



WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE

ANNUAL

REPORT

2016-2017

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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, Queensland Corrective Services, and our community and corporate partners.



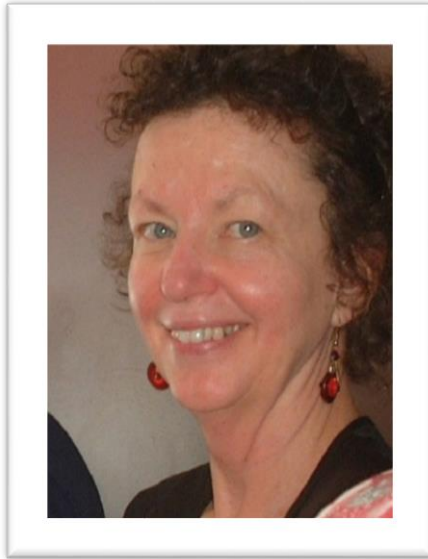
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT PROF RACHAEL FIELD and CEO ANGELA LYNCH

It has been another significant 12 months for Women's Legal Service. This year our Statewide Domestic Violence Legal Helpline has continued to experience high demand, representing an increasingly important form of support for Queensland women and their children who experience domestic violence. It is evident that access to specialist legal information is essential to safety.

The funding landscape has loomed large over this reporting period. A funding shortfall threatened to reduce our Helpline hours by half. In April the Federal Attorney-General and Minister for Women visited Women's Legal Service to announce the national reversal of cuts to Community Legal Centres with a focus on domestic and family violence and family law matters. Hand Heart Pocket came on board with vital interim funding that allowed the Helpline to stay open at existing capacity levels while the government funds allocation process occurred. We were honoured by Dame Quentin Bryce's support of the Helpline at the Hand Heart Pocket funding announcement. Recently the State Government confirmed a funding allocation from the Commonwealth pool for the Helpline. This funding ensures the Helpline will remain open at current capacity levels until 2020. Women's Legal Service is grateful for this vital funding, and we congratulate the State and Federal Governments on their commitment to address domestic violence in our state.

This report recognises our impacts on the lives of Queensland women and children affected by domestic and family violence. These achievements have been made possible through the contributions of staff, volunteers, management committee and the support of Government and corporate partners. We sincerely thank you for your contributions. Together we all play an important role in building positive and safe futures for some of Queensland's most vulnerable women and their children.

As we remember this year, we honour the memory of the first Women's Legal Service Social Worker and dear friend, Pam Godsell. Pam made an enormous contribution to Women's Legal Service and the domestic violence sector. Her work was pivotal in setting up the Domestic Violence Court Assistance Network (DVCAN) across the state for women to have expert DV support when applying for protection orders. She is greatly missed.



In memory of Pam Godsell

IMPACT

WHO WE HELPED

1 IN 5 CLIENTS WITH A DISABILITY



1 IN 4 CLIENTS WITH URGENT SAFETY RISKS



1 IN 5 CLIENTS ARE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS



84% CLIENTS ON LOW OR NO INCOME



50% OF WOMEN WHO CALLED OUR HELPLINE COULD NOT GET THROUGH



8,000

HELPLINE CALLS ANSWERED

5,870

LEGAL ADVICES

1,390

DUTY LAWYER SERVICES

127

INTENSIVE ONGOING LEGAL CASES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL HELPLINE

- **8,000 calls answered**

Our Statewide Legal Helpline continues to be a key element of Queensland's response to domestic violence. Since establishment in January 2016, the Helpline has helped Women's Legal Service achieve a 600% increase in calls answered.

The Helpline triages calls from women throughout Queensland who seek assistance with a domestic violence, family law matter or child protection matter. The last 12 months has seen a significant increase in women calling the Helpline who are experiencing immediate risk to their safety and the safety of their children. As a result, the Helpline has been restructured to include a dedicated senior Helpline lawyer to respond to the rising number of urgent calls we receive every day. The Helpline is also supported by our volunteer lawyers who provide urgent legal advice through our Legal Link program.

In addition to the urgent advice Helpline lawyer, our triaging process also allows us to prioritise callers who experience greatest vulnerability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) women are 35 times more likely to experience domestic violence, while culturally and linguistically diverse women often experience greater barriers to accessing legal services and have limited support networks to help. Helpline triaging has doubled the number of ATSI women accessing Women's Legal Service over the past 12 months, while 1 in 10 women who received our help spoke a language other than English at home. Greater resources and refined triaging mean the Helpline is responsive to urgency and focusses resources where they are most needed.

Katrina's story

"I relied on charity, and the help of people in my community to survive in the early days after leaving an abusive relationship.

I was brought to this country by my abuser and he was my visa sponsor. When he informed immigration he would no longer support me I had no rights to stay here and had no access to support or help.

I was turned down for legal aid and so if the Women's Legal Service hadn't helped me I would have lost my children. The centre is often the only safety net for people who fall through the cracks as I did. Because of Women's Legal Service me and my kids are safe."

HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS

In the last 12 months Women's Legal Service partnered with the Logan Hospital to establish Queensland's first hospital-based Health Justice Partnership supporting women experiencing domestic and family violence.

Domestic violence is the leading cause of death, disability and illness of Australian women aged 15-44¹. Primary health care clinicians see on average at least one currently abused woman each week, although the signs may not be obvious.²

Established with funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Women's Safety Package, our partnership with Logan Hospital seeks to improve health, legal and safety outcomes for women experiencing domestic violence. A Women's Legal Service Solicitor provides free legal help to hospital patients in relation to family law, domestic violence and child protection matters. A key benefit of this service is the flexibility of legal help to accommodate patient needs. This includes appointments at the hospital wards, in the solicitor's office at Logan Hospital or by telephone.

In addition to legal help for clients, the program also gives medical staff including doctors, nurses and ancillary health workers customised legal education to increase their awareness of the signs of domestic violence, potential legal issues, and how to sensitively and seamlessly connect women with vital legal assistance and associated services. Training has been provided to over 460 health care professionals. The on-site solicitor has received referrals for over 120 women.

A year after launch, the successful initiative is expanding to Redland Hospital, QEII Jubilee Hospital and Princess Alexandra hospitals.

By intervening early and offering flexible service delivery, Women's Legal Service Queensland's Health Justice Partnerships are creating safer futures for women and their children affected by domestic violence.

¹ ANROWS, 2016, A preventable burden: Measuring and addressing the prevalence and health impacts of intimate partner violence in Australian women, <<http://media.aomx.com/anrows.org.au/s3fs-public/28%2010%2016%20BOD%20Compass.pdf>>.

² Hegarty K.L, 'Measuring a multidimensional definition of domestic violence: prevalence of partner abuse in women attending general practice', Unpublished doctoral thesis, Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1999 in Roberts, G et al (eds.). *Intimate Partner Abuse and Health Professionals: new approaches to Domestic Violence*, Churchill Livingstone Elsevier 2006, p.36.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNITS

Women's Legal Service has established Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. The DVUs operate with a high intensity caseload to support women with extremely complex needs who are experiencing severe domestic violence.

- **Brisbane DVU: 73% of clients were culturally or linguistically diverse, coming from 26 different countries**
- **Brisbane DVU: 13% of clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander**
- **Gold Coast DVU: 65% clients were culturally or linguistically diverse**
- **Gold Coast DVU: 20% clients had a disability**

Both units reached capacity within weeks of establishment and continue to achieve positive outcomes for clients.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DUTY LAWYER AND LEGAL OUTREACH

- **1390 Holland Park, Ipswich, Caboolture, Duty Lawyer Service matters**

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 critical time, providing information about court procedures, explaining their options and appearing in court with them. Our Duty Lawyer service continues to operate from the Holland Park, Ipswich and Caboolture Magistrates Courts.

The Women's Legal Service Outreach Lawyer conducts visits to multiple off-site locations to give vulnerable women access to legal assistance. Women in prison commonly have multiple forms of disadvantage and have been victims of violence. We have continued our important outreach services in the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre providing free assistance with family law, child protection and domestic violence matters. Our Outreach Lawyer also provides legal services at the Logan and Mount Gravatt Family Relationship Centres. This solicitor gives women information and advice about parenting and separation, which is important when preparing for mediation with the aim of negotiating better and safer outcomes for women and their children.

RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE LEGAL ADVICE

Women's Legal Service recognises that women experiencing domestic violence who live in rural and remote areas face increased vulnerabilities which prevent their access to justice. Each Tuesday our Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) phone line provides legal advice to women who live in regional Queensland. The RRR line is exclusively available to regional, rural and remote Queensland women ensuring that they are given priority access to the Service.

Jennifer's story

"I have been able to represent myself in court eight times against my violent ex-partner. I couldn't afford a lawyer or to access Legal Aid. I had nowhere to turn. The help, assistance and input I've received from the very professional solicitors at Women's Legal Service has been priceless. They have been so tolerant and understanding to my circumstances. I wouldn't be able to come into the service as I live in regional Queensland, and without having this Helpline in place, with easy access for people like me, I wouldn't have had the benefit or access to the service. WLS has been my lifeline."

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

- **32 community legal education sessions delivered to service providers**

Women's Legal Service is committed to equipping rural and remote communities to better respond to domestic violence. Over the last 12 months Arrow Energy funded the delivery of four full-day community legal education workshops in Miles, Chinchilla, Dalby and Toowoomba. The sessions focused on building the capacity of service providers to support women and children escaping domestic violence in rural Queensland. Participants also gained better knowledge and understanding of how to refer clients to free legal services and where they can find free and accessible information online for their clients. The workshops were highly successful with requests from participants to conduct further workshops in the area.

Over the past year our service also worked closely with YourTown, Family Law Practitioners Network Gold Coast (FLPNGC) and members of the Combined Women's Refuge Group (CRWG) to develop and deliver a training package for refuge workers about supporting women and children escaping violence. The two-day workshops included speakers from the Queensland Police Service and a training activity conducted by Karen Carmody (Barrister-at-Law). The training topics also included immigration and domestic violence, child protection, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and family violence, parenting disputes and property settlement. Participant evaluation was overwhelmingly positive and individuals stated it was the most useful training workshop they have ever attended.

SOCIAL WORK

- **97% of clients referred to social work present with immediate safety concerns**
- **32% of clients referred to social work were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**

The Women's Legal Service Social Work team provide a holistic response to domestic violence with a primary focus on women's safety. Social workers provide short term solution-focused counselling, specialist risk assessment and individualised safety planning, application assistance for domestic violence orders and Legal Aid grants, as well as targeted referral and advocacy for a range of issues including, housing, health, Centrelink and ongoing support.

Over the past year, targeted triaging through the Helpline has resulted in an increase in the number of complex cases our Social Workers are responding to, with these clients needing more intensive and ongoing support.

In the 2016/17 financial year, the Social Work service provided over 200 women with discreet advice or ongoing casework assistance. This represents a 30% increase in casework from the previous year.

ONLINE TOOLS

When a woman leaves a violent relationship, a mobile phone may be one of her few possessions. Easy access to information can empower women with the resources they need to make key decisions. Digital tools like smartphone 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. Our digital outreach connects more women with services and gives them the knowledge to navigate a complex legal system.

PENDA

- **2,000 downloads**

This year Women’s Legal Service collaborated with the Financial Rights Legal Centre to develop Penda: a national, free, simple to use app combining financial, personal safety and legal information and referrals for women who have experienced domestic and family violence.

Penda provides practical information including financial safety planning, tips to access emergency money, crisis payments, and emergency housing. Penda helps women prepare and protect their finances moving into the future with tips to safeguard assets and manage debt after separation or divorce.

The safety of Penda users is paramount. The app warns users to consider their safety before download and throughout, giving them other options to find information. Penda also features a lock screen game function easily accessible by tapping the icon or shaking the device, as well as an optional passcode setting to open the app.

Penda provides information on risk factors, safety planning, and the safe use of technology. The app also includes essential legal information on topics including domestic and family violence, child support, parenting, property settlement, visas and immigration with the aim of empowering women to make informed decisions.

Penda aims to break the cycle of violence and build safer, more secure futures.

This app has been made possible with funding from Financial Literacy Australia with a national communication campaign funded by Credit Union Australia.

SEPARATION BOOK

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

PROPERTY SETTLEMENT ROADMAP

Our Property Settlement Road Map is a quick online 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.

LAW REFORM

Informed by client data and experiences, Women's Legal Service contributed submissions to a number of State and Federal enquiries on issues including:

- Abortion law reform (Queensland Domestic Violence and Abortion Reform Bill #1 and #2).
- Bail law reform and other measures to protect domestic and family violence (DFV) survivors (Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016).
- Family Law Act changes preventing DFV perpetrators directly cross-examining their victims (Family Law Amendment - Family Violence and Other Measures Bill 2017).
- Legislation that establishes a sexual assault counselling privilege in Queensland (Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016).

Law reform and systems advocacy is core to our mission to create a society free from violence and ensure that women have access to justice.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

We thank our highly skilled, dedicated pool of volunteers whose knowledge and expertise have assisted Women's Legal Service to deliver quality legal and support services to the ever-increasing number of Queensland women needing help.

Our evening advice service continues to be extremely busy and this year volunteer Solicitors, Barristers and Support Workers assisted 1,019 women. This included a combination of both in person and telephone appointments. We are extremely thankful to our volunteers for offering their time and expertise.

Other areas of the volunteer program 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.
- Paralegal volunteers support our Duty Lawyer Solicitors at Holland Park, Ipswich and Caboolture Magistrates Court.

Our volunteers play a significant role in enabling more women access to legal advice. We are sincerely grateful for their support and commitment. Also particular thanks to all of the pro bono barristers that provided much needed expert court advocacy in a variety of client matters during the year.

2016-2017 VOLUNTEERS

Solicitors

Aleisha Edwards
Alison Slocombe
Amalie Grima
Amy McBreen
Angela Yates
Annabelle Jacob
Annalee Madssen
Belinda Jeffrey
Caitlin Downs
Caitlin Elliott
Candace Gordon
Candace Watkins
Carla Franchina
Carol Brierley
Charlotte Paterson
Chloe Blaney
Chloe Jackson
Danielle Dick
Deepal Raniga
Diane Wright
Dora Ko
Elizabeth Hollidge
Evette Jones
Fiona Manderson
Flora Tang
Hayley Kennedy
Hazra Ahmed
Jane Guerin
Jennifer Franklin
Jennifer Hetherington
Joanna Sheridan
Julia Murfitt
Kara Burgess
Kate Tolley
Kathryn Mackenzie
Kay Feeney
Kelli Martin
Kirsten MacGregor

Kirstie Colls
Kylie Perkins
Lauren Holm
Lezah Gildea-Marega
Micaela Chomley
Natasha McGrow
Nichola Di Muzio
Nicole Manning
Patricia Keyworth
Phillipa Jacomb
Phillipa Kingswell
Pravinita Singh Pillay
Rebecca O'Brien
Rina Biswas
Sandie Chatterton
Shannon Daykin
Sharon Beresowskyj
Sue Westall
Tarah Tosh
Temika Slee
Vanessa Leishman
Wendy Miller
Yolandi Beer
Zoe Earl
Zoe Adams

Barristers

Ann-Maree Eames
Clare Dart
Dearne Firth
Karen Carmody
Kate Gover
Margaret McLennan
Pamela McGhee
Sue-Ellen Wright

Support Workers

Alisha Greelish
Anita Lowe
Anna Brasnett
Chloe Blaney

Caitlin Collins
Ellie Bassingthwaite
Emmalene Travers
Georgia Gustafson
Jane Hegarty
Jessica Dejanovic
Jenny Jackson
Katherine Gough
Melanie Grodecki
Maira Mcintosh
Natasha Berrell
Rebecca Mync
Rebecca Terry
Caitlin Collins

Paralegals

Alina Visan
Alison Giles
Angelique Riley
Annabel Burton
Beenush Khokhar
Bo McGrath
Brooke May
Caryn Falk
Claire Pekol-Smith
Caitlyn Duke
Elizabeth Singleton
Elizabeth Troeger
Emmalene Travers
Emily Carter
Hannah Jeffries
Hannah McSharer
Ingrid Morrow
Julia West
Julie-Ann Ross
Kate Clinton

Kate Sangha
Kellie Mikkola
Laura Sammon
Leanne Lakeman
Libby Masters
Megan Summers
Melissa Lanthois
Natasha Winters
Nicole Gillard
Onjawli Chakravarty
Philipa Robinson
Prianca Maharaj
Rebecca Kirk
Rebecca Le
Rosie Deeb
Sabrina Xiao
Samantha Chai
Sarahjane Robertson
Sarah MacDonald
Savannah Duncan
Shelby McGrechan
Sjaana Steffens

Administration

Brooke May
Catherine Fricker
Cecilia Redfern
Genevieve Hallam
Jacquie Hughes
Josephine Booth
Kate Sangha
Laura Donaldson
Laura Sammon
Linda Miller
Maddison Farmer
Megan Summers
Michelle Cumerford
Rebecca Le
Samantha Chai
Sarah Ross

FUNDRAISING VOLUNTEERS

We sincerely thank the 300 generous events volunteers who donated their time to assist Women's Legal Service in the last 12 months.

We particularly thank our volunteer Dancing CEOs fundraising committee: Dominique Lamb (Chairperson), Rozelle Bothma, Ben Desir, Kate Van Der Heyden, Annaliese Spurge, Tara Edgar, Keren Brown, Alan Dong, Jae Spann, Kristi Birchall, Maddison Finnimore and Tina Ashworth.

We also sincerely thank the following incredible CEOs for their dedication and skill in raising \$260,000 for our frontline services: Adam Barton, Sally Sylvester, Michelle Wilson, Katherine Maslen, William Tan, Scott Matterson, Marina Perry, Kate Middleton, Kelli Martin, Angie Hicks and Penelope Twemlow.

Special acknowledgement must be given to Women's Legal Service Ambassador Marisa Vecchio, who raised over \$70,000 as part of Dancing CEOs to become the highest ever individual fundraiser in our organisation's history.

SUPPORTING OUR SERVICE

In the past year, Women's Legal Service has continued to host some of the most successful fundraising events in Brisbane. In 2016, high demand saw our Legal Profession Breakfast move from the Supreme Court to Brisbane City Hall, where an audience of 800 legal professionals raised \$100,000 for our frontline programs. A capacity crowd of 1,000 members of corporate Queensland returned to City Hall in May 2017 for Dancing CEOs, while over 500 people attended our Autumn Designer Rummage sale at Hanworth House which sold out of clothing in less than an hour.

We were also privileged to partner with outstanding community events including the McInnes Wilson Botanical Ball, Minter Ellison Trivia Night and the Soroptimist International Brisbane Rosie Batty Roadshow, which helped to raise both funds and awareness for our service.

Crucial to the success of every event are our dedicated volunteers. From selling raffle tickets to planning highly complex events, our volunteers continue to amaze and humble us with their generosity and shared dedication to ensuring that Women's Legal Service can help as many women and children as possible.

CORPORATE AND PRO BONO PARTNERS

The important support we receive from fundraising and our corporate and pro bono partners ensures maximum resources can be directed to frontline service delivery. We gratefully acknowledge support received from our corporate and pro bono partners including:

- **Hand Heart Pocket**, for providing a funding injection to support our DV Legal Helpline, RRR Community education and new organisational website.
- **Financial Literacy Australia**, for funding the development of the Penda financial empowerment app.
- **CUA**, for funding a national washroom advertising campaign to raise awareness of the Penda financial empowerment app.
- **Arrow Energy**, for funding the delivery of community legal education and specialist legal appointments in rural and remote regions of Queensland.
- **Tech Project**, for the provision of pro bono tech support and IT equipment
- **KPMG**, for pro bono forensic accounting and data analysis assistance.
- **Panda Pearls**, for many generous fundraisers, raffle prizes and gifts for our supporters.
- **Queensland Community Foundation**, for organisational capacity building.
- **Zonta Club of Brisbane Breakfast**, for providing emergency relief for our highest risk clients.
- **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 our important resource per year, the Separation Book for Queensland women.
- **Clayton Utz**, for pro bono governance support, infrastructure grants, clothing donations and corporate working bees.
- **KLM Solicitors**, for supporting Women's Legal Service through fundraising raffles and awareness raising, in addition to volunteering.
- **College of Law**, for hosting the Women's Legal Service Annual General Meeting and key events each year.
- **Black and White Cabs**, for client transport assistance.
- **Your Local Movers**, for support of Women's Legal Service clients and events.
- **National Storage**, for the provision of pro bono off site storage.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MEMBERS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AS AT 30 JUNE 2017

- **Prof Rachael Field:** President
- **Sarah Flower:** Secretary
- **Emma Bristow:** Treasurer
- **Rebecca Shearman:** Ordinary member
- **Cheryl Gray:** Ordinary member
- **Dominique Lamb:** Ordinary member
- **Julia O'Connor:** Ordinary member
- **Angela Lynch:** Staff Representative
- **Rachel Neil:** Staff Representative

Patron:

- **The Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC**

Ambassadors:

- **Marisa Vecchio**
- **Amanda Stein**

FINANCIAL REPORT

