

Community Legal Centres Australia

Annual Report 2021–22



**Community Legal Centres
Australia**

Community Legal Centres acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Australia and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional owners of the land on which the CLCs Australia office stands.

We pay deep respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Chair and CEO report



Anna Cody, Chair



Tim Leach, Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to Community Legal Centres Australia's Annual Report 2021-22.

Over the year in the face of some considerable challenges – think COVID, rising costs of living, and a tough employment market for starters – our sector has continued to deliver for the communities of which we are a part and with whom we're proud to work. The 170 centres in our membership network delivered about 650 000 critical legal and related supports to more than 180 000 people nationwide. These are the people whose first-hand knowledge of the unfairness of our legal system helped shape our advocacy for law reform.

Our centres do innovative, high-quality, and effective work with some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country. As we increasingly measure outcomes across our sector, we have more and better evidence to confirm what we have always known: our service model works and centres' work has impact, changing lives for the better.

As a national peak, we are proud to be associated with the work that centres are doing to tackle some of the country's most intractable injustices. We continue to make the case nationally for community-embedded and community-designed responses to the legal problems our communities confront.

This year we made significant progress tackling some of the big organisational issues on our agenda – we kicked off a conversation on the future of CLASS, we started planning for our first post-COVID national conference, we triggered the de-merger from knowmore, we commenced a review of the fees paid by member centres and we began drafting our new strategic plan. We worked hard to see that extra legal assistance funding, secured from the Commonwealth in 2021, made its way to community legal centres. Regrettably, the experience confirmed what we have known for some time: that when it comes to understanding and supporting our sector's work, some states and territories are doing much better than others. We brought together some of the sector's key advocacy asks in a national Hands Up for Justice campaign, reminding us all that service delivery, without the advocacy that flows from it, ultimately fails our clients and our communities. We delivered an accreditation program that safeguards the integrity of our services, secured critical insurance coverage for centres in challenging circumstances, continued to administer and support

CLASS, built our capacity to tell the sector's story through high-quality data and conducted a rolling program of webinars and training programs to build the capacity of our sector.

We acknowledge the hard work of Nassim Arrage and Michelle Cutler who, between them, led the organisation for much of the year. And we thank our team of dedicated and talented employees for all their efforts.

We'd like to thank our hard-working Board members for their sound governance: Cathy McMorrine, Sarah Patterson, Vanessa Lesnie, Ellie English, Gerard Brody, Wynetta Dewis and Arlia Fleming, and outgoing member Chuck Berger.

We thank our colleagues at the eight state and territory associations that make up our direct membership – they do an amazing job and make it possible for us to do ours. We acknowledge the hard work of our colleagues who deliver the other critical parts of the National Legal Assistance Partnership, which funds a large proportion of the legal assistance services delivered across the country – the Family Violence Prevention Legal Service Forum, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and National Legal Aid. And thanks also to our colleagues at the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and to all our pro bono partners.

It's been a privilege to occupy our roles in 2021-22 and we are excited about what our organisation and our sector might achieve in the year to come.

Reconciliation Action Plan

CLCs Australia is committed to strengthening understanding and healing relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people. Since 2012, we have developed and implemented two Reconciliation Action Plans under the guidance of Reconciliation Australia. During 2022 we reinvigorated our efforts to embed real and meaningful change in our organisation by starting work on a third Reconciliation Action Plan, to be implemented in 2023.

Strategic plan, 2018-21

We are a strong voice to, and for, the community legal sector

We advance a shared vision for the community legal sector

We lead and support national advocacy that facilitates access to justice and the protection of human rights for all people in Australia

We collect and communicate compelling data to ensure a strong understanding of the importance and impact of community legal services

We increase the resources available to the community legal sector

We advance the financial sustainability of the community legal sector

We adapt the range of services we provide to support the changing needs of the community legal sector

We share employment policies and practices designed to nurture the wellbeing and personal growth of staff, including our own

We strengthen our communities through enhanced collaboration

We are guided by and support the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations

We enhance coordination and collaboration within the community legal sector

We enhance strategic and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders external to the community legal sector

We facilitate the provision of high-quality community legal services

We provide a framework for the community legal sector to provide greater and improved services that best meet the needs of their communities

We provide a robust National Accreditation Scheme to ensure continuous quality improvement

Our Values

Member Focus We assist and enhance the capacity of our members and individual community legal centres, and support their independence and autonomy.

Leadership We work with our members to lead a strong, independent and innovative community legal sector.

Fairness We believe in equity, social justice and human rights and work towards alleviating systemic disadvantage.

Collaboration We build quality relationships to leverage combined resources, expertise and knowledge for the benefit of the organisations and communities that we collectively serve.

Quality We strive to develop and support high standards and quality in our own work and across the sector.

About Us

Community Legal Centres Australia is the national peak body for the community legal sector.

The community legal sector is made up of approximately 180 community-based legal services that take client-centred and systemic approaches to legal service delivery.

Community legal centres provide essential legal and related services and are a vital part of ensuring everyday people in Australia can access the legal help they need.

CLCs Australia's role is to ensure the community legal sector continues to thrive and is able to meet the needs of communities around Australia.



Community Legal Centres Australia

Members

State and territory associations

CLCs Australia's members are the eight state and territory community legal centre associations.

Australian Capital Territory Association of Community Legal Centres

Community Legal Centres New South Wales

Community Legal Centres Queensland

Community Legal Centres South Australia

Community Legal Centres Tasmania

Community Legal Western Australia

Federation of Community Legal Centres Vic

Northern Territory Association of Community Legal Centres

Centres

CLCs Australia provides services and support to around 170 organisations which are members of the state and territory associations, including community legal centres, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

ACT

Animal Defenders Office
ANUSA Legal Service
Canberra Community Law
Care Consumer Law
PARSA Legal
Women's Legal Centre (ACT and Region)

New South Wales

Ability Rights Centre
Arts Law Centre of Australia
Australian Centre for Disability Law
Australian Pro Bono Centre
Binaal Billa Family Violence Prevention Legal Service
Central Coast Community Legal Centre
Central Tablelands and Blue Mountains Community Legal Centre
Environmental Defenders Office (EDO)
Far West Community Legal Centre
Financial Rights Legal Centre

HIV/AIDS Legal Centre
Hunter Community Legal Centre
Illawarra Legal Centre
Immigration Advice and Rights Centre
Inner City Legal Centre
International Social Service Australia
Kingsford Legal Centre
Macarthur Legal Centre
Marrickville Legal Centre
Mid North Coast Legal Centre
North and North West Community Legal Service
Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre
Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Redfern Legal Centre
Refugee Advice and Casework Service
Seniors Rights Service
Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre
South West Sydney Legal Centre
Tenants' Union of NSW
Thiyama-li Family Violence Service
University of Newcastle Legal Centre
Welfare Rights Centre

Western NSW Community Legal Centre
Western Sydney Community Legal Centre
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre
Women's Legal Service (NSW)
Youth Law Australia

Northern Territory

Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit
Central Australian Women's Legal Service
Darwin Community Legal Service
Katherine Women's Information and Legal Service
North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service
Top End Women's Legal Service

Queensland

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services
Aboriginal Family Legal Service Southern Queensland
ADA Law
Basic Rights Queensland
Bayside Community Legal Service
Brisbane North Community Legal Service
Cairns Community Legal Centre
Caxton Legal Centre
Central Queensland Community Legal Centre
Gold Coast Community Legal Centre and Advice Bureau
Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre
HUB Community Legal
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health
knowmore
LawRight
LGBTI Legal Service
Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre
Moreton Bay Regional Community Legal Service
My Community Legal Gold Coast
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 National
Tenants Queensland
Townsville Community Law Inc
Women's Legal Service (QLD)
YFS Legal
Youth Advocacy Centre

South Australia

Community Justice Services SA
Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation (SA)
JusticeNet SA
Northern Community Legal Service
Refugee Advocacy Service of South Australia
Roma Mitchell Community Legal Centre
Uniting Communities Law Centre
WestSide Lawyers

Women's Legal Service (SA)
Working Women's Centre SA

Tasmania

Hobart Community Legal Service
Launceston Community Legal Centre
North West Community Legal Centre
Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service
Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service
Tenants' Union of Tasmania
Women's Legal Service Tasmania
Worker Assist Tasmania

Victoria

AED Legal Centre
Animal Law Institute
ARC Justice – Goulburn Valley and Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centres
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre – Human Rights Law Program
Ballarat and Grampians Community Legal Service
Barwon Community Legal Service
Brimbank Melton Community Legal Centre
Consumer Action Law Centre
Disability Discrimination Legal Service
Djirra
Eastern Community Legal Centre
Emma House Domestic Violence Services Legal Program
Environmental Justice Australia
First Step Legal
Fitzroy Legal Service
Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre
Gippsland Community Legal Service
Human Rights Law Centre
Hume Riverina Community Legal Service
Inner Melbourne Community Legal
InTouch Legal Centre
JobWatch
Justice Connect
Law and Advocacy Centre for Women
Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre
Mental Health Legal Centre
Monash Law Clinics
Moonee Valley Legal Service
Northern Community Legal Centre

Peninsula Community Legal Centre
Refugee Legal
Seniors Rights Victoria
Social Security Rights Victoria
South-East Monash Legal Service
SouthPort Community Legal Service
Southside Justice
Tenants Victoria
University of Melbourne Student Union Legal Service
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service
West Heidelberg Community Legal Service
WEstjustice
Whittlesea Community Connections Community Legal Service
Women's Legal Service Victoria
Young Workers Centre
Youthlaw

Western Australia

Aboriginal Family Legal Services
Albany Community Legal Centre
Circle Green Community Legal
Citizens Advice Bureau
Consumer Credit Legal Service WA
Fremantle Community Legal Centre
Goldfields Community Legal Centre
Gosnells Community Legal Centre
Kimberley Community Legal Service
Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre
Mental Health Law Centre
Midland Information, Debt and Legal Advocacy Service
Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre
Peel Community Legal Service
Pilbara Community Legal Service
Regional Alliance West
SCALES Community Legal Centre
South West Community Legal Centre
Southern Aboriginal Corporation Family Violence Prevention Legal Service
Street Law Centre
Sussex Street Community Law Service
Welfare Rights and Advocacy Service
Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre
Women's Legal Service (WA)
Youth Legal Service

National data snapshot

In
2021–22

Community legal centres delivered over

648 000
services

legal and non-legal
(plus information and referrals)

Community legal centres helped more than

180 000
people in
communities
across Australia.



about 74% of whom were experiencing financial disadvantage



110 104 women



75 975 people with low income, no income or negative income



60 7113 people experiencing domestic or family violence



53 923 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



44 753 people with a disability



25 401 people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities



23 708 people from rural and remote communities



21 311 older people



20 008 young people (under 25)



16 498 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

People seek help with all kinds of problems, mostly family law and civil law, with some criminal law.

CLCs delivered more than

304 000 civil law
services for problems including

Domestic violence protection orders
Housing
Immigration
Credit and debt
Employment

143 000 family law
services for problems including

Parenting arrangements
Domestic and family violence
Family law property

36 000 criminal law
services for problems including traffic and vehicle offences, motor vehicle property damage and theft.

Community legal centres provide lots of different kinds of legal services, and some non-legal services, such as counselling and social work.

Of the more than

648 000

services provided, some of the common types were

	Referrals	215 782
	Legal advice	205 061
	Information services	101 966
	Legal tasks	434 141
	Duty lawyer	29 302
	Court/tribunal	8483
	Dispute resolution	777

Community legal centres do more than provide legal services. They educate people about their legal rights and advocate for systemic change and law reform.



The numbers shown here are an aggregate of data collected from 135 community legal centres that use a system called CLASS.

How do we ensure the accuracy of these numbers? Continued emphasis on improving data quality is a major concern of CLCs Australia's dedicated data team. CLCs Australia recognises the importance of quality data for accurate planning and needs analysis, and to show how much community legal centres help people and communities.

Advocacy and law reform

Our national advocacy, policy and law reform work is critical to CLCs Australia’s core function as a national representative voice for the community legal sector. Our movement has a vision for justice which will only be realised through progressive law reform, and through adequate resourcing for our sector, so that the people and communities we work with can access the legal supports they need.

Sector funding

We were pleased to see the Federal Government deliver a significant increase in funding for the legal assistance sector in the 2021-22 Federal Budget. This followed extensive advocacy by CLCs Australia, the state and territory peaks, individual centres and other organisations. Following the funding announcements, CLCs Australia worked with our members to track the quantum and timing of the release of funds to organisations across the legal assistance sector.

We used this data to advocate to federal, state and territory Attorneys-General to establish transparent processes to allocate resources, release funds as quickly and efficiently as possible, direct as much as possible to the community legal sector and limit burdensome reporting requirements.

Despite these funding increases, there remains a high level of unmet need for legal services in our communities, which cannot be addressed through ad hoc, one-off funding injections. In the lead-up to the 2022 election CLCs Australia continued to prosecute the case for sustainable, long-term funding increases for the community legal sector, including through our Hands Up for Justice campaign.

Hands Up for Justice

Through our Hands Up for Justice campaign, we established a suite of law reform and sector funding asks which formed the basis of a coordinated, national access to justice campaign in the lead-up to the federal election in May 2022.

We consulted widely with the sector to develop and refine our campaign asks, working closely with state and territory peaks to facilitate consultation and member engagement in the campaign’s development and roll-out.

The suite of advocacy and campaigning tools we developed – including a campaign website, social media assets, national and electorate-level data snapshots and briefing documents – enabled time-poor organisations across the country to engage actively in the campaign.

In October and November 2021, we launched the campaign with a virtual lobbying event in Federal Parliament. Through this event, we supported representatives from local centres to build



Hands Up for Justice campaign asks

relationships with – and deliver the sector’s vision for justice to – 25 federal MPs and Senators from various parties.

Post-election, we began the process of reviewing and updating our funding and law reform asks, shaping our advocacy agenda for the 47th Parliament, and building an effective working relationship with the incoming Attorney-General and his office.

Amplifying national justice campaigns

Amplifying the advocacy, policy, and law reform work of state and territory sector peaks and individual centres, and supporting them with strategic advice and resources, is critical to our role as national peak. Throughout 2021-22, we supported several important sector-led and external advocacy initiatives and campaigns to improve access to justice for people and communities. This included:

- Active membership of the Change the Record Steering Committee, supporting this community-led organisation’s amazing advocacy to end the persistent and inexcusable over-representation of First Nations adults and young people in Australia’s prisons. Throughout the year, we amplified key campaigns to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least fourteen across all Australian jurisdictions and establish a national justice reinvestment body and adopted First Nations justice as a key plank of our Hands Up for Justice campaign.
- Working with sector experts at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the Human Rights Law Centre, Kingsford Legal Centre, state and territory associations and allied organisations like Equality Australia and the Australian Democracy Network to analyse and raise concerns about key legislative reforms proposed during the final year of the 46th Parliament, including:
 - The Religious Discrimination Bill 2022 – while filling an important gap in our anti-discrimination laws by protecting people from discrimination for their religious beliefs, the Bill risked weakening existing protections for people already at high risk of discrimination, including LGBTQI+ people.
 - Legislation amending the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission’s Regulations to provide it with additional powers to deregister charities which engage in advocacy on behalf of the people and communities they serve.
 - The Electoral Legislation Amendment (Voter Identification) Bill 2022, which risked disenfranchising many people experiencing disadvantage in Australia right before an election, including young people, people experiencing homelessness and First Nations people.
- Supporting national collaboration between centres advocating for a robust response from the Federal Government to the Respect@Work inquiry’s recommendations – this helped ensure the sector delivered consistent responses to government proposals and draft legislation.

Sector capacity building

CLCs Australia's capacity building team delivers several important services to centres to enhance their governance, risk management and service delivery capability.

This reflects our strategic priority to support centres across Australia to deliver high-quality legal services to people and communities.

Accreditation

The National Accreditation Scheme is an industry-based quality assurance process that supports and recognises good practice in the delivery of community legal services. Any organisation that wants to be a member of its state or territory association must participate in the scheme. It is a statement of service quality and a critically important means by which we protect the 'community legal centre' brand: if a centre is accredited, clients, communities, funders and other stakeholders can be confident it has been through a rigorous assessment process and deemed to meet – or be working towards – key performance standards by qualified assessors.

CLCs Australia delivers the National Accreditation Scheme with the state and territory peaks. We assess and accredit centres in the ACT, Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania. In the larger states, Regional Accreditation Coordinators employed at state peaks assess and accredit their members.

COVID-19 lockdowns created new challenges for the National Accreditation Scheme, which had always been delivered through in-person visits to centres. In 2021-22, CLCs Australia and local coordinators continued to assess and accredit centres via a remote delivery model developed in the early days of the pandemic. Using this model, CLCs Australia accredited 5 of the 31 centres accredited under the scheme. We also worked with local coordinators to support centres to implement improvement plans developed during the assessment process.



Capacity Building Manager Meg Houston on an accreditation visit with Nicky Snare, then CEO of Launceston Community Legal Centre

National Accreditation Scheme review

Since its inception, CLCs Australia has conducted periodic reviews of the National Accreditation Scheme so that, like the legal centres it accredits, it is subject to a process of continuous improvement. These reviews follow a three-year cycle. During 2022, CLCs Australia began preparatory work for the third National Accreditation Scheme review. This included developing scope and objectives in consultation with Regional Accreditation Coordinators and other sector stakeholders. The goal of this review, which will be finalised in 2022-23, is to develop clearer, more user-friendly accreditation documentation that is consistent in its approach and language with other sector standards, such as the Risk Management Guide.



A meeting of the National Accreditation Scheme review working group

Insurance

The National Insurance Scheme is consistently identified by member centres as CLCs Australia's most valuable service. During 2021-22, 145 of 170 member centres received cover under the scheme, as well as some state and territory peaks. While management of the scheme requires a huge investment of time and effort from our Capacity Building team, the benefits to the sector are clear. Participating centres pay only a fraction of the cost of arranging coverage independently. CLCs Australia continued to work during 2021-22 to streamline processes and minimise the risks to centres of failing to secure cover.

The scheme provides three group policies – professional indemnity insurance, association liability insurance, and public liability insurance. CLCs Australia supports and encourages centres to take out other insurance such as cyber, business, and voluntary workers' personal accident insurance.

During 2021-22, CLCs Australia continued to work with insurance broker Arthur J Gallagher to help secure and negotiate coverage at a national level and respond to centre queries about cover. We also delivered ongoing insurance-related education and training in the form of information resources and presentations from sector experts and insurance industry professionals as part of the *Emergence* webinar program.

In January 2022, we began work on the 2022-23 insurance renewals process. This involved collecting and processing forms from 146 centres, monitoring the broker's progress in negotiating coverage for the policies, keeping the Public Indemnity Insurance Network updated and liaising with Law Societies, which must review and approve the policies offered by CLCs Australia and ensure our sector's lawyers are properly covered before issuing their practicing certificates for the year. Despite a difficult insurance market, we maintained coverage for our members with a much lower increase in premiums than what was seen across the market, and with only minor changes to the policy terms.

We acknowledge the important contributions to the success of the scheme made by Catherine Eagle and the National Public Indemnity Insurance Network, Arthur J Gallagher, and the state and territory law societies.

Governance Tool

Building and supporting the governance capacity of community legal centre boards is a constant challenge for under-resourced centres. Boards comprised of overstretched volunteers can struggle to effectively exercise critical governance functions in the absence of proper training or support.

In 2019, Community Legal Centres NSW worked with management consulting firm Nous Group to develop the Governance Tool to respond to this need in the sector. Following a successful trial with centres in NSW, CLCs Australia and Community Legal Western Australia began a trial with sixteen Western Australian centres in March 2021.

The tool includes an anonymous governance skills assessment which is completed by board members. The responses from all centres are compiled to create a benchmark, and each board receives a performance report which allows them to see how they compare to other boards. The deadline for completing the assessment was extended until July 2022.

From March 2021 to July 2022 CLCs Australia supported and encouraged the participating boards. Performance reports are due to be sent to participants in September 2022 and the trial will wrap up in 2022-23. Once the WA trial is completed, CLCs Australia aims to make the Governance Tool available to the sector nationally, as part of its support for continuous improvement.

Risk Management Guide review

The Risk Management Guide is a community legal sector-specific practice management resource for organisations that sets out minimum standards for legal and related service delivery. Mitigating organisational risk is a central concern for all legal practices, and following the guide is a requirement for community legal centres under the National Accreditation Scheme. A version of the guide has been in use since 2002, and it has been substantially expanded and updated several times.

As a result of successive revisions, the guide has become a long and complex document and CLCs Australia recognises the need for a clearer, more usable version of this important resource. The guide also needs to reflect the way the sector has developed in recent years to provide more holistic client support, which might include services from non-legal practitioners such as social workers and financial counsellors.

In 2022, CLCs Australia established a project to review the Risk Management Guide. The end goal of this project is a version of the guide that will support legal centres to provide the best possible services to their clients by ensuring that lawyers and other staff are following appropriate procedures and meeting a series of 'Mandatory Standards'. The review will clarify how these Mandatory Standards relate to National Accreditation Scheme standards. CLCs Australia is consulting with the National Professional Indemnity Insurance Network and across the sector as part of this process and will complete the review in 2023.

Emergence



EMERGENCE

OUR STORIES IN THE NEXT DECADE

The National Community Legal Centres Conference has been a mainstay of the community legal sector for many years. It brings together sector professionals from across Australia to connect, learn and socialise. When it became clear that COVID lockdowns would make a conference impossible in 2020, CLCs Australia quickly pivoted to deliver virtual training and capacity building sessions to keep the sector connected, engaged and well-supported. The result was *Emergence*, a year-round series of more than 60 webinars delivered between 2020 and 2022.

Emergence featured presenters from within and outside the community legal sector. It covered a wide range of topics including risk management, cyber security, sexual harassment in the workplace, integrated practice, data management, financial abuse, and accessibility. Recordings of the webinars and other resources are available to member centres on clcs.org.au. *Emergence* was phased out during 2021-22 as we began planning for the 2023 National Conference, the first in-person conference since 2019.

Data and ICT Services

Data

Data is the evidence base for the story we tell about community legal centres across Australia. A good dataset can tell the collective stories of community legal centres, our clients and communities, and provide a record of our achievements. It can also chart trends and changes over time and space as new areas of legal need emerge, and our communities grow, adapt, and evolve.

Throughout 2021-22, CLCs Australia continued to strengthen our data capability and to improve the quality of the aggregated data that centres provide via CLASS (Community Legal Assistance Services System). This National Dataset constitutes a valuable resource for centres, CLCs Australia, state and territory peaks and funding bodies. As a result, data quality is at the forefront of all the decisions we make about the ongoing development of CLASS.

Recognising the increasing importance and complexity of collecting and reporting quality data about the sector's clients and services, we established a dedicated two-person data team which is supported by our larger ICT team. This year, the team focussed on educating and supporting centres to improve their data input practices, to ensure our data is as authoritative and complete as possible, as well as analysing and presenting the data to improve legal needs analysis and sector planning.

The team also streamlined and made more transparent the reporting process for the sector's funding bodies, so that the figures centres provide are fully auditable and repeatable. Part of this work has been to develop 'report counting rules' so that data is counted consistently across all the centres that use CLASS. In perhaps the most challenging and technical project of the year, the team has been working with Australian Bureau of Statistics and Federal Attorney-General's Department on a process to securely supply unit-level data whilst preserving clients' rights to privacy and data integrity through data de-identification methods.

ICT and CLASS

During 2021-22 CLCs Australia's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team continued to respond to the sector's changing data and technology needs, particularly as they relate to the need for sophisticated client management systems. When it was first established, CLCs Australia's ICT team's primary role was to develop CLASS as a tool for centres to report to funding bodies about their service delivery, in line with their funding agreements. Over time, the team's role evolved to include expanding the functionality of CLASS and providing customisations to meet centres' unique needs. Now the team's role extends beyond CLASS to supporting centres to find and implement solutions to their increasingly complex digital needs.

Designed as a data reporting tool, CLASS was never intended to deliver the functionality of a case management system. As a result, many centres are now moving to adopt fully-fledged case management systems. Supporting them with this process – and ensuring that the systems they choose can continue to 'talk' to CLASS – has become a major part of the ICT team's work. This work has involved complex planning and negotiation with the developer of CLASS, case management system software vendors, centres, and other stakeholders. The goal is to develop processes to migrate centres' historical CLASS data into their new systems, and then to synchronise new data entered in centres' case management systems with CLASS, so it can be included in reporting.

These processes will be critical to protect the integrity of centres' historical data, avoid double entry of data into different systems and ensure we can continue to build and maintain a complete and high-quality National Dataset.

CLASS still has a central role in reporting, and for many centres it is still the primary tool for recording client data. To ensure its ongoing functionality and accessibility, the ICT team successfully released a package of usability improvements and implemented multi-factor authentication to ensure the security of CLASS data in 2021-22.

As usual, the team responded to hundreds of data requests via the ICT Helpdesk. These requests included questions about data extracts and reporting, data consistency, and customisation of fields in CLASS. Supporting centres in this way allows them to use their data to inform decisions and provide better outcomes for their clients.

National Networks

CLCs Australia supports a number of National Networks, which are a critical part of the national community legal centres movement. They bring together expertise and enthusiasm from across the national membership, enabling centres to learn from each other, coordinate action, and maximise use of limited resources. Networks facilitate multi-state collaborations and undertake critical advocacy.

The following networks were active in 2021-22:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Network
- Animal Law Network
- Community Services Network
- Disability Rights Network
- Employment Law Network
- Human Rights Network
- Older Persons’ Legal Services Network.
- Professional Indemnity Insurance Network
- Rural, Regional, Remote and Very Remote Network
- Youth Advocacy Network

This year, we profile the work and achievements of the Community Services, Human Rights and Public Indemnity Insurance networks in 2021-22.

Community Services Network

The Community Services Network is convened by Helen Wallace, Social Work and Practice Director at Caxton Legal Centre, and is open to social workers, advocates, community liaison offices, support workers, counsellors and students working within the community legal sector.

In 2021-22, the network welcomed new members and worked collaboratively on key sector events, such as Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The network has also supported members to understand and address the opportunities and challenges of working in multidisciplinary teams that include legal and non-legal services. Members have shared their organisations’ integrated service delivery models and the network has arranged presentations from several expert guest speakers.

- Bernice Beaucaine (social worker at the Centre of Innovative Justice RMIT University in Victoria) presented on research and service evaluation projects conducted in partnership with community legal centres such as Mental Health Legal Centre, Law and Advocacy Centre for Women and YouthLaw.
- Kasumi Ejiri (head of Socio-Legal Team at Women’s Legal Centre ACT and Region) spoke about the socio-legal practice model at women’s legal services.
- Lulu Milne (from Women’s Legal Service Queensland) provided an overview of two reports released by the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce in Queensland in 2021-22. These reports considered legislating to criminalise coercive control and the experiences of women and girls across Queensland’s criminal justice system – as both victims of sexual assault and as accused persons and offenders.

Human Rights Network

The Human Rights Network focuses on critical human rights issues and advocacy, including supporting the campaign for a National Human Rights Charter and participating in United Nations Periodic Reviews and shadow reporting processes related to Australia's performance against its international human rights obligations. In 2021-22, the network contributed to advocacy against proposed legislation that did not meet human rights standards, including:

- Opposing the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Voter Identification) Bill 2022, which proposed requiring people to provide proof of identity documents to vote and would have disenfranchised many people in Australia, in particular people experiencing social and economic hardship.
- Opposing the Religious Discrimination Bill 2022 which would have weakened existing discrimination protections and human rights in Australia.

The network was pleased to see that, following concerted advocacy against these bills, both lapsed at the end of the 46th Parliament.

Current Convenors, Sarah Marland, Community Legal Centres NSW, and Rachael Pliner, Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic), look forward to the continued growth of the network and to building a program of work focussed on strengthening democracy and civic participation over the life of the 47th Parliament.

Professional Indemnity Insurance Network

The National Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) Network consists of representatives from each state and territory and works to support centres in legal practice management. As well as supporting the annual renewal of the National PII Policy, the network analyses claims and notifications under the policy and uses this to plan and provide resources and training at national, state, and territory levels.

In 2021-22 year, the PII Network:

- Continued to support centres to make notifications to the insurance broker and provided guidance on next steps
- Contributed to the Risk Management Guide review as a key stakeholder
- Delivered a successful Emergence webinar to 100 participants on public indemnity insurance and risk management
- Oversaw implementation of the annual cross-check process, which ensures that centres are complying with the Risk Management Guide
- Liaised with Regional Accreditation Coordinators on matters relating to legal practice as identified by the cross-check process as part of delivering the National Insurance Scheme

We extend special thanks to Network Convenor, Catherine Eagle, for her assistance over many months in planning for the renewal of the PII policy.

Pro bono and partnerships

CLCs Australia's pro bono and corporate partners enable us to increase our capacity in key areas and enjoy the benefit of specialised legal advice. Special thanks to the following firms and institutions for their ongoing support in 2021-22:

HWL Ebsworth provided graduate lawyers to work with CLCs Australia on secondment, greatly increasing CLCs Australia capacity in key program areas.

Wotton + Kearney provided expertise in the development of climate project documentation.

Ashurst provided expert advice on CLCs Australia's trademarks.

Maurice Blackburn supported a webinar presentation on COVID.

Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers provided guidance on renewing the CLCs Australia office lease.

LexisNexis provides a corporate partnership that allows CLCs Australia to provide centres with free access to various LexisNexis products.

Western Sydney University provided interns who gained professional experience working alongside our Operations and Policy and Advocacy teams.

University of New South Wales provided a social work student for one semester as a professional placement.



People

Board

Anna Cody – Chair

Ellie English – Deputy Chair

Chuck Berger (to Dec 21)

Gerard Brody (from Dec 21)

Wynetta Dewis

Arlia Fleming

Vanessa Lesnie

Catherine McMorrine

Sarah Patterson (from June 22)

National Network convenors

Our National Networks are established and driven by centres in our sector. Convenors volunteer personal time, on top of their day jobs as lawyers, social workers, and community support workers, to run meetings and deliver on networks' terms of reference.

Samantha Rudolph, Consumer Action Law Centre (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women)

Tara Ward, Animal Defenders Office (Animal Law)

Helen Wallace, Caxton Community Legal Centre (Community Services)

Mark Patrick, Australian Centre for Disability Law (Disability Rights)

Gabrielle Marchetti, JobWatch (Employment)

Sean Bowes, Kingsford Legal Centre (til Dec 21) and Rachael Pliner, Federation of CLCs Vic (Human Rights)

Rebecca Edwards, Seniors Rights Victoria, and Jane Andreassen, Townsville Community Legal Centre (Older Persons' Legal Services)

Catherine Eagle, Welfare Rights Centre WA (Public Indemnity Insurance)

Judy Harrison, Darwin Community Legal Service and Bill Mitchell, Townsville Community Law (Rural, Regional, Remote and Very Remote)

Matthew Keeley, Youth Law Australia (Youth Advocacy)

Staff

Executive

Nassim Arrage – CEO (to Jan 22)
Michell Cutler – COO (to Jan 22);
Acting CEO (to May 22)
Tim Leach – CEO (from May 22)

Capacity Building

Meg Houston – Capacity Building Manager
Liz Wells – Capacity Building Coordinator
Olivia Conte – Capacity Building Officer

Operations and Communications

Charlotte Maung – Business Resilience
Coordinator
Kim Hunter – Sector Engagement Coordinator
David Herrero – Operations Officer
Paulina Monforte – Operations Officer
(to Feb 22)
Laura Barter – Operations Officer
(from Apr 22)
Anne Handley – Communications Manager
(to Nov 21)

Special Projects

Mirinda Boon-Kuo (to July 21)
Maria González (to Dec 21)

Advocacy

Maria Graterol – Strategic Partnerships
Manager (to Sep 21)
Kelley Temple – Advocacy Manager
(from Oct 21)

ICT and Data

Russell Siachico – ICT Delivery Manager
(to Apr 22)
Meghan Kemp – ICT Delivery Manager
(from Apr 22)
Suzanne Slegers – Data Manager
(from Nov 21)
Reuben Johnson – ICT User Support Officer
Rhys Ambler – ICT User Support Officer
Samuel Martin – ICT User Support Officer
James Okeby – ICT User Support Officer
(to Oct 21)
Alex Ariti – ICT Coordinator (to Dec 21)
Oliver Moore – ICT User Support Officer
(to Jan 22)
Allain Woodsford – ICT User Support Officer
(from Nov 21)
Alex Huang – ICT User Support Officer
(from Mar 22)
Upama Shrestha – Data Officer (from Mar 22)

Financial statements

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Revenue	3 382 882	9 596 621
Less: expenses		
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(556 692)	(1 573 469)
Employee benefits expense	(1 939 910)	(5 707 107)
Occupancy expense	(33 056)	(47 221)
Finance costs	(40 632)	(130 998)
Conference expense	(3150)	(1404)
Operating expense	(215 530)	(566 369)
Project expense	(6420)	(99 907)
Consultants	(604 357)	(1 655 508)
Recruitment	(28 240)	(29 670)
Travel	(2998)	(33 120)
Settlement on de-merger	(1 070 409)	—
	<u>(4 501 394)</u>	<u>(9 844 773)</u>
Deficit from operations	(1 118 512)	(248 152)
Other comprehensive income for the year	—	—
Total comprehensive income	<u>(1 118 512)</u>	<u>(248 152)</u>

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1 572 366	2 299 267
Receivables	608 924	1 808 017
Financial assets	479 446	479 146
Other assets	17 784	26 505
Total current assets	<u>2 678 520</u>	<u>4 612 935</u>
Non-current assets		
Financial assets	501 534	511 116
Intangible assets	–	52 864
Lease assets	321 129	1 709 297
Property, plant and equipment	–	5 554
Total non-current assets	<u>822 663</u>	<u>2 278 831</u>
Total assets	<u>3 501 183</u>	<u>6 891 766</u>
Current liabilities		
Payables	264 827	877 570
Lease liability	352 543	839 514
Provisions	195 500	192 911
Other liabilities	87 322	213 856
Total current liabilities	<u>900 192</u>	<u>2 123 851</u>
Non-current liabilities		
Lease liability	–	1 042 743
Provisions	77 195	82 864
Total non-current liabilities	<u>77 195</u>	<u>1 125 607</u>
Total liabilities	<u>977 387</u>	<u>3 249 458</u>
Net assets	<u>2 523 796</u>	<u>3 642 308</u>
Equity		
Reserves	137 500	137 500
Accumulated surplus	2 386 296	3 504 808
Total equity	<u>2 523 796</u>	<u>3 642 308</u>

