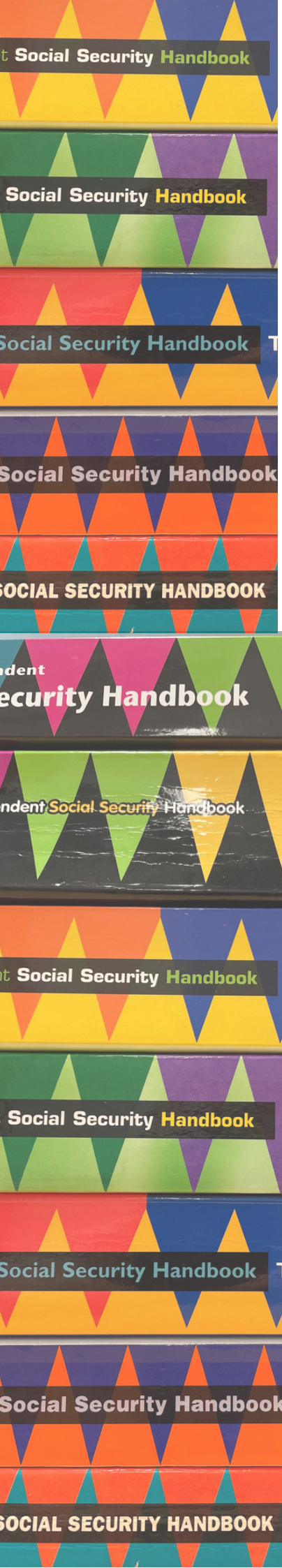


**ANNUAL
REPORT**

2023



Contents

Message from our Chair and CEO	3
Helping people navigate the social security system	4
Domestic Violence Project	5
Disability Support Clinic	6
Casework Overview	7
From Our Clients	8
Community Education	9
Communications	10
Outreach	11
Seeking a Fair and Accountable Social Security System	12
Robodebt	13
Social Security & Domestic Violence	14
Working Towards Reconciliation	15
First Nations Access Officer	16
Using Our Organisational Strength	17
Board	18
Staff	19
Volunteers	20
Pro Bono Support	21
Partners	22
Finances	23

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR AND CEO

In 2023, Welfare Rights Centre proudly marked 40 years of championing the right to social security. Throughout four decades, we have developed unparalleled expertise in social security law and used our knowledge to advocate for reforms to the social security system. We've won cases, influenced legislative change, and provided a lifeline to individuals and families grappling with poverty, often in great distress.

In these last 12 months we have continued to help people access Centrelink payments and challenge unfair debts. This is despite the pandemic's ups and downs, ongoing recovery from natural disasters, and recent cost of living challenges.

Our dedicated staff provided expert guidance, supporting over 1,000 individuals with social security law issues. We fought for their rights, taking complex cases to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. We helped gather evidence, made referrals to other services, and treated everyone with dignity. Our casework team's dedication and social security law expertise were key to our clients' success. To empower more people, this year we trained 1,000 community workers and held information sessions across NSW, receiving outstanding feedback.



Katherine Boyle, CEO, and Chair, Simon Rice at our 40th Anniversary Celebration

We've also been actively engaged in law reform, collaborating with Economic Justice Australia to advocate for change, especially for Disability Support Pension eligibility and income support for domestic violence survivors. We have been encouraged by the Government's response to the Robodebt Royal Commission. If fully implemented, the Commission's recommendations can lead to substantial systemic improvements in social security policy development and Centrelink service delivery.

As the pandemic, climate change, and inflation impact our clients, we remain committed to fighting for their rights and ensuring they have the resources for a meaningful life. Your support means the world to us.

At 40 years old, we're still a dynamic, thriving community legal centre, and we're committed to making a difference for another 40 years.

WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE 40 YEARS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I congratulate the Welfare Rights Centre on 40 years of service to the community. Since 1983, the Welfare Rights Centre has provided important help for vulnerable people to access vital income support and challenge unfair Centrelink decisions. Throughout this time, the Welfare Rights Centre has offered free legal information and representation to thousands of people adversely affected by Centrelink decisions each year. The Welfare Rights Centre is the lead social security law and policy agency in NSW, championing law and policy reform to make the Australian social security system fairer and more accountable. The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme highlighted the importance of being able to dispute unfair Centrelink debt and reverse discriminatory policy decisions. I regularly refer people in the Sydney electorate to the Welfare Rights Centre and value the dedication of the board, staff and volunteers who continue to help disadvantaged and marginalised people. I thank the Welfare Rights Centre for four decades and trust you will continue to be there for people in need of this basic human right.

-Legislative Assembly 12 Sept 2023 Hansard

Helping People Navigate the Social Security System

At the heart of our casework practice lies a commitment to deliver vital legal services to individuals in NSW as they navigate the intricate landscape of the social security system. Our clients often grapple with a myriad of complex and interwoven challenges, ranging from health concerns to housing instability, safety issues, and overwhelming financial burdens.

During 2022/23, we extended our legal information, advice and representation to over 1,000 individuals. We delivered compassionate support and tailored referrals to ensure comprehensive assistance. For some, a stand-alone legal advice enabled them to tackle their Centrelink problems on their own. We guided and supported these individuals in gathering evidence and preparing materials to resolve their matter. We also stood up for our clients advocating directly to Centrelink, and advised and represented clients at both levels of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. We tested a crucial procedural issue in the Federal Court.

In our work, we ensure Centrelink follows the rules and treats people fairly. Getting the correct Centrelink payments and resolving unfair debts can make a big difference by reducing financial strain and breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Even though simply getting a Centrelink payment might not seem like a big deal, we've seen how our efforts change people's lives for the better.

We deeply appreciate the support from both the Federal Government and the NSW Government, which allows us to continue this essential work and make a positive impact on our community. Together, we aim to create a fairer society where everyone can access the support and benefits they deserve.

Case Study - Egregious decision by the AAT

Lena* moved to Australia and later returned to her home country to give birth, seeking family support. Due to unforeseen COVID-related border closures, her return to Australia with her newborn was delayed. While overseas, Lena applied for Paid Parental Leave from Centrelink, but her claim was rejected, even after an internal review. Lena sought advice from us and then presented her case to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Unusually, the Tribunal member dismissed the appeal, rather than affirming the rejection of the claim and providing reasons for the decision. This potentially denied Lena a further review and raised concerns about the fairness of the process, prompting our involvement to safeguard the rights of our clients. The Bar Association supported Lena by arranging pro bono assistance from barrister Reg Graycar. We appealed to the General Division of the Tribunal, but it was deemed outside their jurisdiction, reinforcing our worries.

Our next step was an appeal to the Federal Court. Negotiations with the Department of Social Services led to an agreement to waive costs for Lena, given the case's public interest aspect. The case settled with consent orders quashing the first Tribunal decision and remitting the case back to a differently constituted Tribunal, with the Secretary agreeing to pay Lena's costs. The consent orders noted that Lena was denied procedural fairness in the first Tribunal hearing as a result of her appeal being summarily dismissed without a response to her submissions and without putting her on notice that summary dismissal was being contemplated. The Judge commented that the approach and outcome of Lena's first Tribunal hearing was egregious.

We intend to address this issue with the Deputy President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to ensure fairness and prevent similar instances.

**Client names and details have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

Our Domestic Violence Project

Our Domestic Violence Project played a crucial role in assisting individuals facing domestic violence to access Centrelink benefits and contest unjust debts. These cases were often intricate, demanding a deep understanding of domestic violence and expertise in social security law. In 2022/23, 20% of our clients reported experiencing or being at risk of domestic violence, an increase on the previous year.

Our new Domestic Violence Community Worker has provided structured assistance, aiding in safety planning, making necessary referrals, gathering evidence, and collaborating closely with our legal team to resolve clients' Centrelink issues. We also conducted focused training for domestic violence community workers, enhancing their ability to identify and address Centrelink challenges, particularly cases where the client may not be aware of the issue. This training has broadened the support network within NSW that can help those escaping domestic violence to navigate their social security concerns.

Additionally, we ensured that our clients' experiences directly influenced policy development. We contributed essential case studies and insightful analysis to Economic Justice Australia, our peak organisation, which successfully advocated for vital reforms at the intersection of domestic violence and social security law and policy.

Case Study - Helping domestic violence access support

Nia* was married to her husband for ten years. They had two young children. She didn't speak English and had no family or friends in Australia. When speaking with Nia we used an interpreter.

Nia's husband managed all their finances, he was extremely controlling and psychologically and emotionally abusive. He would spend a lot of their money on gambling and recently he had started taking the drug ice. He would use up all their money on these and Nia and her daughters didn't have enough for basic things. Nia had stayed in the relationship hoping he would change but he got worse, and recently she had noticed he would talk to himself and hallucinate which made her very fearful for herself and her daughters.

Nia phoned Welfare Rights Centre for advice about her eligibility for a Centrelink payment if she were to leave the family home with her daughters. One of our solicitors advised her on this matter and also referred her to our Domestic Violence Community Worker.

Our Community Worker spoke to Nia and made sure that her and the girls were safe, and spoke about safety planning, Housing NSW and the Start Safely rent subsidy, and also about women's refuges and what they are and what they do. With Nia's permission our Community Worker searched for and phoned services on her behalf. We linked her in with a local service who assigned a case worker to call Nia who could assist her in leaving the home safely, getting an Apprehended Violence Order, and getting into crisis and long term accommodation. The caseworker also supported Nia to apply for the appropriate Centrelink payments.

**Client names and details have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

Our Disability Support Clinic

Our Disability Support Clinic offered expert help to over 100 individuals grappling with serious illnesses, injuries, or disabilities, guiding them to access suitable Centrelink payments. The cases varied, but a common challenge was unravelling the complex Disability Support Pension (DSP) claim process. Many people were puzzled when their claims were rejected and needed advice to understand the reasons. We assisted them in gathering the necessary medical evidence to either submit a new claim or appeal the decision. Numerous clients, unable to work due to their conditions, faced distress being on JobSeeker Payment, unable to fulfill Centrelink's work-related requirements. We supported them in presenting their medical facts to Centrelink, often establishing their eligibility for the Disability Support Pension. We also provided information to healthcare professionals, helping them comprehend Centrelink's requirements so they could better support their patients. Many medical experts struggle to grasp the specific evidence needed by the social security system. We express our gratitude to law firm Hall & Wilcox for their generous support of the Disability Support Clinic, providing invaluable pro bono assistance through seconded solicitors.

In partnership with EJA and other peaks, our experience and expertise gained from this work informed advocacy that led to a small but significant change to the tables assessing eligibility for DSP. We are hopeful this change made by the Federal Government will lead to clearer and fairer DSP assessment decisions.

Case Study - Disability Support Pension Clinic in action

George* reached out to us after his Job Network Provider threatened to report him for insufficient job applications, which risked suspension or cancellation of his Jobseeker payment. A man in his 60s, George is homeless and faces challenges stemming from a workplace accident years ago, resulting in a degenerative disc injury and mental health issues. He lives in a remote part of NSW, struggles with social interactions due to his mental health, and faces physical limitations due to his spinal issues.

George had previously applied for the Disability Support Pension but was rejected because he hadn't engaged with a Job Network provider or actively sought work for 18 months before lodging his application. Despite subsequent efforts and engagement with a provider, a recent application was rejected on medical grounds. When we first met George, he was awaiting an appeal hearing at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

To support George, we collaborated with his supportive GP and clinical psychologist to gather necessary evidence. We offered ongoing legal support, assisting him in understanding the hearing process, advising on expectations, and coordinating with medical professionals for updated evidence. George, with the newly gathered and presented medical evidence, represented himself in the appeal. The Member recognised Centrelink's error in rejecting George's Disability Support Pension application and swiftly granted his payment, backdating it to the date of his application. This successful outcome meant George received a significant back payment.

**Client names and details have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

1572

People
Helped

CASEWORK

1694

Information and legal
advice about how to
resolve a Centrelink issue

225

Collection of evidence and
advocacy to Centrelink

14

Representation at the
Administrative Appeals
Tribunal & Federal Court
of Australia

642

Referrals for
additional support

52

Non-legal support
services

FROM OUR CLIENTS

“Thank you very much for your legal expertise and the assistance that I received. As well as alleviating my anxiety, I was sufficiently informed to be able to proceed with the steps you outlined. I just wanted to express my gratitude for your services and your organisation, and thank you very much. It’s very much appreciated.”

“I would like to acknowledge Julius for the assistance he gave me today along with his genuine approach. He’s a good man.”

“I wanted to express my heartfelt gratitude. Your kindness and support mean the world to me. You are the only person who has really listened and helped me. Thank you for being you.”

“Centrelink reinstated my Pension... So I am ecstatic, I am so grateful, particularly your personal involvement, you helped out immensely. If Centrelink appeals, I will let you know. Please have a wonderful Easter break, don't take home any files home with you or have access to them at home - Relax, enjoy the long weekend and thank you again.”



“Very clear relevant information to assist me to help clients navigate a very stressful system!”

We have successfully implemented a comprehensive community legal education (CLE) project consisting of 10 large-scale in person and on-line training events. These events cover various topics, including ABSTUDY eligibility and appeals mechanisms, Disability Support Pension (DSP), and payments available to parents of children with disabilities. The CLE sessions have been well-received, with over 1,000 participants benefiting from the training. Feedback from post-event surveys indicates that community workers have increased their knowledge, skills, and confidence in engaging with Centrelink.

In support of the expanded program, we have recruited an Events & Communications Officer who has been instrumental in organising and coordinating the training sessions and workshops.

In terms of outcomes, our online CLE sessions have resulted in a positive shift in community workers' skills, knowledge, and confidence in supporting individuals with social security rights. Participants have reported a better understanding of the social security system, increased confidence in assisting clients, and relevance of the training to their work. Our workshops have also shown positive outcomes, with participants gaining a better understanding of Centrelink issues and feeling more capable of helping people resolve problems. The workshops have facilitated collaboration between community workers and the Centre, leading to increased advocacy and support for clients.

We have commenced a Community of Practice for community workers assisting people with Disability Support Payments. This pilot project engages peers to share knowledge, learn and exchange successful strategies. Overseen by our specialist DSP lawyer, community workers gain access to tailored learning, support and advice.

96%

of respondents
said they had a better
understanding of the
social security
system

97%

of respondents
said they felt the
training session was
relevant to their area
of work

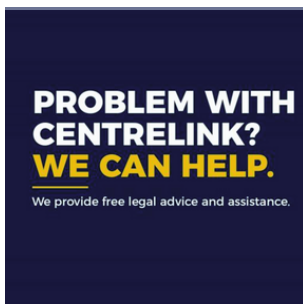
88%

of respondents
said they felt more
capable of helping
people deal with
Centrelink

Communications

During 2022/23, we actively communicated with stakeholders to further our strategic goals. Our communications strategy prioritised sharing our expertise with individuals struggling to navigate the social security system while also contributing to ongoing debate and discussion about critical social security issues. Our work reflected our core values, grounded in advocacy for social justice and a commitment to reflect the diversity and integrity of the community of Centrelink recipients.

Our commitment to effective communication has been instrumental in advancing our mission, raising awareness, and ensuring that those who need support navigating the social security system can access our resources and expertise.



Our website

We launched an upgraded website with improved design and increased functionality, including a First Nations microsite. Our new website includes information pages covering many of the common questions asked about key Centrelink payments, and detailed referral options, giving people faster access to the information they seek.



Our social media

Our social media platforms played a crucial role in keeping the public informed. We regularly posted updates about recent and upcoming changes to Centrelink payments, posted bite-sized information nuggets, and promoted our community legal education program. With an average of three posts per week across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter, we reached more than 60,000 people.



Other communications channels

We extended our outreach efforts to mainstream television, radio, and print media, providing content and participating in interviews to amplify our message. We also engaged with stakeholders by regularly updating members of our Trade Union Program.

In May, we successfully presented a series of workshops in the Northern Rivers region, addressing Centrelink issues that arise after natural disasters. The sessions developed a strong relationship and referral pathway with Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre and strengthened referral relationships with 20 local organisations in regional NSW. We enhanced the capacity of 25 keyworkers who now understand the effect of disaster related assets changes on Centrelink payments. Workers will share this important information with communities affected by disasters as part of their everyday work. We identified the need for specific written resources to address local disaster related issues, which we will develop.

The outreach uncovered an urgent policy issue likely to result in flood affected people unfairly being denied a Centrelink payment, such as, the Age Pension. We have brought this to the attention of the Minister for Government Services and we are confident of a positive resolution.

Thanks to Ecstra and FRRR for supporting this critical initiative.





Katherine Boyle

Executive Director, Welfare Rights Centre New South Wales, Sydney

CEO, Katherine Boyle, gives evidence at the Robodebt Royal Commission.

SEEKING A FAIR AND ACCOUNTABLE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

We have continued to have a significant impact on social security law, policy, and practice. Our clients' experiences and our casework drive our efforts to improve the social security system. We've not only handled numerous appeals at Centrelink's Authorised Review Officer level but also spearheaded test cases at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and Federal Court. With each client we assist, we hold Centrelink accountable.

Additionally, we've persistently shed light on flaws in the social security system and advocated for systemic change. This involves exposing gaps that fail victims/survivors of family and domestic violence and critiquing laws that perpetuate abuse against them. Our focus also extended to highlighting barriers to the Disability Support Pension, leaving many without appropriate social security benefits.

Our collaboration with Economic Justice Australia (EJA), the peak body for organisations providing specialised social security advice, has remained strong. We engaged in research, shared impactful case studies, submitted proposals, and advocated for change through reports and representation. Moreover, we provided valuable insights to inquiries and reform proposals such as those examining cashless debit card, employment services, cost of living, and other social security amendments.

ROBODEBT ROYAL COMMISSION

CEO Katherine Boyle, along with Economic Justice Australia and other CLC representatives, provided testimony at the Robodebt Royal Commission in November 2022. In her evidence, Katherine Boyle stated that after the robodebt scheme began in late 2016, the Centre saw a 14% increase in the number of people seeking help with a Centrelink debt and described their confusion, distress, agitation, and anger. In every case where the Centre assisted clients, the debts were reduced after it was recalculated on the basis of payslips or information obtained from bank statements, rather than on averaging the income.

The Centre welcomed the report by Royal Commissioner Catherine Holmes, which painted a stark picture of a crude, heartless, and unjust, and of course unlawful, scheme. The Centre firmly supports the Report's recommendations, which, if fully implemented, will lead to substantial systemic improvements in social security policy development and Centrelink service delivery. The Centre was pleased to see the Minister for Government Services, Bill Shorten MP, recognise our CEO's public advocacy, describing her as one of the heroes of Robodebt, and the Commonwealth Government's recent announcement that it has agreed to all of the Robodebt Royal Commission's recommendations.

Yet it is worth noting that despite the Scheme's discontinuation in 2019, many of robodebt's problematic features persist, as clients grapple with unclear debt notices and calculations that remain obscure (see CEO Katherine Boyle's [op-ed](#) published in the Sydney Morning Herald).

"I received a call from a client who wanted to thank our Centre, and specially Katherine, for her article on Centrelink debts. She said that the work we do is amazing, and it is raising awareness about how brutal Centrelink can be when they raise debts. She said the article made her feel like she wasn't alone, especially as she suffers with PTSD. The debt exacerbated her condition, and knowing that there were others out there who understood what she was feeling gave her some peace of mind."



Katherine Boyle says Centrelink debt letters can leave people distressed and confused. (ABC News)

SOCIAL SECURITY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In positive news, and as a consequence of our advocacy in collaboration with Economic Justice Australia, Centrelink has updated its policies to better consider family and domestic violence when defining a "member of a couple" for social security purposes.

The changes will increase access to income support for victims/survivors and decrease the number of unfair debts. However, legislative amendments are still required to more thoroughly address our broader concerns. Our CEO spoke to these important changes on the ABCs The Drum.

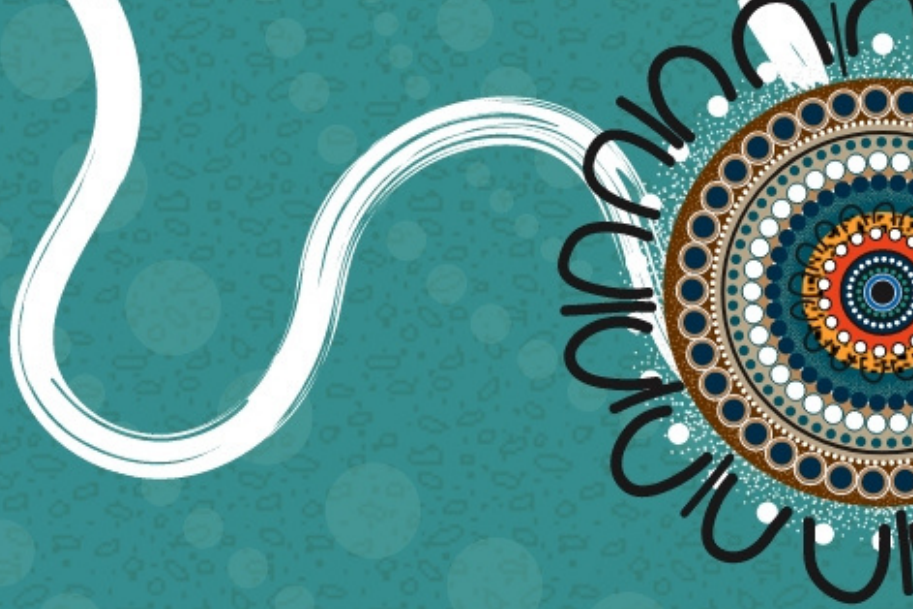


THANKS TO LEANNE HO

After five years leading Economic Justice Australia, Leanne Ho resigned in June 2023. Her leadership, commitment, resourcefulness, intelligence and focus has won real progressive change to Australia's social security system and has put EJA in a powerful position to go next level in making sure our safety net works as it should.

We say farewell for now but know we will continue to work with Leanne in her new role and as a lifetime member of the movement for positive change to our social security system!





WORKING TOWARDS RECONCILIATION WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

Providing a culturally safe service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is core business. We have continued to reflect on our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to better inform our practice and worked to implement our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

In collaboration with NGNY, a First Nations owned business, we completed the expansion of our website to include a dedicated section targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We thank Jasmine Sarin, who developed the artwork as the central design element for the First Nations section of the site. You can find more of Jasmine's amazing work at www.jskooridesigns.com.au.

We've regularly posted targeted content through our social media, exploring ways to improve our communications with First Nations peoples. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprising almost 8% of our clients, we remained committed to amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our advocacy for a fairer social security system.

After consultations with our First Nations staff and Board members we took a public position to support the Voice referendum. In our work, we see how the social security system has often failed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, including being slow to recognise family and kinship arrangements. We called for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice because we need expert First Nations advice to Parliament to ensure our social security system effectively supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Despite the disappointing referendum result, we remain committed to Reconciliation and to seeking justice for First Nations People.

FIRST NATIONS ACCESS OFFICER

With thanks to our new First Nations Access Officer we have strengthened and extended our First Nations collaborations, enhanced the organisation's cultural safety, created targeted educational materials and commenced our training program.

We developed First Nations targeted education resources and conducted training focused on ABSTUDY both online and in person to Indigenous student support centres.

Our First Nations Access Officer actively engaged in building and strengthening networks directly with First Nations individuals and organisations. This has established a platform for First Nations people to connect with the Centre and gain information and advice. Key actions undertaken include staffing stalls at Yabun, NAIDOC events and First Nations Financial Wellness Week, updating our directory of Community Controlled Organisations, strengthening relationships with First Nations staff in the community legal centre movement and consulting the Aboriginal Agency Network.



Do you need help
with Centrelink?
We can help.

We provide confidential and free legal advice
if you have a problem with Centrelink.





USING OUR ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH TO DELIVER QUALITY SERVICES

Our dedicated staff remain the foundation of our work, delivering focused and compassionate services driven by their expertise and unwavering commitment to achieving our social justice goals. In 2022/23, we expanded our team by hiring three new members: a Communications and Engagement Officer, an Intake Solicitor, and a Centre Manager.

We prioritised staff development by facilitating their participation in various training sessions and professional growth opportunities. This included attendance at CLCNSW's quarterly training events, CLC Australia's conference, and Economic Justice Australia's National Conference.

Despite facing ongoing financial constraints, we've strived to maintain the quality of our casework service. To adapt to increased pressure, we revised our intake procedure and transitioned to a new flexible case management system. Reduced resources has regrettably led to a reduction in our casework capacity. We're actively addressing this issue in the short time while keeping our eye on long term impact by investing in a collaborative strategic planning process.

Upholding sound governance practices, our Board convenes bi-monthly to provide organisational oversight. Our Centre remains fully accredited under the National Association of Community Legal Centre's National Accreditation Scheme. We remain deeply appreciative of our devoted volunteers, whose contributions are invaluable to our operations. Additionally, we've offered opportunities to students through social workplace placements and those completing their Practical Legal Training.

OUR BOARD

Our dedicated Board members generously volunteer their time and expertise to guide our Centre. They set our strategic direction, ensure our long-term sustainability, and manage performance and risks. Many of them have deep personal or professional ties to our Centre, enriching their oversight. Their support in 2022/23 is greatly appreciated.

Chair	Simon Rice
Deputy Chair	Clancy King
Secretary	Laura Lombardo
Director	Andrew Howell
Director	Thomas Calma
Director	Sam Clay
Director	Rita Martin
Director	Wendy Field
Director	Ann Sloan
Director	Nicole Hibberd-Smith
Director	Scarlet Wilcock
Director	Renee Martin

In the past year we farewelled long serving and dedicated Board members, Scarlet and Clancy. We are grateful for their leadership and commitment to the Welfare Rights Centre.

OUR STAFF

In 2022/23, our dedicated staff, whether full-time, part-time, or casual, played a crucial role in our Centre's ongoing success. Their unwavering support has been invaluable.

CEO

Katherine Boyle

Casework Practice

Principal Solicitor

Natalie Ross

Senior Solicitor

Daniel Turner (until Oct 2022)

Senior Solicitor

Donna Flood

Solicitor

Julius Golab

Solicitor

Juliet Dimond

Intake Officer/Solicitor

Kylie Fergusson (from Jan 2023)

Casual Intake Assistants

Yubin Shaw, Jacob Swidler, Brissa Pamungkas

Domestic Violence Community Worker

Roxanne Gonzalez Lopez

Community Engagement Team

Communications & Engagement Manager

Sally Cameron

Events & Communications Officer

Bree Roberts

First Nations Access Officer

Allientia Weldon-Oti

Operations Team

Centre Manager

Julie Foreman (from March 2023)

Office Administrator

Eric Chu (until Dec 2022)

Administration Officer

Georgia Phin

Locum administrative assistants

Ursula Reynolds, Maram Nachabe, Lavanya Kumar



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers keep the doors open and the Centre running. Thank you all for your help during this very challenging time. We have appreciated your help enormously. Couldn't do it without you!

Intake & Admin Volunteers

Geena Blackwell

Christopher Briscoe-Manuel

Tayyibha Butt

Catie Caldwell

Sam Cenizal

Zineb Chelihi

Bolu Chen

Michael Choi

Lachlan Cicurel

Cyrus Dadgostar

Archit Dhillon

Kylie Fergusson

Timothy Fikh

Edward Ford

Julian Fu

Benjamin Furry

Ruth Gayed

Ariana Haghighi

Angela Huang

Negar Jafari

Saumya Joshi

Helena Kastrissios

Liana Keo

Lavanya Kumar

Adrian Lee

Lara Li

Steven Li

Vivien Lu

Ruoyu Liu

Olga Makin

Antonia Mangos

Phoebe McDermott

Emma McGee

Chhayly Moek

Maryam Nachabe

Nicolette Nair

Benjamin Nguyen

Carter Overton

Brissa Pamungkas

Jiewen Pang

Shengxuan Shan

Tazmin Sultana

Jacob Swidler

Alicia Tang

Emily Theseira

Yong Tze Jie

Dana Ubiparipovic

Annika Wang

Alex Wu

Victor Yan

Jacinda Yang

Stella Zirkos

“I found my time at Welfare Right Centre wonderful and deeply gratifying as I watched and learnt from you, Natalie and others. It is a time that I have treasured. I hope I will become a wonderful solicitor, as you all showed me with your dedication to those in need. I hope in 2023, all hopes and dreams of Welfare Rights Centre become a reality”

PLT, Social Work & Communications Placements

Aleks Arcaba - PLT

Adrian Lee - PLT

Ariq Islam - Communications

Lavanya Kumar - PLT

Paul Dimassi - PLT

Tahlia Brown - Social Work



Joni Gear - Volunteer Solicitor

Joni passed a significant milestone this year, having volunteered for the Welfare Rights Centre for the past five years.

Thank you, Joni, for your impressive contribution and on-going commitment to our organisation.

"I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to complete my practical legal training (PLT) at the Welfare Rights Centre and the experience has been invaluable. From day one I received incredible support, training and mentorship which gave me a lot of confidence while learning new things. I was given exposure to a variety of legal tasks and received consistent feedback throughout my training. A highlight for me was seeing first hand the positive impact of the work I was doing and the difference it made to the clients. The opportunity has given me insight into the great work the solicitors at the Welfare Rights Centre do and their commitment to advocating for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. I would definitely encourage any law students that are looking to broaden their legal knowledge and skills in a supportive environment to consider the Welfare Rights Centre."

Aleks Arcaba



OUR PARTNERS

Welfare Rights Centre, a registered charity, depends on government, philanthropic, private, and trade union support. We express gratitude to our partners for their vital support, enabling us to sustain our services.

Government Partners

NSW Government
Commonwealth Government

Non-government Partners

Ecstra
John T Reid Charitable Trusts
Thyne Reid Foundation
John N. Kirby
HESTA
FRRR

Pro-Bono Partners

Hall & Wilcox
HWL Ebsworth Lawyers
Thomson Cooper Lawyers

Trade Union Program Partners

Independent Education Union
NSW Nurses & Midwives Association
NSW Teachers Federation
Police Association of NSW
Public Service Association of NSW
Sutherland Tradies

Thank you for your pro bono support!

Hall and Wilcox

Head of the Pro Bono: Nathan Kennedy
Pro bono and Admin Support: Ruby Hunt & Nuhulan Ahmed
Solicitors: Adrian Torio, Barbara Casado, Eloise Cotchett, Jade Dunn, Leonie Nadarajah, Carl Newton, Katt Faapito, Gabby Mulry, Anthony Crowe, Charles Friocourt, Nelson Tang, Amelia Hagley, Hugh Pearce, June Li, Bree Cohen, Esther Chen.

HWL Ebsworth

Head of Pro Bono Karen Keogh and graduate lawyers Katherine Huet, Patrick Thynne, Matthew Ambler, Sinem Kirk, Avani Mohan and Helen Yunlu Lin.

Thompson Cooper

Special Counsel Laura Maker and graduate lawyers Brittany Bartolo, Declan Ryan, and Talia Shepherd.

FINANCES

During the 2022 - 2023 financial year we received funding from a diverse range of sources. This included State and Federal Governments, our trade union and superannuation partners, philanthropic trusts and foundations, as well as donations. We also received very generous in-kind support from our pro bono partners, helping make our work possible through the secondment of staff, volunteer engagement and donation of resources and facilities.

Our investment in fundraising and partnership continues to bear fruit. We have attracted significant philanthropic funding for our social security training program, a Domestic Violence Community Worker, and a First Nations Access Officer.

However, both State and Federal Governments have, to date, continued to underinvest in specialist social security legal services and we continue to be unable to help less than half of those that contact us. We made a small surplus of \$16,139 for the 2022-2023 financial year and by the end of the financial year, we have maintained a healthy level of equity of \$319,108. We will continue with our fundraising strategy, to advocate to State and Federal Governments to increase funding for specialist social security legal services, as well as seek new partnerships with philanthropic trusts and foundations.

You can find a copy of our Audited Financial Report on the [Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission website](#).



If you would like to support the Welfare Rights Centre, please consider [donating](#), or [volunteering](#).
