



**Women's**  
Legal Service Qld

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020 - 2021

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



**Australian Government**  
Attorney-General's Department



**QUEENSLAND  
GOVERNMENT**

Department of Justice and  
Attorney-General



**Queensland  
Government**

Queensland Department of Children,  
Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

## Mission

Accessible legal and social justice for a safer future for women and children.

## Values

Informed by feminist principles ~ Care, respect, inclusivity, accountability, collaboration.

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## Message from the President and CEO

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This financial year and the COVID-19 pandemic have presented a wide variety of challenges for Women's Legal Service Queensland (WLSQ) and for our clients. Across WLSQ there has been increased demand due to the rising complexity of client presentation in the context of COVID-19. Changing health directives and border closures have led to unique safety and parenting issues. Clients are reporting the escalation of violence and financial stress due to employment losses and increasing housing costs.

During this reporting period there have been a number of intimate partner homicides in Queensland. Following these, WLSQ teams experience increases in the number of referrals received from outside agencies for high-risk, vulnerable women. Many domestic and family violence (DFV) services are at capacity, and this has caused clients to be referred to WLSQ earlier in the process and staff are needing to do more early intervention work such as safety planning, assistance to find safe housing and applications for protection orders. These factors have put pressure on women seeking to separate safely and on WLSQ's team.

The pandemic has continued to shape our service delivery. As an organisation WLSQ quickly moved to working remotely to keep our clients and volunteers safe. Our evening drop-in advice sessions have been unable to run face-to-face, but with the systems established through the Remote Volunteering Program, evening advice volunteer lawyers were still able to provide vital free legal advice remotely. Health restrictions also posed significant challenges to delivery of our Divorce Clinic program. Being unable to see clients face-to-face paired with changing restrictions generated uncertainty and greater levels of stress and anxiety for clients. At times during this period, the clinic was not able to utilise volunteers, adding to staff workloads.

Despite the challenges, the program pivoted to assist clients remotely through the use of technology.

WLSQ's remote service delivery has continued to ensure these programs have broad reach, assisting clients throughout Queensland.

Two new programs are meeting recently identified client need. WLSQ noticed many women experiencing high-risk DFV being misidentified as the 'respondent' on domestic violence protection order applications. Misidentification of the person most in need of protection can have serious implications for a woman's safety. To address this, WLSQ commenced the new Women as Respondents (WAR) program in September 2020. The WAR program is an extension of the Brisbane Domestic Violence Unit (DVU), with a dedicated WAR lawyer and paralegal working directly with women who have been named as respondents on domestic violence protection order applications and are victim-survivors of DFV.

Brisbane is an identified location for the Priority Property Pools under \$500,000 (PPP500) pilot program in the Federal Circuit Court. WLSQ noticed a pool of separating clients with small property pools, eligible for the PPP500 program who were unable to acquire representation through private means or Legal Aid. To address this need, WLSQ recently commenced the Pro Bono Property Settlement Program in partnership with Lander & Rogers. WLSQ refer clients to Lander & Rogers who provide comprehensive pro bono advice and case work. The WAR and Pro Bono Property Settlement Program are two examples of responsive service delivery meeting changing client needs.

Increases and redeployment of resources within WLSQ also improved client outcomes across the financial year. A new dedicated social worker and lawyer are providing State-wide Helpline crisis support to better meet the needs of high-risk clients. Helpline clients with urgent, discrete matters can now receive on-the-spot appointments jointly attended by a lawyer and social worker.

This provides timely, holistic support for high-risk clients, while limiting re-traumatisation by removing the need to repeat information to multiple staff.

The financial year also saw our duty lawyer service expand to two days in the Caboolture Magistrates Court, with our duty lawyers assisting on both private applications and police applications over those two days. During this period, the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Services, Health Justice Partnership (HJP) moved from the Brisbane HJP Lawyer to the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Unit. This change has further strengthened the relationship between WLSQ and Gold Coast Health. It has also created additional flexibility for women to access the HJP Service. Our Counselling Notes Protect (CNP) – sexual assault counselling notes service was better able to meet high demand through the addition of a further lawyer position and by refining geographic scope. New and more strategic allocation of resources helped WLSQ better meet ever growing demand.

Despite agile service delivery, client demand continued to outgrow capacity:

- Though the Helpline responded to 28% more calls than the previous year, 30% of calls still went unanswered.
- The WLSQ CNP service, has experienced a 22.7% increase in demand.
- Social work experienced a 73% increase in clients from the previous financial year.

Law reform and systems advocacy remained core to our mission to create accessible legal and social justice for a safer future for women and children.

Informed by client data and experiences, WLSQ made submissions to State and Federal inquiries, and on issues including: The Review of the Queensland Criminal Code in relation to domestic violence, Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System submission and in-person hearing, and The Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia. WLSQ was instrumental in the introduction of 'The COVID List'.

This list hears urgent parenting issues that have arisen because of the pandemic, increasing safety through swift hearings for DFV victim-survivors and their children.

This year we bid a sad farewell to our long-time President, Professor Rachael Field, and Patron, The Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC as they stepped down from these positions. We wholeheartedly thank Rachael for the enduring contribution she has made to the Service and are delighted that she remains involved as an Ambassador. The Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC stood down as Patron to lead the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. Losing Margaret as our Patron is a huge loss to the Service but will be for the greater good as her new role provides the opportunity to lead substantive change to safety outcomes for women and children in Queensland. We wish her all the best in her new role and this significant next chapter.

We acknowledge the hard work of our Management Committee, Ambassadors and Staff. We thank you for your time and efforts in helping WLSQ to assist more vulnerable Queensland women experiencing DFV and sexual violence to receive access to free legal and social work help when they need it most.

On behalf of our clients we would like to sincerely thank our government and corporate partners. This year with your support we answered over 13,397 calls to our Helpline and helped 5, 248 women. Your contributions are life changing for the Queensland women and their children experiencing DFV and sexual violence that we support.

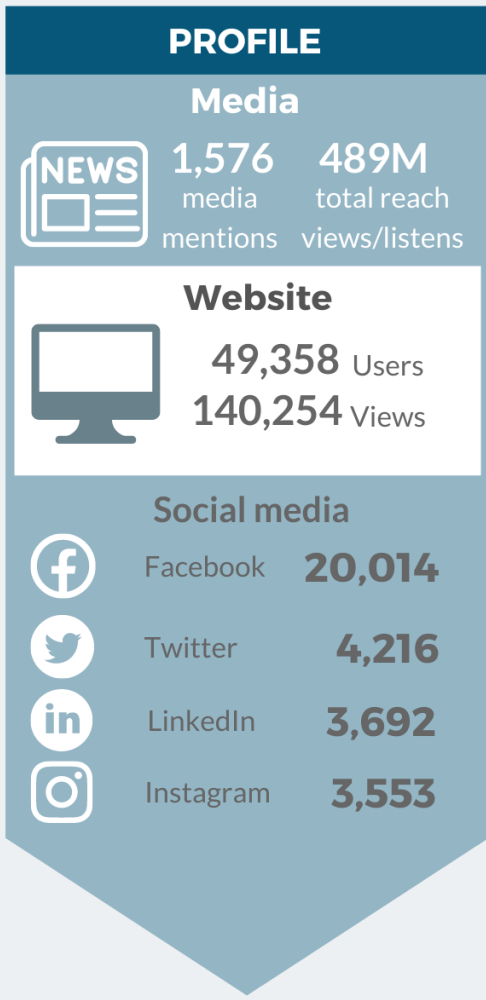


**Interim CEO  
Kristen  
Podagiel**

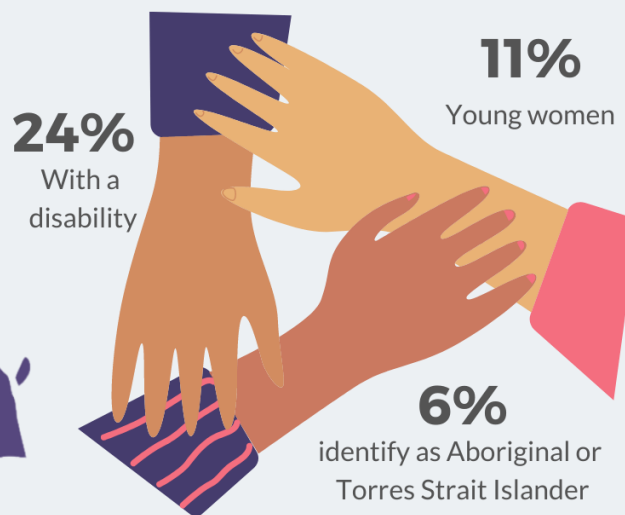
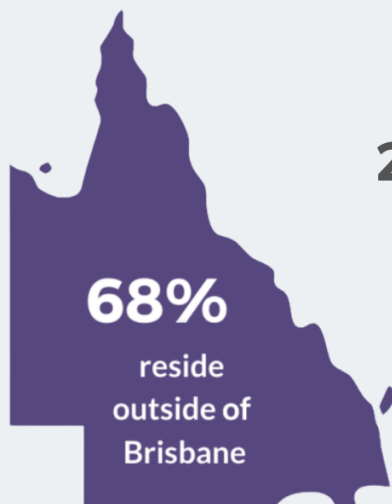
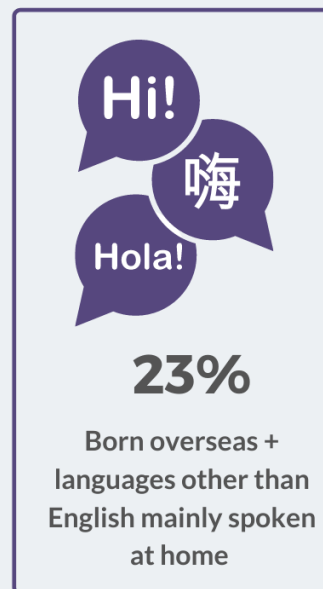
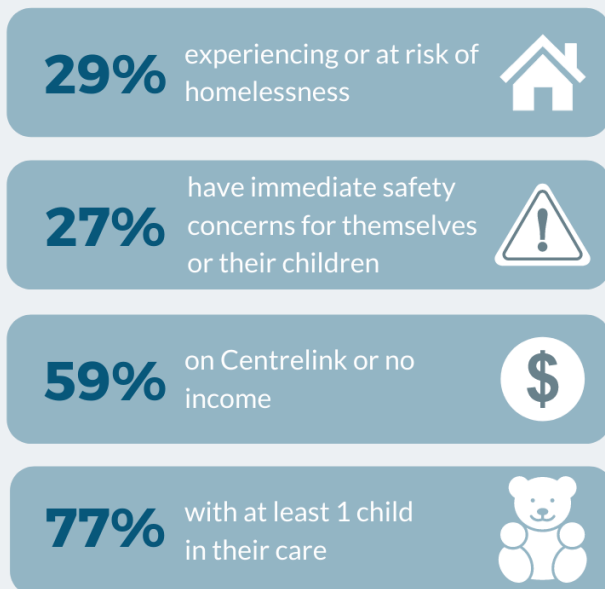


**President  
Dominique  
Lamb**

# Impact

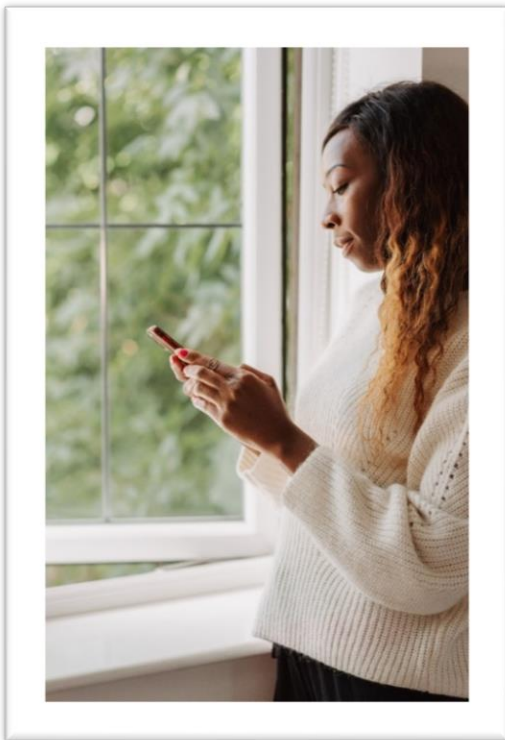


## Clients



## State-wide Helpline and Rural, Regional and Remote Advice Line

- **13,397 calls answered**
- **28% increase in calls answered from 2019/2020**
- **30% of calls still go unanswered**



The State-wide Helpline and Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Advice Line is a key component in Queensland's response DFV. Helpline information and referral officers triage calls from women throughout Queensland seeking assistance for DFV, family law, or child protection matters – identifying eligibility and booking legal advice appointments.

A senior helpline lawyer responds to the most urgent calls while volunteer lawyers increase WLSQ's capacity, providing legal advice to vulnerable women through the Legal Link and Remote Volunteering programs.

Increases in Helpline staffing across this financial year improved client outcomes. A new dedicated social worker and lawyer are providing Helpline crisis support to better meet the needs of high-risk clients. Helpline clients with urgent, discrete matters can receive on-the-spot appointments jointly attended by a lawyer and social worker. This provides timely, holistic support for high-risk clients, while limiting re-

traumatisation by removing the need to repeat information to multiple staff.

Sadly, demand continues to grow, outstripping increased resourcing. Though the Helpline responded to 28% more calls than the previous year, 30% of calls still went unanswered. While the Helpline was able to respond to a larger volume of calls across this financial year, clients continue to be turned away due to a lack of available legal appointments.

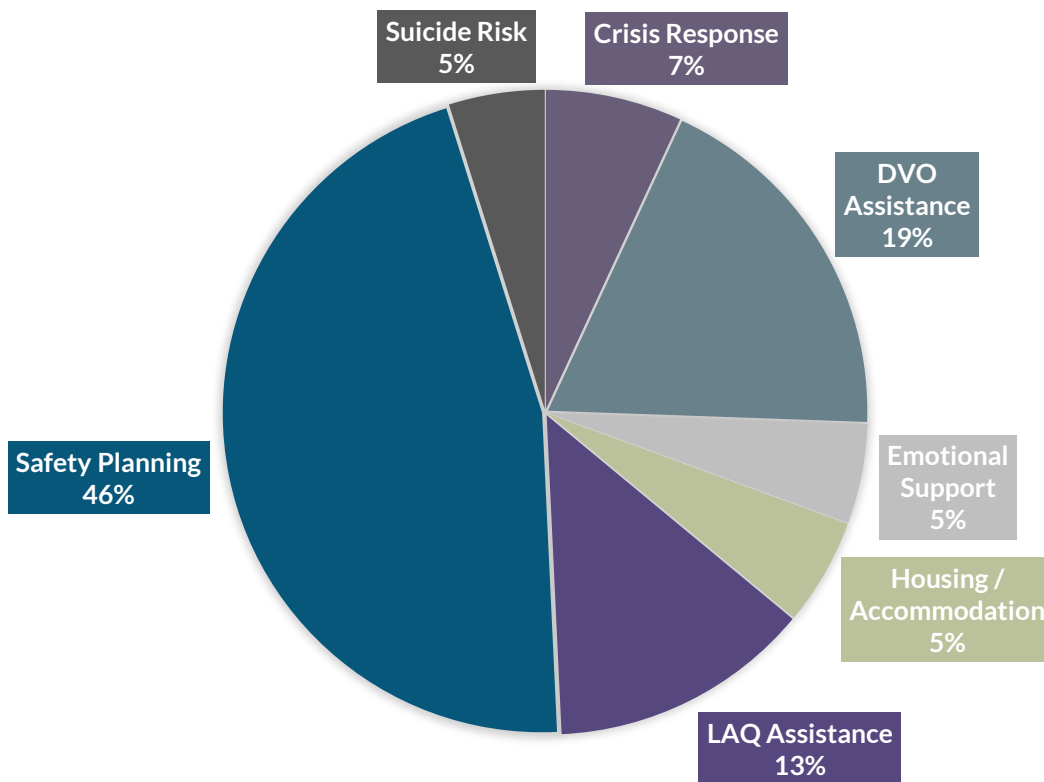
WLSQ recognises that women experiencing DFV who live in rural, regional and remote areas face increased vulnerabilities that can impact accessibility to the legal system. The RRR Advice Line provides free, on-the-spot legal advice by phone to women outside of metropolitan areas, ensuring they do not need to compete with city and suburban callers.

WLSQ sincerely thanks the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Federal Attorney-General's Department for providing vital core Helpline funding; the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs for funding to provide additional hours and lines; and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust for their generous contribution.



## Social Work

- **330 clients**
- **73% increase in clients from the previous financial year**



Social workers support lawyers where a client presents at risk and is not already linked with a specialist DFV support service. Social work assistance builds the woman’s capacity to engage with the legal service by providing women with safety planning, practical assistance with legal applications (such as legal aid and domestic violence order applications) and follow up support. As separation is a high-risk time for the commencement or escalation of DFV, the social work service provides a safety focus alongside the legal steps.

The social work team has experienced a steady increase in demand due to complexity of client presentation in the context of COVID-19. Clients disclosed escalation of violence and financial stress due to employment losses alongside increasing housing costs. All of these factors have put pressure on women seeking to separate safely. As a response to increasing demand for social work, WLSQ increased the social work capacity with an additional worker from January 2021, made possible through a grant from Clayton Utz and fundraising. This allowed the social work team to work closely with the State-wide Helpline to address urgent needs of women who self-referred through the Helpline in crisis.

## Kalina's Story

**Kalina\* is a First Nations woman in her 70s. She was supported by a lawyer and social worker in the Brisbane Domestic Violence Unit.**

*"When I grew up there was violence in my household but I worked hard through my life to get my own home and have a peaceful life living on my own. Around three years ago I invited a relative to stay with me, who had nowhere else to go. I loved him and wanted to help him as I knew he had also been through a hard time. But he became abusive and disrespectful. Yelling at me and threatening to hit me. I knew he'd assaulted other relatives, so I was very scared of him. I tried to get him help but he refused.*

*He would call me fat, yell and scream, and raise his fist in my face. He left cigarettes everywhere. There were so many times he made me feel so small and insignificant. After almost two years, I felt trapped and unable to talk in my own home. I asked him to leave but he refused. His abuse became worse and my health deteriorated due to the stress.*

*I had a worsening health problem and needed surgery. I remember him saying that he "hoped I would die". By this point I was terrified of him. I knew I would need time to recover after my surgery and I was really scared that he would end up killing me. In hospital after my surgery, I told the nurse that I was scared to go home. That's when I was referred to Women's Legal Service Queensland. I spoke to a lawyer and social worker while I was still recovering in hospital. They helped me with a DVO application against my relative to remove him from my home. I was too unwell to go to Court, so the lawyer represented me. WLSQ was able to get me a Temporary Protection Order with the condition that the respondent leave my property. The social worker helped make sure my home was safe and I had emergency supports if I needed. This was such a relief, and I was grateful to be able to go home knowing that my relative wouldn't be there.*

*There were many more court dates because my relative opposed the order. If I didn't have WLSQ, I wouldn't have had the strength to fight him. Eventually I obtained a final order. WLSQ did the negotiating with my relative about the removal of his belongings. I was so grateful for their support.*

*This was all happening during COVID when it was very isolating, and I felt so alone. Having the additional support of the social worker was so helpful. She would ring up to check that I was okay. She was lovely. She talked me through safety steps and gradually I got my confidence back. When I was feeling lost and overwhelmed, she gave me strategies to deal with things. I still use those strategies now.*

*I now feel safe and secure at home. I have my paradise back. I am forever grateful for WLSQ. Their advocacy and support was so helpful for my recovery. My home is back to normal, my garden is beautiful".*

**\*name changed to protect privacy.**

## Duty Lawyer

- **1,140 services provided**

Our duty lawyer services operate from the Holland Park, Ipswich, and Caboolture Magistrates Courts to support women experiencing DFV when applying or responding to an application for a protection order. They provide advice and information about court procedures and the application, explain their options, negotiate on their behalf and advocate and represent them in the Magistrates Court.

Our duty lawyer service continued operating via telephone during periods of lockdown.

## Divorce Clinic

- **80 referrals**
- **29 applications for divorce finalised**

For women with complex needs, filling out, paying for and filing online divorce applications can be overwhelming. WLSQ recognised a growing group of vulnerable clients including those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds needing assistance to complete divorce applications and established our Divorce Clinic.

The Divorce Clinic allows early career family lawyers and corporate lawyers to volunteer their time to help vulnerable clients to complete divorce applications in monthly evening clinics overseen by a WLSQ in-house lawyer and paralegal. Potential divorce clinic clients are identified internally through the State-wide Helpline and warm referral process. Volunteer lawyers receive specialised training prior to attending the clinic.

Pandemic restrictions posed significant challenges to delivery of this program. Being unable to meet with clients face-to-face paired with changing restrictions generated uncertainty and greater levels of stress and anxiety for clients and staff. At times during this period, the clinic was not able to utilise volunteers, adding to staff workloads. Despite the challenges, the program pivoted to assist clients remotely through use of technology (email and phone). Remote service delivery meant this program was broadened to reach beyond Brisbane, assisting clients throughout Queensland.

*"Felt really reassured. The lady I spoke with was very easy to understand – not lots of legal jargon, like speaking with a friend".*

**– Women's Legal Service Queensland Client.**

## Nicole's Story

Nicole\* is a mum of three. She was supported by the duty lawyer and social work team.

*"I was living with my partner and our three kids. He was violent to me, hitting me and calling me names. My kids were scared for me and tried to protect me from him. He kept guns in our house. I didn't know what he would do.*

*I went to court and filed an application for a protection order and applied to have him removed from our home. Even though my application described the serious reasons why I didn't feel safe, it was listed to be heard in a week. This wasn't explained to me properly. I found Women's Legal Service through the Duty Lawyer Service at the Court.*

*After reading the application the WLSQ lawyer and social worker said they were worried for the safety of me and my kids because it was likely my partner was going to be served with a copy of the application by the police while we were living under the same roof. The application said that my partner had access to guns that were inside the house. They thought my partner could become more violent after being served, and there would be nothing protecting us before going to court.*

*The WLSQ lawyer spoke with the Registrar to ask for the matter to be heard urgently that day but was told that this was not possible. The Registrar also said the Magistrate would probably not let me withdraw the application so I could draft a stronger one with help to get an urgent Temporary Protection Order.*

*I had a joint appointment with a WLSQ lawyer and social worker. They helped me with safety planning and legal advice about what I could do to improve the chances of getting the 'ouster' condition to make my partner leave. The social worker contacted other police and DV services to put a plan in place to try to keep us safe until we went to court. Lawyers worked together to put together information to improve my chances of getting a temporary protection order.*

*With Women's Legal Service's help I got a Temporary Protection Order which included all of the conditions I asked for and more, including the ouster condition. My partner also had to stay more than 100 metres away from our home. Now me and the kids can live safely at home together, free from violence".*

\*name changed to protect privacy.

## Outreach

### Women's Prisons

WLSQ have continued important outreach services at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre and the Southern Queensland Correction Centre providing free legal advice on family law, child protection and domestic and family violence matters. These services continue to be offered in person and via telephone, in accordance with COVID-19 health directives.

### Family Relationship Centres

Outreach lawyers provide legal services at the Logan and Mount Gravatt Family Relationship Centres. Lawyers provide women with legal information and advice about family law, and domestic and family violence matters, to assist with negotiating better and safer outcomes for women and their children through the mediation process.

### Domestic Violence Units (DVUs)

- **453 clients assisted**

WLSQ operates Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) in Brisbane, Caboolture and the Gold Coast.

The DVUs provide legal advice and representation for clients in child protection, DFV legal matters. They operate with a high intensity caseload to support women with extremely complex needs who are experiencing severe DFV.

Throughout the pandemic, DVUs have seen an increase in vulnerable clients requiring urgent support. Many DFV services are at capacity, and this has caused clients to be referred to the DVUs earlier in the process, requiring more early intervention work such as safety planning, assistance to find safe housing and applications for protection orders.

During this reporting period there have been a number of extremely violent and horrific deaths of women in Queensland, often by their partners or former partners. Following these incidents, the DVU teams have seen an increase in the number of referrals received from outside agencies for high-risk, vulnerable women.



*WLSQ staff at the Caboolture Neighbourhood Open Day*

## Aanya's Story

**Aanya\* is from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background. She was supported by the WLSQ Case Work lawyers and the social work team.**

*"I was referred to Women's Legal Service through a warm referral from the Immigrant Women's Support Services. English isn't my first language and I'm caring for two young sons. My husband was violent to me especially when he had been drinking. I separated from him after he was charged with assault, as he used "excessive discipline" on one of the children. Although he was charged with assaulting our child and Child Safety had been involved, he was ultimately found not guilty and had filed a family court application to spend time with the children.*

*My husband could afford a private lawyer. Although I applied for Legal Aid funding, I was refused because I didn't give them enough information.*

*When I found WLSQ, the court had adjourned the matter once and I had already missed the date to file my response and the interim hearing was coming up.*

*I had no internet or computer at home and was busy studying English and looking after the children on my own. I was struggling with trauma from my experiences and had very little money.*

*My cultural background meant that I didn't feel comfortable speaking to a male lawyer.*

*The WLSQ social work team supported me to appeal the Legal Aid refusal (which took several months). In the meantime WLSQ lawyers helped me with paperwork and to subpoena information from my husband.*

*I was linked in with the Caxton Legal Centre duty lawyer at the court and represented myself at the interim hearing.*

*Thanks to having all of my paperwork together, and the subpoenaed information from my husband, I got the orders to protect the children, and have since been approved Legal Aid funding for representation for the next stage of the court."*

**\*name changed to protect privacy.**

## Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs)

- **401 clients assisted**

Health Justice Partnerships link female health care patients and carers of patients experiencing DFV with legal advice and assistance through partnerships with hospitals across Southeast Queensland.



*Supporting Young Mums to Know Their Legal Rights Video*

The pandemic presented significant challenges for the Health Justice Partnership teams, with lawyers at times working remotely in line with health restrictions and the unique needs of hospital partners.

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, HJPs experienced increased demand for services compared to the same reporting period in the previous year.

Vital DFV training was delivered to hospital staff in person, and via webinars. HJP lawyers continued to build strong, collaborative relationships with health workers through in-person visits, attending and hosting networking events, participating in hospital staff professional development programs and attending staff meetings.

The community legal education video *Supporting Young Mums to Know Their Legal Rights*, produced with the Caboolture Young Mothers for Young Women Group and Legal Aid Queensland, was finalised during this period. The video is for workers supporting young mothers and provides information and referrals relating to pregnancy and breastfeeding, in the birthing suite, and after the baby's born.

This program operates in partnership with:

**Logan Hospital**

**QEII Jubilee Hospital**

**Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service**

**Redcliffe Hospital**

**Young Mothers for Young Women Groups (Caboolture and Brisbane)**

**Redlands Hospital**

**Princess Alexandra Hospital**

**The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital**

**Caboolture Hospital**

## Community Legal Education

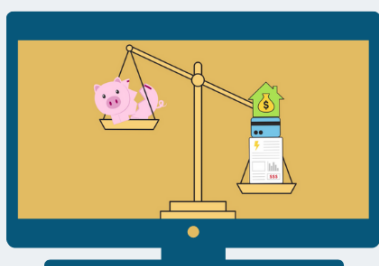
- **Activities: 10**

Free webinar series generously made possible by Arrow Energy. This series was for individuals and organisations that help victim-survivors of domestic and family violence including health care and education providers and community services. Webinars delivered during last financial year include:

- Domestic and Family Violence and Family Law Basics: COVID-19
- Introduction to Domestic and Family Violence: current stats, trauma and risk assessment
- Non-Lethal Strangulation: what to know about it
- Applying for a Protection Order in Queensland
- Sexual Assault Counselling Privilege
- Criminal Law: what to know for domestic violence victims
- Family Law – Parenting and its interaction with other areas of law
- The Human Rights Act 2019 for Regional Communities
- Identifying Financial Abuse
- Family Law – Property Settlement and how it works

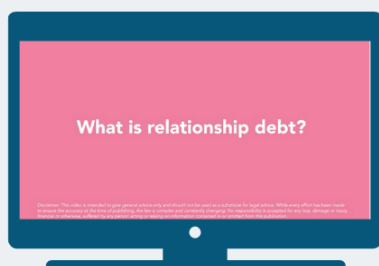
### **Domestic Violence Information Sheets for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women**

With a generous grant from the Queensland Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, WLSQ developed a myth-busting factsheet addressing key barriers culturally and linguistically diverse women face when separating from a violent partner. The factsheet was translated into five languages and made available on the WLSQ Website here: <https://wlsq.org.au/domestic-violence-myth-fact-sheets-languages-other-than-english/>



### **Financial Abuse Prevention Videos**

Made possible with a generous grant from Bank Australia, WLSQ developed four social media videos that address crucial topics of financial literacy and safety relevant for women who have experienced financial abuse. The videos are available to view on the WLSQ Website here: <https://wlsq.org.au/helpful-videos/>







## Financial Abuse Prevention Unit (FAPU)

- **277 clients assisted**
- **\$457,000 debts cleared**

Debts and insufficient money significantly impact women's ability to leave relationships when their partners are using violence.

FAPU consists of a specialist DFV financial counsellor and lawyer who work collaboratively to increase safety and reduce risk for women, and their children, when experiencing DFV. The FAPU employs a holistic, DFV informed approach to financial counselling, property settlement, family law advice, and consumer credit.

Changing health restrictions continued to impact FAPU client service accessibility. FAPU clients often require support people to attend appointments – a challenge when conducted virtually. To mitigate this, FAPU successfully moved many appointments to Zoom which increased accessibility and significantly decreased cancellations.

This financial year, FAPU experienced a significant increase in warm referrals from refugees and DFV services for women experiencing difficult circumstances financially paired with complex legal and social support needs. Supported by a generous grant from the Financial Counselling Foundation and the Federal Attorney-General's Department.

## Kelly's Story

**Kelly\* experienced financial abuse. She was supported by the Financial Abuse Prevention Unit.**

*"This financial counselling service has been life changing for me.*

*I was in a financially abusive marriage and my husband had coerced me into taking on loans and debts to the point of absolute overwhelm.*

*My credit rating had been destroyed and I was left without any means of paying them back.*

*I stumbled upon this amazing service when another financial advice company advised me that I had actually been in a financially abusive situation and to contact Women's Legal Service QLD.*

*Up until this point I didn't even realise that what had been happening to me was considered abuse and had no idea that I was even able to use such a service to help me.*

*My case manager has been an absolute blessing. She has made herself available to me for questions, assisted with drawing up a budget and advocated on my behalf with creditors and managed to clear over \$30,000 of debt that was incurred in my name.*

*My credit file is clear for the first time in many, many years and I am now in a position of financial freedom to be able to make a new life for myself and my children.*

*I had no idea that this was even possible and I feel so much gratitude and appreciation for the support that this service has given me and I thank my case worker from the bottom of my heart for showing me that there is always an opportunity for a better life.*

*I feel as though there needs to be more awareness for women in a situation like myself, more education as to what constitutes financial abuse and more knowledge as to what resources are out there to help women in a similar situation who feel helpless and trapped due to financial abuse.*

*Thank you so much to everyone involved".*

**\*name changed to protect privacy.**

## Counselling Notes Protect Service – Sexual Assault Counselling Privilege

- **150 legal advices and tasks**

The Counselling Notes Protect (CNP) service is delivered by Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ) in partnership with WLSQ. The CNP service provides counsellors and counselled people with advice, assistance and representation under the rights provided to them by the Sexual Assault Counselling Privilege, introduced into Queensland law in 2017. This law protects the counselling records of victims of sexual assault or alleged sexual assault from being accessed and otherwise used in criminal matters in the District Court and domestic and family violence proceedings.

In the past financial year, the WLSQ CNP service has provided 150 legal advices and tasks, with 70 case files opened during the financial year. The CNP service has represented 67 women who identify as being victim-survivors of sexual offences. WLSQ CNP lawyers appear and represent victim-survivors in court to oppose applications to access the victim-survivors counselling communications in a legal proceeding. The CNP service has acted for other women in negotiations with the Department of Public Prosecutions and counselling services to significantly reduce the volume of their private information made available in legal proceedings, their rights in relation to what, if any, of their records need to be made available, and what the likely consequences of such disclosure would be on them and the court proceedings.

The WLSQ CNP service has experienced a 22.7% increase in demand this financial year as the legal profession has become more aware of the legislation, women are more aware of the service and matters where the protection operates are listed in the District Court. The addition of a further lawyer has been pivotal in meeting demand, with the CNP service always working at capacity.

Importantly, in consultation with key stakeholders, including the WLSQ CNP lawyer, the Chief Judge of the District Court developed and released Practice Directions 5/21. The Practice Directions give the Court (and legal practitioners) a set of instructions to follow when applying to the Court for access to the counselling records of survivors of sexual offences.

WLSQ CNP is also acting in two matters which have been referred to the Supreme Court for judicial review, where it is hoped that the state will finally be provided with some persuasive precedents in relation to the courts and legal profession's implementation and application of the sexual assault counselling privilege.

The WLSQ CNP service has continued to provide legal education to stakeholders on the impact of counselling notes protection legislation, including working with the Queensland Police Service in their specific iSecure training program.


## Law Reform

- **Law & Legal Service Reform: 26**

Informed by client data and experiences, WLSQ contributed submissions to State and Federal inquiries, and on issues including:

- Section 229BC Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020 (failure to report belief of child sexual offence committed in relation to child).
- Attorney General and Minister for Justice QLD - Justice Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response – Proceedings and Other Matters) Regulation 2020 (Proceedings Regulation);
- National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Supporting Economic Recovery) Bill 2020.
- Department of Home Affairs - Public consultation on the English language requirement and the new sponsorship framework for the Partner visa program;
- Review of the Queensland Criminal Code in relation to domestic violence.
- Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System submission and in-person hearing.
- QLRC law reform considerations.
- Request to broaden the definition of pro bono assistance.
- Concerns and analysis of Queensland Law Reform Commission's review of consent laws and the excuse of mistake of fact.
- Strategy for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Proposal for urgent National Summit and agenda of immediate reforms.
- Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia.

Law reform and systems advocacy is core to our mission to create accessible legal and social justice for a safer future for women and children.



*“Beyond grateful for the help I received. I have been given so much relief. The Service is amazing, and I don’t know what I would have done without it. You simplified things a lot more. You were incredibly patient going through everything. I can’t speak highly enough of the service”.*

**– Women’s Legal Service  
Queensland Client.**

## Women as Respondents

- **27 case files**
- **17 legal tasks**
- **61 advices**
- **105 legal services provided**

WLSQ noticed many women experiencing high-risk domestic DFV being misidentified as the 'respondent' on domestic violence protection order applications. They may not present in-line with stereotypes of victimhood – appearing enraged, confused, or even uncooperative with police. Sometimes they are the victim of false allegations levelled by their abuser to continue controlling, to retaliate for an application against them, or to gain a tactical advantage in family court proceedings. Misidentification of the person most in need of protection can have serious implications for a woman's safety.

To address this need, in September 2020 WLSQ commenced the new Women as Respondents (WAR) programme. The WAR programme is an extension of the Brisbane Domestic Violence Unit (DVU), with a dedicated WAR lawyer and paralegal working directly with women who have been named as respondents on domestic violence protection order applications and are victim-survivors of DFV. WAR clients are referred internally.

Assistance provided includes:

- One-off legal advice and warm referrals, including referral to social workers for assistance to apply for legal aid;
- Preparing cross-applications;
- Preparing submissions to police prosecutors; and
- Ongoing legal representation at mentions and hearings, sometimes briefing pro bono counsel for hearings.

## Pro Bono Property Settlement Program

Brisbane is an identified location for the Priority Property Pools under \$500,000 (PPP500) pilot program in the Federal Circuit Court. The aim of the PPP500 pilot is to improve the responsiveness of the family courts for vulnerable parties to provide a simplified way of resolving property disputes which will minimise risk and legal costs, and best preserve the parties' assets. The purpose is to achieve a just, efficient, and timely resolution of PPP500 cases, at a cost to the parties that is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances of the case.

WLSQ noticed many separating clients with small property pools, eligible for the PPP500 program who were unable to acquire representation through private means or Legal Aid. To address this need, the Service recently commenced the Pro Bono Property Settlement Program in partnership with Lander & Rogers. WLSQ refer clients to Lander & Rogers for comprehensive pro bono advice and case work. To date, two clients have been referred and accepted. As a pilot program, the Service have agreed to refer five clients within the first year. Thank you to Lander & Rogers for their generous pro bono contributions.

## Volunteering

- **1,393 volunteer appointments**
- **85 Lawyers and Barristers on roster**

Volunteer lawyers have been integral in helping WLSQ assist more women and their children experiencing DFV across the pandemic.

WLSQ has been able to quickly move to working remotely to keep our clients and volunteers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the systems established through the Remote Volunteering Program, evening advice volunteer lawyers were able to provide vital free legal advice remotely and continue to provide a much-needed service for our clients.



**Kirstie Colls,  
Barry Nilsson**

Thank you to Kirstie Colls from Barry Nilsson who celebrates a remarkable 15 years volunteering at Women's Legal Service Queensland.

## Legal and administration volunteers

### DIVORCE CLINIC

Clayton Utz  
McCullough Robertson

Minter Ellison  
Thili Joseph

Maud Beach

### BARRISTERS

Karen Carmody  
Kate Gover

### REMOTE LEGAL LAWYERS

Annette Power Martell  
Avril Cowarn  
Breony Dowling  
Chantal Hill  
Danae Younger  
Elise Clowes  
Heather Owens  
Jay Rose  
Jessica Grumelart  
Joelene Nel

Kate Alroe  
Katherine Hogan  
Kathryn Mcloughlin  
Kayla Bucknell  
Mairi Kerfoot  
Margarett Kummerfeld  
Melissa Lanthois  
Michelle Porcheron  
Michelle Richardson  
Miranda Woodland

Natasha Priestley  
Nicole Jevtovic  
Peta Krarup  
Robyn Hampton  
Sarah-Jane Macdonald  
Sophie Pearson  
Stacey Ward  
Tarryn Rea

## EVENING LAWYERS

Aleisha Draper  
Aleisha Edwards  
Allison Caputo  
Amelia Torre  
Amy Little  
Amy McBreen  
Anna Domalewski  
Annabel Burton  
Annabelle Jacob  
Belinda Jeffrey  
Bronwen Curtis  
Candace Watkins  
Carolyn Mckenna  
Catherine Bub  
Chai Hoe  
Chloe Blaney  
Chloe Jackson  
Clare Jobson

Debra Effeney  
Ebony Morris  
Georgia Dalton  
Hannah Robinson  
Jane Guerin  
Janelle Osborne  
Jennifer Franklin  
Josephine Cockerill  
Julia Murfitt  
Kelli Martin  
Kiarah Kelly  
Kirstie Colls  
Laura Wainwright  
Lezah Gildea-Marega  
Marie Sambanis  
Melissa Lanthois  
Natalie Powell

Nichola Di Muzio  
Onjawli Chakravarty  
Patricia Keyworth  
Pravinita Singh-Pillay  
Rachel Gillies  
Rachel Stuart  
Sandra Kelly  
Sarah Hampson  
Sarahjane Robertson  
Shannon Bownds  
Stacey Glover  
Sue Westall  
Tarah Tosh  
Vanessa Leishman  
Victoria Eastwood  
Wendy Miller  
Zina Ceric  
Zoe Busch

## ADMINISTRATION

Adriana Fernando  
Alarice Whale  
Alice Chapman  
Anna Neilson  
Anna Matthews  
Aoife Grennan  
Bridget Duda  
Cailin Hill  
Chelsea Keirsnoski  
Emily Doan

Ezna Rashid  
Francesca O'Dwyer  
Georgia Henderson  
Hannah McAuliffe  
Imogen Forster  
Jade Wardle  
Jessie Goldsworthy  
Maria Hernandez Castillo  
Matilda Lambooy  
Nanci Sergi

Nida Tavakoli  
Nitika Summers  
Peta-Jayne George  
Rahel Zewee  
Rena Lowden  
Riley Roberts  
Shona Jackson  
Sophia Stathis  
Yiqiao (Eva) Huang  
Yvette Parker

## PARALEGALS

Alice Tanzer Wilde  
Amelia Watson-Black  
Annabel Phelan  
Emma Macdonald  
Ezna Rashid  
Gia Lynis  
Helen Booth

Jaqueline Marzinotto  
Jasmine Chin  
Jessica Wray  
Linden Peacock  
Madison Mckewin  
Phoebe Silva  
Prathnaa (Penny) Haripersad

Rashwin Kaur  
Rebekah Roma  
Sarah Ainscough  
Siobhan Markwell  
Thili Joseph

## Fundraising

WLSQ programs are supplemented by money raised through fundraising campaigns and events. These fundraising initiatives are vital to ensuring women experiencing DFV receive the legal and social work support they need to escape violence.

Across this financial year, WLSQ was the official charity of Women's Network Australia and was the beneficiary of their successful Christmas lunch, and a high tea with Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO and Nina Schrinner, the Lady Mayoress of Brisbane.

COVID-19 continued to impact our fundraising, with two of our much-loved events, River to Rooftop and the Legal Profession Breakfast, postponed.

WLSQ was the beneficiary of many International Women's Day events including the beautiful *Agenda* coffee table book which was launched in both Brisbane and Sydney to enthusiastic audiences.

WLSQ is extremely grateful for the generous support from our individual and regular donors, as well as our community fundraisers. These donations, both large and small, ensure the delivery of frontline services, directly creating safer futures for women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence. Thank you for your continued support over the past year.

A special mention must be made to our amazing volunteers who generously gave their time to enthusiastically work so hard to make our events a success. Thank you.

The important support we receive from our corporate partners, philanthropic trusts and foundations, individuals, community organisations, and pro bono partners ensures maximum resources are directed to frontline service delivery. We gratefully acknowledge this support as you help us to achieve our mission.



Thank You



### Labels on the Lawn

At the inaugural Labels on the Lawn, shoppers enjoyed a relaxed and leisurely shopping session on the beautiful lawns of Hanworth House, perusing some of the best preloved labels and luxury designer items donated by some of Brisbane's best fashionistas, all to benefit the Service. A huge thank you to WLSQ Ambassador Marisa Vecchio for her amazing fundraising efforts.



### Designer Rummage

In March, over 500 dedicated shoppers descended on our annual Designer Rummage sale to grab a designer bargain. Jackets, jeans and ball gowns were quickly sold to raise \$60,453 in just five hours. A huge thank you to our Rummage donors and volunteers, who sorted, stacked and folded the many pre-loved donated clothes – we couldn't have done it without you. Thank you to our corporate sponsor, Best Wilson Buckley Family Law.

### Dancing CEOs

Our flagship event, Dancing CEOs, made a comeback in May 2021 with a record-breaking \$578,377 raised. Ten incredibly dedicated and enthusiastic business leaders put on their dancing shoes to 'wow' the crowd while raising funds for the Service. We cannot thank our 2021 CEOs enough, who stayed with us throughout COVID-19 delays, as well as our amazing sponsors, supporters and volunteers who donated and attended the event.

#### 2021 DANCING CEOs

Andrew Reid  
Caralee Fontenele  
Dr Dinah Blunt  
Francesca Webster

Jamie Shine  
Lorilie Cunningham  
Marguerite O'Sullivan  
Mick O'Shea

Professor Rachael Field  
Rafe Berding



## A huge thank you to our wonderful supporters

### COMMUNITY & CORPORATE SUPPORTERS, TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS, INDIVIDUALS

Agenda Book Launch	Collins Biggers & Paisley	Individual Donors	Somerville House
Allens Linklaters	Epic Good Foundation	International Women's Day Supporters	The GPT Group
Arrow Energy	Financial Counselling Foundation	KPMG	Transurban
Bank Australia	Gadens Lawyers	Myer Foundation	Turks Legal
Banskii Foundation	Grant Thornton	Myer Community Fund	Westfield Carindale
BAR Association	Hanworth House	Pilbeam Philanthropy Pty Ltd	
Cambooya Pty Ltd	Harcourts Foundation	Queensland Community Foundation	
Clayton Utz Foundation	Holy Trinity CSI		
College of Law			

### GOVERNMENT

Brisbane City Council	Department of Industry, Science, Energy & Resources (Stronger Communities Programme)	Legal Aid Queensland
Council of the City of Gold Coast	Department of Justice and Attorney-General - State and Federal	Lord Mayors Charitable Trust
Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs	Department of Social Services	Australian Taxation Office

### PRO BONO SUPPORT – FIRMS

Clayton Utz	Lander & Rogers
Gadens	McCullough Robertson
KPMG	Minter Ellison

### PRO BONO SUPPORT – BARRISTERS

Heath Berghofer	Richard Galloway	Neil McGregor
Dr Jacoba Brasch QC	David Guttridge	Terry Morgans
Scott Casey	Christopher Hughes	Dianne Pendergast
Clare Dart	Georgia Kiss	Stephen Scarlett
Bruce Dodd	James Linklater-Steele	

## Management Committee

President	Dominique Lamb
Vice President	Julia O'Connor
Treasurer	Cheryl Gray
Secretary	Genevieve Dee
Committee member	Bec Shearman
Committee member	Lesley Symons
Committee member	Hannah Taylor

## Ambassadors and Patrons

### Marisa Vecchio AM

Marisa Vecchio AM is owner of beautiful Hanworth House, one of Brisbane's oldest residences. Marisa is an avid philanthropist and WLSQ is a passion of hers. This year Marisa reached out to her generous networks to mastermind the inaugural Labels on the Lawn which resulted in a record-breaking fundraising amount (\$66, 034) towards Dancing CEO, Lorilie Cunningham's fundraising tally.



### Amanda Stein

The Owner of PandaPearls Australia Pty Ltd, Amanda recognised the changes occurring within the retail sector and pre-COVID chose to 'do business differently' where she has an online presence with over 14,000 database customers and participates in rural and regional shows such as BEEF Australia in Rockhampton.

In Amanda's vast 20-year experience in retail she has witnessed, assisted and supported women experiencing varying forms of abuse. The PandaPearls Team are committed to stopping abuse in all its forms.

## **Famin Ahmed**

Famin graduated in a Bachelor of Laws (first class honours) and Arts from UQ in July 2019. With a full-time job in law lined up for January 2020, Famin began a project called "Famin Makes", where she sews reversible hats and scrunchies and donates all the proceeds to WLSQ. Since founding the project in mid-2019, Famin has raised over \$38,558 for WLSQ. Famin is also passionate about raising awareness about domestic violence, using her platform to inform others on the issue through social media, podcasts and interviews.



## **Professor Rachael Field**

Rachael is a Professor in the Law School at Bond University, co-director of the Bond Dispute Resolution Centre and a member of the Executive of the Centre for Professional Legal Education. She is an Australian Learning and Teaching Fellow and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Rachael teaches first year law threshold concepts and transition as well as dispute resolution. She has received national recognition for teaching excellence through a national citation in 2008, a national teaching fellowship in 2010 and a national teaching excellence award in 2014.

In 2013, Rachael was named Queensland Woman Lawyer of the Year.

Rachael is the founder of the Australian Wellness Network for Law, which is now expanding internationally. Her areas of research expertise include dispute resolution, family law, domestic violence and legal education. She is also co-founder of the Australian Dispute Resolution Research Network. She has a portfolio of more than 80 scholarly publications and is co-author of four books.

Since 1994, Rachael has volunteered on the Management Committee of WLSQ and she has been president of the Service since 2004.

We wholeheartedly thank Rachael for the long enduring contribution she has made to the Service and are delighted that she remains involved as an Ambassador.

## The Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC

Our long-standing Patron, The Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC stepped down this year to lead the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.

Across her distinguished career Justice McMurdo has been an inspiration, particularly to many in the legal profession - serving as President, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of Queensland, July 1998 - March 2017. Ms McMurdo was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2007. She has been Patron of WLSQ since 2014.

Losing Margaret as our Patron is a huge loss to WLSQ but will be for the greater good as her new role provides opportunity to lead substantive change to safety outcomes for women and children in Queensland.

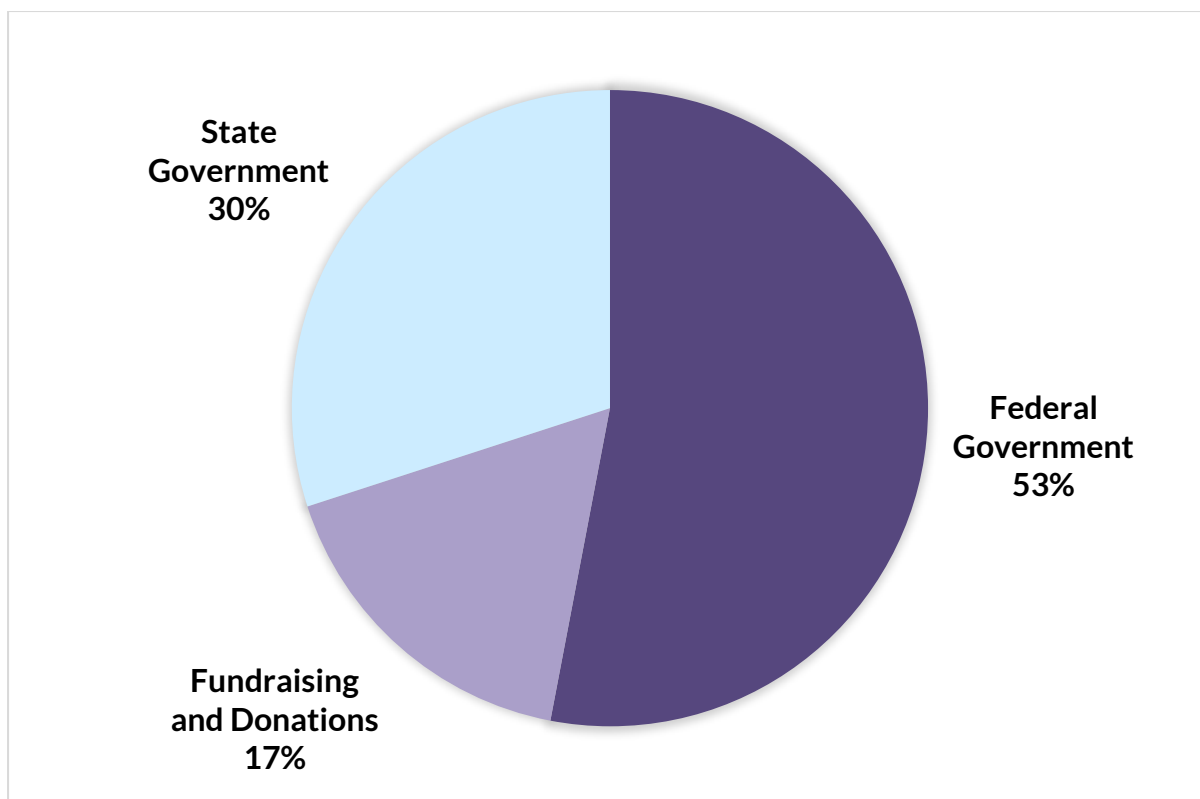
We wish her all the best in her new role and this significant next chapter.



*"I was initially very concerned for the safety of myself and my children, but after speaking with you I felt safe. The legal staff contacted me exactly when they said they were going to. I'm grateful as I was desperate to talk to someone. They spent a lot of time with me and gave me enough confidence to file my own court documents".*

**- Women's Legal Service Queensland Client.**

## Financials



Federal Government	\$3,486,881
State Government	\$1,958,681
Fundraising and donations	\$1,140,789
Other	\$24,625
Local Government	\$15,995
Interest	\$10,036
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$6,637,007</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>\$6,307,919</b>
<b>Net surplus</b>	<b>\$329,088</b>



*“I’m so grateful. You helped me so much through a hard time when I didn’t know what to do. The government needs to help and support centres like this. This service is a blessing”.*

**- Women’s Legal Service Queensland Client.**



**Women's**  
Legal Service Qld

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