



**Community
Legal Centres
Queensland**

Annual Report 2023 - 24

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This Annual Report covers the period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024 and was presented at the Community Legal Centres Queensland Annual General Meeting on November 4 2024.

Community Legal Centres Queensland held appropriate insurance throughout the 2023-24 financial year. This included \$20 million in public liability insurance cover.

About us

Community Legal Centres Queensland is the peak body representing the 32 independent, community-led community legal centres operating across Queensland, including in rural and remote areas.

Queensland's community legal centres provide free information, legal assistance and referrals, representation and casework, community education and advocacy to people experiencing disadvantage who are facing legal and social problems.

Established in 1993, our vision is to work with our centres towards a fair and just Queensland.

Our mission is to be a voice for the sector and to lead and support Queensland community legal centres to deliver quality and accessible services to people experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage and to bring about change for individuals and communities.

Our objectives are to:

- continually improve organisational sustainability and service quality
- increase the accessibility, profile and resourcing of the sector
- to unite around common objectives to bring about change.

We acknowledge traditional custodians

Community Legal Centres Queensland pay our deepest respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the land in Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and commit to fostering a culture of learning from and working with First Nations peoples in the spirit of reconciliation and access to justice.

President & Director's report

This year marked a significant milestone for community legal centres in Queensland, as the state government made its first substantial investment in many years.

The Queensland Government allocated \$14.4 million over 12 months to support workforce development and assist CLCs in transitioning to new databases. A significant catalyst for this investment was the data on the workforce crisis facing community legal centres which Community Legal Centres Queensland gathered from our sector and included in our budget proposal.

Our inaugural workforce survey confirmed the concerning trends we had heard anecdotally: stark pay disparities between community legal centres and Legal Aid; the loss of experienced staff due to limited career opportunities leading to a “hollowing out” of our workforce; and the mounting pressures from the rising cost of living.

Looking ahead to 2024-25, our primary challenge will be to secure ongoing funding for workforce uplift under the new national partnership arrangements for the next five years. We are eager to share the positive impact of this investment for our members and the communities they serve.

We are particularly proud of our inaugural event for First Nations community legal centre employees, Wunya. Special thanks to Sammy Cooper and Leah Lane for their dedication and creativity in creating a space where attendees felt acknowledged, supported, and valued. This event is rapidly becoming a cherished annual gathering, and we look forward to being able to continue it in 2024-25.

Another highlight this year was the Climate and Disaster Resilience project, which showcased how targeted resources and expertise can empower community legal centres to tackle shared challenges within their communities. We extend our gratitude to Monica Taylor for leading this initiative and developing comprehensive resources that will prove invaluable to community legal centres in the future.

The achievements of Community Legal Centres Queensland this year were made possible through the collective efforts of our dedicated staff and management committee.

It's a testament to our team's capabilities that our members and stakeholders often express surprise at our small size. We remain ambitious for our members and are committed to securing sustainable funding for Queensland community legal centres and the communities they serve in the year ahead.



Rosslyn
Monro
Director



Amanda
Whelan
President

2023-24



32
members
community legal
centres



13
members
re-accredited under
NAS



29
webinars held



4000+
webinar registrations



10
meetings with
politicians



1
trip to Parliament
House (Canberra)



220+
2024 State Conference
attendees



40+
First Nations
employees attended
Wunya



4
Quarterly newsletters
sent



25
Member's Digest
email newsletters



3,800+
Facebook followers



1,200+
LinkedIn followers

Workforce Survey



In 2023 Community Legal Centres Queensland conducted its first survey of community legal centres and their workforces across the state.

The aim of the survey was to understand the profile of the community legal centres workforce and the attraction and retention factors for working in Queensland's community legal centres.

Two surveys were distributed: an Organisational Survey which was sent to all CEOs/centre managers, and an Individual Worker Survey which was provided to all current and paid staff.

299 individual responses were received and 25 centres completed the organisational survey.

The survey measured the composition and characteristics of community legal centres, including details of the roles, conditions, hours worked, wellbeing, training and salary, developing a baseline Queensland community legal centre workforce profile.

The surveys collected valuable information about workforce composition, the 'push and pull' factors of the community legal centre sector, good recruitment processes, and how Centres can maintain and sustain their workers.

The survey results were the basis for the influential Community Legal Centres Queensland 2024 State budget proposal which identified a 22% wage gap between employees of Legal Aid Queensland and community legal centres.

The data was a key factor in triggering the Queensland Government's funding response of \$12.4 million in 2024-2025 for community legal centre workforce uplift.

The workforce survey found:

- High levels of staff turnover due to low wages
- A 'juniorisation' of the workforce, requiring additional community legal centre resources to train and support new workers, while losing more experienced and mid-career professionals to higher paying employers
- Frequent workforce vacancies that sometimes remain unfilled for up to 12 months, particularly in RRR locations
- Additional work pressures requiring community legal centre staff to complete work outside ordinary hours to ensure clients receive the help they need
- Increased risk of burnout of the existing workforce, and of workplace health and safety risks particularly regarding psychosocial hazards stemming from stress, inadequate reward and recognition and vicarious trauma.

Budget Advocacy

Ahead of the 2024-25 State Budget, Community Legal Centres Queensland called on the State Government to invest an additional \$18.76 million in the budget to stem the flow of critical community legal centre workers to better paid jobs and ensure the current suite of community legal centre services is maintained across Queensland.

Our proposal outlined how the investment in the vital social infrastructure of community legal centres would:

- Maintain the current suite of community legal centre services to ensure Queenslanders get the services they need
- Show frontline workers they are valued and support workforce diversity and inclusion
- Ensure regional, rural and remote community legal centres and services are not left behind
- Provide community legal centres with essential ICT assistance to transition from the current CLASS client database to a new Client Management System (CMS) by June 2025

- Increase the capacity of the state peak body to provide effective support and sector development to a community legal centre sector growing in size and complexity, including advocacy on key policy issues, and coordination of disaster responses and CLASS transition.

After many months of discussions and meetings with the Attorney-General and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the budget announced:

- \$12.336 million in 2024-2025 for an uplift in salary and conditions for community legal centre staff
- \$1.6 million one-off funds for transitioning from CLASS
- \$425,000 across the three year forward estimates to replace CLASS

This was a big win for community legal centres but the lack of funds committed in forward estimates have left the sector in an uncertain position.



State Budget Investment Proposal 2024-2025

Queensland's 32 community legal centres (CLCs) play a vital role in making Queensland a safer and fairer place to live, by ensuring everyone has access to justice. CLCs have a positive impact and make a real difference.






Key priorities and recommendations

This State Budget Investment Proposal recommends that the Queensland Government invest an additional **\$18.76 million** in 2024-2025 to stem the flow of critical CLC workers to better paid jobs and ensure the current suite of CLC services is maintained across Queensland.

Recommendation 1: CLC Workforce investment	\$15,829,375
Recommendation 2: Fund CLASS Database Transition	\$2,269,800
Recommendation 3: Fund the State Peak Body for CLCs	\$660,000

Climate and Disaster Resilience Project

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority supported Community Legal Centres Queensland to deliver a 12-month Disaster Resilience Community of Practice and Sector Capacity Building Project.

The project was jointly financed under the Commonwealth/State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018 and administered by the Queensland Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE).

The project's high-level objective was to support the knowledge and capability of community legal centre lawyers, staff, volunteers and organisations to deliver targeted and effective place-based legal support across all phases of the disaster cycle.

Underneath this overarching objective, key Project aims were to:

- Build a Community of Practice for Queensland community legal centres to quickly and effectively respond to the legal needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities which arise at all stages of disaster.
- Support community legal centres to ensure their own organisational processes and practices support their internal resilience when responding to disaster legal needs.
- Build resilience through preventative legal work to mitigate harm to people and communities to help reduce the burden on government-led responses.

Community Legal Centres Queensland also identified two additional 'stretch' project aims:

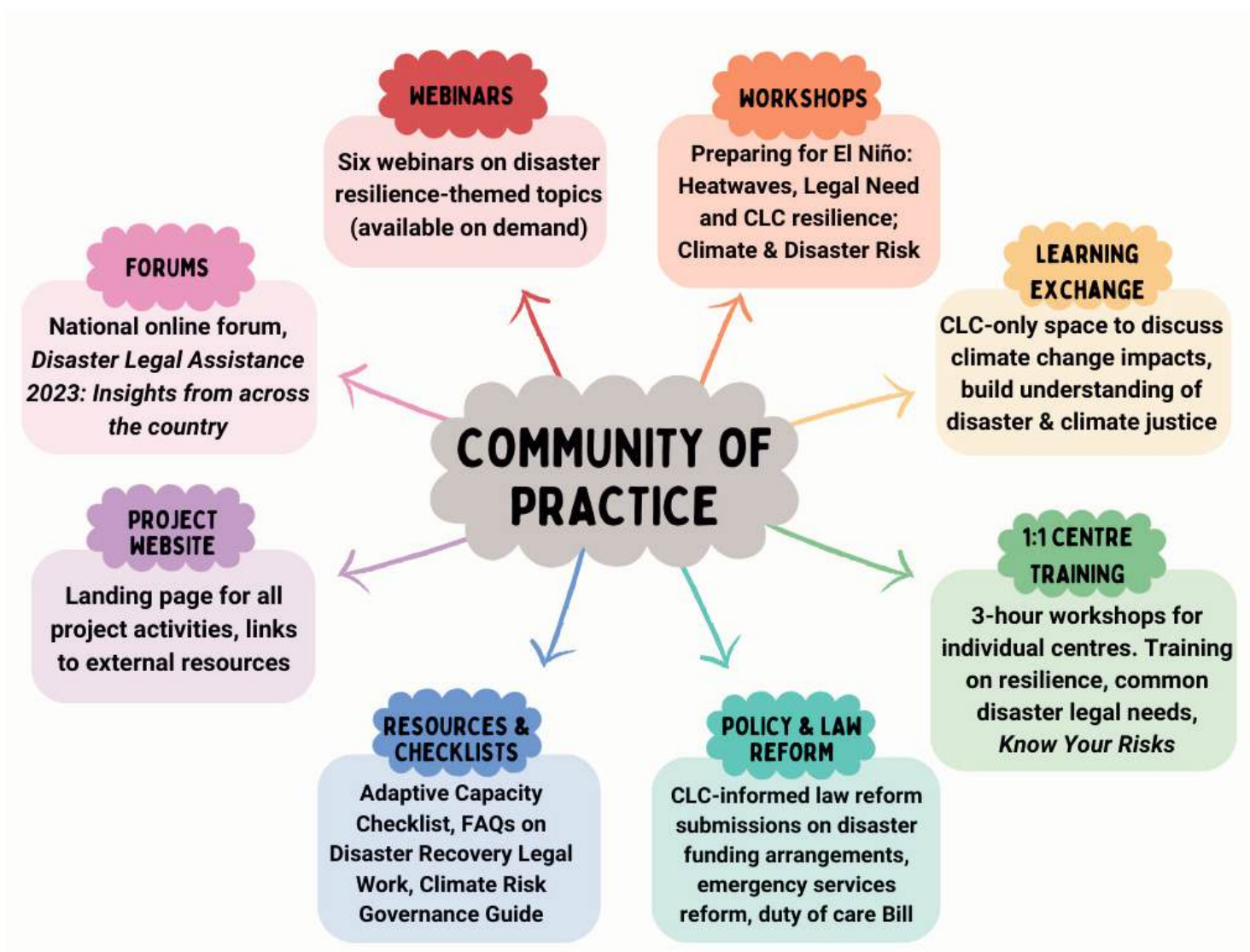
- Build literacy on basic climate science so that community legal centres have a better understanding of how climate change impacts will affect their community
- Lay the foundation for developing an overarching Strategy for Disaster/Climate Resilience for community legal centres in Queensland, and nationally.

Community Legal Centres Queensland determined some guiding principles for this Project. The first principle was that First Nations expertise must be at the heart of our response to the climate crisis.

Second, that climate change exacerbates inequality and injustice across our social, legal, economic, and political systems. And third, that the best assurance against harm from climate change is deep and drastic greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

These principles shaped the narrative for how Community Legal Centres Queensland approached the task of capacity building its members through this project.





WATCH OUR ON DEMAND WEBINAR

Community volunteers:
Risk and liabilities for
community-led disaster
response

presented by
Jacob Currie, Hopgood Gamin
Lawyers & Jacqui Cavanagh,
Caxton Legal Centre



Community
Legal Centres
Queensland



Wunya

Wunya is a Yuggera word that means welcome/greetings.

On 25 and 26 October 2023, Community Legal Centres Queensland welcomed 42 members of the First Nations Employee Network to gather in Meanjin/Brisbane.

Wunya was a collaborative event focusing on cultural self-care, connecting with communities across the state and yarning about experiences within the community legal sector.

The two days of Wunya were filled with deep listening, reflection, learning, laughing and blak joy.

The focus on cultural self-care, connection and sharing was inspiring and we are deeply grateful to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who attended for their generosity, courage, and support.

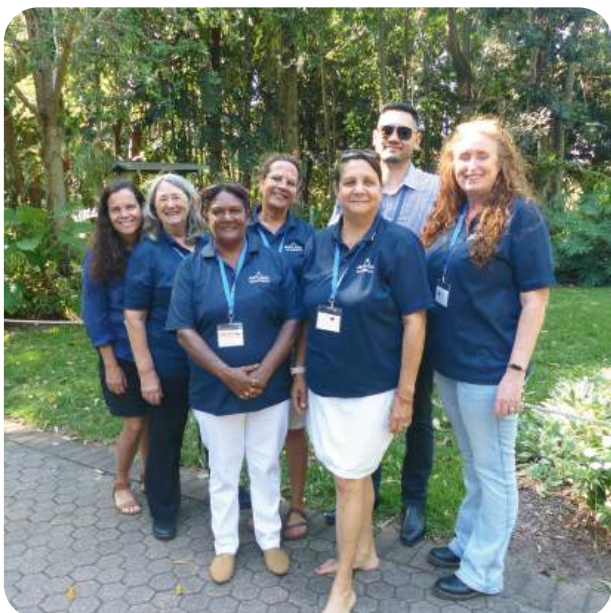
Wunya 2023 was the First Nations Employee Network's first ever in-person event and was funded as part of Community Legal Centres Queensland First Nations Sector Strategy project.



The two day program included:

- Our Why – presented by Penny Sullivan and Sammy Cooper from Community Legal Centres Queensland
- Blak Identity – presented by Aunty Margaret Hornagold from Legal Aid Queensland
- Weaving with Desert-Rain Magpie
- Managing workplace stress and cultural pressures – presented by Kevin Yow Yeh
- Art Workshop with Our Yarn
- Where to from No? – facilitated by Sammy Cooper from Community Legal Centres Queensland
- Social/networking evening at Birrunnga Gallery

"Wunya gave us an opportunity to come together as mob, heal, network and spark broader discussions on the issues that affect us as mob and as a sector on a daily basis. I have made friends for life as well as so many valuable networking opportunities. First Nations people in the sector can be very isolated and Wunya is an opportunity to combat this and support mob to stay in the sector."



First Nations Stakeholder engagement

First Nations Framework: This year saw significant progress towards development of a First Nations Framework for Queensland's community legal centre sector.

The framework will support our continuing efforts to build the capability of our member community legal centres to work with and for First Nations peoples.

It will guide ongoing action that will help centres to meet reporting obligations, the requirements of accreditation, and support meaningful relationships within community legal centres and their communities.

The key focus areas of the framework include initiatives to improve cultural safety for First Nations peoples and support the recruitment and retention of First Nations peoples as part of the community legal centre workforce.

During the year we continued our consultation processes with First Nations community controlled community legal centres, members of our First Nations Reference Group, our First Nations employee network and other key First Nations stakeholders, as well as engaging with representatives from our 'mainstream' services.

First Nations Employee Network: Community Legal Centres Queensland continued to support the First Nations Employee Network.

This network provides support to First Nations staff in their work in community legal centres across Queensland in a positive, confidential and supportive environment.

First Nations Reference Group: We thank the Community Legal Centres Queensland's First Nations Reference Group, which has continued to provide invaluable guidance to us in progressing the First Nations focused aspects of our work.

This year the Reference Group has been our vital sounding board in the development of a First Nations Framework for Queensland's community legal centre sector, and in shaping our directions for Wunya, our Conference and the annual Leadership Forum.

This year we also said goodbye to one of our founding Reference Group members, the indomitable Aunty Bino Toby, who retired from her role as Cultural Advisor and head of the case management practice at QIFVLS.

Her insights and wisdom will be greatly missed by the Community Legal Centres Queensland team.



NLAP Review

In June 2023, Dr Warren Mundy was appointed to undertake an independent review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-2025 (NLAP).

Community Legal Centres Queensland hosted a meeting with Dr Mundy and representatives from South-East Queensland based community legal centres and facilitated and attended a meeting in Cairns with Dr Mundy and representatives from regional and remote community legal centres.

Regular updates were provided to the sector about the Review process via Teams Meetings with CEOs and Directors along with updates in our member e-news.



On behalf of Queensland centres, Community Legal Centres Queensland made a comprehensive written submission to the review which included recommendations about:

- the critical need for the funding of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- calling the national partnership to set benchmarks for State government funding contributions to the legal assistance sector
- a need for a comprehensive legal needs analysis
- funding guidelines that set timeframes that don't disadvantage community legal centres
- indexation of community legal centres funding by the Commonwealth
- funding levels that ensure community legal centres can maintain and grow the workforce.

The final report was publicly released on 28 May, 2024 and included 39 recommendations.



Strengthening the sector

National Accreditation Scheme

This year saw us continue to progress our next phase of the National Accreditation Scheme (NAS), with 13 community legal centres achieving re-accreditation during the year. The NAS, owned by Community Legal Centres Australia and administered in Queensland by Community Legal Centres Queensland, ensures that all accredited centres meet the rigorous 17 key standards and requirements.

Client Survey

We supported community legal centres to undertake their annual survey of clients and other stakeholders.

The 2024 client survey data showed:

- 94% of clients said they would recommend the organisation to other people;
- 90% of clients said they know where to get help if they have another legal problem in the future;
- 96% of clients said staff listened to their legal problem in a friendly and respectful manner;
- 92% of clients said staff helped them understand how to deal with their legal problem and provided them with options.

Class Transition Project

Queensland community legal centres are facing the challenge of moving away from the national data base, CLASS, to platforms that are compatible with a newly developed national data repository.

We have been in the process of supporting our members with the transition away from CLASS by:

- Surveying community legal centres to assess readiness to transition to a new CRM and support needs
- Successfully advocating for members to receive \$1.6 million one-off funding to support the cost of transitioning to a new CRM system and a further \$425k of ongoing funding to cover licence fees
- Coordinating five webinars focused on the CLASS transition with a mix of CRM vendors and pro bono partners
- Creating a dedicated page on our website with CRM transition resources.
- Developing transition support resources with pro bono partners
- Providing individual support to community legal centres



The Community Legal Assistance Service System (CLASS) database, administered by Community Legal Centres Australia (CLCA) will no longer be available to Queensland CLCs by the end of the NLAP in June 2025.

CLASS is a critical piece of infrastructure for the collection and analysis of service data, reporting to government and funding bodies, and legal risk management including conflict checking.

There is an important role for CLCQ as the peak body to provide sector-wide business transition support to assist Queensland CLCs to move from CLASS to an alternative CMS. CLCQ has received project funding from BURG to provide this support to member CLCs to meet the June 2025 CLASS deadline.



Free and accessible webinar program

The Community Legal Centres Queensland webinar program continues to provide training and resources to our members to support their work in the community.

29 webinars were held covering a wide range of topics including:

- Ethics and risk management
- Climate and Disaster Resilience
- Human Rights
- Governance
- The Voice
- Credit Law and consumer debt
- Disability
- WHS and supporting community legal centre staff

Webinars held throughout the year are available to watch “on-demand” via the Community Legal Centres Queensland website.

A specific program of governance webinars for community legal centres was developed and formed part of our 2023 leadership development program.

The webinars provided information about the essential principles and processes of sound governance, including the requirements of the National Accreditation Scheme (the NAS), insights into the key elements of governing for impact and where to start, and building readiness for the next large-scale crisis – including the questions that Boards and CEOs should be looking to answer in assessing organisational viability through a strategic risk lens.



2023 Leadership Forum

Community Legal Centres Queensland hosted its annual Leadership Forum in November 2023.

The forum was a chance for Community Legal Centres Queensland to consult with the sector about a number of projects including the First Nations Sector Strategy and the initial data from the recent Workforce Survey.

During the forum, the Community Legal Centres Queensland 2023 Impact Report was launched by State Attorney-General, the Hon Yvette D'Ath MP.

"Enormous thank you to CLCQ for the hard work, strategic thinking and approach to programming these important leadership forums and events. It's an incredible group of people who are doing extraordinary work. The opportunity to come together to share our challenges."



2024 Community Legal Centres Queensland Conference

The 2024 Community Legal Centres Queensland Conference saw more than 400 delegates across two days gather for thought provoking presentations and robust conversations.

"Working in a CLC for a few years now, annual conferences almost feel like a family reunion with the privilege of meeting new faces to the sector and hearing fabulous updates from older faces who have either moved around in the sector or moved into new roles. I walked away with a new appreciation for my role with a broader mindset on how I can continue to develop in my little corner to contribute to the bigger focus."

"I learnt so much at the conference and it was good to network with other organisations and learn from them."

Leadership Development Training

Community Legal Centres Queensland facilitated a training program for managers and leaders working in the Queensland community legal centre sector.

Joan Wilson-Jones from JwJ Consulting was engaged to develop a bespoke program that addressed the training needs identified in a Leadership Training Sector Survey undertaken by Community Legal Centres Queensland.

The program had 15 participants from 12 different community legal centres.

The program was delivered across three 2-day intensive modules and aimed to develop skills in management and leadership; support participants to understand their leadership style to build and maintain a high performing team; and to create a successful and sustainable workplace.

Based on the feedback and success of the program, Community Legal Centres Queensland looks forward to offering the training opportunity next year.



Federal Advocacy

In March 2024, Community Legal Centres Queensland joined Community Legal Centres Australia and representatives from other state peaks in Canberra for the launch of the State of the Sector Report.

The report was launched by Commonwealth Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus and painted the picture of a sector in crisis.

While in Canberra, Community Legal Centres Queensland met with Queensland based MPs and Senators to brief them on the impact community legal centres have for people and communities experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability and the need for increased funding.



A fair and just Queensland



51,587

individuals received help from
Queensland's community
legal centres



87,116

different legal issues
were dealt with



1,583

community legal education
resources and activities delivered
to communities

Community Legal Centres Queensland's members 2021-2022 work included:

- Giving close to **87,083** legal advices
- Assisting with over **13,986** legal tasks
- Providing over **15,468** duty lawyer services
- Appearing in courts or tribunals in almost **5,113** matters
- Assisting with **168** mediations and dispute resolution services
- Helping with over **11,835** non-legal support services, such as social work and financial counselling
- Providing referrals on close to **87,703** occasions.

Service delivery

Our members delivered:

- **61 per cent** of services by phone
- **28 per cent** of services in person
- **9 per cent** of by letter or electronically (email and videoconference)



Client groups



73%

of clients were experiencing financial disadvantage



35%

of clients had no or low income



65%

of female clients were experiencing, or at risk of, family violence



8%

of clients were homeless



11%

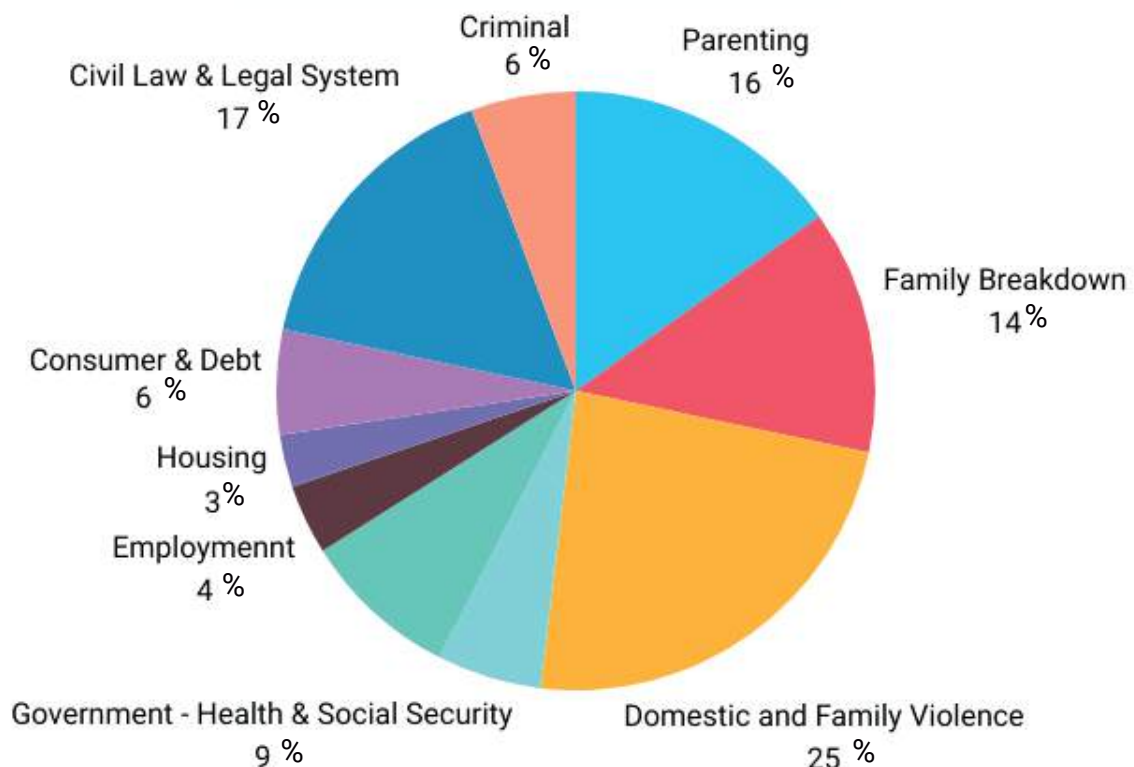
of clients were First Nations peoples



25%

of clients were living with disability or mental illness

Legal issues CLCs assisted with*



(*discrete services only)

Our members

- Aboriginal Family Legal Services Queensland (Maruma-li-mari)
- Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia
- Basic Rights Queensland
- Bayside Community Legal Service
- Brisbane North Community Legal Service
- Cairns Community Legal Centre
- Caxton Community Legal Centre
- Central Queensland Community Legal Centre
- Environmental Defenders Office Queensland
- First Nations Women's Legal Services Queensland
- Gold Coast Community Legal Centre
- HUB Community Legal
- Institute for Urban Indigenous Health
- knowmore
- LawRight
- LGBTI Legal Service
- Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre
- My Community Legal Inc
- North Queensland Women's Legal Service
- Pine Rivers Community Legal Service
- Prisoners Legal Service
- Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service
- Suncoast Community Legal Service
- TASC
- Tenants Queensland
- Townsville Community Law
- Wide Bay Burnett Community Legal Service
- Women's Legal Service Queensland
- YFS Legal
- Youth Advocacy Centre



Our people

Staff members

Rosslyn Monro, Director
Penny Sullivan, Capacity Building Lead
Carly Hanson, Capacity Building Lead
Sammy Cooper, Capacity Building Coordinator
Kath Kerr, Capacity Building Coordinator (until December 2023)
Kate Scanlon, Capacity Building Coordinator
Monica Taylor, Project Coordinator (until April 2024)
Angela Hale, Operations Coordinator
Leah Lane, Communications & Events Coordinator
Daniel Song, Client Survey Project Officer (May/June 2024)

Management committee members

Amanda Whelan (President), knowmore
Jonathan Ward (Treasurer), HUB
Elizabeth Behrend, Cairns Community Legal Centre
Karen Cutler, EDO (until August 2024)
Kelly Moore, Women's Legal Service (until March 2024)
Ben Tuckett, LawRight
Helen Wallace, Caxton Community Legal Centre
Alex Whitney, Townsville Community Law



Our thanks

Thanks to our volunteers

Charlie Mitchell, Daniel Song, Imogen Stocks, Jack Gibney, Lachlan Varley, Liisa Kuru, Marie Ludjio, Melody Suen, Ryan Collins, Seongeum Choi, Tamika Dalby

Thanks to our supporters

Community Legal Centres Queensland acknowledges funding from the **Queensland Government's Department of Justice and Attorney-General** as well as sponsorship from the following sources in 2023-24:

Actionstep
Allens
Ashurst
Bar Association of Queensland
Colin, Biggers & Paisley Lawyers
DLA Piper
Herbert Smith Freehills
Hopgood Ganim Lawyers
MinterEllison
Maurice Blackburn
MurphySchmidt
Queensland Law Society
QLeave
UQ Pro Bono Centre



Community Legal Centres Queensland

PO Box 12102
George Street, Meanjin Brisbane
QLD 4003
07 3392 0092
admin@communitylegalqld.org.au

ABN: 71 907 449 543

www.communitylegalqld.org.au