



Women's Legal Service
Queensland
2015-2016 Annual Report

Cover "Interwoven" by Chantel Schott

Interwoven is a delicate filigree-like line work that represents feminine qualities, promotes healing from the pain associated with domestic violence and has an abstract earthly energy that encompasses peace and restoration.

I have experienced both physical and emotional abuse and understand the lengthy struggle of overcoming inner fears and anxieties, and working towards becoming a confident and happy survivor.

Women's Legal Service provides amazing services to Queensland women in need and I am honoured to have the opportunity to share my story through my art.

Women's Legal Service Queensland

Administration Line

07 3392 0644

admin@wlsq.org.au

Postal Address

PO Box 119 ANNERLEY

QLD 4103

Street Address

8 Ponsonby Street

ANNERLEY



Women's Legal Service gratefully acknowledges the funding and support received from the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Federal Attorney-General's Department, the Queensland Department of Communities, and our community and corporate partners.



**Queensland
Government**



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department



McInnesWilson
LAWYERS



KONICA MINOLTA

**COLIN
BIGGERS
& PAISLEY**
LAWYERS



gadens



EVANSPETERSEN
LEGAL

arrowenergy
go further



stanwell



TECHPROJECT

**your local
movers**



ZONTA
CLUB OF
BRISBANE
BREAKFAST INC
MEMBER OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL
EMPOWERING WOMEN
THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY



**THE COLLEGE
OF LAW**
Queensland



Queensland
Community Foundation
A charitable trust



BRISBANE WOMEN'S CLUB

EST 1908



Welcome from Dr Rachael Field, Women's Legal Service President

This year Women's Legal Service has helped more Queensland women experiencing domestic violence than at any time across our 32 year history. It has been a period of evaluation, reflection and renewal, with implementation of the largest ever changes to the Service.

Continuous improvement has been vital in guaranteeing our limited resources are best used to assist more Queensland women who have no other options in accessing justice. We are pleased to have launched the new Helpline which has enabled more women with complex needs to connect with the Service.

Women's Legal Service launched a number of innovative new programs this year. Funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department through their Women's Safety Package allowed us to establish the Brisbane and Gold Coast Domestic Violence Units, providing more intensive support to our highest risk clients. The establishment of the Logan Hospital Health Justice Partnership funds a domestic violence lawyer for women at the hospital and means Women's Legal Service is at the forefront of domestic violence intervention and prevention.

This year has also seen significant reform and legislative changes relating to domestic violence in Queensland. Women's Legal Service has shared our knowledge and expertise to assist lawmakers in improving access to justice for Queensland women. This has included the implementation of the landmark "Not Now, Not Ever" Domestic Violence (DV) Taskforce recommendations, appearance and submission to parliamentary committees at a state and federal level (including regarding the new strangulation criminal offence), and provision of feedback on other initiatives such as the Domestic Violence Bench Book.

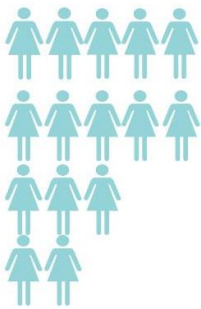
Efforts to restore the Coordinated Family Dispute Resolution (CFDR) model of mediation were initiated this year. The CFDR was designed by Women's Legal Service for the Federal Attorney-General to facilitate safe mediation practice in matters where there is a history of domestic violence.

On behalf of the Management Committee I particularly thank our dedicated and hard-working volunteers and staff. As an organisation we also extend our sincere appreciation to all our Government and corporate supporters for recognising and supporting the positive impact of the work of WLS. As President, I extend the organisation's deep appreciation to all the members of the Management Committee who devote many pro bono hours of service working for the best interests of the organisation and of the women we serve. Together we all play an important part in contributing to making positive and safe futures possible for some of Queensland's most vulnerable women and their children. With these improvements and with your continued support, we are moving closer to our goal of a community safe from violence. One in which everyone receives a fair and just outcome from legal and social welfare systems.

Impact

5958

Women
Helped



91%

of casework
involved
domestic
violence

Since Helpline launch



600%

More calls
answered



Demand still
exceeds
capacity

40%

of calls were
unanswered

We target clients with high and complex needs



1 in 5
women who contacted us
identified housing stability
as an issue



78%

of clients on
low income

34%

of all new
clients were
born
overseas

Women's
Legal
Service
assisted
women from

59

differing
language
groups



393

new clients had a disability



135

clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



How we helped

2018 Daytime advices

1072 Evening advices

872 Duty Lawyer matters

310 Outreach advices



Almost 80%

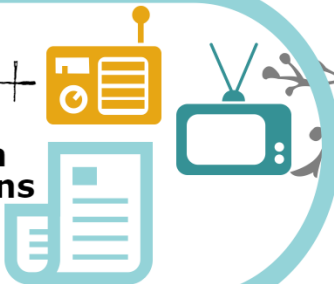
of our clients had one or more children in their care



41.68% of clients in rural and regional Queensland

Community Awareness

33+ media mentions



Facebook

50% increase in page likes

49,070 post reach

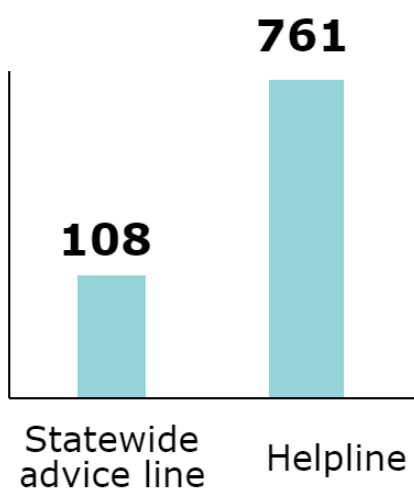


Extending our Reach

Helpline

More Queensland women who experience domestic violence are seeking assistance than ever before. To meet this growing need, Women’s Legal Service Queensland has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of our programs and implemented a significant Service re-design. The aim was to make the Service available to more women, while better prioritising the needs of Queensland’s most vulnerable.

Calls answered per month



In January 2016, a new Women’s Legal Service Helpline was launched. Since then, the Service has experienced a 600% increase in calls answered. Through a new triaging system, the Service is focused more than ever on those most in need: women experiencing domestic violence, women with disabilities, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander women and those at risk of homelessness.

Women’s Legal Service is committed to creating a community safe from violence. One in which everyone receives a fair and just outcome from legal and social welfare systems. This initiative is an important step towards this.

The Helpline was officially launched by the Attorney-General, the Hon Yvette D’ath. We particularly thank McInnes Wilson for their leadership and major sponsorship of the Women’s Legal Service Helpline and Colin Biggers and Paisley for part funding our Helpline Solicitor role.

The Helpline and its far-reaching impact was also made possible by founding supporters including the Queensland Government, Tech Project, the Panda Pearls Family, KPMG, Hanworth House, Soroptimist International Brisbane, Sunsuper, Slater and Gordon, Minter Ellison, Stanwell, Westpac, Gadens, Rowland and Results Legal.

“Keep up the great work. Your services provide so much assistance and hope to many women like myself who forgot they had a voice. You provide every woman who has suffered domestic violence the direction, the tools, the courage and the initiative within each woman to face their fears and overcome them. It isn't easy having to deal with one's current or former partner head-on in such circumstances. For most women, if not all, it's one of their greatest fears or worst nightmares coming to fruition. Women’s Legal Service is an amazing service bringing about positivity and change into the lives of so many women. Thank you again”. – **Women’s Legal Service Client**

Mahira's story

"I was in a relationship filled with abuse. My three children saw many acts of domestic violence. They suffered abuse many times from their violent father. They saw him kicking down a door to get to me and hitting me in the face, while I was holding one of my children.

After I left, my ex-husband kept threatening to take me to Court if I did not let him see the children. He threatened to take them away from me.

I had immigrated to Australia and did not have the support of extended family. I had no money and didn't know how to find legal help. I worried about my children's safety and welfare but I gave into his threats, and I let him to see the children.

The children told me they were being "belted" by their father. There were hand marks left on their skin after he hit them. My three year old was slapped so hard in the face it left a visible handprint for some time.

When this happened I was in Hospital. The Hospital told me about Women's Legal Service and I contacted them. They were wonderful, helping me through the legal process. Just knowing someone was on my side, willing to fight for me helped me through my treatment.

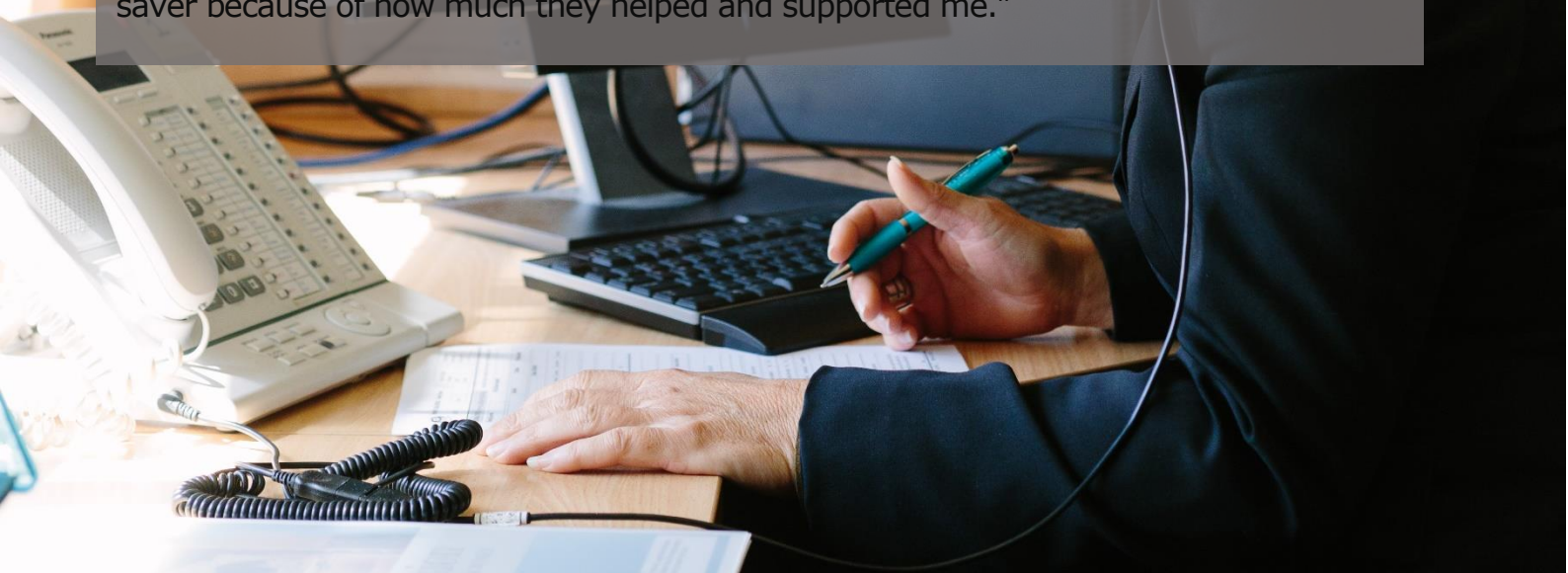
I had been too scared to report the violence, not only towards me but to the children. I am still struggling to deal with the feeling that I had been unable to stand up for my kids.

I am so grateful for the help, patience and understanding from Women's Legal Service. The help, advice and guidance made a world of difference to me. I may have lost custody of my kids if they hadn't helped me.

Women's Legal Service helped me get a Protection Order and Parenting Orders in place.

The children are doing okay now. One of my children sees their father in safe arrangements.

I am so grateful that a place like Women's Legal Service exists. To me it was a life saver because of how much they helped and supported me."



Health Justice Partnership

In a Queensland first, the Service has joined with Logan Hospital to establish a Health Justice Partnership with funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

A Women's Legal Service Solicitor provides legal advice to Logan Hospital patients in relation to family law, domestic violence and child protection matters.

Medical staff including doctors, nurses and ancillary health workers receive training to equip them with the knowledge to identify signs of domestic violence, potential legal issues, and sensitively connect women with vital legal assistance.

Women's Legal Service Queensland and the Logan Hospital are playing an important, frontline role in domestic violence identification and early intervention.

Domestic Violence Units

Women's Legal Service has established Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. The DVUs each consist of a full-time solicitor, social worker and paralegal who operate with a high intensity caseload to support women with extremely complex needs who are experiencing domestic violence. Both units reached capacity within weeks of establishment and continue to achieve positive outcomes for clients.

Katerina's story

"I had years of abuse from my husband. At the start, the abuse was controlling, emotional and with words, then it became physical. I finally found the strength to leave. My health was suffering and I wanted a better life for me and my children.

English is not my first language and I was new to this country. I had no family support and felt lonely. I had many health problems, some were very bad. Because I was not an Australian citizen it was hard to get the medical help I needed. It got so bad I had to return to my country to get treated. It broke my heart but I had to leave the children with my ex-husband so I could get better, he wouldn't let me take them with me.

A close friend told me the children were being abused and neglected. He started hitting the children and my oldest child told me she was sleeping with a knife under her pillow. She was so scared of her father.

I was still sick but I came back to try to protect my children. My ex-husband got the Family Court involved and he was seeking for the children to live with him. I knew the children were not safe and I needed help.

I called Women's Legal Service for help. It was a great relief to finally feel like I was getting support and someone was really listening. I was given step-by-step help to draft my Court documents. The support was amazing. I would not have been able to do it on my own. Not having any help or support can be scary, and I was so upset thinking about my children, it was all too much to do on my own.

It was so important to know I could pick up the phone and get extra information about my rights whenever something new happened.

The children are living with me now, in a stable and loving home. But I know it is not over, I still have a long road."

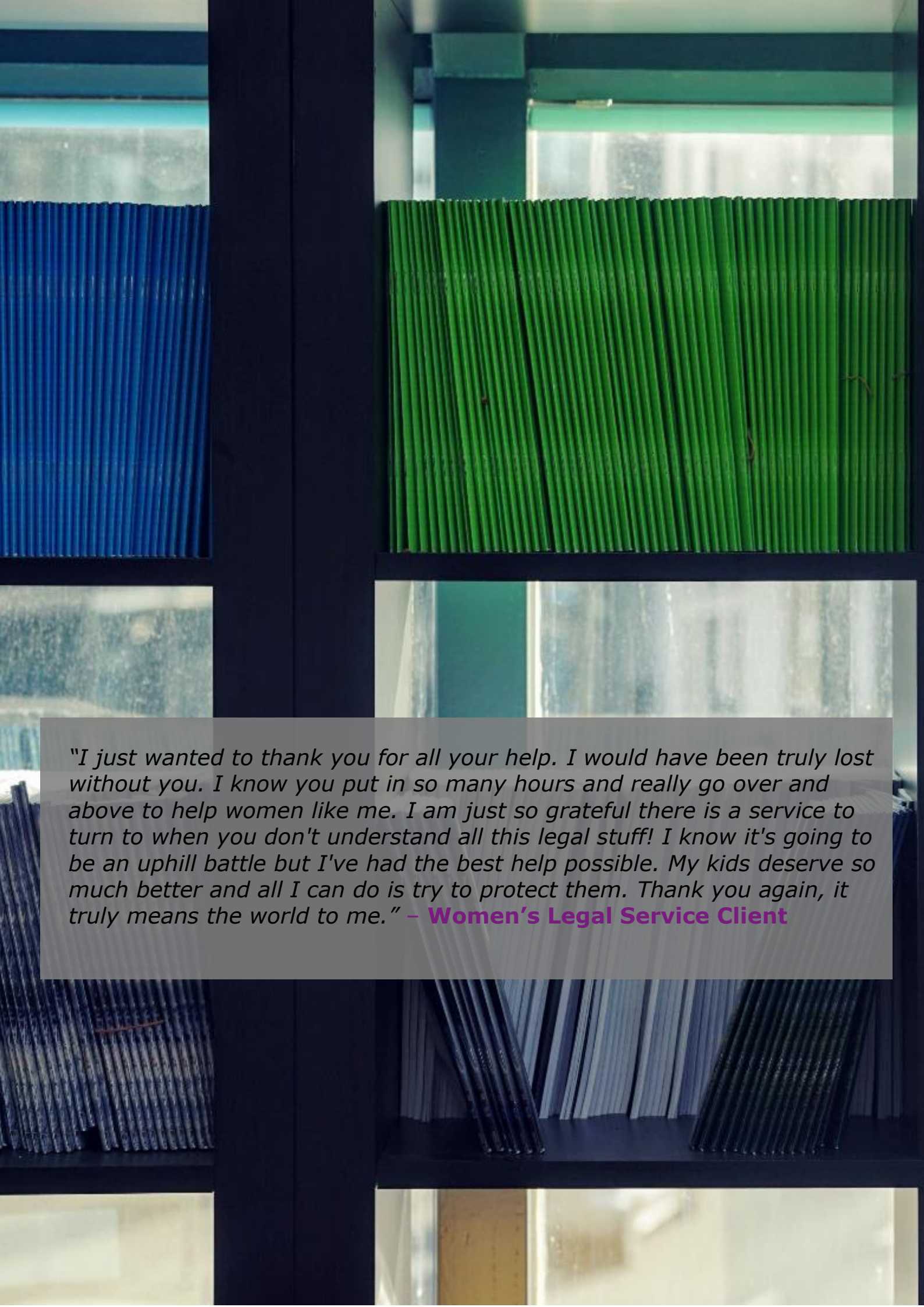
The help Women's Legal Service provided to me is priceless."

Outreach Solicitor and Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer Services



Facing court can be daunting for women experiencing violence, especially for those who cannot afford representation. Women are often fearful of their abusive partner or ex-partner, and of the court system itself. Our Duty Lawyer Solicitors support women at this time, providing information about court procedures, explaining their options and, when resources permit, appearing in court with them. Our duty lawyer service has this year expanded from Holland Park Magistrates Court to include Ipswich and Caboolture Magistrates Courts. This has enabled us to help more women seeking protection.

Our Outreach Lawyer conducts visits to the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre and Family Relationships Centres. Women in prison have often experienced multiple forms of disadvantage and been victims of violence. Women's Legal Service has continued our important outreach services in the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre. Our Outreach Lawyer also visits Logan and Mount Gravatt Family Relationship Centres to provide information and advice about parenting and separation. This information helps women prepare for mediation, and ultimately negotiate better and safer outcomes for themselves and their children.

The image is a collage of various photographs. The top-left and top-right sections show stacks of blue and green corrugated metal sheets, respectively. The bottom-left and bottom-right sections show stacks of blue corrugated metal sheets. In the center, there is a semi-transparent grey rectangular box containing a testimonial in black text, with the name of the client in purple text.

*"I just wanted to thank you for all your help. I would have been truly lost without you. I know you put in so many hours and really go over and above to help women like me. I am just so grateful there is a service to turn to when you don't understand all this legal stuff! I know it's going to be an uphill battle but I've had the best help possible. My kids deserve so much better and all I can do is try to protect them. Thank you again, it truly means the world to me." - **Women's Legal Service Client***

Rural, Regional and Remote Matters and Community Legal Education

41.68%

of clients in rural and regional Queensland

377

RRR Advice Line matters

23

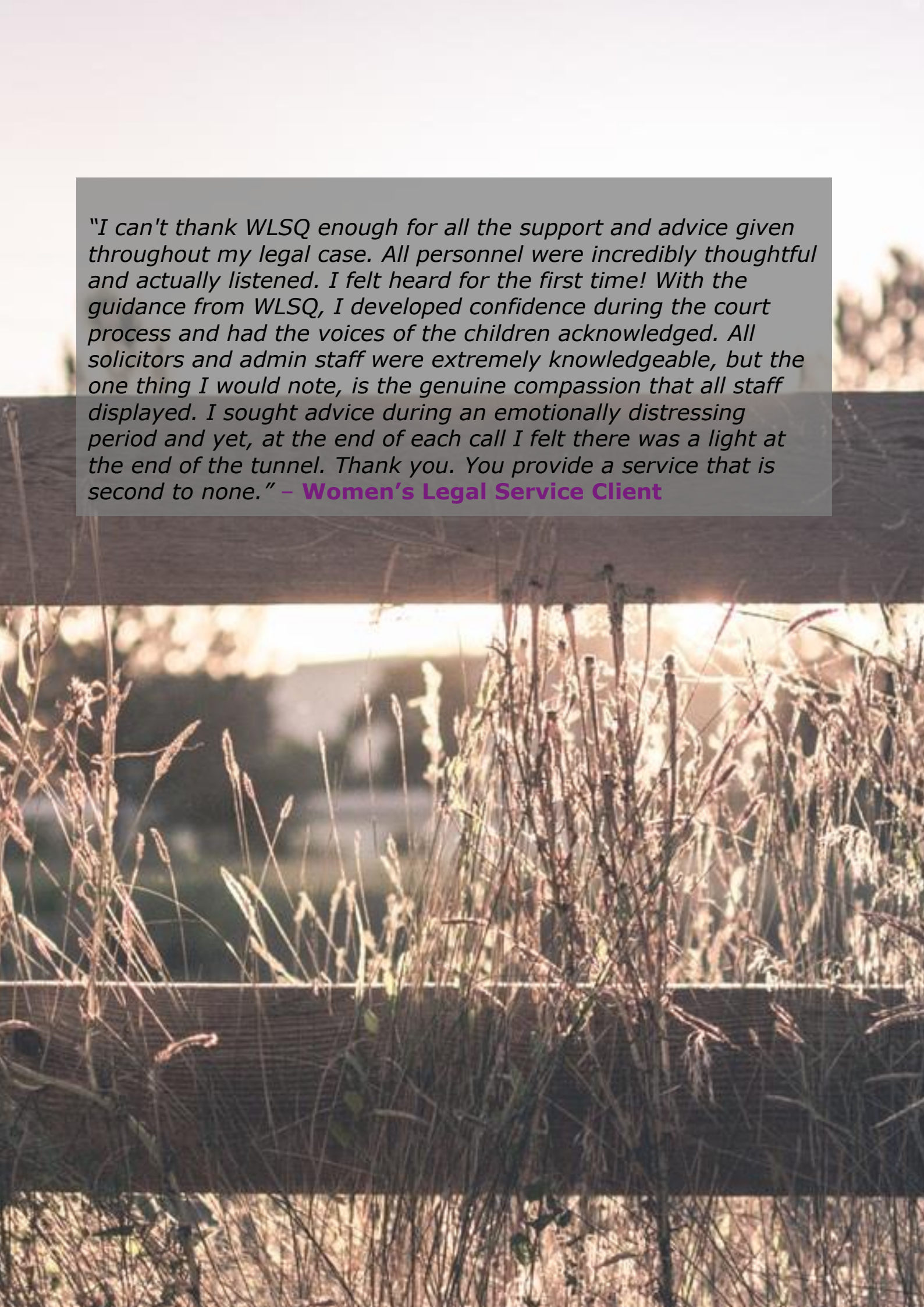
Community Legal Education projects

Women in Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) areas experiencing domestic violence face specific and complex barriers which compromise their safety and access to justice. We know our RRR clients often contend with physical and social isolation, a lack of privacy and anonymity, higher costs in accessing help and the prospect of being “conflicted out” of local legal practitioners.

In addition to our dedicated RRR Helpline, our new Helpline has helped reach more women in rural and regional areas. This year, women in RRR areas accounted for 41.7% of our clients – an increase from 33% last year.

Our RRR Community Legal Education workshops and clinics foster access to justice in rural and regional Queensland. These workshops, administered by our specialist RRR Solicitor, equip local community services with the tools and knowledge they need to better respond to domestic violence in their local communities. Our work in Regional Queensland also includes legal clinics providing direct help to women with domestic violence and family law matters. Last year, our RRR Solicitor delivered workshops in Rockhampton and St George.

We look forward to our 2016/17 partnership with Arrow Energy in assisting women throughout the Darling Downs as we conduct free community legal education workshops and clinics in Toowoomba, Dalby, Miles and Chinchilla.



"I can't thank WLSQ enough for all the support and advice given throughout my legal case. All personnel were incredibly thoughtful and actually listened. I felt heard for the first time! With the guidance from WLSQ, I developed confidence during the court process and had the voices of the children acknowledged. All solicitors and admin staff were extremely knowledgeable, but the one thing I would note, is the genuine compassion that all staff displayed. I sought advice during an emotionally distressing period and yet, at the end of each call I felt there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you. You provide a service that is second to none." – **Women's Legal Service Client**

Reaching out online

Often when a woman leaves a violent relationship, a mobile phone may be one of her few items. Digital tools, such as smartphone apps, can help us to help more women. Apps allow women to access vital information while not connected to the internet – an essential feature for women living in regions with limited internet coverage and women who are living under surveillance.

Easy access to information can empower women with the resources they need to make key decisions. Our digital outreach connects women with services and gives them the knowledge to navigate a complex legal system.

Re-Focus



Re-Focus is a free, easy-to-use and interactive app for women who have separated or are thinking of separating.

It covers legal information about domestic violence, arrangements for children, financial and property matters, options for reaching a legal agreement, and safe accommodation. It also provides helpful referrals and coping tips about separation.

Financial Literacy App

With a grant awarded from Financial Literacy Australia, Women's Legal Service is developing an app for women in Australia who are thinking about, or have recently separated from a relationship where there has been domestic violence. The app is designed to empower women to take control of their finances, build resilience and strength, and know where to get help.

Separation Book

Our separation book provides a comprehensive overview of legal information for women who are considering or who have separated from their partner. Our corporate partner, Minter Ellison print hundreds of copies of this important resource each year, ensuring its availability for Queensland women.

Property Settlement Roadmap

Our recently developed Property Settlement Road Map is a quick guide to help women navigate the division of property at the end of a marriage or de facto relationship. The Property Settlement Road Map links women with services and provides information about the legal process.

Our online community

Earlier this year, a woman escaping domestic violence with her baby took the brave step of contacting Women's Legal Service. The client was not yet an Australian citizen or permanent resident. She was not permitted to work and was not eligible for any kind of social security payment. With no family, and no means to support herself, the woman was considering going back to her abusive ex-partner.

To aid our client through the difficult period, our Social Worker connected her with services to provide emergency help and accommodation. She also received legal help from our Solicitor. But some essentials including nappies and baby formula were not available through these channels. A call for donations was quickly put out through Facebook. The generosity of our online community was overwhelming. The post was quickly spread, reaching almost 11,500 people. Donations of baby essentials immediately flooded in, with Women's Legal Service online community members travelling from as far away as Warwick to donate.

It meant that she could get through this challenging time knowing she had support. Our online community united to ensure a safer future for this client and her baby.

Our Volunteers

We thank our fantastic, diverse pool of volunteers whose skills and expertise have assisted us to deliver high quality legal and support services to the ever increasing number of Queensland women needing help.

Our focus this year has been to increase accessibility for women living in rural regional and remote areas. To this end, we have introduced a mix of booked phone appointments via our Helpline and drop-in face-to-face legal advice during our evening service. This year, Volunteer Solicitors, Barristers and Support Workers assisted 1108 women through our evening advice service. We are extremely grateful for their support and dedication to our clients.

We have also increased our volunteering opportunities to include administration and paralegal volunteers:

- Administration Volunteers assist our frontline services by greeting clients and professionally completing administration and office duties essential to the smooth running of our service.
- UQ Pro Bono generously assisted with recruitment of highly skilled and enthusiastic Paralegal Volunteers. Our Paralegal Volunteers support our Duty Lawyer Solicitors at Holland Park, Ipswich and Caboolture Magistrates Court.
- Over three hundred fundraising and communications volunteers have been key to successful fundraising activities and events over 2015/16 - enabling us to help more Queensland women and their children.

Our volunteers make a huge contribution to the quality of our service and we are sincerely thankful for their support and commitment.



Volunteer Profile

Kelli Martin, KLM Solicitors. On what she enjoys about volunteering with WLS, Kelli says, "Meeting and supporting a diverse group of women and assisting them with the first part of what is usually a scary process to most people. I love seeing relief on a client's face when she realizes there is something she can do to get out of the situation she is in and move on."

Women's Legal Service - 2015/2016 Volunteers

SOLICITORS/ BARRISTERS

Jennifer Hetherington
Justine Woods
Adele Bentham
Aleisha Edwards
Alicia Schubert
Alison Slocombe
Amy Chesnutt
Amy Campbell
Angela Yates
Anna Black
Annalee Madssen
Ann-Maree Eames
Belinda Jeffrey
Bronwen Curtis
Carla Franchina
Carol Brierley
Clare dart
Chloe Jackson
Danielle Dick
Diane Wright
Debra Effenev
Dearne Galbraith
Dora Ko
Elizabeth Mathews
Evette Clark
Elizabeth Hollidge
Fiona Manderson
Flora Tang
Hayley Kennedy
Hazra Ahmed
Jemima McGregor

Jennifer Hetherington
Justine Woods
Kate Grant
Kara Burgess
Karen Carmody
Kelli Martin
Kirstie Colls
Kristina Kutija
Lauren Holm
Lezah Gilda Marega
Lynne Bricknell
Michelle Vu
Margaret McLennan
Marilyn Davis
Naomi Lewis
Natalie Locke
Nichola Di Muzio
Noori Sidhu
Pamela McGee
Patricia Keyworth
Phillipa Kingswell
Pravinita Singh-Pillay
Rebecca Gee
Rebekah Lamb
Rochelle Henningsen
Renee Pappagallo
Sandie Chatterton
Sarah Higon
Sarah Ramsey
Shaneen Pointing
Sharon Beresowskyj

Shila Batenburg
Sue Westall
Sarahjane Robertson
Temika Bohem
Tina Riveros
Vanessa Leishman
Wendy Miller

SUPPORT WORKERS

Anita Lowe
Boba Djordjevic
Chanelle McCormack
Chloe Blaney
Ellie Basingthwaite
Emmalene Travers
Georgia Stewart
Jane Hegarty
Jenny Jackson
Lei Lehua Helu
Melanie Grodecki
Maira McIntosh
Natasha Berrell
Rena Carrigg
Shannon Hurley
Rebecca Terry

PARALEGAL/
ADMINISTRATION

Alexandra Ritchie
Annabel Burton
Bo McGrath
Brittany Reynolds
Catherine Fricker

Carryn Falk
Cody Robinson
Danielle Hurda
Elizabeth Singleton
Elizabeth Troeger
Emily Carter
Eva Bevan
Grace Van De Graaff
Isabella Pilbeam
Julia West
Julie-Ann Ross
Kate Sangha
Kellie Mikkola
Keertan Samra
Leanne Lakeman
Melissa Lanthois
Nicole Macgregeorgos
Nikhila Tumkur
Nicole Kohn
Phillipa Robinson
Prianca Maharaj
Phylli Verrall
Rebecca Kirk
Samantha Chai
Sarah Ross
Savannah Duncan
Sjaana Steffens



Volunteer Profile

Administration Volunteer, Maddi. "I've always had a passion for justice and to see women empowered, so when an opportunity came up earlier this year to volunteer at the Women's Legal Service Annual Pop Up Fashion Event, I jumped at the chance. Since then, I've had the pleasure of becoming a regular admin vullie at the WLS Brisbane office. As I'm currently studying a dual degree in law and psychology, and have a desire to work in the family law sector helping women and children, this has been one of the most educational, and most rewarding experiences I've ever had."

Fundraising volunteers

We sincerely thank the hundreds of volunteers who have ensured successful fundraising events throughout the year. We particularly thank our volunteer Dancing CEOs fundraising committee: Dominique Lamb (Chairperson), Rozelle Bothma, Kate Humzy, Ingrid Morrow, Corrinne Werner, Ben Desir, Bindi Balazs, Disa Johansen, Kate Van Der Heyden, Carly Faragher, Cecile Potelle and Jessica Lydiard.

We also sincerely thank the following incredible CEOs for their dedication and skill in raising \$219,000 for the Women's Legal Service Helpline: Maria Becis, Mark Middleton, Sue-Ellen Watts, Elena Gosse, Clarissa Rayward, Angela Mogridge, Matt Turner, Amelia Hodge, Janet Benson, Warren Swanston, Jellaine Dee and Dene Harris.

Helping our Service

Across 2016 our events portfolio has grown consistently. Women's Legal Service Queensland now has three established events: Dancing CEOs, The Legal Profession White Ribbon Day Breakfast and our Corporate Clothing Pop-up, and smaller fundraisers throughout the year. This year's sell-out Legal Profession White Ribbon Day Breakfast was the most successful breakfast to date, raising \$81,000. Dancing CEOs 2016 defied all expectations raising \$219,000 to become the largest annual gala event held at City Hall and the most successful fundraising event ever held by an Australian community legal centre. We were humbled to see support from Corporate Queensland in action.

At the heart of these successful events are our volunteers. Each year, the Dancing CEOs volunteer committee generously donates their time to realise this immense gala event. Across the year, over 300 volunteers ensure events run smoothly, while guaranteeing the maximum funds raised go to where they are needed most – helping our clients.

The important support we receive from corporate and pro bono partners ensures maximum resources can be put into frontline services. We gratefully acknowledge support received from our pro bono supporters:

Konica Minolta, for all printing and multi-function printing devices and event sponsorship.

Colin Biggers and Paisley, for pro bono legal and policy assistance and support for major events.

Minter Ellison, for printing hundreds of copies of the important resource, the Separation Book, for Queensland women.

Clayton Utz, for pro bono governance support, grants and corporate working bees.

College of Law, for hosting the Women's Legal Service Annual General Meeting each year.



Management Committee

Members of the Management Committee as at 30 June 2016

Dr Rachael Field: President

Sarah Flower: Secretary

Emma Bristow: Treasurer

Kylie Hilliard: Ordinary member

Rebecca Shearman: Ordinary member

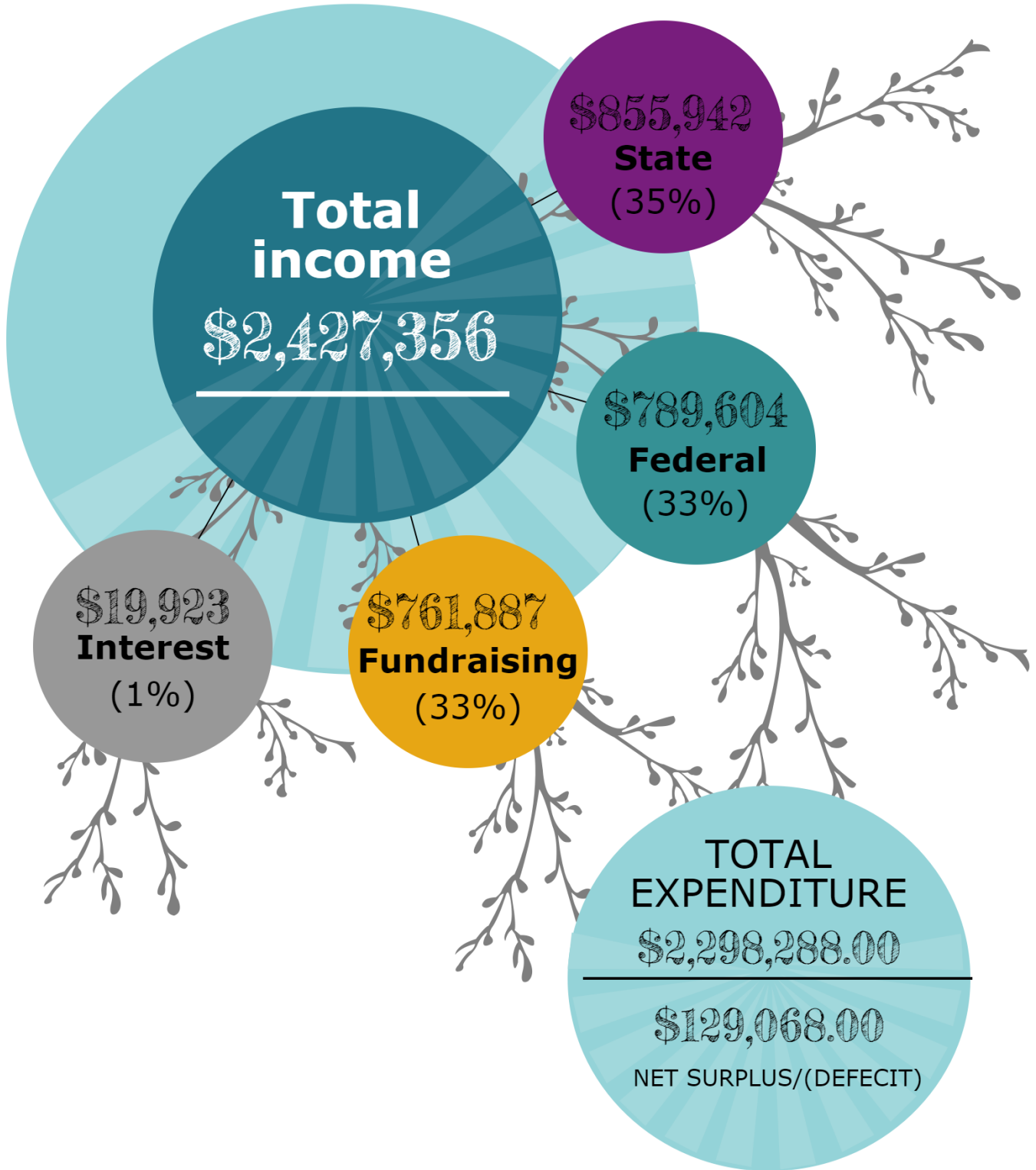
Angela Lynch: Staff Representative

Natalie Davidson: Staff Representative

Patron: The Honourable Justice Margaret McMurdo AC

Ambassadors: Marisa Vecchio and Amanda Stein

Financial Report





chantel schott