)

## Members

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services  
North Queensland

Aboriginal Family Legal Service Southern Queensland

Basic Rights Queensland

Bayside Community Legal Service

Cairns Community Legal Centre

Caxton Legal Centre

Central Queensland Community Legal Centre

Environmental Defenders Office Queensland

Environmental Defenders Office of Northern Queensland

Gold Coast Community Legal Centre & Advice Bureau Inc.

Goondiwindi Community Legal Service

Junkuri Laka Community Legal Centre Aboriginal Corporation

LawRight

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex Legal Service

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre

Moreton Bay Regional Community Legal Service

North Queensland Women's Legal Service

Nundah Community Support Group

Pine Rivers Community Legal Service

Prisoners' Legal Service Inc.

Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service

Refugee and Immigration Legal Service

Robina Community Legal Centre

South West Brisbane Community Legal Centre

Suncoast Community Legal Service

TASC National

Taylor Street Community Legal Service

Tenants Queensland

Townsville Community Legal Service

Women's Legal Service

YFS Legal

Youth Advocacy Centre

# Thanks

## Volunteers

Jean Morton  
Tammy Tang  
Theresa Yu  
Genevieve Feely  
Susanna Je  
Chris Vale  
Manasa Pappu  
Danielle Goltz  
Tegan Baker  
Yaeun Kim  
Matthew Singer

## Management Committee

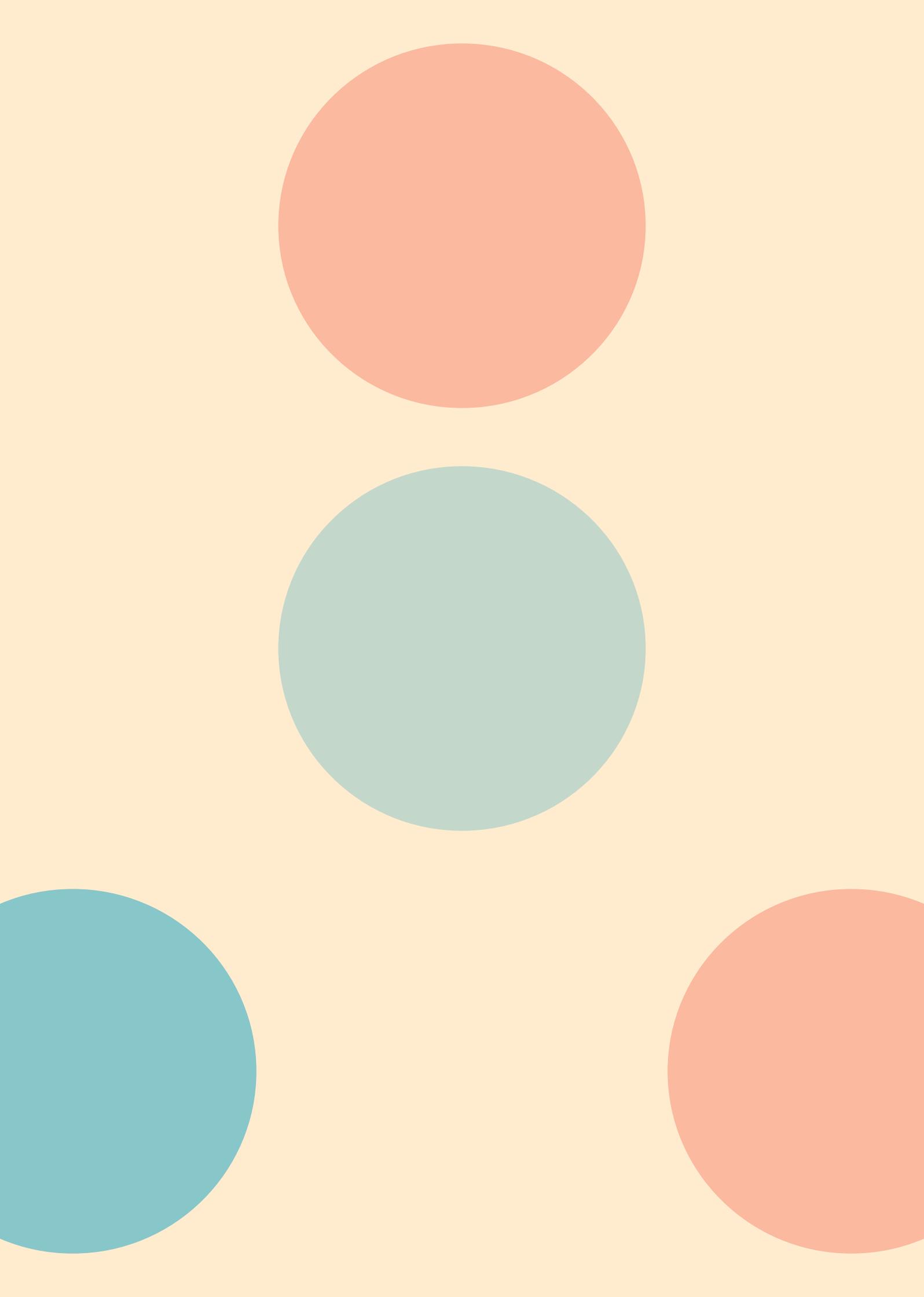
Janet Wight (Youth Advocacy Centre), President  
Aaron Finn (Townsville Community Legal Service), Treasurer  
Hayley Grainger (North Queensland Women's Legal Service)  
Susan Hamilton (Aboriginal Family Law Service Southern Queensland)  
David Manwaring (TASC National)  
George Pharmacis (Robina Community Legal Centre)  
Alison Swift (Pine Rivers Community Legal Service)  
Georgina Warrington (Basic Rights Queensland)  
Philippa Whitman (TASC National)

## Sponsors and funders

# to

Community Legal Centres Queensland acknowledges funding from the following sources in 2016-2017:

- Legal Practitioners Interest on Trust Account Fund, responsibility for which lies with the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and which is administered through Legal Aid Queensland
- Federal Attorney-General's Department
- Queensland Department of Justice
- Legal Aid Queensland Community Legal Education Collaboration Fund
- John Villier's Trust
- Event sponsors, including: The Services Union, Ian Potter Foundation, New Way Family Lawyers, Office of the Information Commission, Herbert Smith Freehills and Clayton Utz.







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