



2020-21

Annual Report

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Welfare Rights Centre's office is located on the land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, who are the Traditional Custodians of this land and we pay our respects to the Gadigal people and their Elders, past and present.

The Welfare Rights Centre acknowledges, respects and supports the continuation of the cultural, spiritual and educational practices of First Nations People throughout Australia.

Black Fish Season, by Aboriginal artist, Jude Jarrett, from the Gumbaynggir Nation. For more information see page 30.





CHAIR'S MESSAGE

We came into this year with considerable momentum which we have maintained despite the constraints imposed by Covid.

Last year we had begun seeking new sources of funding for the Centre. Our successes have grown. Helped by the insights and expertise of Wendy Brooks Consulting, the Centre has been able to secure philanthropic support from a variety of programs. This has enabled us to expand our services with greater intake capacity, to extend our reach with enhanced communications and community legal education, and to focus our efforts drawing on research data on our impact.

Broadening our funding base in this way has required new skills and ways of thinking from staff and board members. Without doubt the initiative has been led by our Executive Director, Katherine Boyle, who has shown an impressive facility for grant writing and working closely with grant makers.

A significant factor in the Centre's ability to attract philanthropic interest and support has been its clear and strong strategy, which we launched at the beginning of 2020/21 ([click here](#)). No one reading our strategy can be in doubt about our Aims and Goals and, most importantly, our underpinning theory of social change.

We began the year working towards the Centre's 2020-2023 Strategy, and its content reflects the views and aspirations of our staff and board members.

"The Strategy is an essential framework for ensuring that our efforts are focused on achieving a fair, just and inclusive society."



"Our Strategy is complemented by our Reconciliation Action Plan which we developed during the year."

We were guided in the process by the 'Reflect, Innovate, Stretch, and Elevate' approach of Reconciliation Australia, reflecting on our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to better inform our practice.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan sets out our vision for reconciliation, also describing what we will do to work towards a fair, just and inclusive society for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, where they have the resources to meet their basic needs and to participate fully in society.

During the year we were able to renovate and reconfigure the Centre's premises, creating a lighter and more functional workplace. Significantly, the premises now feature an extraordinary work of art, a mural designed for the Centre by Bundjalung Artist, Bronwyn Bancroft (see page 34).

Covid-related restrictions, however, kept the Centre's staff out of the premises for much of the year, just at the time that the effects of the 2019-20 bushfires and the Covid pandemic flowed through to the Centre's workload. The Centre's staff, while supporting people in navigating the social security system, have themselves been coping with the demands of working remotely, with limited access to resources and collegial support, and the added pressure of being able to provide services only by phone.

"All staff deserve credit for working through these challenges to meet the legal needs of people in distress."

Simon Rice
Chair

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"I have some good news for you," I hear one of our solicitors, Julius, say to his client through the thin wall that separates our offices. "The ARO has overturned the decision. Looks like there'll be money in your account on Thursday, including back pay."

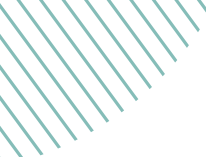
The relief in Julius' voice is palpable. His client has been off payment and without savings for more than six weeks because Centrelink thought she was a member of a couple with a man who's never contributed anything to support her or her children. He is also threatening and violent.

It's the hardest part of the job: knowing your client has no money to live on, relying only on what charities can provide, while we do the painstaking and time consuming work building a legal case to get them back on payment. Today Julius is enjoying giving the good news, one of many successful outcomes by our impressive team of solicitors over the last year.

Getting a client back on payment is the best feeling, knowing we've made a material difference to that person's life. Not only have we prevented homelessness, helped keep the lights on, the phone connected, and the kids fed and clothed, we've increased their economic security while working towards our vision (outlined in our new strategy): that everyone has the resources they need to lead a meaningful life.

All of our staff, pro bono partners and volunteers are working towards this vision. Everyone who works at Welfare Rights Centre does so because we want to make a difference. So, a very big thank you to each and every staff member who has worked so hard this past year to "make it work" during the many readjustments Covid has necessitated. And sincere thanks too to all of our volunteers and pro bono partners, without whom we could not possibly function.





In an environment of very constrained resourcing, we deliver: whether it's advice, information or referrals, tribunal representation, clear and accessible information on our website and in our social media communications, or engaging and informative training and presentations. And behind all of this public-facing work, we're always trying to do everything more efficiently and effectively (e.g., running the Centre remotely during the lockdowns), so we can help more people and achieve better outcomes.

But let's not kid ourselves. We don't always win. In fact, we often have to be the bearers of bad news. Social security and family assistance law is rigidly strict and very unforgiving. People who are destitute may have no right to a Centrelink payment or cannot get their debt waived under current laws - and there is nothing we can do about it.

Many New Zealand citizens and people on temporary visas are simply not entitled to any kind of Centrelink payments. Under current laws, a woman who is in a domestic violence situation can have her Centrelink payments not only cancelled because Centrelink believes she's 'in a relationship', but Centrelink can also raise a massive debt against her. If the perpetrator or anyone else has misled Centrelink about the woman's relationship status (even if she has never said anything dishonest herself), the debt cannot be waived

under any circumstances. She is stuck with the debt whether or not she saw any of the money herself, no matter how bad the violence or how big the debt.

"What we need is law reform."

Some of the most important work we do is with our peak, Economic Justice Australia. Our frontline experience dealing with the many ways social security law can negatively impact our clients, along with the experience of other members centres around Australia, is at the heart of EJA's public advocacy to reform the social security system to make it fair and a genuine safety net for all who need it.

With the advent of Covid-19, for a brief period we saw what a more inclusive and accessible social security system could look like. We've also seen a real change in the public narrative around people who receive income support from Centrelink. So in closing, I invite all of you reading this Annual Report to be part of the movement to see permanent change to our social security system.

Katherine Boyle
Executive Director

THEORY OF CHANGE

The Welfare Rights Centre provides free legal information, advice and representation to help people who live in New South Wales navigate the social security system. Many people dealing with Centrelink have complex, intersecting issues in their lives that cause deep distress, including health, housing, safety, and financial pressures. Our work transforms people's lives. Accessing social security entitlements and challenging unfair debts alleviates financial hardship and prevents disadvantage that can span generations.

We build knowledge and understanding of the social security system and provide practical legal support to access Centrelink benefits and challenge unfair debts. Accurate one-off legal advice can empower some people to resolve their issue, while others may need more substantial, ongoing legal assistance. In providing this service, we hold Centrelink to account and ensure its decisions are lawful and fair.

We collaborate with our peak organisation, Economic Justice Australia, to shape and advocate for Government investment in a fair social security system. No one should have to worry about meeting their basic economic and social needs. Everyone should have a safe place to live and food on the table. Good policy ensures people's immediate survival needs are met, and underpins people's capacity to participate fully in society and live with dignity and safety.

Through our work, we contribute to a robust social security system that sets the foundation for a fair, just and inclusive society.



Our Impact

"I like the way you talk to me, it's beautiful, it's worth billions of dollars"

Client

In December 2020, Welfare Rights Centre engaged Think Impact to evaluate our social impact and develop an impact measurement infrastructure. This work is supporting us to more deeply understand the change we create in the community.

Our social impact is evidenced by synthesising qualitative stories and quantitative data. The evaluation demonstrates that we are creating change for people requiring income support through our provision of legal advice, as well as for community organisations, through the facilitation of workshops.

The ongoing impact of Covid has only further intensified the volume and need of people accessing our services.

Changes for people requiring income support

Welfare Rights Centre's work is creating changes for people requiring income support across three primary areas: financial empowerment, health and family relationships.

Outcomes experienced by clients include:

Empowerment

- increased knowledge of rights and improved access to other support services (70 per cent of clients surveyed stated this as the most significant change experienced as a result of the WRC's support)
- feeling heard and respected
- being in a better financial situation (15 per cent of clients surveyed stated this as the most significant change experienced as a result of WRC support)

"I feel like I'm human again, I feel included."

Client

Health

- improved physical and mental health (15 per cent of clients surveyed stated this as the most significant change experienced as a result of the WRC's support)

Family relationships

- improved family relationships

The Welfare Rights Centre is improving knowledge of, and access to, support services for people requiring income support. Impact is created not only through the advice itself but through the way that this advice is delivered – with respect and an emphasis on listening to the unique stories and experiences of clients. 100% of clients surveyed would recommend the Welfare Rights Centre to other people.

When clients were asked what has changed for them as a result of our assistance, the most frequent responses were:

- A clearer understanding of their rights, and a better understanding of the Centrelink system

'Having someone from Welfare Rights Centre to talk to and explain things to me. It's a nightmare trying to deal with Centrelink and deal with the paperwork they send you. Help navigating and understanding the correspondence. Knowing my rights.'

- Accessing income support and improved finances

'I finally got on income support after trying unsuccessfully for years. It's taken a lot of stress off my life. I was getting rejected for years. The Welfare Rights Centre put me on the right track.'

- Less stress and improved health

'I was so stressed for years, without that stress my mental wellbeing has improved so much.'

Some of our clients deal with major communication issues, including being unable to write, as a result of their disability. We were thrilled to receive this lovely 'thank you' image from one of our clients in late 2020.



Impact Evaluation shows our Community Legal Education workshops are generating change

Social security is a complex and specialist area of law. The sector relies on the work of Welfare Rights Centre to educate and upskill its workforce. The importance of this education and workforce development has become amplified throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as rapid changes to the social security system were continually made. In this context, the sector's reliance on Welfare Rights Centre to understand and communicate these changes to community organisations working with people requiring income support has never been greater.

Key outcomes occurring for community organisations as a result of our community workshops include increased expertise and improved productivity. Welfare Rights Centre is improving the knowledge and skills of community organisations in the social services sector. Data from our most recent Community Legal Education workshop regarding the rights of migrants and newly arrived people demonstrates that the workshops have a high degree of relevance, accessibility and usefulness for community organisations in the sector, with:

- 90 per cent of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that training sessions met expectations and included information that was relevant to their area of work.

Outcomes relating to increased expertise and productivity are also occurring at a high degree, with:

- 100 per cent of survey respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that as a result of the workshop they had a better understanding of the social security system, felt more capable of helping people resolve problems with Centrelink payments and/or debts, and would be able to apply the knowledge they learned.
- 90 per cent of survey respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that they felt more confident supporting people to navigate the social security system.

When asked the most valuable thing learned from the workshop, 90 per cent of respondents described the acquisition or expansion of knowledge of the social security system. The impact of this increased knowledge and expertise is a workforce more equipped to support clients navigating the social security system, the value of which also flows through to clients, who are more informed and also better able to self-advocate.

Casework Overview



People helped

1592



Referrals

874



Information

601



Legal Advices

1260



Representation
to Centrelink
& internal appeals

95



Representation
at the AAT

48



Additional
Assistance

184



Stakeholder engagement,
Community Legal Education
& Law Reform activities

71

AIM 1

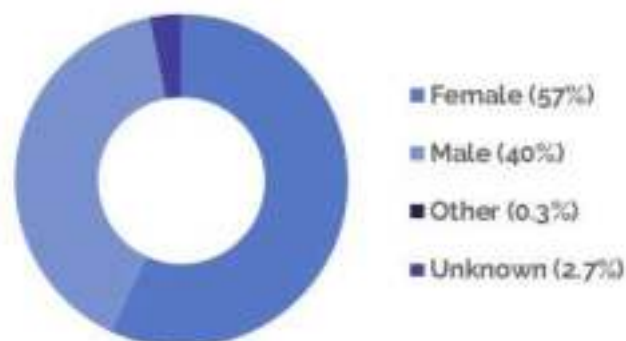
We achieve positive outcomes for people navigating the social security system

During the past year, we provided ongoing, compassionate support to people with complex problems to access social security payments and challenge unfair debts through our casework. We provided high quality advice to people who had an adverse decision from Centrelink regarding the application of social security and family assistance law to their issue and explained their appeal options. We significantly increased the number of people to whom we provided information about their rights and obligations under social security and family assistance laws, and improved the quality of that information through the involvement of caseworkers.

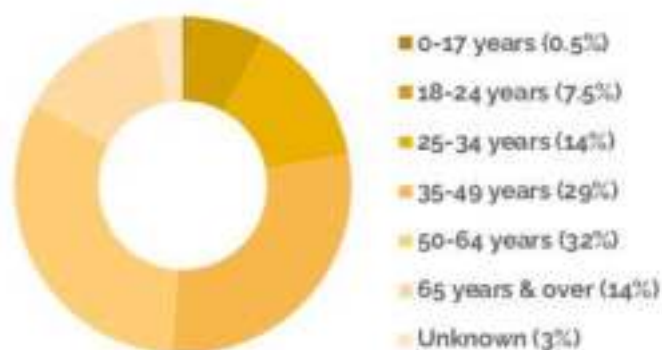
We have been active at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, increasing the number of matters in which we represented clients at both tiers of the Tribunal. We also expanded our Disability Support Pension Clinic by recruiting and training additional pro bono lawyers, which has allowed us to offer a higher level of service to vulnerable people trying to get on a Disability Support Pension.

We have fostered lines of communication with Centrelink to obtain information about client's social security issue, advocate for an outcome and lodge internal appeals. We have also helped our clients meet their basic needs by supporting access to community and other services while resolving their social security problem.

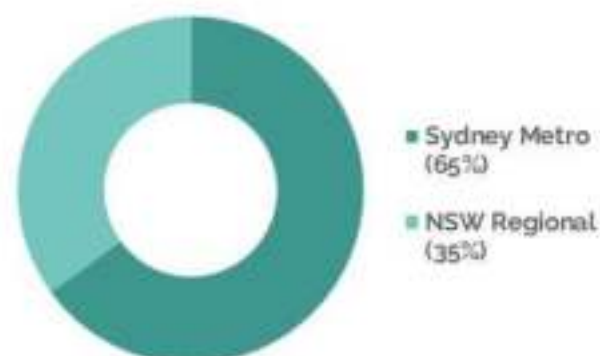
Gender



Age



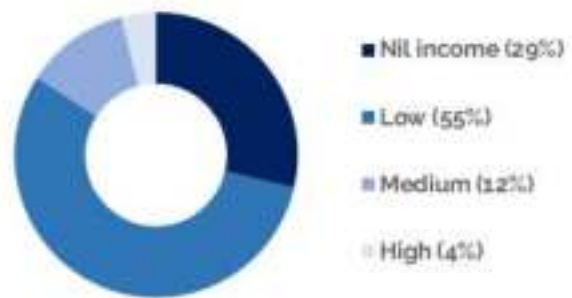
Location of Clients



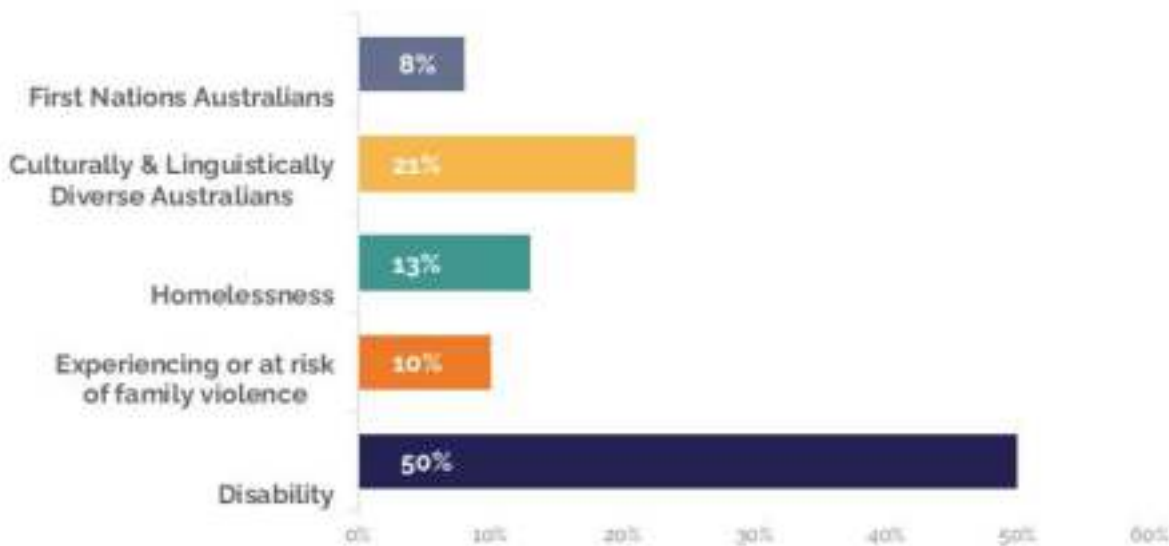
During 2020-21, we prioritised and provided our services to people most in need of assistance.

To that end, we offered people diverse means of contacting the Centre to obtain information and advice, and developed and maintained an intake system which identifies, prioritises and assists people most in need of advice and ongoing casework assistance.

Income (where known)



Client Characteristics

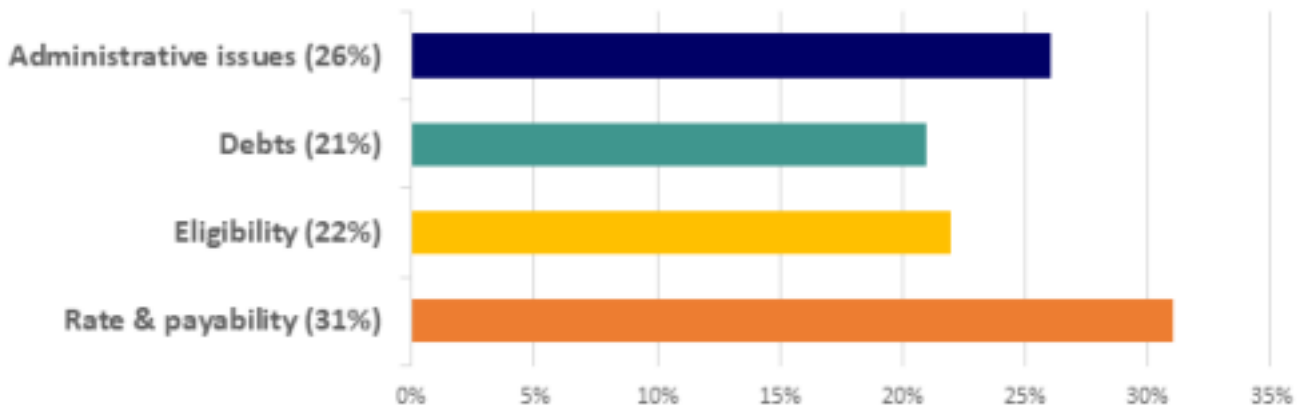


Victim of domestic violence with Centrelink debt and no income

Maya was referred to us by a financial counsellor after learning that Maya and her three children were living on food provided by charities. Maya had been to Centrelink and applied for Jobseeker and Family Tax Benefit (FTB), asking to be treated as 'separated under one roof' because her violent ex-partner was still living in her home but refusing to provide any financial support. Maya wasn't working as she was caring for her children and had absolutely no income. She had also just learned that she had a \$37,000 Family Tax Benefit debt that had been automatically generated because her former partner had years of outstanding tax returns.

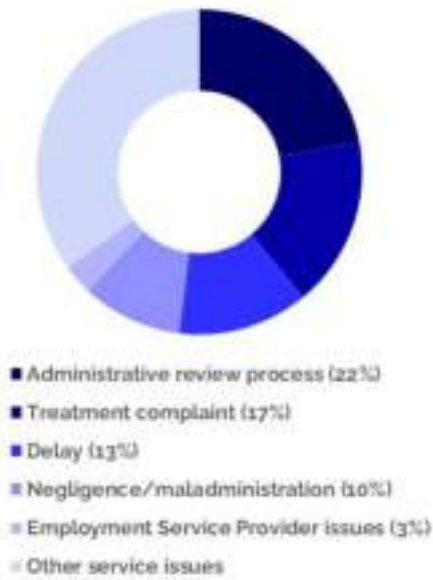
We contacted Centrelink on Maya's behalf and were able to get decisions expedited. Her claims for Jobseeker Payment and FTB were successful, and we also arranged for her \$37,000 debt to be written off until her husband lodges his tax returns. That will allow Centrelink to do a FTB reconciliation and decide whether she owes any money at all.

Presenting Issues



A further breakdown of these four presenting issues is provided below.

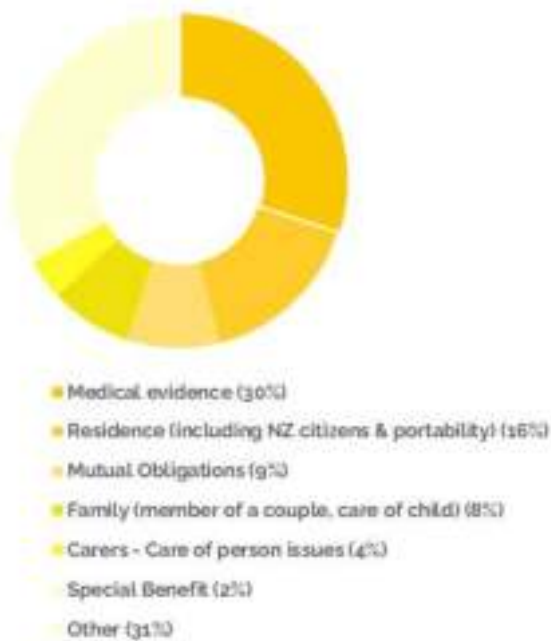
Administrative Issues



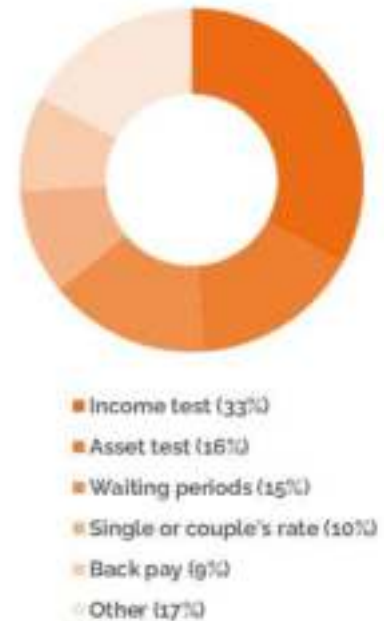
Debts



Eligibility



Rate and Payability



Our website continues to form a core function of our communications strategy. During the previous 12 months:

- There have been 45,481 users, of whom 45,078 were new users (89% - a percentage that has remained relatively constant throughout the period).
- The most popular page has been the COVID-19 information page, with 36,000 visits. The factsheets page was the 2nd most popular, with almost 7,000 views.
- 86% of visitors arrived at our site via use of search terms. 11.5% arrived 'directly' by typing the website address.
- 57% of visits were from a mobile phone, 40% from a PC, and 3% from a tablet.

A number of short videos were created and shared on social media, including a series of Q&A's with a solicitor, and announcements of major changes or events. Our post announcing the increasing Age Pension qualifying age was the most viewed post on Facebook (reaching 15,000) during the 2020/21 period.



\$100,000 debt waived - noting Centrelink's error

Sarah had a complex history of serious mental health issues and was also caring for a family member who was seriously unwell. After receiving debt notices totalling \$100,000 for overpayment of Disability Support Pension (DSP) and Family Tax Benefit (FTB), she was so distressed that she attempted suicide.

Sarah had been overpaid because she was receiving periodic compensation for a workplace injury while also receiving DSP. She'd told Centrelink about the compensation twice, when she first claimed DSP and subsequently in a phone call querying her rate of payment. Centrelink had failed to act on that information and granted her payment in error. We also discovered that Sarah's FTB debt was an automatic debt generated because she hadn't lodged her tax returns for several years, so Centrelink required full repayment of her FTB.

We represented Sarah at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, where the Tribunal decided to waive a substantial portion of the DSP debt due to administrative error and the balance of the debt due to her special circumstances. The Tribunal accepted evidence of Sarah's serious mental health condition and that recovery of the debt would impede Sarah's chances of improving her mental health. The Tribunal also accepted our submissions that an extension of time should be granted to allow her to lodge a tax return. As a result, Sarah was refunded around \$6,000 of her debt repayments.

We increased the capacity of community based organisations to assist their clients to navigate the social security system. During the previous 12 months we delivered community legal education (CLE) presentations via Zoom, attracting more than 1400 registrations. 94% of respondents rated their session as good or excellent. 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they felt more capable of helping people deal with a Centrelink problem as a result of attending the session.

We also delivered an additional seven CLEs to individual organisations on diverse platforms. A significant pool of CLE resources was developed, including eligibility flow charts and case study videos. These will have ongoing application, making future CLEs less resource intensive. We have also presented CLEs in partnership with ACOSS, NSW Community Legal Centres and Community Legal Centres Australia.

We delivered seventeen Information Sessions to approximately 300 community workers during interagency meetings in the Central Tablelands, Coffs Harbour, Hunter, Kempsey, Lithgow, Macksville, Nambucca, Shoalhaven, Taree, and Wagga Wagga regions. These sessions introduced the work of the Centre and provided 'top tips' on Centrelink payments, also allowing time for participants to ask questions.

As well as increasing community workers' awareness of our work and their capacity to identify and address clients' Centrelink problems, we received a number of client referrals directly into our casework service following these sessions. We also presented a session on Centrelink debts for Legal Aid's Law for Community workers podcast ([click here](#)).

Intake Officer, Ben Jackson,
managing a client intake shift



Responding to Covid & other disasters

The Covid-19 epidemic had a significant impact on our workload, a situation exacerbated by staff moving in and out of remote service provision. We were fortunate to receive fixed-term additional funding to expand our casework service from the Federal Government and from the Thyne Reid Foundation. With these funds we were able to fund an additional solicitor and an intake assistant to help meet the demand.

We experienced increased demand for information and support from many who had lost employment as a result of shutdowns, including queries trying to clarify eligibility and conditions relating to the intersection of JobSeeker and JobKeeper. A notable feature during this period was the requests for help from people in quite desperate situations who were locked out of the social security system

because they were subject to a compensation preclusion period. They'd received compensation long ago but were now without funds and had no way to secure income through employment given the Covid shutdown.

We worked hard to stay on top of the rolling changes to social security during this time, in turn providing information to community workers through our community legal education program (funded by the Ecstra Foundation and Collier Charitable Trust). In particular, we promoted the temporary suspension of the Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period (NARWP), also revisiting our casework files to personally contact all previous clients affected by the NARWP. We then posted advising people affected by the reintroduction of the NARWP to claim Special Benefit prior to their payment being cancelled.



Photo: AAP

We ensured that we were responsive during the NSW bushfires and the NSW flood crisis, including posting on social media, on our website and including information in our community legal education sessions.

In a number of instances, we were able to work with local community organisations to streamline services and provide casework support.



Act of Grace payment for man with a disability

Rose was referred to us by her union as she was struggling to support her brother Lucas, as well as her young son.

Lucas, who was born with a disability, migrated from New Zealand to live with Rose as he required ongoing care. Lucas's claim for Disability Support Pension (DSP) was rejected because the Australia/New Zealand Social Security Agreement effectively provides that Australia will not pay DSP to a person if their disability arose before they came to live in Australia.

As Lucas was not eligible for any Centrelink benefits, the Centre made an application for an Act of Grace to the Department of Finance. To demonstrate there were no viable alternative options available to Lucas to secure payments, the Centre undertook an intensive and exhaustive process of gathering evidence to demonstrate that Lucas was not eligible for income support from New Zealand, and also had no prospect of obtaining Australian citizenship.

The Australian Minister for Finance granted Lucas's application for an Act of Grace payment equivalent to DSP until he would otherwise qualify for the Age Pension. Lucas and his sister were very happy, and the Centre held a Zoom meeting with him to celebrate!

AIM 2

We seek a fair and accountable social security system

In the past year, we have contributed to the development of social security law, policy and practice through our casework. We have run test cases in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, completing twelve cases at the Social Services & Child Support Division and seven cases at the General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

In these cases, we have sought to challenge the interpretation of law and policy relating to dependent adult children of refugees, the application of the social security agreement with New Zealand on the issue of "date of disablement", incorrect application of newly arrived resident waiting periods to Childcare Subsidy, and the provision of accommodation criteria for Special Benefit.

We brought our knowledge of our clients' experience to public attention to highlight injustices in the social security system and to advocate for change. In 2020, our client, Cassandra Clark (pictured right), decided to go public about her \$27,000 debt to Centrelink and was featured on the 7:30 program and on the ABC website. You can read more about Cassandra's case on page 23.

We have also promoted (anonymised) casework wins through our social media to promote our casework service and the core notion that social security decisions can be appealed.





Intake Officer, Jessica Duan, with volunteers Margarida Arminda Pinto Boa Morte and Hugh Bartley

Tribunal decision will benefit other new migrants

Sasha had been sponsored by her employer to come to Australia for work and she became a permanent resident. After she gave birth, she continued working but found her son's childcare fees crippling. She applied for Child Care Subsidy but Centrelink told her she wasn't eligible because she'd been in Australia for less than a year, stating Child Care Subsidy has a 12 month Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period (NARWP). That is not correct.

We represented Sasha at the first tier of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and argued that Centrelink's decision was wrong in law. To be eligible for Child Care Subsidy, a person must have a 'Family Tax Benefit Child', which is not the same as claiming Family Tax Benefit (FTB). Centrelink had erroneously interpreted the reference to "FTB child" as meaning a child for which a person is receiving FTB Part A (which does have a 12 month NARWP). The decision was inconsistent with the legislation because the Act requires that before a person is eligible for FTB Part A they must have an FTB child.

The Tribunal agreed that Centrelink had made a mistake, stating that under the Social Security Act, "an FTB child is not necessarily a child for whom a person receives Family Tax Benefit".

We're happy to report that now Sasha is receiving Child Care Subsidy, her son is attending childcare, and she's managed to keep her job!

The ongoing problem of dual reporting requirements

Cassandra vividly remembers the day she received an unexpected letter in the mail telling her she owed Centrelink \$27,000.

Her husband had his own business and Cassandra received Family Tax Benefit for her two children, one of whom has a disability. After learning that she may be eligible for Carer Payment, Cassandra filled out a claim form in full and was granted payment. She regularly and accurately updated her husband's income details with Centrelink.

Unbeknownst to Cassandra, she was accumulating a debt from the very first Carer Payment she received because although she had declared her husband's income on the claim form, Centrelink had failed to take it into account. Her debt continued to increase because nobody at Centrelink had told her that she needed to provide details of her husband's income fortnightly. She was reporting annually – as required for Family Tax Benefit – so in Cassandra's mind, Centrelink knew exactly what her husband earned.

The debt had arisen because of the 'dual reporting requirements' associated with Family Tax Benefit and Carer Payment. While Cassandra believed that Centrelink was using her annual estimate of family income to calculate Carer Payment – incredibly – those two arms of Centrelink don't communicate with each other so the discrepancy was not noticed.

Cassandra appealed the debt to Centrelink. They accepted that she'd received the payments in good faith, and that they'd made an initial error when they failed to take into account the income she'd declared on her Carer Payment claim form. However, Centrelink argued that their letters had put her on notice that they were making an error, and that by not responding to these letters Cassandra had contributed to the error, and therefore the debt was not caused by 'sole administrative error' by Centrelink, as required by the Social Security Act.

Cassandra then appealed the full \$27,000 Carer Payment debt to the first tier of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), which waived the debt on the basis of sole administrative error on the part of Centrelink. Centrelink appealed! That's the point at which Cassandra contacted us.

Following an assessment of the tier one AAT decision, we concluded there were problems with the way the Member had found there was sole administrative error but there were other grounds to argue sole administrative error, which related to her husband's income as a sole trader.

After unsuccessfully trying to settle the debt with Centrelink, we represented Cassandra at the General Division hearing. Unfortunately, the Tribunal did not agree with our arguments relating to sole administrative error. This is a complex area of law which we've been seeking to clarify for many years. It is also an area of law that ignores the reality that many people don't read the small print on what they consider 'form letters' on the back of Centrelink correspondence, including where people cannot read or understand the information.

Fortunately, however, the Tribunal found Cassandra's evidence of her circumstances compelling and together with the evidence of Centrelink's error, found there were special circumstances and waived the entirety of the debt. The Tribunal's decision can be found at [Clark; Secretary, Department of Social Services and \(Social services second review\) \[2021\] AATA](#).

Cassandra's experience relating to dual reporting requirements is indicative of a more systemic issue; an issue we've raised in the media, including important coverage on ABC's 7:30 program ([click here](#)).

Collaboration with Economic Justice Australia

During the past year, we continued our collaboration with Economic Justice Australia (EJA), the peak organisation for community legal centres providing specialist advice to people on their social security issues and rights. Through this collaboration we have sought to influence social security law, policy and practices and improve access to income support.

We provided evidence to parliamentary and other inquiries about our clients' experiences navigating the social security system, including providing evidence at the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Standing Committee on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (click [here](#) for the transcript).

We also contributed to a number of EJA's submissions:

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee's Inquiry into Centrelink's compliance program (click [here](#));
- Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into the purpose, intent, and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension (click [here](#)).
- Inquiry into Social Security (Parenting payment participation requirements – class of persons) instrument 20201 (ParentsNext) (click [here](#)).
- Pre-budget Submission for 2021-22 (click [here](#)).

Extract from Executive Director, Katherine Boyle's evidence to the House of Reps Standing Committee (see above) outlining the crucial role Centrelink social workers can play supporting victims of violence. This case - involving an alleged debt - made it all the way to the General Division of the AAT before the client contacted us. After we advised and referred her to a Centrelink social worker, a retrospective exemption based on her ex-partner's violence meant there was no debt.



We instigated research into the sharp increase in the number of people approaching the Centre for assistance during the 2020 lockdown who were precluded from receiving any kind of Centrelink payment as the result of receiving a lump sum payment of compensation.

We attended the Biannual Consultation with the Department of Social Security, along with representatives from EJA. Issues raised with the Department included improvements to the Social Security Guide in relation to domestic violence and victims of crime compensation, clarification regarding continuation of benefits following the lifting of the coronavirus waiting period waivers, compensation preclusion periods, and debts.

The Centre wrote to Tanya Plibersek MP to urge her to oppose any proposed legislation giving effect to the extension of the four year Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period to additional Centrelink payment, such as Carer Payment, Carer Allowance and Family Tax Benefit.

New Policy, Media & Communications Subcommittee

We led an EJA initiative, introducing a new Policy, Media & Communications Subcommittee which considers and develops EJA's policy positions on social security law, policy and administration, coordinates and shares social media content amongst member centres, and develops an informed consistent and coherent media messaging.



Special Benefit Test Case

Raj was 75 years old when he migrated to Australia from Pakistan with his elderly wife, planning to live with his son, daughter-in-law and their infant child temporarily in their one-bedroom unit until he found work and secured alternate accommodation.

Raj wasn't successful despite his extensive attempts to gain employment, forcing him and his wife to remain living in his son's living room, sleeping on a futon next to an open kitchen, surrounded by their belongings. Raj and his wife largely fed themselves from food he received in exchange for voluntary work at a charity restaurant.

As Raj's son lacked the financial means to support everyone in the household, their relationship became tense, resulting in near physical altercations and threats of eviction. Then Raj was diagnosed with heart failure but decided not to undergo surgery, in part because of his insecure living arrangements.

Raj contacted us after his claim for Special Benefit was rejected despite Special Benefit being considered a discretionary payment of last resort. We provided Raj with advice about Special Benefit and his appeal rights to the first tier of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Raj represented himself at the Tribunal and was successful in his appeal. Special Benefit was granted on the basis that his heart failure arose in Australia, representing a substantial change in his circumstances. But when Centrelink implemented the decision, it reduced his payment by two thirds on the basis he was receiving 'free boarding and accommodation'. Raj was left with around \$12 a day.

We represented Raj in the General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, arguing that a person's payment should only be reduced if the accommodation meets an acceptable standard and to meet this standard, the accommodation should be in the form of a room which offers privacy. We also provided evidence of payment Raj had made to his son to help cover expenses. Before the matter proceeded to hearing, we settled with Centrelink and a decision was made by consent which resulted in Raj receiving an arrears payment representing his full entitlement to Special Benefit.

AIM 3

We work towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

We have reflected on our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to better inform our practice, noting that providing a culturally safe service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is core business.

Reconciliation Action Plan

In February this year, we launched our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), a very significant moment in the Centre's history ([click here](#)). Our guest of honour was Jude Jarret, whose artwork was licenced for our RAP (see page 30). We are very grateful to Zac Armytage, CLCNSW's Aboriginal Legal Access Program Coordinator, for supporting us in the development of our RAP (and the RAPS of three other community legal centres). Our RAP Working Group meets monthly, consisting of the four CLCs who worked together to develop our RAPs, along with Zac Armytage, with recruitment underway for an external First Nations member.

First Nations Access Officer

With the employment of a First Nations Access Officer (FNAO), Lucy Doolan, in April 2020 we launched our First Nations Access Program. As we believe that First Nations people should be central to the design of any services or programs targeting them, we wrote to First Nations controlled organisations and stakeholders to ask what we should include in the FNAO position description prior to advertising the role.

Compensation Preclusion Period Waived

A drug and alcohol service support worker referred Craig, an Aboriginal man with a serious mental illness and drug and gambling addictions, as his claim for a Centrelink payment had been knocked back.

Craig had received a large compensation payment from a workplace injury but had been sleeping rough for 18 months as he had no money left, having spent most of his compensation money on drugs and gambling. During the COVID-19 lockdown, a homelessness service had managed to get Craig a place in a hotel but had been unsuccessful in their attempts to help him get on a Centrelink payment. Craig remained subject to a compensation preclusion period locking him out of Centrelink payments despite having had no income or savings for a long time.

We worked with Craig's support worker to help Craig appeal the decision, including gathering evidence and preparing submissions about Craig's mental health condition, addictions and homelessness. It was a great day in the office when we learned that Centrelink's Authorised Review Officer had overturned the original decision and granted Craig Jobseeker Payment.

From these discussions we drafted a flexible position description which would evolve in accordance with the First Nations Access Officer's skills and interests. This has included changing the title of the role (from "Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer"). Since starting in the role, Lucy has focused on building our capacity to develop relationships with First Nations controlled organisations, producing culturally appropriate materials (including social media) targeting First Nations people, and commenced our website renewal project, which will include webpages for First Nations people (funded by a \$20,000 grant from the NSW Government under the Social Sector Transformation Fund).

We were fortunate to hold an internal NAIDOC week event and have continued to make efforts to increase our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights by ensuring staff meetings always include time for discussion of recent and important First Nations texts. Unfortunately, due to the lockdown, many NAIDOC week events were cancelled and we were unable to attend. We had planned to go to family fun day events in



Marrickville on Gadigal Country, and Couridjah on Darawal Country, and had booked stalls and prepared goody bags for the kids. We look forward to attending these events in 2022.

We continue to post targeted content through our social media feeds, exploring ways to improve targeting of First Nations people.

First Nations Access Officer, Lucy Doolan, and solicitor, Julius Golab, presenting a Community Legal Education case study during community support worker training





Staff and volunteers celebrating NAIDOC week 2021 in front of our Bronwyn Bancroft mural

Debt wiped for First Nations woman

Leah is an Aboriginal woman with seven children who has relied on Parenting Payment Single and Family Tax Benefit (FTB) to support her large family. She has never lived as a couple with the father of her children, Marcus. Marcus has never paid child support and has contributed very little to supporting the children.

Following years of violence, which resulted in Marcus spending time in prison for domestic violence, the police took out an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order to protect Leah and her children.

Despite this history, Centrelink decided that Leah had been in a de facto relationship with Marcus since 2006. Her Parenting Payment and FTB was cancelled and a \$217,000 debt was raised. With no income to support herself and her children, Leah was worried that the Department of Communities & Justice would get involved and remove her children from her care.

After extensive work gathering evidence from Leah, her support workers and the Local Court, we lodged a request for review of the Parenting Payment and FTB cancellations, and applied to have her Parenting Payment reinstated while waiting for the review outcome. Our request for payment pending review was successful, with Leah receiving nearly \$4,000.00 in arrears which kept her family afloat while she waited for the outcome of the review.

Several weeks later, we received the wonderful news that the decision to cancel Leah's payments has been reversed by the Authorised Review Officer, as has the decision to raise debts. Leah is back on payment and has no debt.



Our Reconciliation Action Plan features the painting, *Black Fish Season*, by Aboriginal artist, Jude Jarrett, from the Gumbaynggir Nation.

Jude writes about herself and the painting as follows:

About the painting: *Black fish (Warraagan) Season*

This painting is a tribute to my Brother in Law who always took my sister, their sons, my sons and myself and other immediate family members fishing and swimming along the river and the beach. This was a regular outing during the summer months. He taught the young boys how to catch fish, clean and prepare it and then cook it on an open fire on the river bank, where it would then be shared amongst the families. He was a great fisherman with local knowledge of the best fishing spots: knowledge which he passed down to the boys. The river and beaches are still a great provider of freshwater and salt water fish for my family and a resource we need to look after.

Jude Jarrett

(2020)

About the Artist

My paintings don't always tell the traditional stories that usually come with indigenous art, but they tell my story, one of reconnecting with my family, finding my place and where I belong. My works reflect the "conciliation" between traditional methods with modern colours and mediums. They are what lies deep in my heart and soul. In short my paintings are my story, my journey, nothing more, nothing less.

Yaari Yarraang /Goodbye.

Jude's Artist Profile can be found at <https://www.boomalli.com.au/jude-jarrett/>

Single mother's payment cancelled

Barbara rang the Centre because she hadn't been able to access her baby's birth certificate as it was at her former home where her husband continued to live in Western Australia. She had no source of income, and was sleeping on a mattress on the floor in her mother's home with her four children, two of whom have autism spectrum disorder.

Due to complications during her most recent pregnancy, Barbara had spent a protracted time in hospital, and she'd had to place her children in foster care given her husband's mental health issues and domestic violence. After the baby was born, she'd decided to separate and move with the children to NSW. Barbara's husband then accessed her Centrelink account and uploaded documentation purporting to show that she was no longer caring for the children.

Centrelink cancelled Barbara's Carer Payment, Carer Allowance and Family Tax Benefit, also advising she had a \$1000 debt because the children were not in her care while she was in hospital. They told her that her payments would only be re-instated if she provided proof the children were now living with her, and they required the birth certificate for her new baby.

The Centre contacted Centrelink urgently on Barbara's behalf to assist her to appeal the payment cancellation and debt, also advising her to lodge a claim for Parenting Payment Single, which would be easier to qualify for while she waited for the outcome of the Carer Payment cancellation appeal. In the short term, her Parenting Payment claim was successful, and subsequently, all her payments were restored with arrears paid. The \$1000 debt was wiped.

The Centre has raised Barbara's situation with Services Australia as an example of how its processes lead to vulnerable women having their payments cancelled, and the issue had also been raised in EJA's submission to the Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence.

AIM 4

We use our organisational strength and sustainability to underpin our social security expertise and deliver a quality legal service

We have ensured that we've had the people and skills to deliver a quality service which has a beneficial impact on people's lives. In the past year we have employed five additional staff members: Sally Cameron (CLE & Comms Officer), Juliet Dimond (Solicitor), Lucy Doolan (First Nations Access Officer), Bryn Overend (Solicitor) and Jessica Duan (initially as Intake Assistant, then as Intake Officer).

This year, staff have participated in a range of training, presentations, workshops and professional development, including cultural awareness and unconscious bias training, leadership training, training sessions at the CLCNSW State Conference, and the Community CEOs forum. Staff also attended EJA's National Conference and attended training, including training on the Robodebt settlement, compensation payments, debt calculation, and vicarious trauma during Covid.

We were fortunate during 2020/21 to attract additional funding from philanthropic sources and from the State and Federal Governments. With the support of the Ecstra Foundation, the Collier Charitable Fund and other trusts and foundations, we were able to employ a Community Legal Education & Communication Officer to re-launch an expanded CLE program targeting community workers and boost our capacity to respond to calls for assistance. The Federal Government gave us a temporary boost in funding to deal with the impacts of Covid, which enabled us to employ an additional solicitor and our First Nations Access Officer. We received funding to help us respond to the 2020 bushfires, which we used to employ a Community Liaison Officer. We were also fortunate to receive funding from the Community Enterprise Foundation to launch an impact evaluation project, which we will report on in full in next year's Annual Report.

Despite the additional funding, the audited financial result for 2019-20 shows a deficit of \$70,211, which was funded from our equity and the surplus brought forward from 2019-20 to fund vital services during the COVID-19 lockdowns. This deficit was planned and in last year's Annual Report was predicted to be \$100,000. As of 30 June 2021, we maintained a healthy level of equity of \$368,965. The Centre's full financial statements are available on request, and are also available from the Australian Charities Register on the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission website, www.acnc.gov.au.

We re-engaged Wendy Brooks & Partners in 2021 to support us in our fundraising strategy.

We have continued to practice good governance, participating in Phase 3 of the National Accreditation Scheme. Following the site visit by the Regional Accreditation Coordinator, we received the draft assessment report which recommended that the Centre be certified under the scheme.

Staff with Board Chair, Simon Rice (far right), at our Impact Evaluation Day at the University of Sydney





This year we were extremely fortunate to have a mural designed for our Centre by Bundjalung Artist, Bronwyn Bancroft.

Bronwyn writes about herself and the painting as follows.

Shields

When I initially started thinking of concepts for Welfare Rights at the beginning of this year, COVID hit and isolation and social distancing became the new normal.

"Shields" visualises self-protection and safety through connection. This image encapsulates the concept of protection of and for the individual. Protection from inequality and creating shields of cohesion to protect vulnerable members of our society.

Dr. Bronwyn Bancroft

(2020)

About the Artist

Bronwyn Bancroft is a proud Bundjalung Woman and Artist. She has been exhibiting both nationally and internationally for over three decades. She has a diverse artistic practice including public art commissions and imagery design for private commission and has illustrated and/or written 40 books. She has been a Director of her own company, Designer Aboriginals Pty Ltd since 1985. Bronwyn is a Director of Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) and a member of the Commonwealth Bank Indigenous Advisory Council. Bronwyn has been a volunteer senior strategist at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative since 2009.

Find out more about Bronwyn's work at <https://www.bronwynbancroft.com/>

Our Board

Simon Rice | Chair

Simon is the Kim Santow Chair of Law and Social Justice at the University of Sydney Law School. He has been a solicitor and volunteer at Redfern Legal Centre, Principal Solicitor and Director of Kingsford Legal Centre, and a board member of many other legal centres. Simon has also been Director of the NSW Law and Justice Foundation, Chair of the ACT Law Reform Advisory Council, adviser to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, and a judicial member of the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal. Simon has practised, taught and written extensively in anti-discrimination and human rights law.

Clancy King | Deputy Chair

Clancy is a former volunteer of the Welfare Rights Centre and has lived experience of dealing with social security law. She holds a Juris Doctor and a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and is a senior associate in the employment team at DLA Piper where she advises on employment and workplace issues. Clancy joined the Board in December 2015 and became Deputy Chair in 2016.

Laura Lombardo | Company Secretary

Laura is a special counsel in the pro bono team at Gilbert + Tobin where she runs public interest litigation with a particular focus on discrimination, human rights, Indigenous justice and refugee rights. She has represented clients in the District, Supreme and Federal Courts, NSW Court of Appeal, High Court of Australia, in coronial inquiries and Royal Commissions. Laura was previously the Principal Solicitor at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and she has worked in Katherine and Alice Springs at the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, after starting her legal career as a litigator at global law firm Ashurst. Laura joined the board in October 2016.

Lua Penrith De Burgh

Lua is a former administrative secretary of the Welfare Rights Centre, and also has experience dealing with social security law and Centrelink from a personal perspective. She has worked at George Community Housing, Hurstville, as a customer service officer, developed and managed the Sydney Indigenous Tennis Program, and supported the mentoring of young Aboriginal people at the Tribal Warrior Association. Lua is an Aboriginal Yuin Nation woman with family ties to the south coast of NSW. She joined the Board in December of 2016. Lua will be resigning from the Board at the 2021 Annual General Meeting. Lua's devotion to the Centre's vision and her guidance and commitment will be greatly missed. We wish you all the best Lua!

James Jankulovski

James is a senior associate in the disputes group at Herbert Smith Freehills. He holds a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Science from UNSW. In 2017, James was awarded an Australian Institute of Company Directors' Not-for-Profit Scholarship and he has since completed the AICD's Governance Foundations for Not-for-Profit Directors course. James was a volunteer at the Welfare Rights Centre in 2014 and 2015 before joining the Board in April 2015 and being appointed Company Secretary from October 2015 to November 2020. Having completed his third term, James will be retiring from the Board at the 2021 Annual General Meeting. James' contribution and commitment to the Centre, especially during a period of funding instability and rapid change was unwavering. Thank you, James. We will miss you!

Rita Martin

Rita has a background in Intensive Care Nursing and public hospital management, having worked extensively in Ireland, England, Switzerland, Netherlands, USA, Germany, Italy and France, before settling in Sydney. Rita studied Political Science and Industrial Relations prior to her appointment at the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, which is the industrial and professional organisation representing nurses and midwives in NSW (and also the NSW Branch of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation). Initially Rita worked as a Professional Officer in the Professional Services team, until the development of her current role as Government & Community Relations organiser. The NSWNMA are proud to be long term supporters of the WRC.

Graeme Smith

Graeme has been admitted as a Solicitor in NSW and is the former NSW Public Guardian. He is also the former Director of Operations, NSW Ageing and Disability Department.

Valentine Tse

Valentine is the Managing Director of a public practice accountancy firm with over 25 years' experience in financial control, taxation and wealth management. Prior to becoming self-employed, Valentine held positions of responsibility at Price Waterhouse, IAG, Zurich and Intech. Valentine joined the Board in October 2017.

Scarlet Wilcock

Scarlet is a Lecturer at the University of Sydney Law School. Her research focuses on social security law and policy issues, and particularly the impacts of social security fraud and compliance practices for Centrelink recipients. Scarlet is admitted as a solicitor in NSW and is a former volunteer of both the Welfare Rights Centre and Social Security Victoria. She joined the Board in December 2015.

Principal Solicitor, Natalie Ross, and Solicitor, Donna Flood
discussing casework approaches



Our People

Katherine Boyle | Executive Director

Katherine has worked in the community legal sector, union movement, private practice and in the public sector for over 25 years. She leads the Centre's strategic planning and implementation, staff and organisational management, and policy and law reform. She is also the Deputy Chair of Economic Justice Australia's Board. Katherine has a long association with Welfare Rights Centre, having volunteered at the centre in the 1990s.

Natalie Ross | Principal Solicitor

Natalie commenced as the Centre's Principal Solicitor in July 2019. She has worked and volunteered in the community legal sector for 30 years including as Principal Solicitor at Inner City Legal Centre and team leader at Redfern Legal Centre. Before joining the Centre, Natalie worked as a generalist solicitor and clinic supervisor at Kingsford Legal Centre. She has authored, edited and project managed many plain English legal publications. Natalie is also a member of Economic Justice Australia's Board.

Daniel Turner | Senior Solicitor

Dan has worked in community legal centres for more than seven years. Starting as a volunteer at the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre while still a student, he has now held numerous positions including intake officer, tenant advocate, solicitor and legal service co-ordinator. Dan has also been on the board of CLCNSW for the past five years, and has a very broad range of experience both as a lawyer and manager in the CLC sector.

Donna Flood | Solicitor & Community Liaison Officer

Donna has worked in the community legal sector since 2012 and at the Centre since 2017. She currently supervises the Disability Support Pension Clinic, working with volunteer lawyers from the private sector. She also undertakes community legal education in the centre's Regional Access Project, increasing the skills of community organisations in bushfire affected regions of NSW. Donna has previously volunteered as a solicitor in family law and general practice and has also spent time working in Native Title law.

Julius Golab | Solicitor

Julius began working in the community legal sector while studying at the University of Wollongong and has been with the Centre since 2019. His role involves advising and representing clients. Over the last year, Julius's work has included a focus on appealing Compensation Preclusion Periods for vulnerable clients to the AAT, and he has also presented at community legal education events.

Juliet Dimond | Solicitor

Juliet returned to the Centre in October 2020 as a permanent staff member, having previously worked for the centre on a temporary basis. Before joining the Welfare Rights Centre, Juliet was a generalist solicitor at Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre. Juliet has a strong background in volunteering at community legal centres and over the years has volunteered at various CLCs including Women's Legal Service, Redfern Legal Centre, Katherine Regional Aboriginal Legal Service, the Inner City Legal Centre and the Welfare Rights Centre. Juliet also has a background in government policy and law reform.

Sally Cameron | Community Legal Education & Communications Officer

Sally has worked in numerous community legal centres, other community sector organisations and international agencies over the last 25 years, bringing wide ranging experience in community education and policy analysis to her role at the Centre. As the Information Campaign Lead, she coordinated the design and implementation of a broad reaching community education campaign as an urgent response to the large numbers of people applying for a social security payment as a result of COVID-19.

Eric Chu | Office Administrator

Eric's background in project coordination and customer service is invaluable in his role as Office Administrator. His work includes undertaking administrative duties, maintaining office systems and supervising volunteers. Eric's efficiency and attention to detail have proven vital to the efficient operation of the Centre's legal practice and community legal education program.

Ben Jackson | Intake Officer

Ben was our Intake Officer until March 2021, helping clients access Centre's services through management of our client intake procedures and supervision of volunteers and secondees. Ben brought a background in law and counselling to the role, having worked in legal, mental health, and homelessness services. His expertise strongly informed our intake procedures, ensuring an understanding of the complexity and diversity of people's experience guides interaction with our clients day-to-day. In March 2021, Ben migrated with his wife and child to Denmark. We wish him all the best!

Jessica Duan | Intake Officer/Intake Assistant

Jessica has been with the Centre since 2019, starting off as an admin volunteer during her studies at Sydney University. She has been in various roles at the Centre, including filling in as locum administrator as well as Intake Assistant before stepping in as Intake Officer after graduation. Jess's role includes training and supervision of volunteers and secondees, as well as overseeing client intake procedures.

Lucy Doolan | First Nations Access Officer

Lucy is a passionate advocate for human rights and standing up for freedom, justice and equality for First Nations people. Lucy has supported the Centre to become a more accessible and culturally safe service for First Nations people, including working on the development of online resources targeting First Nations people about how to deal with Centrelink problems. Lucy has previously worked at the Aboriginal Legal Service and Warra Warra Legal Service in Broken Hill.

Bryn Overend | Senior Solicitor & Barrister

Bryn worked with the Centre in 2021 as an independent lawyer, having worked in community legal centre and legal aid settings for much of the last 7 years. Bryn has now been called to the Victorian Bar but was previously the Principal Lawyer at Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV). Before SSRV, he worked at Victoria Legal Aid in summary crime and mental health. Bryn has also worked as a criminal lawyer and community legal educator in Central Australia with CAALAS (now NAAJA). Since being called to the Bar, we have briefed Bryn to represent our clients at the AAT.

Utkarsh Chanana | Intake Assistant

Utkarsh started with us as a volunteer in 2020 while studying law at UNSW. Since March 2021, he has worked as the Intake Assistant while also completing his Practical Legal Training at the Centre. His role is to be the first point of contact for the high volume of incoming calls from clients and first time callers. This involves creating detailed profiles and gathering information about the client's queries. At times, under the guidance of a solicitor, he also provides supervised advice to clients who are in need of immediate assistance. As a part of his training, Utkarsh also assists our solicitors by collating evidence and doing research on the AAT cases/legal advices.

Simran Gowan | Intake Assistant

Simran has been an Intake Assistant at the Welfare Rights Centre since March 2021, while also completing her final year of studies at Western Sydney University. Simran's role includes a range of duties which assist in the management of Triage matters, including being a liaison to clients; reviewing documents relevant to their matter and providing them with general and referral information. Simran also assists with administrative duties such as managing inbound and outbound calls, emails and file maintenance. Prior to March 2021, Simran supported the Centre as an admin volunteer.

Kylie Malone | Design & Communications Assistant

Kylie began working at the Welfare Rights Centre in October 2020, designing imagery for our social media posts and undertaking other graphic design for our Centre's publications. She has developed numerous templates and illustrative imagery that will have ongoing application.

Bridget Kendall | Social Work Student Placement

Bridget is a social work student completing her final year of placement at the Welfare Rights Centre. Bridget has been assisting in the intake team by responding to calls from members of the public seeking help with a Centrelink problem and providing meaningful and holistic referrals for those who have multiple and complex needs.

Our Volunteers

ABOU KARAM, Muriell
BARTLEY, Hugh
BLACKBURN, James
BOA MORTE, Margarida Arminda Pinto
BOURIS, Catherine
BRINK, Jordan
CHANANA, Utkarsh
CHAPPEL, Edwina Isabel
CHEUNG, Ellen
CHEUNG, Evangelina
DADGOSTAR, Darius
DARBY, Kate
DEVARAJ, Judith Shalomi
DUAN, Jessica
FERGUSSON, Kylie
FORD, Edward
GAO, Victoria
GOWAN, Simran
GREEN, Jane
GUO, Shanshan
HALAWANI, Nachrawan (Nana)
HAO, Hong
HAYMAN, Claudia
HOSSAIN, Jarin
KAZMIERCZAK, Brendan
KOHLI, Anvi
KUMAR, Lavanya

LEBDE, Diala
LEE, Adrian
LEE, Marcus
LI, Xinwei (Stella)
LIANG, Yubin (Mark)
LIM, Arthur
LIN, Aileen
LINDSAY, Alice Ann
MAI, Lucia
MAYMAN, Karie
MCCARTHY, Ryan
MCGEE, Emma
MOULDS, Kate
NACHABE, Maryam
PEDERSEN, Danielle
RADATT, Storm
SHANYI, Kyra Lee
SMITH, Jacob
SRIVASTAVA, Smriti
SYKES, Joshua
TAKRITI, Nora
TALEVSKI, Adrian
TIMBS, Kate
UBIPARIPOVIC, Dana
VISHNEY, Maxim
ZHOU, Jack



Our Pro Bono Lawyers

ALKOZAI, Maryam
ARMSTRONG, Sarah
BANKS, Andrew
BERZINS, Livija
BOWE, Sarah
BOYDELL, Alexandra
CASADO, Barbara
CHAHAL, Hasveen
COTCHETT, Eloise
DUNNE, Jade
FAAPITO, Katt
FAIRGRIEVE, Liam
FAUL, Brad
FRIOCOURT, Charles
GEAR, Joni
KENNEDY, Nathan
KHAN, Sumaiya
LOMI, Ruby
MORGAN, Simon
MULRY, Gabb
NADARAJAH, Leonie
PHAM, Julie
SANTIAGO, Samantha
SARA, Nadim
SHIM, Michaela
SNOWDEN, Hugh
TIMBS, Kate
TORIO, Adrian



Thank You

The Welfare Rights Centre gratefully acknowledges members, partners, volunteers and donors who make our work possible.

For their ongoing support of the Welfare Rights Centre, we would like to thank:

- Members of our Trade Union Program: Independent Education Union, Teachers Federation, United Workers Union, NSW Nurses & Midwives Association, Public Service Association of NSW, NSW Police Association, and Sutherland Tradies
- The team at HESTA
- ECSTRA Foundation and Collier Charitable Fund for their generous support of our community legal education and communications program
- The State and Federal Governments, through the community legal centre program funding, bushfire funding and COVID-19 funding
- Our partners at Hall & Wilcox, led by Nathan Kennedy and Rubi Lomi, and their solicitors, who have provided advice on Disability Support Pension and helped our clients gather evidence in support of their appeals
- Our partners at Thompson Cooper lawyers and their solicitors for helping our clients navigate Centrelink debts and understand their appeal rights
- Our partners at HWL Ebsworth and their graduates-at-law who have provided vital support to our intake team, especially during the lockdown
- Joni Gear and Kate Timbs, for their pro bono support and for lending their expertise and giving their time advising the centre's clients and contributing to our complex casework
- All of our volunteers, PLT students and social work placement students
- Ellen Cheung, supported by Jarin Hossain and Kate Moulds, for the graphic design of this annual report

