

ANNUAL REPORT 2026

Welfare Rights Centre



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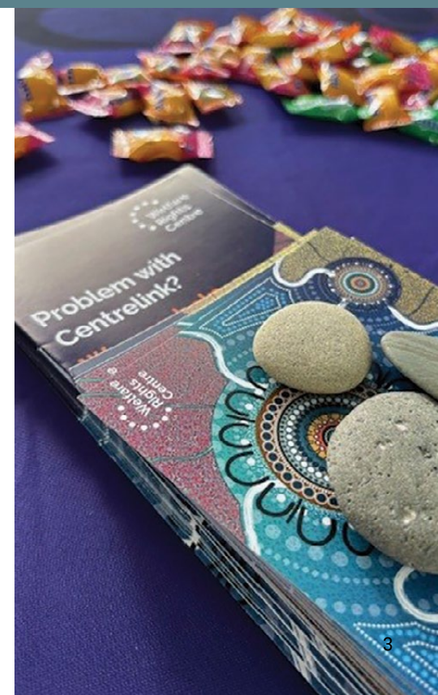
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Our Commitment to First Nations People

Welfare Rights Centre acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our office is located and pays respect to Elders past and present. As a statewide service, we extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living on and off Country throughout the land now known as New South Wales.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have endured the ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession and systemic injustice, and that legal, government and social systems have contributed to these harms. We acknowledge that these injustices continue to affect access to social security, justice and essential services today.

We are committed to supporting First Nations justice and self-determination. This means listening to and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, valuing First Nations knowledges and leadership, delivering services that are culturally safe, respectful and accessible, and advocating for reforms that address systemic disadvantage and inequity.



Our Centre

Established in 1983, Welfare Rights Centre (WRC) is a specialist legal practice focused on social security rights. Based in Surry Hills, we provide practical legal help to people and communities across NSW.

It's rewarding to see the ripple effect of our work and what a small, dedicated team can achieve when united by a commitment to access to justice and a fair, accessible social security system.

Most of our work takes place over the phone and online allowing us to reach people across regional, rural and remote NSW. In 2025–26, we piloted an outreach to a remote community, strengthening connections and creating new opportunities for our statewide service to provide face-to-face legal help.

While we value direct engagement with clients and communities through outreach, legal advice and community worker training, our centralised model enables us to extend our reach and make the most of our limited resources.

Our work is strengthened by volunteers, pro bono secondees, student placements and practical legal trainees. Together, we help people avoid poverty, homelessness and financial crisis by turning social security rights into reality.





Our Strategic Goals

Strategic Plan 2024-2028

Our strategic goals guide our work to strengthen legal representation for vulnerable clients, build the capacity of the community sector, and advocate for systemic reform of Australia's social security system. Partnerships are central to achieving these goals.

1

Centrelink held to account for unfair and unjust decisions

We will provide accessible legal advice and representation to people with complex social security law matters where there is a high benefit to the client and/or that have the potential to remedy problems in the social security system.

2

An empowered community sector

We will support the community sector to develop and embed capability to resolve their clients' Centrelink problems.

3

Systemic change

We will publicly advocate for reforms that will result in a fair, just, accessible and adequate social security system.

4

A thriving organisation

We will maintain and develop a well-resourced, robust, ethical and effective organisation.

Our Vision

A fair, just, accessible and adequate social security system that provides all people with the resources they need to lead a life which is meaningful to them.



Reflections on Birpai Country. WRC attended the CLCNSW Regional, Rural and Remote Summit. Port Macquarie, July 2025

Message from the Chair

Welfare Rights Centre has continued to deliver essential legal assistance to people experiencing problems with Centrelink, despite growing demand and ongoing funding uncertainty. As Chair, I am proud of what the organisation has achieved this year. I am also concerned about the financial pressures that continue to limit its capacity to respond to need.

The underlying problem is clear: specialist social security legal assistance remains inadequately funded by both state and federal governments, despite its importance to people experiencing financial hardship and its potential to reduce demand on other public services.

This year, WRC continued to adapt its service delivery to reach people who might otherwise struggle to access assistance. The expansion of outreach into Far West NSW, including a regular presence in Dareton through our partnership with Coomealla Health Aboriginal Corporation, is an important example. Our investment in First Nations programs, support for newly arrived migrants and community worker training has also extended the reach of WRC's expertise beyond direct legal services.

These initiatives demonstrate the value of innovation and partnership. However, innovation alone cannot resolve a funding shortfall.

Despite submitting an innovative proposal to the NSW Government under the National Access to Justice Partnership tender, seeking to expand specialist social security legal assistance across NSW through training and collaboration with other community legal centres, WRC received no funding through this process. This was a significant missed opportunity to build capacity across the sector and improve access to income support for people who need it.

Although there has been some promising support for new approaches through the Economic Justice Australia network, this funding is short term. At the end of the year, WRC faced a challenging financial position, with reduced rather than expanded service capacity. This is difficult to reconcile with the growing demand for assistance and the consequences for people unable to access their social security entitlements.
The Board remains focused on the long-term sustainability of the organisation. Short-term funding arrangements make it difficult to plan, retain capacity and respond strategically to emerging needs.

> WRC has demonstrated that it can deliver effective services, develop partnerships and adapt to changing circumstances. What it needs now is funding that recognises the value of this work and provides a more secure foundation for the future.

As we look ahead, we do so during a period of significant change. We farewell two exceptional leaders whose contributions have shaped the organisation.

Natalie Ross retired after more than 35 years in the community legal sector, including many years leading WRC's legal work as Principal Solicitor. Her expertise, commitment and contribution to social justice have been invaluable. We thank Natalie for her service and wish her well in retirement.

We also farewell Katherine Boyle, who has led WRC as CEO for the past decade. Katherine has guided the organisation through the Robodebt era and years of funding uncertainty, maintaining a clear focus on clients and service quality. She leaves WRC with a highly capable team, strong governance and sound financial controls. On behalf of the Board, I thank Katherine for her leadership and wish her every success in the next chapter.

I thank my fellow Board members for their expertise and commitment, and acknowledge the staff, volunteers, pro bono partners, donors and supporters whose contributions sustain WRC's work.

WRC has a strong history and a clear purpose. Our challenge is to ensure that the organisation has the resources to continue fulfilling that purpose. The Board will continue to pursue sustainable funding, strengthen partnerships and support approaches that extend access to specialist legal assistance. We remain committed to securing a future in which WRC can meet the needs of the community for decades to come.



Darren Dick, Chair

Message from the CEO

This year's annual report is both a record of the work Welfare Rights Centre has done over the past year and a chance for me to look back over a wonderful decade which has shaped me as both a lawyer and leader.

When I first started in 2026, WRC was in a period of renewal. We were recovering from a significant funding loss from the NSW Government, strengthening governance with the introduction of a new constitution and reshaping systems. Within months of commencing in the role we were faced with what would become one of the most significant social security justice issues and public policy failures in recent Australian history: Robodebt.

> Robodebt was, in many ways, my baptism of fire at WRC. It exposed what happens when administrative convenience, automation and suspicion are allowed to override fairness, accuracy and human dignity.

WRC's clients were among those harmed by unlawful debt collection practices, and our casework, evidence, public advocacy and sector collaboration helped bring those harms to light. The lessons of Robodebt continue to shape our work: systems must be lawful, accountable and accessible, and people must be able to challenge decisions that affect their right to income support.

Over the past 10 years, WRC has remained what it has always been: a small, specialist community legal centre with deep expertise in social security law and a clear commitment to people who are too often pushed to the edge by poverty, disability, family and domestic violence, homelessness, racism, migration status, illness, trauma and kafakaesque administrative systems . We have helped people access the income support they were entitled to, challenged unfair debts and cancellations, and used what we see in individual cases to press for broader reform. That combination of individual advocacy and systemic change is at the heart of WRC's impact. Our job is to listen and learn, and turn those lessons into change.

The past year has shown that this work remains as necessary as ever. Despite continuing funding uncertainty and pressure on a small team, WRC secured more than $2.37 million in financial benefit for people across NSW. That figure represents debts waived, arrears paid and ongoing income support restored - but behind it are people better able to pay bills, afford medicine and keep a roof over their heads.

Our casework this year reflected the pressures facing communities across NSW: rising housing costs, cost-of-living pressures, family and domestic violence, disability, climate-related disasters and the continuing complexity of Centrelink rules and processes. We saw again that access to the right payment is often the difference between crisis and stability.

WRC's Community Worker Training program has become one of the most powerful ways we multiply WRC's impact. By building the knowledge and confidence of thousands of workers who support people with Centrelink issues, we help ensure that practical social security knowledge reaches far beyond our own casework capacity.

Our First Nations access and outreach work has also grown in importance and depth. This year, through relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, attendance at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal Aboriginal Tenancy List, and outreach in Far South West NSW, we saw once again that place-based, culturally respectful social security legal help can make a profound difference. Sitting with people on Country, hearing what has happened, and helping them access the support they were entitled to all along is a reminder of why this work matters.

I am deeply proud of what this small, clever and determined team has achieved. WRC has built and sustained partnerships that make our work possible: with community organisations, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, legal centres, pro bono firms, unions, philanthropic funders, government agencies and our national peak, Economic Justice Australia. Those relationships have helped us respond to urgent need, develop specialist clinics, strengthen advocacy channels and make the case for a fairer social security system.

The next phase will bring new challenges, including continued funding pressure and new forms of automated decision-making. As I wind up my time at WRC, I know it is ready for what comes next.

I want to thank our staff, volunteers, current and former Board members, funders, pro bono partners, union supporters, community partners and sector colleagues for their skill, solidarity and belief in this work. I particularly want to acknowledge the current WRC team whose care, expertise, judgement, commitment and persistence have carried the organisation through demanding times. I also want to acknowledge former staff and colleagues who helped shape WRC over the past decade, particularly the legendary Natalie Ross, who recently retired as our Principal Solicitor.

Most importantly, I want to thank the people who contact WRC for help. Your courage in challenging unfair decisions, telling your stories and insisting on your rights is what drives our work and our advocacy.

For more than 40 years, Welfare Rights Centre has stood alongside people navigating one of the most complex and essential systems in our society.

> Over the past 10 years, I have been privileged to play a part in that work. Social security is a human right. A fair system should provide security, not deepen poverty. WRC will continue to hold that line, through casework, training, advocacy and reform, for as long as people need help to access the support they are entitled to.



Outreach in the outback. WRC sets up in Far South West NSW. Barkindji Country, August 2025



Katherine Boyle, CEO

10 years of leadership



40 year anniversary celebration

Strengthening WRC
Over the past decade CEO Katherine Boyle has built a strong organisational culture with purpose and planning. Modernising our IT, financial and operational systems and ensuring WRC can deliver services and measure impact.



Pro Bono Partnerships
Built partnerships with leading law firms, creating specialist clinics and expanding access to free legal help for people facing social security issues.

Responding to Crisis
Led WRC's rapid transition to comprehensive online services during COVID-19, ensuring people could still access help during a time of unprecedented demand.

Advocacy & Law Reform



Fighting Robodebt

It is also about the welfare advocates who raised the uncomfortable truths long before this Royal Commission. I acknowledge, amongst others, the evidence of Genevieve Bolton, Katherine Boyle and Catherine Eagle, but there were many. Thank you for speaking up for those who didn't have a voice.

The Hon. Bill Shorten MP

Robodebt Royal Commission final report Press Conference transcript Friday 7 July 2023

Understanding our impact
Over 10 years WRC has provided 16,825 services.

First Nations Access Program
Expanded outreach and community engagement
14% increase in services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Philanthropic fundraising strategy
$3.6 million raised.

Domestic Violence Clinic
Established clinic including wrap around services for clients, which has seen a three-fold increase in the number of people experiencing or at risk of family or domestic violence access WRC's services.

Community Worker Training Program
10,556 community workers trained.



National Leadership on Economic Justice Australia's Board

Royal Commission into the Robodebt scheme

Access to Justice: Social Security Rights

The social security system is the key mechanism for preventing poverty and financial exclusion in Australia, yet it remains difficult for many people to navigate. Welfare Rights Centre over the past year has continued to work at the front line supporting, guiding and helping the people of NSW who are facing unfair debts, refused access to the social security safety net and who are wrongly deemed ineligible for income support.

We help hundreds of people facing homelessness, families devastated by domestic violence, people who have been financially abused or had the social security system used as a weapon to control or punish them.

Everyday our casework team hear stories of poverty, abuse and of families in crisis. Many of our clients are overwhelmed and have nowhere else to turn, are unable to understand how to proceed due to the complexity and frustration of dealing with Centrelink.

In a recent decision* a Justice of the Australian Federal Court stated that:

> **This unfortunate case reveals not only the Byzantine complexity of the statutory and administrative framework that underpins the determination of whether a person is eligible to receive payments under the Social Security Act 1991 (Cth), but also the bureaucratic nightmare that often confronts those who apply for such benefits.**
>
> **Heimdall v Secretary, Department of Social Services [2026] FCA 1176**

The social security system is labyrinthine. Casework takes time and our solicitors spend years mastering the intricacies of social security law and Centrelink's complex processes to find pathways to economic justice. Sometimes there is no clear route. Too often we must work within outdated laws that are not fit for purpose, produce unjust outcomes or fail to take account of the consequences for those effected by their application.

* https://www.judgments.fedcourt.gov.au/judgments/Judgments/fca/single/2026/2026fca1176



Our Impact

$2 returned to clients for every $1 we receive to fund our free social security legal service.

This year, WRC secured $2,373,405 in financial benefits for clients, a 25% increase on last year.

$2.37 million total financial benefit for our clients

$477,911
in Centrelink debts waived

$467,155
in back payments secured

$1.43 million
in annual repayments

Where the outcome is known, 84% of our services produced a successful outcome for our clients

Financial Wellbeing and Social Security

Social security is a critical foundation of financial wellbeing. Before a person can manage debt, build savings, improve their financial capability or plan for the future, they need a stable and adequate income. For many Australians, social security provides that foundation during periods of unemployment, illness, disability, caring responsibilities, study, retirement and other significant life transitions.

Financial wellbeing and mental wellbeing are closely connected. Financial insecurity can create significant stress and uncertainty, affecting a person's mental health, relationships and ability to participate in their community. At the same time, poor mental health can make it more difficult to navigate complex systems, manage finances and access available supports. When people are unable to access the income support they are entitled to, the consequences can be immediate and severe.

Yet poverty in Australia continues to rise. In 2025, 14.2% of Australians lived below the poverty line, while many social security payments remained inadequate to meet the cost of living. WRC regularly assists people facing even greater hardship - those denied income support, whose payments have been cancelled or reduced due to debt repayments, or who are trapped in lengthy disputes with Centrelink.

Through specialist legal assistance, advocacy and community education, WRC helps people secure essential income, challenge unfair decisions and navigate a complex social security system. As demand for these services continues to increase, expanding access to specialist social security assistance will be critical to reducing poverty, strengthening financial wellbeing and ensuring that no one is left without the support they need.

> Even though they can't fix a terrible Centrelink system, I would like to say Welfare Rights possibly saved my life.
>
> WRC client





A highlight for the casework team was attending the Economic Justice Australia (EJA) Conference, which began with a tour of Services Australia headquarters. The visit provided an opportunity for WRC and EJA to see the work of Services Australia from the inside and to build on the constructive relationship developed through the Legal Advocates Channel. The Channel has created a valuable pathway for experienced Services Australia staff and community lawyers to work together to resolve complex problems for clients. This respectful relationship is making a practical difference for people who rely on social security.

Casework Practice

Throughout 2025–26, we continued to provide specialist legal assistance to people facing significant barriers to accessing social security, due to homelessness, family violence, disability, ill health, migration-related challenges and complete loss of income. Through advice, legal support and representation, we helped people access vital income support, challenge incorrect decisions and resolve complex Centrelink problems.

Demand for assistance remained our greatest challenge. Despite ongoing improvements to our intake and triage systems, demand continued to exceed capacity. During the year, almost half of all unique callers to our advice line—more than 1200 people—were unable to get through.

We continued to deliver a number of pro bono-supported specialist clinics, including our Disability Support Pension (DSP) Clinic with Hall & Wilcox and our Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) Clinic. These partnerships enable us to provide targeted assistance to people with complex legal needs.

The increased use of Services Australia's Legal Advocates Channel helped resolve many matters quickly, allowing clients to access payments, secure debt waivers and correct Centrelink errors without lengthy appeals. We also continued our advocacy on behalf of refugee families affected by the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period, contributing to positive operational changes within Services Australia.

Alongside direct client services, we invested in quality improvement, workforce development and planning for the National Social Security Advice and Triage Service pilot recently launched in August 2026 as ASSIST, the social security helpline for community workers, providing access to specialist social security legal assistance across Australia.

We thank the Federal and NSW Governments for their ongoing support of access to social security rights and economic justice.



Natalie Ross & Donna Flood with Services Australia staff in Canberra. September 2025



$15,000 backpay and Special Benefit

A speedy resolution and payment for Sara

Sara arrived in Australia in May 2025. She was granted a permanent partner visa three months later. Shortly after that, Sara's ongoing hip pain became severe and she was diagnosed with bilateral osteoarthritis. Her specialist recommended that she have a total hip replacement. Sara soon became unable to walk, let alone work, and her husband had to leave his job to look after her as she needed assistance with personal care and the daily activities of living.

Sara's husband went to Centrelink to enquire about a payment for Sara. Centrelink advised Sara to make a claim for DSP, which was rejected immediately. They then advised Sara to make a claim for Jobseeker Payment and that claim was also rejected a short time later.

Sara and her husband contacted us for advice. We quickly determined that Sara was not entitled to DSP or Jobseeker Payment due to the waiting period for newly arrived migrants, so we advised Sara that she should make a claim for Special Benefit.

We contacted the Legal Advocates Channel and asked for Centrelink to assist Sara to make a claim for Special Benefit and requested that her payment be backdated to the date she first made a claim for DSP. Within six days of Sara's appointment with us Centrelink had determined that Sara was entitled to Special Benefit and paid her arrears back to the date of her DSP claim in early January 2026.

Who we help

Supporting people experiencing complex and intersecting disadvantage

41% live with a disability

31% experiencing homelessness

12% affected by family and domestic violence

33% no income

17% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

23% main language other than English

89% financially disadvantaged

First Nations Access Program & Health Justice Partnership Pilot

Improving access to social security legal assistance for Aboriginal communities remained a key focus during 2025–26.

Katherine's relocation to Far South West NSW presented a unique opportunity for WRC to pilot a Health Justice Partnership with Coomealla Health Aboriginal Corporation (CHAC) in Dareton, embedding social security legal assistance within an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation for the first time. The project brought place-based assistance to a community that has rarely accessed WRC's services, strengthened referral pathways and built relationships with community members, Elders and local services. It also established links with Services Australia Indigenous Service Officers and delivered outreach and community education activities in Far West NSW. Despite limited part-time resources, the partnership secured over $150,000 in financial benefit for the local community.

The pilot demonstrated significant unmet need for specialist social security legal assistance in regional and remote communities and informed the development of a formal Health Justice Partnership framework to guide future service delivery.

Our First Nations Access Program also continued to support Aboriginal communities through attendance at the Aboriginal Tenancy List at NSW Civil Administrative Tribunal, ABSTUDY information sessions and outreach activities, the development of cultural protocols for staff and volunteers, and ongoing engagement with First Nations organisations and networks across NSW.



$17,000 backpay and DSP

Mary's Story

Mary, 61, had experienced significant disadvantage throughout her life, including family and domestic violence, homelessness, mental ill-health and a long-term gambling addiction.

After being injured in a car accident, Mary received a compensation settlement of around $500,000. The payment triggered a compensation preclusion period, preventing her from accessing Centrelink payments until 2029. Over the following year, Mary's gambling addiction and deteriorating mental and physical health led to the loss of her compensation funds, leaving her in severe financial hardship and at risk of losing her home where she had been a tenant for over 30 years.

When Mary sought help from WRC, she had already been unsuccessful in multiple attempts to access income support.

We assisted Mary to gather evidence, including psychological reports, detailed financial records and a statement explaining her circumstances. We then represented her in a Tribunal appeal, arguing that her gambling addiction, declining mental health, financial hardship and risk of suicide amounted to special circumstances warranting an end to the preclusion period.

The Tribunal agreed.
As a result, Mary regained access to income support, receiving more than $17,000 in arrears before being granted the Disability Support Pension. Once again she was able to pay for essentials, maintain her housing and access the medical care she needed.



Katherine Boyle and Allienttia Weldon
June 2026

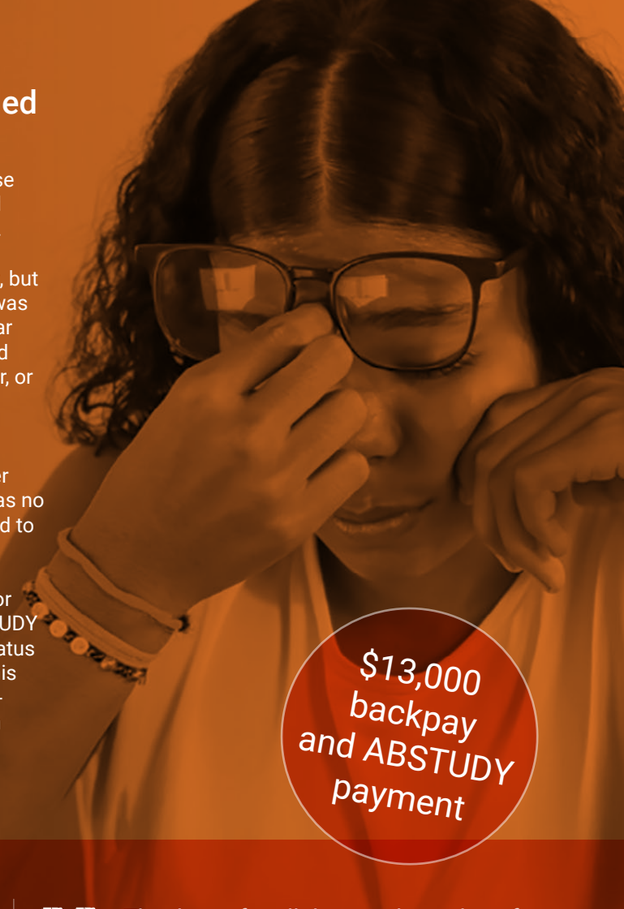
Karly gets the help she desperately needed

Karly, a 16-year-old student, was referred to us via an ACCHO community worker. She had left her father's home due to drug use and violence and was couch surfing with friends, her mother and aunty. An AVO had been issued to protect Karly from her mother.

Karly had been granted ABSTUDY at the rate of $42 per fortnight, but no one was receiving FTB for her because her accommodation was so unpredictable and there was no one who was providing regular care for her. We noticed that her rate of ABSTUDY was calculated based on her mother's income, but Karly was not staying with her, or anyone else, on a regular basis.

Karly gave us consent to speak to her DCJ case manager and a Centrelink social worker, which we did. Karly's DCJ case manager agreed that Karly was floating between houses and that there was no single carer who would be consistently entitled to FTB. He agreed to write a letter updating Centrelink on Karly's living arrangements.

The Centrelink social worker decided that it was unreasonable for Karly to live at home from 1 December 2025, but when the ABSTUDY Team reviewed the decision, they decided to backdate Karly's status as being unreasonable to live at home from 19 January 2025. This meant that Karly would be eligible for a higher rate of ABSTUDY - $670.37 per fortnight and also that she was paid over $13,000 in arrears.



$13,000 backpay and ABSTUDY payment

Dareton outreach services delivered

83	Services delivered
49	People helped
$155,317	Financial benefits obtained

> Thank you for all that you have done for our Community during your time with us at CHAC. I have received many compliments from members of the community that you have helped and assisted.
>
> Summer Hunt CEO, Coomealla Health Aboriginal Corporation (CHAC)



Baaka event Barkindji Country
November 2025

Domestic and Family Violence and Social Security

WRC continues to assist high numbers of clients experiencing family and domestic violence and to advocate for reforms to social security laws and processes that allow Centrelink to be weaponised by perpetrators.

In 2025-26, one in five WRC clients were experiencing or at risk of family and domestic violence.

Our client's experiences show that:

- Lack of access to Centrelink payments can trap people in dangerous situations
- Perpetrators can cause unjust Centrelink debts
- System barriers can push people into homelessness

Many of our clients have experienced controlling relationships in which access to money or information was restricted, contributing to Centrelink debts being raised in their names.

Some clients are also unaware of the consequences of not taking action in relation to child support assessments, leaving them struggling to support their families without the Family Tax Benefit payments to which they are entitled.

This year brought long-awaited legislative changes to debt waiver provisions, creating fairer rules for determining when Centrelink debts may be waived under "special circumstances".

A debt may now be waived even if a person knowingly misled Centrelink — if their actions were justified in the circumstances.

These changes recognise that people do not always control what is reported to Centrelink and that economic abuse and coercive control can significantly affect their social security entitlements.

We thank Mercy Foundation for supporting legal advice for migrant and refugee women at risk of homelessness, particularly those escaping domestic violence.

> I'm literally crying with relief. I cannot thank you enough for your guidance and time. You have made such a difference to my life and that of my children in helping to resolve this continued financial abuse. I'm essentially starting my financial life again without a ball and chain. It makes life less of a struggle and gives us hope for the future.
>
> WRC Domestic Violence Clinic client



Alia's unfair debt

Alia was referred to us by her caseworker at a local domestic violence service. She had experienced severe domestic and family violence over many years and was living in the same home as her former partner due to her financial circumstances.

Her former partner struggled with alcoholism and displayed unpredictable and controlling behaviour. Alia had reported the violence to police on multiple occasions and had obtained an Apprehended Violence Order three times.

She was also caring for three school-aged children. She and her children were surviving on payments from Centrelink. Despite these circumstances, Centrelink determined that Alia was still a member of a couple and raised debts of more than $45,000 for Parenting Payment Single and Family Tax Benefit.

We undertook a detailed review of her situation and gathered evidence about the history and impact of the violence she had experienced. We prepared submissions to Centrelink explaining how domestic violence, coercive control and the practical realities of Alia's living arrangements affected her ability to separate safely from her former partner.

As a result of this advocacy, Centrelink agreed to review its decision. All of Alia's outstanding debts were waived, relieving her of more than $45,000 in liabilities. Centrelink also accepted that Alia was separated from her former partner and restored her entitlement to be paid as a single person.

The outcome provided Alia with financial security for herself and her children and removed a significant barrier to rebuilding her life free from violence.

$45,000 debt waived

DSP Benefits and Barriers
Is it any wonder clients need specialist legal advice?

Welfare Rights Centre

FINISH
Success!
DSP Granted

87 Your doctor adjusted your meds, Centrelink say you are not stabilised. See specialist again

86 You have uploaded your documentation, but Centrelink cannot confirm receiving it and requires you do it again

85

84 You cannot afford to see the specialist and pay for the diagnosis and treatment letter

83



82

81 Centrelink said your treatment was too long ago. Find a new specialist and start again.
GO BACK TO START

80 Welfare Rights Centre

79 Your GP gave CL your medical history but CL won't accept it as it is not from a specialist

78 You can access your super due to limited life expectancy - manifest eligible and DSP granted -
GO TO SQUARE 88!

67 Happy Birthday! You qualify for the Age Pension!

68



69 There are no specialists available that will bulk bill and Centrelink will not grant DSP without a specialist opinion

70

71 Congratulations you have submitted your application for DSP.
Miss 4 turns while you wait for outcome

72

73 Sonic Health call and tell you that you're eligible

74



75 Centrelink tried to call your GP to talk to them and your GP never answered the call

76

77 Your GP retired and you did not get your records transferred. You have lost all of your medical history

66

65 Your GP sits down with you to talk about how your day to day life is impacted by your conditions and fills out a WRC template

64

63

WRC represents you at the ART

61 Your GP practice has a co-located psychologist and social worker and they all work together to help you apply

60 Welfare Rights Centre

59 Your GP is sick of helping you with your DSP applications and refuses to give you anything else

58

57

56



45 Your medical report states that no matter what treatment you have you will not be able to work 15 hours a week at any time in the next 2 years

46

47 You apply based on 20 points on 2 impairment tables but Centrelink only gave you 15 points in total

48 Your Job Network Providers designs your mutual obligations to support your disabilities

49



50 No one told you that getting a medical exemption from mutual obligations could impact your DSP applications

51

52 You have completed an 18 month Program of Support

53 You're over 60 and have not worked in 10 years but CL still expect you to find a job

54

55 Centrelink call your GP to ask questions when they are not sure about your evidence

44

43 You have all the documentation, medical evidence and meet eligibility checklist. You can apply for DSP

42

41

40 Your medical professional has indicated you may benefit from some therapy. You are now not reasonably treated

39 Your doctor has made it clear that you are diagnosed, treated and stabilised

38

37

36 Your GP refuses to refer you to a specialist because there is no point and nothing a specialist can do

35

34 The Job Capacity assessor asked ONLY about your best days and not about your average days – 10 points only on impairment tables

23 The local specialist has a cancellation and you can get an appointment without having to wait 6 months

24

25

26 Your condition is expected to last for at least 2 years with no reasonable prospect of significant improvement.

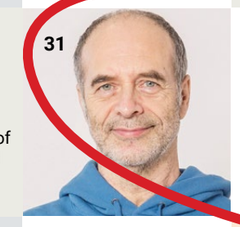
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28 You have third party evidence of your day-to-day impairments & you have been booked in for a Job Capacity Assessment

29

30 You have 20 points across 3 tables - you still cannot access DSP until a Program of Support is completed

31

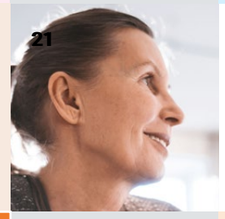


32 Your MP has contacted Centrelink on your behalf

33

22

21



20

19

18 Your GP wants to refer you to a psychiatrist for a physical health condition

17 Welfare Rights Centre

16 Your employment services provider has written you a letter to exempt you from being required to do POS

15

14

13 You are locked out of your MyGov Account

12

START
BEGIN YOUR DSP APPLICATION

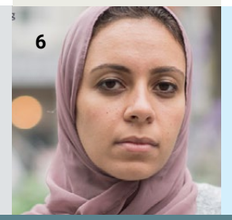
2 Welfare Rights Centre

3 You have 20 points on a single impairment table

4

5

6



7 Your specialist offers to write a letter of support without charging you

8

9 Used WRC templates to take to GP

10

11 You have lived in Australia for over 10 years you can apply for the DSP

Social Security and Homelessness

Homelessness can make it almost impossible to access and maintain social security. People without stable accommodation may struggle to receive correspondence, provide documents, keep appointments or meet reporting requirements. At the same time, a delayed, suspended or refused payment can deepen housing instability and severely limit their options.

WRC assists clients when cancellations, debts, waiting periods or administrative barriers place their housing at risk. Timely legal assistance can help prevent homelessness, restore income and give people the stability they need to secure or maintain a home.

We thank the Hall Foundation and the Mercy Foundation for supporting legal services for people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, especially women experiencing or at risk of family and domestic violence.

Their funding enables WRC to intervene when a social security problem places a person or family at immediate risk of losing their home.

> Thank you and your team for all your support and help you have provided, I will be forever grateful. Without you guys I would most certainly be on the streets, thank you.
>
> WRC client



$6,000 in backpay and Youth Allowance granted

Helping Parisa to rebuild her life

Parisa arrived in Australia from Afghanistan in December 2024 with her mother and two younger siblings to reunite with her father, who had come to Australia as a refugee 14 years earlier.

Her family faced enormous challenges. Parisa had been forced to leave school when the Taliban returned to power and arrived in Australia with limited education and no English. Unable to find work, she enrolled in a full-time English language course at TAFE to build the skills she needed to establish a new life.

When Parisa applied for Youth Allowance, her claim was rejected because she had not been a permanent resident for four years. Centrelink advised she was subject to the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period.

At the same time, the family's financial situation was deteriorating. Parisa's father had recently lost his job, her mother was unable to work, and the family had no stable income. They were not receiving Family Tax Benefit for the younger children and were struggling to meet everyday living costs, placing them at serious risk of losing their housing.

We identified that Parisa may qualify for an exemption from the waiting period because she had arrived as the dependent child of a refugee. Centrelink refused the exemption, arguing she was too old because she was over 22 years of age.

We advocated on Parisa's behalf, arguing that despite her age she remained dependent due to circumstances beyond her control. She had been forced to abandon her education in Afghanistan, had no English language skills, could not yet access employment, and was undertaking full-time study to improve her future prospects.

Our advocacy was successful. Parisa was granted Youth Allowance and received more than $6,000 in back pay. We also helped the family understand their entitlement to other Centrelink payments, including Family Tax Benefit for the younger children.

The outcome provided the family with a reliable source of income at a time of crisis, reducing their immediate risk of homelessness and giving them greater financial stability while they settled into life in Australia. It also enabled Parisa to continue her English studies, improving her long-term employment prospects and helping the family begin to rebuild their lives in safety.

$7,500 debt waived

A fresh start: Helping Joseph challenge a $7500 debt

Joseph was 17 when he was referred to Welfare Rights Centre through a regional community legal service for advice about a $7,500 Centrelink debt. The debt arose after he withdrew from high school without notifying Centrelink.

Joseph had experienced significant disadvantage throughout his childhood and adolescence. He had spent time in foster care, witnessed family violence, experienced neglect, and lived with a serious health condition that worsened during periods of stress.

Before the debt was raised, Joseph became homeless when his family could no longer afford their rent. He moved into a caravan on a family friend's property, enrolled in high school and claimed Youth Allowance. Joseph did not fully understand the requirements attached to the payment and believed it was available to support young people experiencing hardship.

Centrelink took more than three months to process his claim. During that period, Joseph's living arrangements broke down and he became homeless again. He stopped attending school and spent months couch surfing and moving between family and friends before eventually finding stable accommodation.

Welfare Rights Centre assisted Joseph to challenge the debt through an appeal to an Authorised Review Officer. We obtained Centrelink records through a Freedom of Information request, gathered supporting evidence and prepared detailed submissions arguing that the debt should be waived due to Joseph's special circumstances.

After reviewing the evidence, the Authorised Review Officer agreed. Joseph's $7,500 debt was waived in full, relieving a significant financial burden at a time when he was working to rebuild stability in his life.



Disability Support Pension Clinic

134	DSP services delivered
60	Clients helped
60%	Favourable outcomes
$97,440	Annual value of DSP payments gained*
$48,465	Annual value of DSP arrears gained

*Difference between JobSeeker Payment and DSP

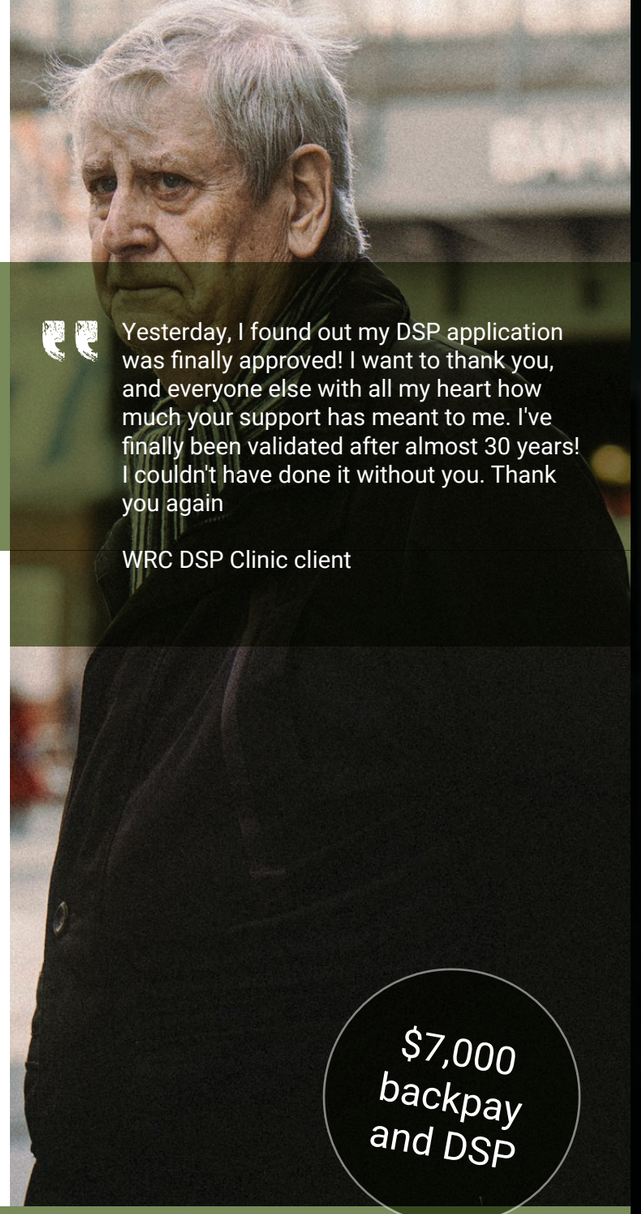
With the support of Hall & Wilcox, our Disability Support Pension (DSP) Clinic has been helping people living with illness and disability to access the income support they need for the past seven years.

Each week, the clinic assists people living with serious chronic illness, injury or disability who are reapplying for DSP or appealing a rejected claim.

Our team helps clients understand Centrelink's requirements, gather medical evidence and navigate the claims and appeals process. This support enables many people to access DSP and move from JobSeeker Payment, where compulsory activities can be difficult or inappropriate given their circumstances.

As part of the clinic, we work alongside healthcare professionals to improve their understanding of Centrelink's medical evidence requirements, helping them better support their patients.

We thank Hall & Wilcox for their ongoing pro bono support, including seconded solicitors whose contribution has been vital to the success of the DSP Clinic.



> Yesterday, I found out my DSP application was finally approved! I want to thank you, and everyone else with all my heart how much your support has meant to me. I've finally been validated after almost 30 years! I couldn't have done it without you. Thank you again
>
> WRC DSP Clinic client

$7,000 backpay and DSP

Helping Evan get DSP with limited treatment history

Evan was seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident, and he has been living alone in his van for the past two years. His left arm was amputated in post-accident surgeries, which also impacted the functioning of his right arm and left him with chronic neuropathic pain. After years of treatment that ended with the amputation, he lost trust in the health system and was very reluctant to engage with medical professionals and treatments. He also battles depression, anxiety and other serious mental health conditions which critically limit his social contacts.

Originally Evan came to us about Centrelink's imposition of a Compensation Preclusion Period which we successfully appealed. He then asked for our help with a rejection of his application for the Disability Support Pension (DSP) because Centrelink considered his arm amputation and associated musculoskeletal injuries as only a moderate impairment. Centrelink also refused to recognise the permanence of his mental health disability because he didn't have recent medical evidence of treatment from either a psychiatrist or psychologist.

Evan was referred to the DSP Clinic, which helped Evan to obtain more evidence about his past treatments and arranged for an assessment by a rehabilitation specialist who found that Evan had a severe impairment of his upper limbs. The Clinic also assisted Evan to write a statement about his medical history and personal life adversities that not only explained why he stopped engaging in treatments, but also presented a full picture of how his disability impacted his daily life. This statement along with the new medical evidence strongly contested Centrelink's rejection and attracted the Tribunal's sympathy for Evan.

WRC represented Evan at his Administrative Review Tribunal's hearing. The Tribunal found that Evan was eligible for DSP on the day he applied, he was granted an arrears payment of $7,000.

Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration Clinic

Government mistakes can have serious consequences for people relying on social security payments. Through our Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) Clinic we help clients seek compensation when Centrelink's administrative errors have caused financial loss or hardship.



$15,000 compensation

Centrelink said no – but they were wrong

Yasmin, 43, lives in Sydney with her husband and three children aged 17, 15 and 13. After arriving in Australia, she was studying English but could no longer afford her classes because the family had very limited income.

Yasmin and her husband repeatedly visited their local Centrelink office to apply for JobSeeker Payment. Each time, Centrelink staff told her she could not lodge a claim and would need to wait four years until her Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period had ended. Although Yasmin had completed an application, she was not permitted to lodge it.

Nine months later, Welfare Rights Centre advised that Yasmin was exempt from the waiting period because of her circumstances as the partner of a refugee. With assistance from Welfare Rights Centre, she was finally able to lodge a claim and was granted JobSeeker Payment.

However, Centrelink would only pay Yasmin from the date her claim was lodged, meaning she missed out on many months of income support after being wrongly turned away.

Through WRC's Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) Clinic, Yasmin obtained Centrelink records through a Freedom of Information request. The records, together with statements from Yasmin and her husband, demonstrated that she had repeatedly attempted to lodge a claim but had been prevented from doing so by incorrect advice from Centrelink staff.

The Clinic then helped Yasmin seek compensation for the financial loss she suffered as a result of Centrelink's actions. Her claim was successful, and she received $15,000 in compensation.

For Yasmin and her family, the outcome provided recognition of the hardship they had experienced and compensation for support they should have received much earlier.

Law Reform and Advocacy

During 2025–26, WRC continued to advocate for a fairer and more accessible social security system, using our casework experience to identify systemic problems and contribute to national reform.

Our advocacy during the year included:

- **Family and domestic violence:** Supported reforms to debt waiver provisions for victim-survivors and contributed casework evidence to national advocacy on the Second National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, Crisis Payment and child support reform.
- **Women outside major cities:** Contributed to and helped to launch EJA's Social Security for Women Outside Our Cities research, highlighting barriers including digital exclusion, identity requirements and limited access to services.
- **Employment services:** Advocated for reform of the Targeted Compliance Framework and stronger safeguards against unfair payment suspensions and cancellations.
- **Disability Support Pension:** Continued advocacy to remove the Program of Support requirement, which creates significant barriers for people with disability and chronic illness.
- **Fairer social security systems:** Advocated for greater accountability in automated decision-making and reforms to debt administration, income apportionment and review rights.
- **Changing the conversation:** Promoted evidence-based messaging that challenges stigma and recognises the important role social security plays in people's lives.

Our advocacy is grounded in what we see every day in our casework. By bringing clients' experiences to policy discussions, WRC helps turn individual problems into opportunities for lasting change.



Formal Review of Decisions Workshop

Tamara Chin (BRQ), Ian Turton (ILC), Donna Flood (WRC), Emily Singh (MLC), Sally Cameron (EJA), Catherine Eagle (WRAS) and Genevieve Bolton (CCL)



Justice where you live: Workshop with the 4Rs Network and Economic Justice Australia

Judy Harrison (4Rs Network), Taylah Bell (EJA), Catherine Eagle (WRAS), Corina Martin (Aboriginal Family Legal Services), Brianna Bell (KWILS), Siobhan Mackay (WLS), Katherine Boyle & Allienttia Weldon, (WRC), James Farrell (BRQ)

September 2025 Ngunawal Country, Canberra

A highlight of the year was Katherine Boyle and Allienttia Weldon presenting on the Justice Where You Live panel at the Community Legal Centres Australia Conference.

The session explored the importance of community-led solutions and place-based service delivery, recognising that government approaches often fail to meet the needs of regional and remote communities.

It also highlighted the limitations of relying on digital services where barriers such as poor connectivity, low incomes, disability, family violence and lower levels of digital literacy can make access to justice even more difficult.

Community Education and Engagement

Community education remained a core part of WRC's strategy in 2025–26. Having been supported by Ecstra for over 6 years to build our Community Worker Training program we have been excited by its success and impact. Through workshops, webinars, targeted training and our Disability Support Pension Community of Practice, we have equipped community workers across NSW with the knowledge and confidence to support people experiencing Centrelink problems.

During the year, WRC delivered 20 training events and engaged with 2,021 participants. Training covered a range of social security topics, including how Domestic and Family Violence intersects with Centrelink, Disability Support Pension eligibility, debts, appeals and exemptions.

The impact of this work extends far beyond the training room. Community workers who participated in WRC training reported supporting an average of eight clients each month with Centrelink issues. This creates a significant multiplier effect, helping people access income support, resolve problems earlier and reduce financial hardship in communities across NSW.

Training participants consistently reported increased confidence and capability, with 93% saying they felt more capable of helping people with Centrelink problems after attending a WRC session. Follow-up surveys also found that 68% of participants were able to help clients resolve a Centrelink problem using knowledge gained through the training.

Beyond formal training, WRC strengthened community engagement through outreach events, and community expos. These activities helped build relationships with community organisations, improve referral pathways and increase awareness of social security rights across NSW.

Insights gathered through our training and community engagement activities continue to inform WRC's advocacy and law reform work, helping identify emerging issues and systemic barriers faced by people accessing Centrelink.

Program Objectives

- Build capacity and confidence of community workers with the skills to navigate the complex requirements of the social security system.
- Expand advocacy and support for people throughout NSW experiencing Centrelink problems.
- Increase specific sector knowledge of social security rights and exemptions.
- Provide accessible resources and information.

We thank Ecstra Foundation for their ongoing and generous support of our community worker training program and First Nations Access program.

Community Worker Training Program Impact

4,097
community workers registered and received training materials

93%
felt more capable of helping people with Centrelink problems

2,021
attended WRC training

68%
Used training to resolve a client's Centrelink problem

8
people are supported each month by a WRC trained community worker

38,960
people benefited by WRC trained community workers*

* based on 487 surveyed community workers

Effective and relevant - what community workers say about our training

> I had a really good outcome from utilising the knowledge you provided. It empowered both me and my client.
>
> Marina, Case Worker

> Your training is so helpful and of such high quality. I always attend sessions whenever possible as they add to my toolkit every time.
>
> Angela, Financial Counsellor

> Super useful - sessions like these are invaluable for keeping us up to date.
>
> Peter, Disability Advocate





Dai Le MP calls out to the community at the Prairiewood Bring Your Bills Day event.

Communications

Our website delivers practical resources, training materials and access to legal services, while our social media promotes our training, activities and advocacy.

32%
of website users engage with our online resources

28,000
individuals have connected with us this year

32%
of website users register for training or watch online videos

22%
of website users look for support, using our 'get advice' online form and contact/referral information

1,400
newsletter subscriptions

8,800
followers on social media

2,416
WRC training video views

1,256
First Nations video views

Disability Support Pension Community of Practice

This year we ran our third annual Disability Support Pension (DSP) Community of Practice (CoP) helping us to build a statewide network of DSP specialists. The DSP CoP strengthened the knowledge, confidence and effectiveness of community workers supporting clients with complex Centrelink issues, particularly around DSP access. The program brought together practitioners through targeted training, case discussions, peer support, and resource sharing. The DSP CoP provided foundational practice support for workers across NSW and beyond, addressing not only knowledge gaps but systemic barriers in the DSP space.

DSP CoP Peer Learning and Sector Connection

- Participants highly valued the opportunity to compare practices, learn from others' cases, and gain insights into different organisational approaches.
- Remote and regional participants reported reduced isolation and increased connection to specialist expertise.
- 97% of participants would recommend the DSP CoP to their colleagues.
- Participants shared resources and information within their organisations further expanding capacity to support clients with DSP issues.
- Participants reported insight into the systemic barriers limiting access to the DSP and this enabled them to contribute to systemic reform efforts within their organisations.

What DSP CoP participants told

> I am the one my colleagues come to for DSP help.

> I'm able to meet eligibility requirements at the outset of engagement with clients which means that fewer clients need to appeal.

> Before joining the CoP we would often refer people to the Welfare Rights Centre, but we haven't had to since starting the CoP.

> I'm able to help them (clients) in a deeper and more detailed way, and provide more support through the process.

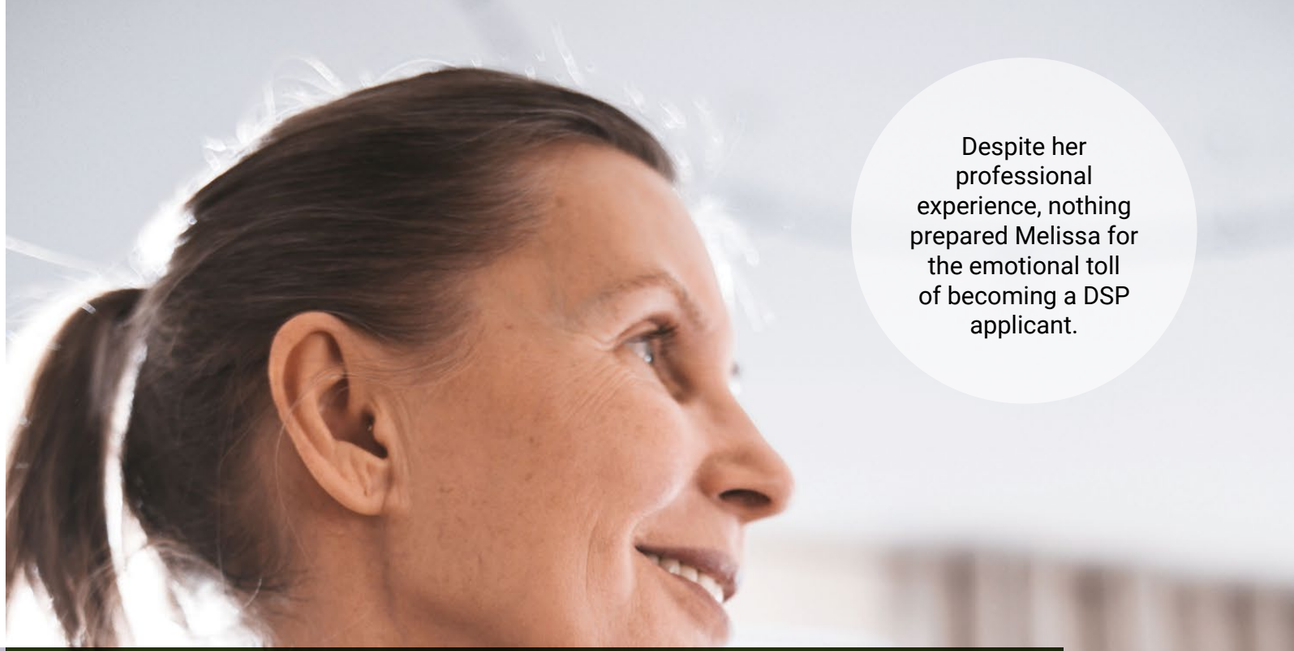
97% reported increased confidence to support clients with a DSP issue

44% reported they have helped more clients since joining the CoP

72% reported confidence in advising colleagues

56% reported they achieved positive outcomes for clients

250 people helped by DSP CoP participants



Despite her professional experience, nothing prepared Melissa for the emotional toll of becoming a DSP applicant.

Lived Experience: Advocating for Disability Support Pension Reform

From Disability Advocate to DSP recipient

For years, Melissa helped people navigate the Disability Support Pension (DSP) system. She understood the rules, the evidence required and the barriers many people faced when trying to access support.

Then a series of strokes left her with a significant brain injury, unable to work and needing to apply for DSP herself.

While managing her recovery, she faced mounting bills, increasing dependence on her teenage son for care and transport, and the terrible uncertainty about whether she would be approved for the support she needed to survive.

Like many people seeking DSP, Melissa spent months gathering the extensive medical evidence required for her claim. During this time, she relied on JobSeeker Payment to survive. Because she could no longer use a computer effectively, she had to attend Centrelink in person to manage her claim while relearning basic tasks and regaining movement in her hands.

Although she was supported by a team of medical specialists, Melissa had no practical help to manage the administrative requirements to claim DSP. At the same time, she was forced to leave her home to move closer to essential services and support.

Melissa describes many aspects of her disability as invisible. On good days she could walk and communicate well, but at other times simple questions left her unable to respond. She often felt vulnerable, overwhelmed and powerless throughout the application process and engaging with Centrelink.

Looking back, Melissa believes her experience has deepened her understanding of what people need when trying to access the Disability Support Pension. More than anything, she says people need time, patience and kindness while navigating one of the most difficult periods of their lives.

Melissa remains concerned for those who do not have the knowledge, confidence or support networks that helped her eventually access DSP. Her experience highlights the importance of a social security system that is accessible, responsive and capable of supporting people when they need it most.

Our Team

In the past year our team of eleven staff members (9.3 FTE), with the support of volunteers and the expertise of our pro bono partners have helped 2003 people and provided education and training to over 2021 community workers.

In 2025-2026 we welcomed Amelia Garpendal to the team replacing Georgia Phin as our Administration Officer. We sadly farewelled our highly respected Principal Solicitor Natalie Ross who retired on the 30 June 2026 and welcomed Donna Flood into the role.

> "My dealings with this group was awesome. Every person I dealt with from reception through to the help from a solicitor was fantastic. Friendly, caring and helpful at each stage. Thankyou!"
>
> WRC client



Chief Executive Officer:
Katherine Boyle

Principal Solicitor:
Natalie Ross

Senior Solicitors:
Juliet Dimond

Donna Flood

Julius Golab

Intake Officer:
Tien Nguyen

First Nations Access Officer:
Allienttia Weldon

Community Engagement Manager:
Thea Butler

Centre Manager:
Julie Foreman

Administration Officer:
Amelia Garpendal

Bookkeeper:
Katharine Cooke

Tribute to Natalie

After nearly four decades working in Community Legal Centres, Principal Solicitor Natalie Ross has chosen to retire. Natalie dedicated her career to advancing access to justice and improving the lives of people experiencing disadvantage. Her leadership, expertise and commitment to social security rights and social justice more broadly, has made a lasting impact on our clients, our organisation, hundreds of volunteers and trainees, and the wider community over many years.

We thank Natalie for her remarkable contribution and wish her a wonderful retirement, we are deeply grateful for her leadership over the past seven years.

Read MP Jo Haylen's Community Recognition Statement acknowledging Natalie's commitment and legacy: https://www.johaylen.com/natalie_ross_welfare_rights_centre2



We received so many special tributes about Natalie's service to the community legal sector we decided to use their words as our background for this post.

Our Board

Our Board has been a steady and generous source of leadership throughout the past year. Board Directors volunteer their time, expertise and judgement to guide Welfare Rights Centre's strategic direction, strengthen governance, safeguard sustainability and ensure the organisation remains focused on its purpose: advancing social security rights and access to justice for people across NSW. We are deeply grateful for their thoughtful stewardship, practical support and commitment to the communities we serve.

Chair:
Darren Dick

Company Secretary:
Andrew Howell

Deputy Chair:
Wendy Field

Directors:
Thomas Calma
Renee Martin
Rita Martin
Maxine Sharkey
Emily Shen
Claire Thurstans
Yvonne Weldon



Our Volunteers

In 2025–26, 93 volunteers supported our work, including pro bono secondees, practical legal trainees, Board members, student placements and volunteers assisting with intake, casework, clinics and community engagement. Their contribution significantly expanded our capacity to provide information, advice and representation to people experiencing Centrelink problems.

Our volunteer program continues to receive positive feedback for its structured and supportive approach. Through comprehensive induction, training and supervision, volunteers are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to contribute effectively. We are committed to creating a welcoming environment where every volunteer feels respected, valued and supported in their role.

We thank all our volunteers for their generosity, expertise and commitment to social security rights. Their contribution strengthens our services and helps ensure more people can access the support they need.

97% of our volunteers tell us that we've been doing a great job preparing them for their role and providing support and guidance.

100% would recommend volunteering with us.

> I am so grateful to have been part of the intake team. It has been such a meaningful experience, and I have learnt so much from the truly amazing WRC staff. You are all so dedicated and compassionate, and your work is so important for the community. It has been a privilege to contribute, even in a small way, to that effort.

> Volunteering at WRC has been the highlight of my law degree so far. I have looked forward to every shift.

> I've gained invaluable insights into advocacy, client work and systemic change and I'm leaving with a much deeper understanding of social justice and rights based practice.

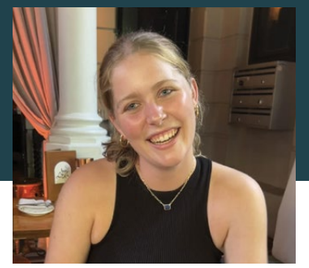




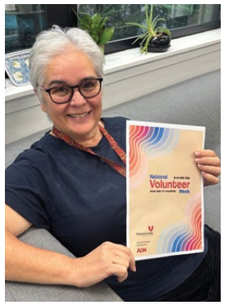








Admin Volunteers

Adam Safar
Alex Huang
Andrea Ruhl
Bonny Morton
Brent Mei
Brooklyn Plunkett
Ellen Mackinnon
Ethan Lee
Faaiza Murshed
Faheemah Dean
Fatima Azhar
Faiza Iqbal
Georgia Morley
Isabelle Lin
Rui (Isla) Shao
Jasmine Cheng
Kenny Chen
Mandy Xu
Mini Wu
Mirna Alemadi
Natasha Josanto
Olivia (Liv) Marega
Patricia (Patty) Asuncion
Reiyan Sahul
Rex Stuckey
Sijia (Scarlett) Zhao
Solomon Xu
Tani Andrews
Tess Mcgrath
Tiange (Tina) Peng
Trista Rose
Yoyo Chien
Zia Wagener

Intake/Triage Volunteers

Carmen Terceiro
Erik Chacko
Liyang Yu
Marcus Pepperell
Margo Souden
Mia Mandrini
Sarah Huffman
Sophia Jordan

Communications Volunteers

Sabine Lynch
Bella Lengyelfalusy
Isabella Carney

PLT students

Harrison White
Britney Ghannoum
Bibha Bhusal
Greta White

Social Work Placement

Charlie Scanlan
Zarah Alothmani

Student Placements

Lara Blair
Yufei Shao

Volunteer Social Security Lawyers

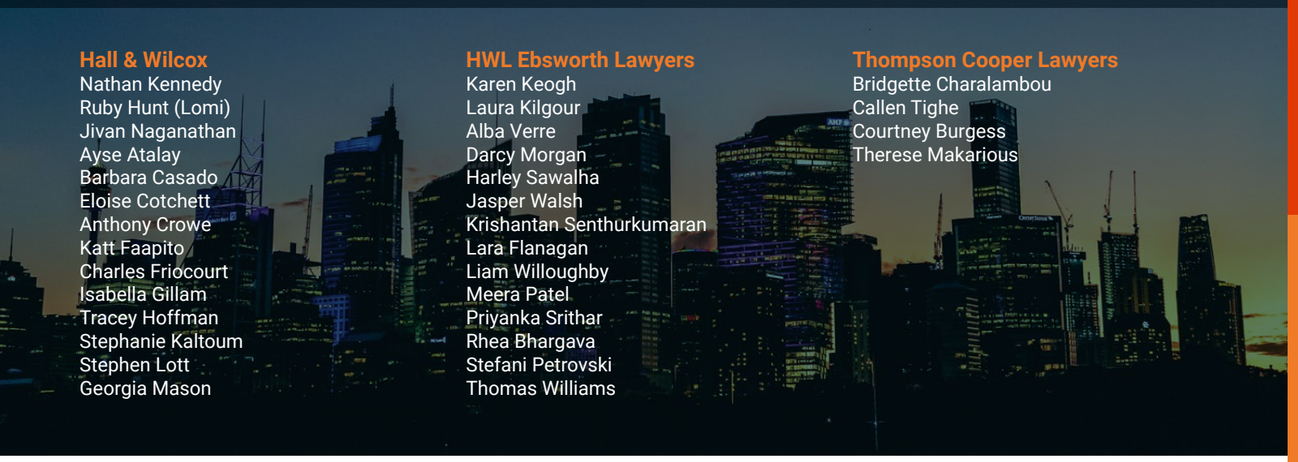
Joni Gear
Derwent Coshott

5,535 volunteer hours valued at $716,936

That equates to an additional 3 full time staff members!

We rely on this vital contribution of volunteers to help meet the high demand for Centrelink assistance across NSW

Pro bono solicitors



Hall & Wilcox
Nathan Kennedy
Ruby Hunt (Lomi)
Jivan Naganathan
Ayse Atalay
Barbara Casado
Eloise Cotchett
Anthony Crowe
Katt Faapito
Charles Friocourt
Isabella Gillam
Tracey Hoffman
Stephanie Kaltoum
Stephen Lott
Georgia Mason

HWL Ebsworth Lawyers
Karen Keogh
Laura Kilgour
Alba Verre
Darcy Morgan
Harley Sawalha
Jasper Walsh
Krishantan Senthurkumaran
Lara Flanagan
Liam Willoughby
Meera Patel
Priyanka Srithar
Rhea Bhargava
Stefani Petrovski
Thomas Williams

Thompson Cooper Lawyers
Bridgette Charalambou
Callen Tighe
Courtney Burgess
Therese Makarious

Strategic Partnerships & Peaks

We collaborate closely with key organisations, sector peaks, and funders to strengthen the social security system and advocate for systemic reform. We thank all of our funding, donor, trade union and pro bono partners for their support.

Funding Partners

ecstra · THE HALL FOUNDATION · mercy foundation · HESTA

Trade Union Program Partners

HSU NSW•ACT•QLD · IEU Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch · NSW Nurses & Midwives' Association · PSA · NSW Teachers Federation · Tradies

Pro Bono Partners and Legal support

Hall&Wilcox smarter law · HWLE LAWYERS · thompson cooper lawyers · WK WOTTON KEARNEY · Maddocks

Peaks

ECONOMIC JUSTICE AUSTRALIA · Community Legal Centres Australia · Community Legal Centres NSW

Australian Government · NSW GOVERNMENT

We are funded by the Australian Government, NSW Government and the Public Purpose Fund through the Community Legal Centres Program administered by Legal Aid NSW.

Finance and Funding

During 2025–26, WRC maintained a diverse funding base across government, philanthropy, and community partnerships, alongside generous donations and significant in-kind support from our pro bono partners.



Caroline Stewart
CEO, Ecstra Foundation

Our fundraising and partnership work supported the continuation of key services, including our Community Worker Training Program, specialist clinics and First Nations access work. Pro bono partnerships also continued to provide valuable legal expertise and staff support.

Core government funding remains a significant challenge. Demand for specialist social security legal assistance continues to far exceed our capacity, highlighting the need for sustained and increased investment from both State and Federal Governments.

During the year, WRC worked with CLC partners to build a stronger foundation for increasing access to social security legal assistance across NSW. We submitted an application for increased funding under the National Access to Justice Partnership uplift tender, seeking to expand our service capacity, conduct specialist training for generalist community legal centres, outreach in South West Sydney and Health Justice Partnership work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

While our application was not successful, we remained committed to expanding access to social security legal assistance and obtaining funding for this work.

WRC was successful in obtaining funding to participate in the pilot of a national social security helpline for community workers.

We are committed to developing sustainable partnerships and advocating for the dedicated investment needed to ensure people can access specialist help when they need it.

Our audited financial reports are available through the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).
Welfare Rights Centre Ltd | ACNC



Donate to make free legal advice accessible

Most of us need Centrelink at some point in our lives.

But Centrelink can make mistakes, rejecting eligible people's claims, cancelling their payments or raising unfair debts.

Leaving them in crisis.

They need our legal help. **We need your support.**

Please donate.

Your donation helps people access free legal advice and representation when they need it most.

All donations above $2 are tax-deductible.

Thank you

welfarerightscentre.org.au/donate-now/



Welfare Rights Centre