

Annual Report 2018-2019



Free legal and welfare assistance for women in Queensland.

WELCOME TO THE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019

Women's Legal Service Queensland gratefully acknowledges critical funding and support from these partners:

- Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Federal Attorney-General's Department
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Community and corporate partners.

Administration

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COVER IMAGE

Our twice-weekly evening drop-in legal advice sessions provide women with advice on family law, domestic violence and/or child protection matters.

Thank you to our professional volunteers from city and suburban law firms who provide this specialist assistance.



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

This year has been one of expansion for Women's Legal Service Queensland (WLS) with new programs enabling the Service to reach more women than ever before with a focus on helping more of those experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage.

In July, the Federal Government announced the Service would receive funding to open a Caboolture high risk Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) to include a Health Justice Partnership and First Nations Liaison Officer. Caboolture has long been identified as a domestic violence "hot spot", which the Service has witnessed first-hand through its ongoing, busy Caboolture Magistrates Court Duty Lawyer Service. Following the model established by existing WLS DVUs in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast, the new unit operates with a high intensity caseload to support women with extremely complex needs who are experiencing severe domestic violence. The integrated unit consists of a Specialist Casework Lawyer, Paralegal and Health Justice Partnership Lawyer to see clients at the Caboolture and Redcliffe hospitals. A First Nation's Liaison Officer has joined the unit and is building staff capacity to make sure we are accessible and sensitive to the needs of First Nation's women.

Established with funding from the Queensland Government, the Counselling Notes Protect (CNP) Service, a joint initiative between WLS and Legal Aid Queensland provides protection for the counselling communications of sexual assault victims in certain court proceedings. The CNP Solicitor provides legal assistance to sexual assault victims who are seeking to prevent their counselling communication records being accessed by the defence counsel/respondent in the sexual violence criminal trial and/or domestic and family violence court proceedings. Furthermore, the CNP Solicitor provides education and training to sexual assault support services, the legal profession, other support services and stakeholders about the new service and sexual assault counselling privilege. Notably, this year for the first time, the CNP Solicitor secured the upholding of the privilege of a sexual assault survivor's counselling records in a criminal trial in Queensland.

WLS also stepped up calls for a broad-based review into how Queensland responds to sexual violence. The campaign attracted significant media investigation into laws and systems responses to sexual violence in this state. An email writing campaign garnered over 890 emails from the public demanding key decision makers consider a broad-based review. The Queensland Government has since referred the mistake of fact excuse and consent laws to the Queensland Law Reform Commission. A Sexual Violence Prevention Roundtable (on which CEO, Angela Lynch sits) and community



forums have been conducted to inform the development of a new statewide Sexual Violence Prevention Framework.

We must acknowledge our professional volunteers from city and suburban firms who provide specialist assistance to domestic violence victims at our twice-weekly evening drop-in legal advice sessions. Without this invaluable service, our clients would not have the means to access legal representation.

This year the Service has also extended its reach by leveraging the support of over 100 volunteers, through fundraising and special projects. Highly successful fundraising events including Dancing CEOs, the Legal Profession Breakfast, River to Rooftop and the Annual Designer Rummage enables the Service to fund and trial innovative projects.

This year the Rural, Regional and Remote volunteering program is making it easier for qualified family lawyers throughout Queensland to register, complete training, schedule appointments and provide legal advice to our clients at a time and place of their convenience. The program saw 22 volunteers from 16 law firms provide free legal advice to an additional 377 women. Naturally, priority is given to women living in rural and remote regions. The program significantly increases the Service's regional presence, expands the volunteer solicitor pool and means we help more women and their children who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence.

Through our self-funded Divorce Clinic, 19 early career family and corporate lawyers have helped 40 vulnerable clients, many from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to complete divorce paperwork in monthly evening workshops overseen by an in-house lawyer and paralegal. By tapping into an underutilised pool of skilled volunteers, the divorce clinic is a cost effective way of meeting a gap in service delivery and allows Service staff to focus on supporting women with complex domestic abuse cases.

In addition, the Statwide Legal Advice Helpline has continued its invaluable work to provide access to our service, answering 2000 more calls or a 26 per cent increase than in the previous financial year.

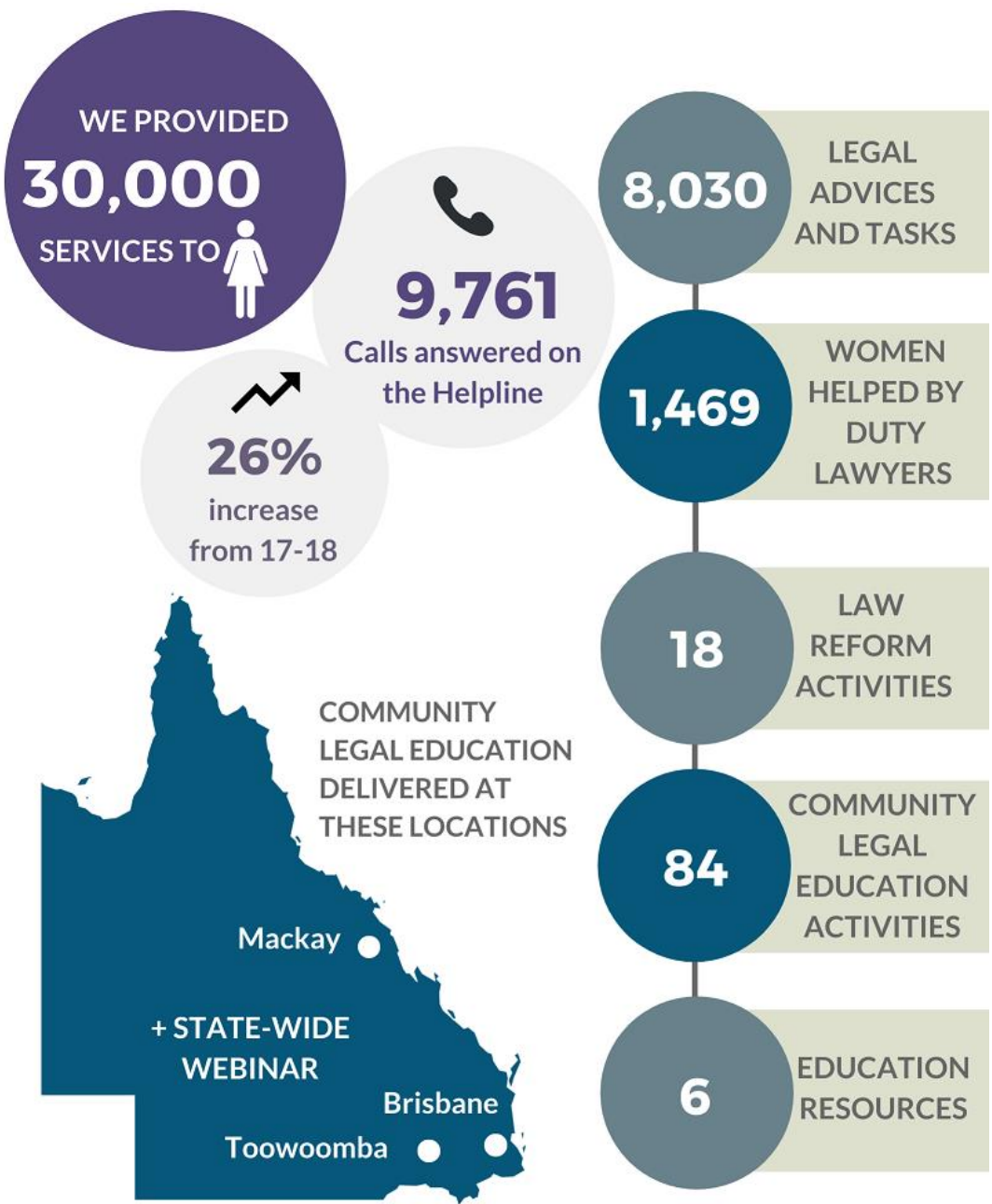
Finally, on behalf of the CEO and myself, we would like to thank all our hardworking staff and volunteers who every day make such a difference to the lives of our clients and the broader community by their commitment and passion to deliver the services offered by WLS.

Rachel Field, President

Angela Lynch, CEO



IMPACT



40% OF CALLS TO THE HELPLINE STILL GO UNANSWERED



WHO WE HELPED

Domestic and family violence does not discriminate.

It affects all ages, all social, financial and cultural groups.

85%

of clients have experienced DV.



26%

clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



32%

believe the safety of themselves and their kids is at risk now.



64%

of clients are on Centrelink or no income.



24%

of clients with a disability.



5%

of clients identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



OUR SERVICES

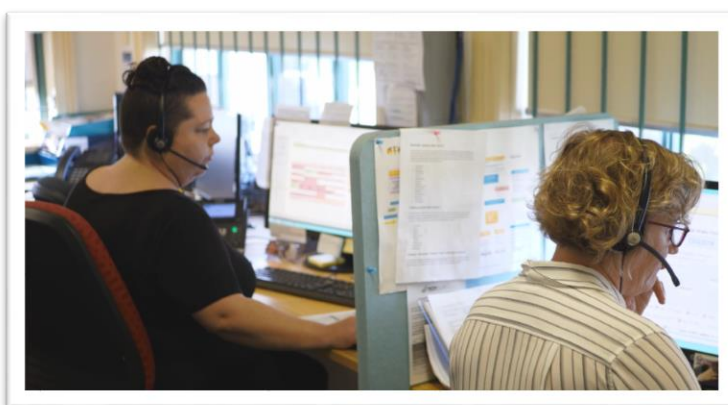
9949 calls answered on the Statewide Legal Advice Helpline and the Rural, Regional and Remote Priority Advice Line.

Statewide Legal Advice Helpline

THIS SERVICE OPERATES MONDAY TO FRIDAY, 9:00AM TO 3:00PM.

Our Statewide Legal Advice Helpline continues to be a key element in Queensland's response to domestic violence.

This year saw the largest volume of calls answered in the Service's 35-year history with an increase of 26% from the previous financial year.



WLS staff respond to calls on the helpline

The Helpline triages calls from women throughout Queensland who seek assistance for domestic violence, family law, child protection or sexual violence matters. A senior Helpline lawyer responds to the most urgent calls we receive while volunteer lawyers provide legal advice to vulnerable women through the Legal Link skilled volunteering program.

The Helpline triaging process helps us to prioritise callers who are experiencing the greatest vulnerability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) women are 35 times more likely to experience domestic violence, while culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women often experience greater barriers to accessing legal services and can have limited support networks. Greater resources and refined triaging mean the Statewide Legal Advice Helpline can respond to the most the urgent cases and focus resources where it's most needed.

Rural Regional and Remote Priority Line

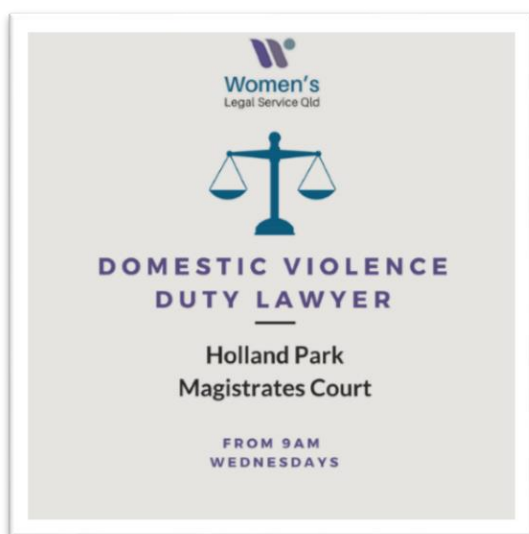
THIS SERVICE OPERATES EVERY TUESDAY, 9:30AM TO 1:30PM.

The Service recognises that women experiencing domestic violence who live in rural, regional and remote areas face increased vulnerabilities that can prevent or hinder their access to the legal system. The Rural, Regional and Remote Priority Advice (RRR) Line provides free legal advice by phone to women located in these locations on a

range of matters including domestic violence, child protection, child support and complex family law matters. The service ensures they do not compete with metropolitan callers and can receive on-the-spot legal advice from an advice solicitor.

Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer and Legal Outreach

1469 Women helped by WLS Duty Lawyers



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 these locations:

- Ipswich Magistrates Court - Mondays from 9am
- Holland Park Magistrates Court - Wednesdays from 9am
- Caboolture Magistrates Court - Thursdays from 9am



Outreach Solicitor, Gail

The WLS outreach solicitor, Gail, conducts visits multiple off-site locations including the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre located at Wacol giving vulnerable women access to legal assistance. Women in prison commonly face multiple forms of disadvantage and most have been victims of violence. Gail also provides legal service advice to women at the Logan and Mount Gravatt Family Relationship Centres and represents some highly vulnerable women in family dispute resolution processes.

High Risk Domestic Violence Units

UNITS OPERATE IN BRISBANE, GOLD COAST AND CABOOLTURE.

With funding from the Australian Attorney-General's office, WLS now operates three Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) in Brisbane, Gold Coast and Caboolture.

The Units operate with a high intensity caseload supporting women with extremely complex needs who are experiencing severe domestic violence who cannot access other legal assistance.

The DVUs provide a range of supports including:

- Legal advice
- Assistance to draft documents including Legal Aid applications
- Lawyer-assisted mediation
- Safety planning and assessment
- Practical and emotional welfare support
- In certain circumstances will represent clients

In July 2018, the Federal Government announced the Service would receive funding to operate a Caboolture DVU including a Health Justice Partnership and First Nations Liaison Officer.

The region of Caboolture, north of Brisbane, has long been identified as a domestic violence "hot spot" which the Service has witnessed first-hand through its ongoing, busy Caboolture Magistrates Court Duty Lawyer Service. The unit follows the model established by existing DVUs in Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

The integrated unit at Caboolture consists of a specialist casework lawyer, paralegal and a Health Justice Partnership lawyer who supports clients receiving care at the Caboolture and Redcliffe hospitals.

A first for the Service, a First Nation's Liaison Officer is building staff capacity to cater appropriately to the needs of the First Nations Women we support.

These DVU's frequently operate at capacity and consistently achieve life-changing outcomes for clients.



Caboolture DVU Solicitor Kaitlin at the Caboolture Neighbourhood Centre Well Being Expo

Health Justice Partnerships

350 Women Referred | Education Forums Delivered to 420 Health Staff

Established with funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Women's Safety Package, the Health Justice Pilot Partnership program provides women affected by domestic violence with legal assistance when receiving medical care in a hospital setting.

This pilot program operates in partnership at these locations:

- Logan Hospital
- Redlands Hospital
- QEII Jubilee Hospital
- Princess Alexandra Hospital
- Gold Coast Hospital
- The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital
- Redcliffe Hospital (NEW)
- Young Mums group facilitated by MICAH at Caboolture (NEW)
- Caboolture Hospital (NEW)



Brisbane HJP Solicitor Adele

Two solicitors provide free legal help to female patients and their carers relating to family law, domestic violence and child protection matters. A key benefit of the partnership is the flexibility of where this legal advice can be delivered – in the hospital, in the solicitor's office or by telephone.

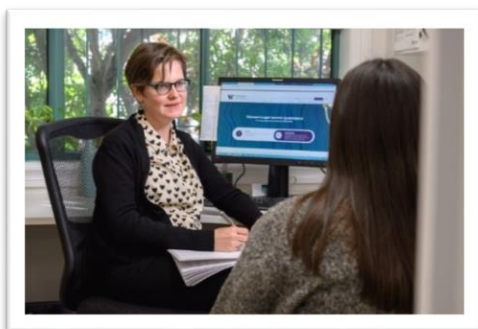
The program has also funded the delivery of customised legal education to 420 medical and allied health staff to increase their knowledge of domestic violence and referral pathways for women to receive critical legal assistance and other welfare and support services. WLS solicitors have received referrals for over 350 women.

This year a second solicitor, working closely with the newly established Caboolture DVU administers the program for the Redcliffe and Caboolture Hospitals and the Young Mum's Group.

A combination of early intervention and flexible service delivery means we now support 350 more survivors affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.

Social Work

A 17 percent cent increase in social work referrals
These clients identify as CALD (37%) and ATSI (6%)

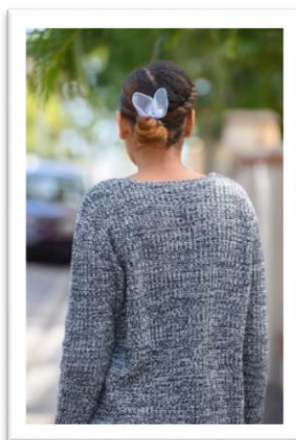


Crucial to our work, and to the safety of women, is providing a timely and holistic response to women experiencing domestic violence through our social work service.

The role of the social workers is to build a woman's capacity to engage with the legal service and provide them with practical safety advice, and emotional and welfare support. Social workers also provide ongoing support to clients as they

access our legal services i.e. advice, duty lawyer and/or divorce clinic.

Aashi's Story



Aashi was subject to severe domestic violence throughout her marriage. Treated as a sex slave, she was financially dependent on her husband. She also disclosed that her husband was abusive toward their baby. Her husband abducted the baby (who was still breastfed), back to their country of origin. She then found herself alone without support in Australia. Further to this, she discovered that her husband had left her significant debt in her name, which she only became aware of after separation when she began to receive debt recovery notices.

With no access to money, she applied to Centrelink. Highly traumatised from being separated from her child and the abuse she experienced she was unable to get help from the local DV service because her husband was overseas and she was not considered at risk of further domestic violence.

Thankfully, WLS provided Aashi with legal advice and a social worker helped her work through tasks outlined by the solicitor including an application for a legal assistance grant under the Overseas Child Abduction Scheme.

As English was her second language, the social worker assisted Aashi with forms and liaised with relevant services and departments. Thankfully, Aashi was successful in obtaining a grant to commence legal proceedings for parenting in her home country. The social worker helped her to contact her bank regarding the debt matters and



referred her to other services for assistance. The social worker is still in contact with Aashi and provides ongoing support as required.

Divorce Clinic

19 Volunteer Lawyers | 40 Women Assisted

For women with complex needs filling out, paying for and lodging divorce paperwork can be overwhelming. WLS recognised a growing group of vulnerable clients including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) needing assistance to complete divorce paperwork, and in response established the Divorce Clinic.



The Divorce Clinic enables our network of early career family lawyers and corporate lawyers to volunteer six hours of their time. Previously only family lawyers with two years post admission experience could volunteer for WLS due to the complexity of our client matters.

Once a month, early career family and corporate lawyers help clients complete divorce applications overseen by a WLS lawyer and paralegal. Volunteer lawyers receive specialised training prior to attending the clinic with clients referred from the WLS Legal Advice Helpline.

Divorce is a crucial safety step for some domestic violence survivors as it officially recognises the end of the relationship and allows our clients to move on with their lives. It also signals to the perpetrator that he does not have a right to ongoing control.

Generous WLS supporter, Clayton Utz were instrumental in the establishment of the clinic by a generous grant. Special thanks also to McCullough Robertson, Minter Ellison, Damien Greer, Hartley Healy, Clear Legal, Delaney and Delaney, Wiltshire Family Law and Doyle Family Law.

Sarah's Story

Sarah and Carl were married and soon after migrated from Singapore to Australia where they set up home raising their children. Sarah made the decision in Australia to end the relationship due to emotional abuse, safety concerns, his declining mental health and severe alcohol dependency. Soon after, he moved back to





Singapore. Despite these being long-term issues for Carl, his family largely blamed Sarah further compounding the emotional abuse.

Sarah wanted to sever the relationship to end the control he had over her and the marriage but felt she could not finalise the divorce on her own. She also would have difficulty serving him because she did not know where he was living.

With advice from WLS, the divorce was filed and served on him. Carl never signed the required paperwork but with our assistance, Sarah was able to get an order for substituted service and obtain the divorce order to allow her to move on her with life. Sarah found the process confusing and overwhelming. Sarah said, "Great news - the registrar has approved the application so all your advice worked. Thank you so much, I really couldn't have done it without you."

Remote Volunteering

377 Women Helped | 22 Remote Volunteers | 90% Like Phone Format

With an establishment grant from the John T Reid Charitable Trust and additional support from the Fairfax Foundation, we developed the IT infrastructure required to match volunteer solicitors in rural, regional and remote locations with women unable to attend face-to-face appointments.

This investment has enabled volunteer lawyers from throughout Queensland to register and complete training, schedule appointments and provide legal advice to our clients at a time and place of their convenience. Priority is given to women living in rural and remote regions. The program significantly increases WLS's regional assistance, expands the volunteer solicitor pool and means we can help more survivors and their children. Distance, a lack of childcare, safety, cost and homelessness are all factors that clients identified as barriers to attending a legal appointment in person.

"There is something truly humbling about being able to help people in need, whom you know, without WLS; these women would not be able to access legal representation because they live in isolated communities or rural locations.

Pro bono work is also an opportunity for lawyers to contribute to their community. It's extremely pleasing when you hear the noises of babies in the background - even without someone to care for their children they can still get help."

Joelene Nel, Senior Associate at McLaughlins Lawyers and remote volunteer.



Counselling Notes Protect – Sexual Assault

Established with funding from the Queensland Government, the Counselling Notes Protect (CNP) Service, a joint initiative between WLS and Legal Aid Queensland, provides protection for the counselling communications of sexual assault victims in certain court proceedings.

The CNP Solicitor provides legal assistance to sexual assault victims who are seeking to prevent their counselling communication records from being accessed by the defence counsel/respondent in their sexual violence criminal trial and/or domestic and family violence court proceedings.

Furthermore, the WLS CNP Solicitor with Legal Aid Queensland provides education and training to sexual assault support services, the legal profession, other support services and stakeholders about the new service and sexual assault counselling privilege. Notably, this year for the first time, the CNP Solicitor secured privilege of a sexual assault survivor’s counselling records in a criminal trial in Queensland.



CNP Solicitor Julie

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION AND RESOURCES

84 Community Legal Education Activities

WLS delivered 84 free community legal education activities at locations across Queensland. With generous support from Arrow Energy, WLS hosted free community legal education workshops in Toowoomba, Brisbane and Mackay. With the aid of technology, the Brisbane event was delivered face-to-face and as an online webinar. Topics included how to access free legal services, protection orders and division of property.



The Brisbane event was delivered face-to-face and as an online webinar



Education Resources

The Service developed a range of community legal education resources and programs to provide women with the information and referrals they need to establish a future free from violence.

- An updated and easy-to-navigate website is making it easier for women to learn about WLS services. This was made possible with generous support from the Hand Heart Pocket, the Charity of Freemasons Queensland.
- New information sheets covering a range of topics including child support, separation, divorce, property and safety planning are available free from the WLS website.
- We launched an updated version of our Penda mobile application, with key sections translated into Russian, Vietnamese, Tagalog (Filipino), Mandarin and Arabic. Sections translated included: money; safety; domestic violence; visa and immigration glossary and help. First released in 2017, the Penda mobile application provides women with a free, simple and safe source of referrals and information about financial, safety and legal matters.

LAW REFORM

Informed by client data and experiences, the Service contributed submissions to State and Federal inquiries on the following issues:

1. Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 (Qld)
2. Domestic Violence and Guns fact sheet
3. My Health System
4. ALRC Review of the Australian Family Law System - Discussion Paper
5. Fourth Action Plan
6. Wiyi Yani U Thangani Project – Human Rights Commission
7. The Practice of Dowry and the Incidence of Dowry Abuse in Australia
8. Proposed Family Court merger
9. Parenting Management Hearings
10. Sexual Violence Prevention Plan
11. Criminal Code (Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images) Amendment Bill 2018
12. Mistake of Fact Excuse and Consent Laws (Qld)



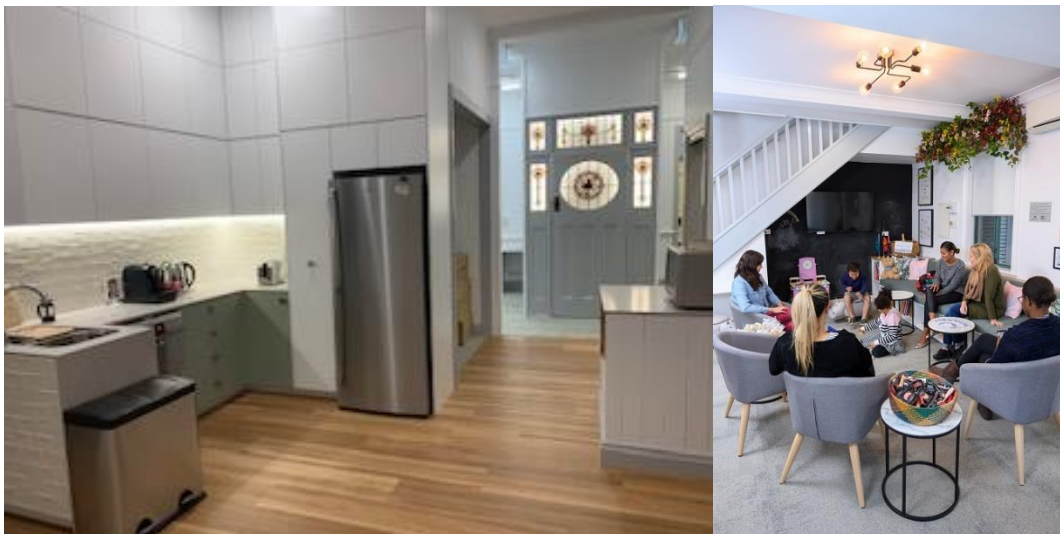
INFRASTRUCTURE

Thanks to a substantial grant received from Hand Heart Pocket the Charity of Freemasons Queensland, WLS was able to renovate and upgrade our Annerley office. The major project created additional offices enabling the Service to accommodate more client appointments and to keep our operational costs at efficient levels.

Before:



After:





2018-19 VOLUNTEERS

The outcomes we achieve is only made possible by a group of dedicated and professional volunteers whose knowledge and expertise have assisted WLS to deliver quality legal and support services to the ever-increasing number of vulnerable Queensland and their children needing help.

EVENING ADVICE SOLICITORS

Aleisha Edwards
Amelia Torre
Amy McBreen
Anna Domalewski
Anna Hutchinson
Annabel Burton
Annabelle Jacob
Belinda Jeffrey
Bronwen Curtis
Caitlin Downs
Caitlin Elliott
Candace Watkins
Carla Franchina
Catherine Burns
Charlotte Paterson
Chloe Blaney
Chloe Jackson
Claire Nolan
Danielle Dick
Debra Effeney
Diane Wright
Evette Jones
Fiona Manderson
Flora Tang
Georgia Dalton
Jane Guerin
Janelle Osborne
Jennifer Franklin
Jennifer Hetherington
Joanna Sheridan
Josephine Cockerill
Kay Feeney
Kelli Martin
Kirsten MacGregor
Kirstie Colls

Kylie Perkins
Lezah Gildea-Marega
Lindsey Miles
Melita Lloyd
Nichola Di Muzio
Nicole Manning
Olivia Phillips
Patricia Keyworth
Phillipa Jacomb
Phillipa Kingswell
Pravinita Singh-Pillay
Rebecca Gillies
Sandra Kelly
Sarahjane Robertson
Shannon Bownds
Shannon Daykin
Sharon Beresowskyj
Stacey Glover
Sue Westall
Tarah Tosh
Vanessa Leishman
Victoria Eastwood
Wendy Miller
Zoe Adams
Zoe Watson

BARRISTERS

Ann-Maree Eames
Clare Dart
Kate Buckley
Kate Gover
Karen Carmody

SUPPORT WORKERS

Alisha Greelish
Anita Lowe
Anna Brasnett

Caitlin Collins
Ellie Bassingthwaite
Emmalene Travers
Georgia Gustafson
Jane Hegarty
Jessica Dejanovic
Jenny Jackson
Katherine Gough
Kath Kerr
Laura Sammon
Laura Sloane
Maddi Farmer
Melanie Grodecki
Moiria McIntosh
Natasha Berrell
Nichola Whalley
Rebecca Le
Rebecca Mync
Sarah Wallace

PARALEGALS

Alexandra Robinson
Avneet Kaur
Beatrice Hamburg
Berta Nagy
Caitlin Philp
Claire Pekol-Smith
Emilie Grosvenor
Hannah McSharer
Hannah Stadler
Helen Booth
Jess Fernandez
Jorji Murray
Laura Sammon
Lauren Rodgers
Prathnaa Haripersad
Rebecca Le



Sabrina Xiao
Sam Tan
Sarah Ainscough
Sarah Stronge
Sarah Truter
Serina Trinh
Tamara Moretto
Vwanganji Sichone
Yashila de Silva

REMOTE LEGAL VOLUNTEERS

Annette Power
Belinda Robinson
Carol Brierley
Chai Hoe
Chantal Hill
Chrissy Leontios
Elise Clowes
Hayley Kennedy
Heather Owens
Joelene Nel
Katherine Hogan
Kathryn Mackenzie
Margarett Kummerfeld
Melissa Lanthois
Michelle Porcheron
Michelle Richardson
Paula Phelan
Sophie Pearson
Suzanne Stannett
Tina Riveros

LEGAL LINK

Orlena Moloney
Rebecca Ogge

ADMINISTRATION

Amelia Watson Blatch

Aleisha Baharvdin
Beatrice Hamburg
Amen Karim
Eliza Ferrier
Elle Bellegoi
Emma Lukeij
Gabrielle Adams
Julia Van Haeringen
Lauren Evans
Lisa Harris
Michilu Lawson
Millie Jones
Rebecca Benoit
Rebekah Roma
Samantha Dorman
Samara Wendt
Taranjit Kaur
Tegan Doherty
Sarah Lawrence
Sarah Smale


DIVORCE CLINIC Family lawyers and firms

Caragh Morgan
(Delaney & Delaney)
Carolyn McKenna
(Damien Greer
Lawyers)
Emily Ownsworth
(Armstrong Legal)
Julie Hearnden (Office
of the Public Guardian)
Laura Wainwright
(Hirst & Co Family
Lawyers)
Prianca Maharaj
(Deloitte Financial
Advisory)

Rozelle Bothma
(Cardno)
Minter Ellison
Belinda Tang
Courtney Coyne
Erin De Monte
Georgia Green
Hazal Gacka
Jenna Adamson
Lara Flanagan
Megan Sharkey
Nadia Braad
Nicole Morgan
Ruby Ramachandran
Sarah Cahill
Sophie Qu
Suzanne Marlow
Vanessa Mellis

Clayton Utz

Bianca Fernandez
Brittany Williams
Geraldine Matthews
Katy Warner
Kristen Centorame
McCullough Robertson
Alexandra Blake
Alex Skilling
Amy Arbuckle
Andreea Lucas
Bianca Banchetti
Bronte Hearn
Catherine Nufer-Barr
Charlotte Aumuller
Gabriella Ritchie
Georgina Buckley
Grace Kaggelis
Hannah Fas
Jamie-Lee Strauss
Madelaine Hogan



Our sincere thanks also to the WLS volunteer committees & the hundreds of event volunteers who help us to deliver a program of proud WLS events.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Members of the **WLS Management Committee** as at 30 June 2019:

- Professor Rachael Field, President
- Dominique Lamb, Vice President
- Julia O'Connor, Secretary
- Emma Bristow, Treasurer
- Rebecca Shearman, Ordinary member
- Cheryl Gray, Ordinary member
- Hannah Taylor, Ordinary member
- Genevieve Dee, Ordinary member
- Sarah Flower (resigned 23 Aug 2018)

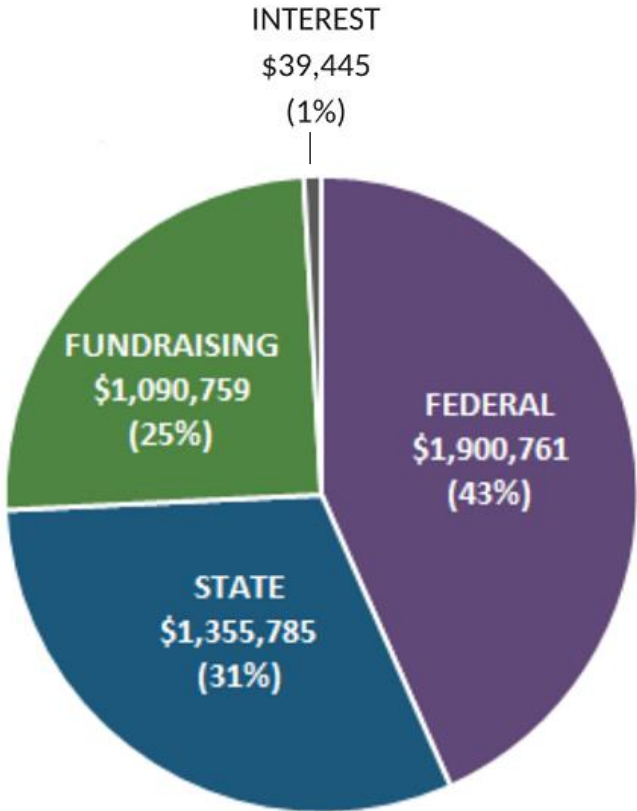
Patron:

- The Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC

Ambassadors:

- Marisa Vecchio AM
- Amanda Stein

FINANCIAL REPORT



TOTAL EXPENDITURE **\$4,190,122**

NET SURPLUS **\$196,628**

TOTAL INCOME **\$4,386,750**