



Illawarra Legal Centre Annual Report 2019



The Illawarra Legal Centre
Management Committee, Staff and
Volunteers acknowledge the Dharawal
Country & Yuin Country as the land
that we work and live upon and
pay our respects to First Nations
Traditional Owners, Custodians and
Elders past, present and future



Illawarra Legal Centre Inc. Annual Report 2018-2019
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CHAIRPERSONS' MESSAGE

Illawarra Legal Centre - at the centre of disadvantage

Community Legal Centres (CLC's) serve the community on many levels. They play a vital role in helping people resolve problems – people who otherwise would not have access to legal and related services. Such assistance is vital, as people who cannot resolve their problems often end up in a downward spiral. An unresolved problem may escalate in seriousness and lead to the development of further linked legal problems.

Many people who are assisted by CLC's have complex needs and multiple legal issues. Problems around employment, for example, will often lead to loss of income and therefore problems with debt or housing. These matters may be related to or lead to relationship breakdown. Mental illness might be a factor or a by-product of the situation.

The impact of unresolved legal problems represents a significant cost to public services and to the community as a whole. The multi-service delivery model of CLC's like the Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC), assisting people with complex needs and multiple legal and social problems, thus represents a significant benefit, not only to the communities those centres serve, but to the wider community. CLC's can assess local needs and design services to effectively meet those needs. They also play an important role in community awareness, legal education and law reform.

The 2016 Census tells us that the number of homeless rose by 14% since 2011. Rising house prices and rising rents have led to a real housing crisis, placing massive financial pressure on households including those

who have not historically needed support or assistance. Many Centrelink benefits have had no real increase in years and cannot keep up with living costs. The cost of even a one-bedroom unit in most of the Illawarra would be more than the payment received by a single person on Newstart Allowance or Disability Support Pension.

Wage rates have long remained stagnant and secure employment for many is difficult to obtain. These things have only served to increase demand on the services offered by the ILC, yet, as you will see from the Centre Coordinator's report, funding uncertainty remains an ongoing reality. Further, in many cases where funding has been secured, that funding does not allow for wage increases.

The staff and volunteers of the ILC have continued to deliver a high standard of assistance to the people of the Illawarra and South Coast through their flexible and innovative approaches to service delivery and their unwavering commitment to social justice. However, ongoing funding issues are putting pressure on ILC to restructure and/or reduce service. This is likely to mean that people's many problems will be left unresolved and this will ultimately be at the cost of the community.

We must not let our political leaders lose sight of the value of CLC's, and help them to understand that the cost of direct funding is much less than the cost to the community of not properly funding these vital services.

Judy Stubbs & John Littrich
Chairperson & Deputy Chairperson
Illawarra Legal Centre

OUR STORY

SO FAR ...

The Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC) was established in 1985 and has operated at its current Warrawong premises for many years. Its employees, volunteer solicitors, clients and the Illawarra community often refer to it as 'the Legal Centre' or just 'the Centre'. It is very much part of the fabric of the Illawarra.

However, the essence of what makes the ILC a real Community Legal Centre is not the old, familiar building in Greene Street, Warrawong, or the offices at one of its outreach services. It is the hard-working, dedicated team of lawyers, advocates, community legal educators, administrative staff and volunteers that provide the services so urgently needed by the people of the Illawarra and South Coast.

After 30+ years of service to our community and with help of more than 600 wonderful volunteers who have given their time, skills and energy to support our work, we have assisted more than 50,000 clients.

Each and every day we proceed with the passion that has carried us this far. We continue to actively protect the human rights of those who are vulnerable and seek to change the structures that systematically undermine those rights.

OUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Illawarra Legal Centre assists people to realise their legal rights.

We promote social justice for all, with a particular focus on reaching those who experience social and economic disadvantage in the Illawarra and surrounding areas.

OUR AIMS

- » Maintain services relevant to the diverse community of the Illawarra and surrounding areas.
- » Provide advice, advocacy and/or referral on a full range of legal matters to the Illawarra and surrounding areas.
- » Undertake policy analysis, review existing laws and work for improvement to laws and legal processes which affect the rights of those in our community.
- » Develop and implement community legal education programs which are both proactive, as well as responsive to community needs.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The ILC is managed by a Management Committee comprised of representatives from the legal profession & the local community and staff members.

Judy Stubbs	Chairperson
John Littrich	Deputy Chairperson
John Corker	Secretary
Peter Moggach	Treasurer
Ray Clack	Public Officer
Angela Robinson	Committee Member
David St.Quintin	Committee Member
Jim Milne	Committee Member
Ron Witton	Committee Member
Catherine O'Neill	Staff Member
Ian Turton	Staff Member
Judi Teesdale	Staff Member
Maroun Germanos	Staff Member
Phillip Dicalfas	Staff Member
Truda Gray	Staff Member
Vesna Horley	Staff Member

OUR SERVICES

The ILC provides a number of services covering different areas of law. The Centre also offers a number of telephone advice sessions per week where community members can ring with questions on areas of law and speak with a caseworker who will either advise them directly or refer them to an appropriate source of information. ILC is a multi-program Community Legal Centre.

SERVICES PROVIDED

- » General Legal
- » Child Support
- » Welfare Rights
- » Community Legal Education
- » Law & Policy Reform
- » Aboriginal Legal Access Program
- » Children's Court Assistance Scheme
- » Financial Counselling Service
- » Tenants Advice & Advocacy

ILC INTEGRATED MULTI SERVICE MODEL

WHO WE SERVE

As a Community Legal Centre, ILC prioritises assistance to the most vulnerable members of our community, with particular emphasis on working with people living with economic and social disadvantage. These groups include:

- Children and young people (<25 years), as well as older people (>65 years)
- People experiencing financial disadvantage
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
- People experiencing or at risk of family violence
- People experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- People residing in regional, rural or remote areas
- People who have a culturally or linguistically diverse background
- People with a disability or mental illness
- Newly arrived migrants and refugees who settle in the area
- People with low levels of literacy
- Single parents.

People in these groups are more likely to experience legal problems and be less able to access services for a range of reasons.

WHOLISTIC SERVICE

We deliver integrated services to our clients, acting as a 'one-stop-shop' where you can access a range of legal and community services that are housed under one roof.

Our diverse and committed staff deliver thousands of hours a year across the services listed above.

We focus on the multiple needs of our clients in order to create and deliver a wholistic service.

People using our services often present with more than one problem. For example, if someone has a welfare rights concern related to the payment of benefits they are very likely to have financial problems that might lead to them needing financial counselling.

That same person might have a dispute about an overpayment, a problem with eligibility for a benefit, difficulty paying bills leading to an eviction order resulting in a tenancy problem.

Our job is to deal with what might be several separate issues, connect that person to the other services in our Centre they might need and if necessary make a referral to an external agency for support with other aspects of their situation.

We hold weekly joint casework conferences, where we go beyond the borders of each service and work with each individual in a wholistic way according to their needs.

ADVICE

General Law phone advice is provided for a total of six hours over three days per week.

Financial Counselling and Welfare Rights are available in office hours. The Tenants Service provides phone advice for 16 hours per week.

General Law is available outside the scheduled hours where possible.

APPOINTMENTS

Face-to-face appointments are offered to clients who require the use of an interpreter, have a disability or if for any other reason they are unable to make contact with the Centre by telephone. We are wheelchair accessible.

The Centre has a weekly Thursday night and Friday afternoon roster staffed by local volunteer solicitors. Community members can make appointments to see a solicitor for face-to-face advice, for general law problems.

Appointments for Financial Counselling, Welfare Rights, Child Support and Tenancy are made by phoning the service.

LAW & POLICY REFORM

The Centre conducts law and policy reform work. The Centre has a strong tradition of research, consultation and submission writing in areas of policy and law which affect our client groups.

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

Apart from casework the Centre has a strong focus on Community Legal Education (CLE) and offers training seminars and workshops targeted to both community workers and the general public.

INTERPRETERS

Qualified accredited interpreters are used when needed, including interpreters from Wollongong City Council Interpreter Service (in person) and the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) for telephone interpreting.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Centre is open to the public on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9.00 am until 5.00 pm, and on Thursday from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm.

The office is closed every day between 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

TELEPHONE ADVICE TIMES

General Law - Call 4276 1939 during business hours to organise a call-back appointment.

Financial Counselling - Call 4276 1939 during business hours to organise a face-to-face appointment.

Welfare Rights - Call 4276 1939 during business hours - A call-back advice service is available.

Child Support - Call 4276 1939 during business hours - A call-back advice service is available.

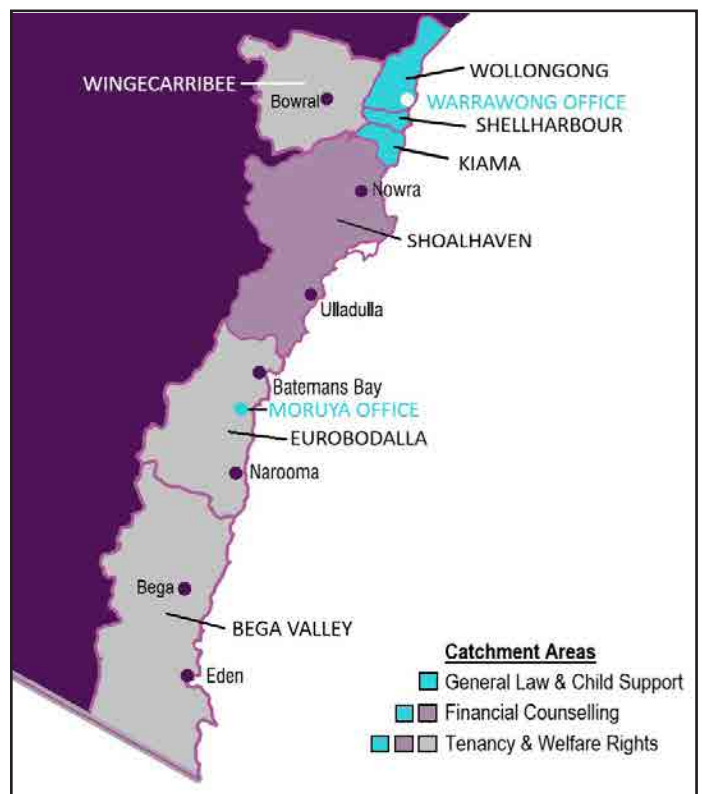
Tenants Service - Call 1800 807 225 between: 9am - 1pm Mondays & Fridays or 1 - 5pm on Tuesdays & Wednesdays.

WHERE WE WORK

ILC is located in Warrawong, within the Illawarra region, south of Sydney. We also have a Tenancy only office located in Moruya, within the Eurobodalla region.

We provide free legal advice and assistance across the local government areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama.

In addition to these areas our Financial Counselling Service provides assistance in the Shoalhaven and our Tenants & Welfare Rights Services reach as far as Wingecarribee, Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley.



OUR CLIENTS

OUR FEEDBACK

We are committed to providing our clients with professional legal services, which are tailored to their needs and circumstances. When delivering our advice, advocacy and representation services we always seek feedback on the assistance provided to clients.

Client feedback is captured periodically to ensure we are assisting people to meet their legal needs and bringing about essential change in our community.

Responses for this year's survey indicated a high level of satisfaction. Overwhelmingly, clients reported that they were very happy with the service.

SURVEY RESULTS

98%

would recommend ILC
to other people

90%

said the advice was clear
& easy to understand

98%

said they were
treated in a friendly &
respectful manner



"It's hard to try to put
into words the **gratitude**
I feel"

"I couldn't fault it"

"So **Selfless**"

"Great service"

"Very happy"

"Very
professional"

"You want to **make a
difference**"

"Wonderful
job"

"I will never forget
your **kindness**"

"Thank you seems so
inadequate"

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

We are deeply engaged with assisting our clients and take our services to them, through the provision of Community Legal Education (CLE) sessions, media and our outreaches.

ILC provides a wide variety of CLE activities across a broad range of legal topics and audiences. We believe in bringing about self-empowerment through education.

This can be realised through traditional teaching methods with select groups, attending community events, utilising various media platforms, and the distribution of engaging and educative information.

This year we carried out **121** Community Legal Education (CLE) sessions, reaching more than **4,000** participants. We also appeared in the media on **45** occasions, highlighting a number of community and law reform issues.

OUTREACHES

Aboriginal Legal Access Program

- Port Kembla Children's Court, Port Kembla - Every 2nd Tuesday
- Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre, Berkeley - 1st & 3rd Tuesday each month

Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS)

- Port Kembla Children's Court, Port Kembla - Every Tuesday

Child Support

- Shoalcoast CLC, Nowra - By Appointment
- Illawarra Women's Health Centre, Warilla - 2nd & 4th Monday each Month

Financial Counselling

- Warilla Neighbourhood Centre, Warilla - Every Monday & Wednesday
- Unanderra Community Centre, Unanderra - Every Wednesday
- Kedesh Rehabilitation Services, Berkeley - Every 4th Month
- Corrimal Community Centre, Corrimal - Every Tuesday
- Ribbonwood Community Centre, Dapto - Every Friday
- Anglicare, Wollongong - Every Monday & Tuesday
- Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra (SAHSSI), Wollongong - Every Tuesday
- Shoalcoast CLC, Nowra - Every Friday

Generalists

- Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre, Berkeley - 1st & 3rd Tuesday each Month
- Illawarra Women's Health Centre, Warilla - 2nd & 4th Monday each Month
- Port Kembla Children's Court, Port Kembla - Youth Law - Every Tuesday
- Kedesh Rehabilitation Services, Berkeley - Every 4th Month
- Homeless Hub, Wollongong - Every 2nd Wednesday

Tenancy

- Eurobodalla Family Support Service, Moruya - Monday to Friday
- NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), Duty advocacy Wollongong - Every Tuesday
- NCAT, Duty advocacy Batemans Bay - Fortnightly
- NCAT, Duty advocacy Nowra - Fortnightly
- NCAT, Duty advocacy Bega - Monthly

Welfare Rights

- Homeless Hub, Wollongong - Every 2nd Wednesday
- Shoalcoast CLC, Nowra - By Appointment
- Legal Aid, Nowra - By Appointment

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION SESSIONS

Aboriginal Legal Access Program

- Aboriginal Legal Issues & Rights - Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre (BNC)
- NAIDOC Family Fun Day - Warrawong
- Northern Illawarra NAIDOC Celebration - Bellambi
- Aboriginal Legal Issues & Rights - Port Kembla Children's Court

Financial Counselling

- Financial Counselling (FC) Services - Kedesh Rehabilitation Services (KRS)
- Debt Collection & Budgets - Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre
- FC Services - Mental Health Unit (MHU) Wollongong Hospital
- FC Services - Illawarra Multicultural Services Inc (IMS) - African Community Groups
- Accessing Superannuation & Insurance - Illawarra Health Justice Forum
- Budgeting; general guide & tips - Baptist Care Playgroup
- Budgeting, prepaying bills, not living on After Pay - Domestic Violence Units, Baptist Care
- FC Services - University of Wollongong (UOW)
- FC Services, payday loans & buy now pay later contracts - ABC Radio

Generalists

- Cybersafety - Holy Spirit College
- Sexting, Cyberbullying & Revenge Porn - Ngaramura at Coomaditchie
- ILC Services - MHU Wollongong Hospital
- ILC Services - KRS
- Employment Rights; Discrimination & Sexual Harassment Law - Workways
- Intro to Law - Red Cross HSP
- What is a CLC? - ABC Radio
- Illawarra Disability Expo - Fairy Meadow
- Victims Support Law - MHU Wollongong Hospital
- Introduction to Australian Law & Legal System - IMS
- Marriage, Consent & DV rights in Australia - Settlement Services International
- ILC Services - Women's Domestic Violence Program
- ILC Services - Support Coordination Network Group
- Planning Ahead - Port Kembla Hospital Motor Neurone Disease Group
- ILC Services - NSW Law Society
- Planning Ahead - Unanderra Community Centre
- Law Week - Wollongong Library
- Victims Support Law - ABC Radio
- Law Week Seminar & Expo
- ILC Services - UOW
- Resilience for Refugee Women stall - STARTTS
- End of Life Planning - CPSA Dapto Seniors
- Wills & POA - Macedonian Welfare Centre
- ILC Services - FACS Housing & Lake Illawarra Police
- Wills, POA & Enduring Guardianship - BNC

- Anti-Poverty Week - Warrawong
- Wills & POA - Cringila Public School Playgroup
- Planning Ahead; Law for Carers - Area Health Service
- Health Justice Outreaches - Illawarra Health Justice Forum
- Illawarra Reintegration Centre Services Expo
- Bring your Bills Day - Baptist Care
- Start Out Right - Legal Aid

Tenancy

- Tenancy Rights; FACS Stock Transfer - Nowra & Bomaderry
- No Grounds Notices of Termination - VOX FM
- Road to Home Workshops - Coniston
- Tenancy Rights - IMS - African Community Group
- Tenancy Rights - MHU Wollongong Hospital
- Tenancy Rights - Homeless Hub
- Tenancy Rights - SAHSSI
- Rent it Keep it Program - Hope House
- Tenancy Rights - Women's Resource Centre, Bega
- Tenancy Reforms for Victims of Domestic Violence - ABC Radio
- Tenancy Rights - Shoalhaven Homelessness Interagency
- Caravan Park Non-Compliance - Wollongong
- Tenancy Laws - AMEP
- Tenancy Domestic Violence Law Reform - NSW Law Society
- Tenancy Services - Illawarra Refugee Action Group
- Sorry Day Events - Moruya

Welfare Rights

- Centrelink Robo Debts - ABC Radio
- Centrelink Issues - ABC Radio
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - MHU Wollongong Hospital
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - Families in Cultural Transition Program
- Centrelink Robo Debts - Triple J
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - AMEP
- Domestic Violence & Centrelink Payments - Wollongong Women's Information Service
- Centrelink Issues, Benefit Rejections & Debts - ARAFMI Mental Health Carers
- Claiming Disability Support Pension - GP Health Network Podcast
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - IMS - Burmese English Class
- Changes to Centrelink Benefits & Obligations - Volunteer Managers Network
- Disability Support Pension Podcast
- National Social Security Rights Network Conference
- Changes in Social Security Law - Shoalcoast
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - IMS - African Community Groups
- Understanding the Disability Support Pension - Illawarra Health Justice Forum
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - Workways

Free legal tips for seniors, families

IT'S easy to take for granted the ability to make your own decisions – but this may change, Illawarra Legal Centre lawyer Lucy Houweling.

So with Law Week on next week, the centre will

Days from being homeless

ILLAWARRA MERCURY



Funding cut: Member for Wollongong Paul Scully (r) with Illawarra Legal management committee member Ron Witton, centre co-ordinator Truda Gray and principal solicitor Phillip Dicalfas. Picture: Adam McLean.

Illawarra Legal Centre services are in jeopardy following a NSW Government proposal that will essentially cut funding.

Member for Wollongong Paul Scully is calling on the State Government to review its decision. Speaking outside the centre in

MAROUN GERMANOS
FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR

WIN News Wollongong

Christmas Credit

Like Comment

WIN News Illawarra

undermine being kicked out without havin

WIN News Illawarra
27 July at 18:55

Federal Labor M-Ps Sharon Bird and Stephen Jones will push Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, to commit to re-opening Warrawong's Centrelink if the party wins the next election.

It comes as the centre shut its doors today, despite fierce backlash from the community, and desperate pleas from welfare organisations.

IAN TURTON
ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE

WIN News Wollongong

ILLAWARRA MERCURY

July 10 2018 - 2:40PM

Hundreds celebrate NAIDOC Family Fun Day at Warrawong

Aaron Latiff

NAIDOC Family Fun Day at Greene St Reserve

Picture: by Sylvia Little

the workshops to help understand the legal issues people and their families when planning for the future.

"Take it for granted we can always make our own decisions about the things that affect our lives," Houweling said. "Unfortunately, as we age, due to injury, we may lose our ability."

Elderly people and seniors' rights will be on hand at the issues for older people workshops, which are on:

- Tuesday May 16, 10am-12pm, Shellharbour Centre auditorium
- Wednesday May 17, 1-3pm, Wollongong Central Library

Contact the venues by phone or email to book your spots.

Calls for a fairer rental system

HOUSING
BY BRENDAN CRABB

AN ILLAWARRA tenants' advocacy group insists that eliminating "no-ground's" evictions is needed to ensure greater security for renters.

Housing advocates, renters and decision-makers visited NSW Parliament earlier this week.

Proposed changes to rental laws contained in the

of the proposed legislative changes were positive – such as limiting rent increases to once per 12-month period, and providing clarity regarding minor alterations to properties – but no-ground's notices needed to be removed.

"Until that happens, renters in NSW, whatever rights they're afforded are going to be undermined by the risk of being kicked out on a whim,

6 ILLAWARRA MERCURY Monday September 04, 2017

NEWS

A 'fair' outcome for renters

BY BRENDAN CRABB

AN ILLAWARRA tenants' advocacy group has called for reforms they say would improve renter security.

A periodic (continuing) agreement is a tenancy for an indefinite period.

A tenant automatically moves to a periodic agreement when a fixed term agreement ends, if the tenant

remains and no new agreement is signed.

Illawarra and South Coast Tenants Services team leader Warren Wheeler said during a periodic agreement, "a landlord can issue a no-ground's notice at any time, without having to state a reason." Also, towards the end of the fixed term, a landlord can issue a 30-day notice without having to state a reason, other than the lease has come to an end," he said.

Mr Wheeler said during a periodic term, if a tenant has complaints regarding a property, they were often reluctant to exercise their rights for fear of receiving one of these notices. "This means often tenants will prefer to put up with substandard premises or poor landlord behaviour, just for the sake

of keeping the peace so they don't get kicked out," he said.

"A landlord will give a no-ground's notice, they don't have to justify why they're evicting the tenant, and as long as the notice is given correctly the Civil and Administrative Tribunal must terminate the tenancy.

"This can only be challenged if a landlord gives a notice in retaliation to a tenant asserting their rights, and even then the tribunal retains discretion."

However, he said tenants were often reluctant to challenge this, due to reasons such as lack of resources.

Mr Wheeler proposed the legislation be reformed to include specific grounds for termination, "to make it fair".

"So if the landlord wants their property back to do renovations, or because they want to move in... There's no argument there that a landlord shouldn't be able to get their property back for those reasons," he said. "We're saying the onus should be on the landlord to prove that is the case. So if they say they're going to renovate the property, then 'okay, show us the plans, show us when the trades are booked."

Campaign highlights the hardship faced by many

ILLAWARRA residents living below the poverty line are often forced to make harsh choices.

"This is the poorest area in the district - places like Berkeley, Warrawong and then - eat, or catch a bus?" Bree is on a disability pension, and lives in a one-bedroom private rental.

She is currently receiving treatment for breast cancer. "You think about," how

The Warrawong resident was among those who visited Warrawong Community Centre on Wednesday.

The centre houses the Illawarra Legal Centre and Warrawong Residents Forum.

WRF also provides a free

ILLAWARRA MERCURY

October 16 2018 - 1:30PM

Anti-Poverty Week event in Warrawong on Wednesday

Warrawong Residents Forum manager Maxyne Graham, Wollongong Handmade Hub manager Jade Mitchell and Sylvia Little

ILLUSTRATION: On Wednesday, Labor pledged to open the Centrelink and Medicare offices at Warrawong if it wins the May 18 federal election. Picture: Supplied.

Labor has pledged to open the Centrelink and Medicare offices at Warrawong if the party wins government in May. The Warrawong Centrelink and Medicare office, located inside Warrawong Plaza, closed last July.

Illawarra Legal Centre

Illawarra tenants' advocacy group has called for reforms they say would improve renter security.

Illawarra Legal Centre has a welfare rights lawyer, Lili Turnbull, open to work on rent issues.

If you have a rento-debt, you may be stopped from going overseas.

The Government implemented the ban last 30 June 2018.

Many 'living on the edge'

EMMA SPILLETT

ALMOST four people a week are declaring bankruptcy in the Illawarra as residents continue to feel the bite of job losses and spiralling living costs.

Almost 50 people across the region filed for bankruptcy in the three months to June 30, along with nine businesses.

New data, released by the federal government's Australian Financial Security Authority, shows Dapto and Port Kembla felt the biggest pinch with 18 people declaring bankruptcy.

Mr Germanos said soaring costs of living, including rising petrol and electricity prices, had also pushed people to the brink.

"Increased utility and petrol prices put pressure on people. They're more likely to use their credit cards to pay a bill they're not expecting or to ask for more time to pay."

But it's not all doom and gloom – overall, we're in less debt than we were in March.

More than 60 people had declared themselves bankrupt in the March quarter this year.

Wollongong was the worst hit

recorded. An extra 10 people had applied for debt help in March, including 22 from Dapto and Port Kembla.

It seems the southern suburbs have done it tough since the end of 2013 as total debt figures show an increase in the past six months.

Just seven people in Dapto and Port Kembla had filed for bankruptcy in the December quarter 2013, while personal insolvency jumped from 20 to 41 residents in the June quarter this year.

Mr Germanos said that areas often struggled.

Warrawong are three of the most disadvantaged areas in the Illawarra – there are people there living on the edge."

Overall, the number of insolventcies in the Illawarra dropped slightly, keeping in line with the 10.1 per cent decline nationally.

But Mr Germanos believes the fall does not necessarily represent a decline in people in financial hot water.

"It could be the case that creditors aren't suing people as much or they're accepting more lenient payment arrangements so people

OUR COMMUNITY

By providing a range of integrated services, from multiple locations, across the Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla & Bega Valley local government areas, ILC ensures that services are accessible to all members of our community.

We also understand that the ability to partner effectively with our community is absolutely essential for succeeding in our goal of promoting social justice for all.

We are deeply engaged with our community, forming partnerships, joining networks and talking to our stake holders.

PARTNERSHIPS

Pro Bono Solicitors from

Access Law Group
Acorn Lawyers
Baker McKenzie
Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers
Carter Ferguson Solicitors
Dawson Lawyers
Foye Legal
Fragomen
Helen Volk Lawyers
Kells the Lawyers
Peter M Woods & Associates
RMB Lawyers
Stacks Heard McEwan
Turner Freeman
Williamson Isabella Lawyers

Subcontracting arrangements

Southern Youth & Family Services – subcontracted to provide support at the Port Kembla Children's Court as part of our Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS).

Lifeline South Coast – subcontracted to deliver Financial Counselling Services to southern local government areas of Illawarra region.

Premises

Wollongong City Council – Provide our main office building at Warrawong which houses 20 staff and has done for 30 years.

Eurobodalla Family Support Services – Provide our full-time office at Moruya for nominal outgoings costs (1 staff member).

Seconded Workers for our Children's Court Assistance Scheme from

Southern Youth & Family Services
Wollongong Youth Centre

Rooms for Outreaches have been provided to us by

Anglicare
Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre
Homeless Hub
Illawarra Women's Health Centre
Kedesh Rehabilitation Service
Legal Aid (Nowra)
Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra (SAHSSI)
Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre



NETWORKS

Sector Based Networks

- CLCNSW Coordinators & Directors
- CLCNSW Finance and Administration Network
- CLCNSW Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Network
- CLCNSW Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) Network
- Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS) State Network
- National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN)
- Child Support Network Meeting

Local/ Community Networks

- Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group (IACBWG)
- IACBWG – Law and Justice Cluster
- Southern Suburbs Taskforce (SSTF)
- Wollongong Youth Network
- Port Kembla Court Users Meeting
- Community Industries Group
- Illawarra Multicultural Services Network (IMS)
- Illawarra Refugee Issues Forum (IRIF)
- Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC)
- Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI)

- Careways Community Network
- Prevention of Older Persons Abuse (POPA) in the Illawarra
- Domestic Violence Interagency Kiama / Shellharbour
- Youth Justice Coalition
- Warrawong Residents Forum
- Wollongong Legal Information Network (WLIN)
- Wollongong Legal And Civil Agencies (WLACA)

Tenancy Networks & Interagencies

- Tenancy Legal Working Party
- Illawarra Social Housing Forum
- NCAT Consultative Forum
- Residential Parks Forum
- Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program (TAAP) Network
- Housing and Mental Health Agreement /District Implementation & Action Committee
- Wollongong Homeless Hub
- Far South Coast Homelessness Network
- Cooperative Legal Services Delivery (CLSD)

OUR IMPACT

ON THE LAW

Illawarra Legal Centre has a strong tradition of research, consultation and submission writing in areas of policy and law which affect our client groups.

The Illawarra Legal Centre's policy and law reform work is focused on challenging potential and existing unfair laws and practices and making recommendations for improvements.

Law reform activities include projects that do the following four things:

- » Highlight the impact of the law on our community, particularly on groups who experience social and economic disadvantage.
- » Draw the community's attention to injustices within the law.
- » Bring to the attention of government and other institutions injustices within the law.
- » Recommend changes to the law and the way it operates based on our experiences within our community.

LAW REFORM ACTIVITIES

Submissions

- **Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW) submission to Victims Services**

In March 2019 we contributed to a CLCNSW submission to Victims Services. We mentioned delays by Victims Services and pointed out that the complaints unit of Victims Services had mixed up the complaints of 3 of our clients. Victims Services later apologised for the latter after we pursued that complaint.

- **Joint submissions for additional changes to Residential Tenancies Act (RTAct) Regulations**

Supported joint submissions with the Tenants Union NSW for additional changes to RTAct Regulations, particularly regarding the jurisdictional limit of the Tribunal, the minimum livable standards of housing and minor alterations. Also appeared on local radio and print to engage tenants in the submission process. These changes are due to be implemented in December 2019.

- **Human Rights**

Legal Aid's Human Rights Committee had given us less than 24 hours' notice to make submissions. Their representative later apologised and agreed to accept our submissions.

Other General Forums:

- **Protecting the environment**

We liaised with EDO NSW about lobbying for an international criminal law to protect the environment.

- **Criminalisation of poverty**

In October 2018 we arranged for University of Wollongong law students to interview homeless people at Warrawong Residents' Forum as part of the Criminalisation of Poverty project. In May 2019 researchers Julia Quilter and Luke McNamara interviewed our staff and staff of Warrawong Residents Forum.

- **Human Rights**

On Human Rights Day and in cooperation with Illawarra Refugee Action Collective we wrote to Prime Minister (Scott Morrison) and the Members for Cunningham and Whitlam in relation to removing refugees from Manus and Nauru. We received replies from:

1. The Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister who commended our centre.
2. The Director, Regional Processing Taskforce, International Policy Division, Department of Home Affairs who said they had started implementing the new medivac law.
3. Sharon Bird MP.

- **Children & Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment Bill**

The Minister for FACS (Pru Goward) via Gareth Ward (MP) replied to the letter we had written in conjunction with CLCNSW in relation to the Children & Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment Bill.

- **Victims Services**

In response to our further complaints to Victims Services, on 11 July 2018 they apologised for their delays in 2 matters. They also acknowledged that they had failed to record some of our phone calls with them.

In September 2018 we made a successful complaint about Victims Services under the Charter of Victims' Rights. A breach of the charter was found and apology given to our client for other issues.

In May 2019 we liaised with Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre to try to prevent Victims Services writing directly to clients represented by lawyers and failing to send notices of listing.

We also were interviewed on ABC Illawarra radio about the delays by Victims Services.

Also in May 2019 we told Paul Scully, State Member for Wollongong about the delays by Victims Services. Later Victims Services apologised in 3 of our cases. They said they have now engaged temporary staff to help with the "backlog caused by technical issues in the transition to a new case management system".

In June 2019 the head of Victims Services found (on Commissioner's Review) that they had dealt with our client's matter inadequately and they apologised.

- **Warrawong Centrelink office**

We met with federal opposition's Sharon Bird MP, Stephen Jones MP and Ed Husic Shadow Minister for Human Services to seek to have the Warrawong Centrelink and Medicare offices re-opened.

- **ADVO breaches**

We told Paul Scully, State Member for Wollongong about the failures of Lake Illawarra Police Station to take out ADVOs and to action breaches.

- **Domestic violence**

University of Wollongong domestic violence researcher Helen Simpson interviewed our staff.

- **Misleading conduct by creditors**

We took action through the Financial Rights Legal Centre and the Law Society of NSW to try to prevent misleading conduct by creditors and their representatives in relation to the status and timing of judgment debts.

- **Poverty**

We spoke about the need for measures to reduce poverty (including an increase in Centrelink payments) at Anti-Poverty Week event attended by the Lord Mayor, media, other community organisations and public.

- **Domestic Violence & the RTAct**

Advocated for additional changes to RTAct relating to domestic violence in particular. These changes were implemented in Feb 2019 across NSW.

- **Park operators training**

Contacted and wrote letters to the Minister for Community Services regarding the failure of the Government and Fair Trading to offer Parks training for operators, as is required under the Land Lease Communities Legislation.

- **Implications of recent law reform on tenants and homeless persons in NSW**

Attended meeting with local Law Society Chapter and subsequent meeting with current LS President Elizabeth Espinosa to discuss the implications of recent law reform on tenants and homeless persons in NSW, and consider collaborative solutions to work with pro bono solicitors in NSW

- **Australian Services Union (ASU) Civil Society campaign**

Attended delegations and consultation to include the right to advocate in what constitutes a civil society.



SIMPLE FACTS

OUR CENTRE IN NUMBERS



PEOPLE ACCESSING
OUR SERVICES



ADVICES



REFERRALS



INFORMATION
SERVICES



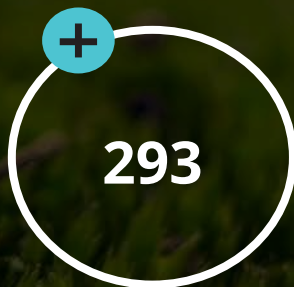
COMMUNITY LEGAL
EDUCATION (CLE)



CLE
PARTICIPANTS



LAW REFORM
ACTIVITIES



OPENED
CASES



CLOSED
CASES

WHO WE HELPED

8% Indigenous
Australians

18% Nil to Low English

62% New Clients

34% Have a disability

58% Female

GENERAL LAW, CHILD SUPPORT & WELFARE RIGHTS



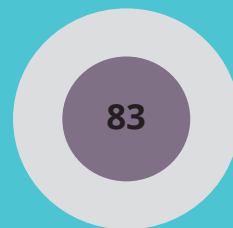
**LEGAL
ADVICES**



**INFORMATION
SERVICES**



NEW CASES



**CLE
ACTIVITIES**

TOP 10 MATTERS

1. Welfare Rights
2. Employment
3. Credit & Debt
4. Child Support
5. Victims Support
6. Consumer Complaints
7. Traffic & Vehicle Offences
8. Neighbourhood Disputes
9. Other Civil
10. Family Law

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

TOP TEN PRIMARY PRESENTING PROBLEMS

Low Financial Literacy
Unemployment
Reduced Employment
Family Breakdown
Domestic Violence
Disability
Illness
Caring Role
Mental Illness
Accident

WHO WE HELPED

13% Nil to Low English

12% Indigenous
Australians

42% Have a disability

HOUSEHOLD TENURE

37% Renter - Private
29.7% Renter - Public
14.2% Owner with
Mortgage
11.5% Boarding/ Lodging
3.4% Owner without
Mortgage
3.1% Homeless
0.5% Other
0.3% Caravan Park

TENANTS SERVICE

DEMOGRAPHICS

9.9% INDIGENOUS
AUSTRALIANS
30% HAVE A
DISABILITY
66% FEMALE

TOTAL CALLS

11,217

TRIBUNAL ADVOCACY

422

MATTERS

42% TERMINATION
23% REPAIRS
21% BOND/ COMPO

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Illawarra Legal Centre has had its share of funding uncertainty over this financial year. All our funding (6 sources both State and Federal) has been under review and unknown until the very last minute. Our General Legal core grant has been under review for years and annually rolled over, our Tenancy grant and our Financial Counselling grant have been under review and extended for 3 months, our Public Purpose Funding was also under review, then all announced approx. 3 weeks before the money runs out. This has placed pressure on our services that should be avoidable.



Truda Gray (ILC Coordinator) and Nick Rheinberger (ABC Radio) talking about the links between Legal Issues and Health Issues.

Now all our services are funded for the next three years, we have breathing space so we can plan and deliver our services making these resources go as far as possible in the right directions as we know our community very well.

Apart from late announcements of funding, over the last decade, there have been a number of changes to the funding of community services that are having detrimental effects. These changes include:

i) Increasingly, both State and Federal governments have been reducing the number of service providers and awarding funding contracts to the larger organisations such as the more well-known charities that operate state-wide.

ii) Competitive tendering.

iii) Privatising community services.

iv) Funding and services are being reviewed constantly and renewal of funding has been delayed until the last minute, often days before it runs out. Funding has been either reduced or held at the same amount for over 3 years and often 6 or more years while reviews are underway and funding is rolled over.

v) Monies have been rebadged/renamed. Often this involves a reduction in overall funding available while it is announced as "new" funding.

THE EFFECTS HAVE BEEN:

MONIES \$\$ FOR WHOLE REGIONS /SINGLE PROVIDERS

- **Local projects and knowledge is lost.**

Eg. The Community Centre next door to us at Warrawong had been running a community development/community garden project in the government housing estate across the road. The people who used and volunteered in the garden would be across at the Community Centre for the free lunch provided and the same people would be helping develop the garden and tailor it to their needs. They were a very close knit group. This garden was abundant and very much appreciated by all. However, the Warrawong garden project lost their funding to a state-wide charity. The local Community Centre worker was made redundant and the locally based community connections were lost.

COMPETITIVE TENDERING

- Small services losing tenders
- Local services losing funding
- Choice of services diminishing
- Just as choice becoming an issue (eg NDIS) meant to be giving "more" choice
- Putting organisations (who ordinarily work together) in competition with each other

PRIVATISING COMMUNITY SERVICES

- There will always be a problem when such services are provided for profit. Quality of service is usually compromised when profits are involved.

Eg. The Inquiry into Aged Care Services is revealing the depths of this inbuilt undermining dynamic.

CONSTANT REVIEWS AND DELAYS

- Either services don't know about the continuity of funding until the last minute or it is rolled over at the same amount for the next funding period (often both).

Eg. ILC had its core funding from both State and Federal governments offered for 3 years then rolled over year after year while under review.

This resulted in the loss of multiple valuable and experienced staff (one who had worked for us for 27 years) as we were not able to assure them that their jobs would be continuing. It also meant that our funding did not keep up with the cost of wages. Planning was hindered as we are at the mercy of the funding bodies.

SMALLER AMOUNTS \$\$ IN NEW POTS

- **Loss of services disguised as "new" services.**

Eg. Funding for social housing in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven was rebadged and a number of smaller services lost their funding or were merged with other services. The overall amount was less than had been available prior to the rebadged monies being announced.

MONIES \$\$ BEING REBADGED

- **Excluding some services from applying even though they provide the services.**

Eg. Our proposal to put ILC legal and financial counselling services in local women's refuges was not funded as not fitting with the "innovative" requirement of the funding despite being recognised as "best practice".

IN SUMMARY

- **Loss of services**
- **Loss local knowledge/tailored services**
- **Loss of community/connections**
- **Loss of variety**
- **Loss of choice**
- **Loss of capacity to plan**
- **Loss of staff**

Truda Gray
Centre Coordinator
Illawarra Legal Centre

ADMINISTRATION & IT

The Financial/ Administrative team of the Centre is responsible for our financial accountability, reception, record & file management, information technology and administrative support for all the Centre's services.

Financial Accountability

The finance team consists of Tracey Davis and Catherine O'Neill. This year Sri Pasztor and Laine Summer filled in for Catherine and Tracey whilst they were on extended leave.

The Financial Report is provided at the end of this report and has been audited by KH Accounting & Financial Group Pty Ltd.

Reception

Wendy Mills and Maria Sewell have shared the task of looking after the front desk over the past year. The front desk deals with both telephone enquiries and walk-in clients.

Triage

The job of the front desk is to initially work out how best to assist a client. Assistance may involve referring the client to one of the ILC services such as our Welfare Rights Service. We also refer clients to other services that operate in the Illawarra region.

Day to Day Functions

Some of the other day-to-day functions that involve the front desk include:

- Fielding and triaging 14,291 calls in the last 12 months (averages out to about 60 calls per day to the front desk).
- Completion and management of advice sheets for services.
- Making appointments for phone advice, Thursday night and Friday afternoon volunteer solicitors and monthly pro bono migration law.
- Management of roster for volunteer solicitors.
- Satisfying WH&S requirements (eg. researching data on products used at the centre, conducting emergency evacuation drills).
- Carrying out client satisfaction surveys for review of ILC service performance.

- Up-keep of Referral Manual

- Day-to-day assistance in the coordination of the centre.

- Securing interpreters for clients as required.

Interpreters

This year saw us securing over 46 face to face interpreters for clients as well as a large number of telephone interpreters. The language most in demand was Arabic. We also had requests for Vietnamese, Serbian, Karenni (Burmese), Portuguese, Kirundi, Macedonian, Italian, Swahili, Croatian, Turkish and Kinyarwanda. At times it has been a challenge finding a qualified interpreter for the not so common languages. Despite attempts we were unable to find interpreters that spoke Tagalog, Kinyamulenge and Indonesian.

Client Satisfaction Survey

Every year we conduct our Client Satisfaction Survey which provides us with great feedback on ILC's service performance. We can report that the majority of clients were very happy with the service administered. Our aim is to assist everyone that comes into the office whether it be at our Centre or by referring them to another service. Clients expressing their appreciation for the courtesy, respect and support given to them makes our jobs rewarding.

Record and File management

Database management, record keeping, information storage and reporting are key elements that support all of ILC's services. Our data entry worker is Kerri Webster.

Data entry staff enter data, update, maintain and retrieve information which is held on our primary database and other databases that the Centre uses. Having the one primary database allows ILC to work efficiently and carry out a variety of everyday tasks such as conflict checks and producing service reports.

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) team consists of Vesna Horley, Trevor Collier and Patrick Helm from Max Computing.

Vesna currently works 1 day a week in this position. Trevor who was previously employed at ILC, has kindly remained as an adviser for our IT and his assistance as such has been invaluable.

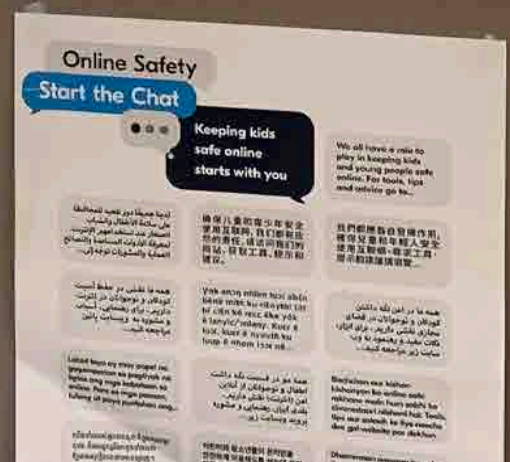
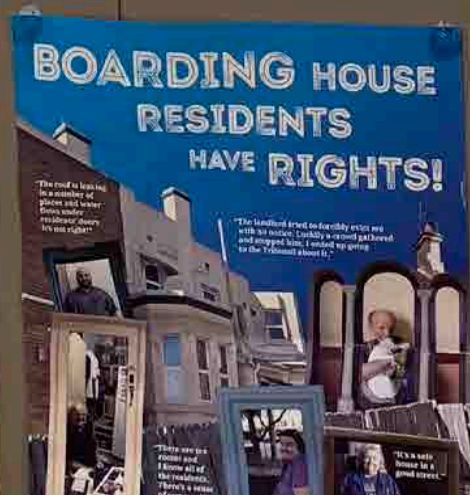
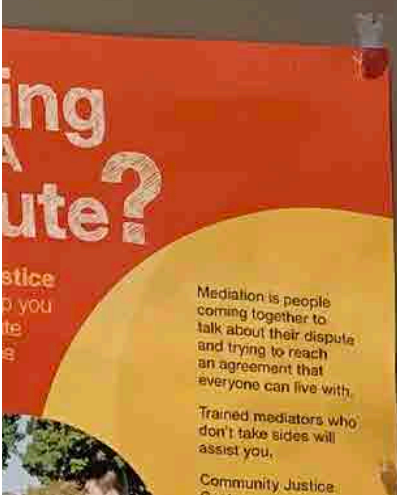
Max Computing provides support for all of ILC's IT needs. In the last 12 months, a new in-house email and calendaring system has been setup and is working very well. We have also replaced 3 lap tops and 7 desktop computers.

In 2019, major projects still in progress are:

- Change over from NBN to a Fibre connection. This will improve the speed of our internet connection and voice quality of our phone system. The estimated date for this connection is late November. Once the connection is made Max Computing will configure and set permissions.
- Replacement and programming of office phones. After 7 years of service, the time has come to replace all the office phones.



Illawarra Legal Centre Reception, Legal Intake & Referral Officers - Maria and Wendy



ABORIGINAL LEGAL ACCESS PROGRAM (ALAP)

The Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP) develops and maintains links with Aboriginal communities and improves legal service delivery for Aboriginal people. ILC is one of the five Community Legal Centres (CLCs) in NSW funded to provide such assistance. Since the program began there has been an 82% increase in the number of Aboriginal clients assisted by these CLC's.



This program has enabled ILC to recruit a dedicated Aboriginal worker to facilitate culturally appropriate services and build lasting relationships between ILC and Aboriginal Communities within our catchment area.

Our current ALAP Worker Levenia Clulow commenced in January 2019.

This program plays an integral role in community engagement, liaison and in creating a bridge between ILC and our local Indigenous communities. The success in doing this is evidenced by increased awareness of and access to services by Aboriginal community members since the establishment of our ALAP program.

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In ILC's catchment area, clients from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities represent the following (ABS 2016):

- Wollongong 2.6%
- Shellharbour 3.8%
- Kiama 1.8%

ILC statistics indicate that for the 2018/19 period Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients made up 9.42% of our Generalist legal work with a high of 18.75% in our casework (including Court and Tribunal representation).

However for ILC it is not just about general legal services. Being a multi-service model, we see the impact of the ALAP worker's work in the community across all of our services

with the following representation of clients from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- 9.87% Tenancy Service
- 12.56% State funded Financial Counselling Service
- 10.63% Commonwealth funded Financial Counselling Service

We aim to promote ILC services by engagement with community and by identifying and minimising the barriers in community. We have been doing this by building rapport, maintaining working relationships and supporting community to access our services within ILC. Thankfully we are seeing the results of this work.

Our ALAP worker, Levenia, collaborates with the ILC on strategies to engage community and acts as a liaison. This has involved:

- Sitting in on meetings between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other employees of the ILC.
- Arranging, attending and delivering Community Legal Education seminars and training.
- Assisting in organising projects relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Supporting Aboriginal families at Children's Court

Contacts within local community

Our ALAP Program has established relationships with many local services and is a member of the Salt Water Festival Place Making for the residents of Bundaleer Estate. Some of these local services are:

- Police Local Area Command
- Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation
- Murra Mia Tenant Advocacy Service (Southern NSW Aboriginal TAAS)
- Mission Australia
- Barnardos Australia
- Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service (IAMS)

ILC ALAP activities and community engagement in 2018/19 have included:

Aunty Jeans Chronic Care Group

We continue visits to Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre for Aunty Jean's Chronic Care Group on the first and third Tuesday of each month accompanying our ILC Generalist Solicitors, Child Support Solicitors and Welfare Rights Solicitors in supporting Elders of the group in obtaining legal advice. Our legal outreach creates a way to build rapport within the group and has assisted community obtaining access to legal and culturally appropriate services within the ILC and Illawarra.

Legal outreach to the group has created awareness and knowledge of entitlements and builds access to our ILC services for the Elders of the group, and minimises barriers they may experience accessing services.

Children's Court

We also continue to visit Port Kembla Children's Court regularly to provide direct support for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending court. Our aim is supporting and building the rapport with these young people and fostering connections with our ILC services in collaboration with Aboriginal Legal Services and Legal Aid. We assist with a young person's court process and access to legal services culturally appropriate to the young person's legal problems and needs.

Other Activities Include:

- NSW CLC Quarterly Yarn Up
- Illawarra Disability Expo
- Tenant Forum - Mission Australia
- CLE - ILC Child Support Services visit to Aboriginal Playgroup Bundaleer Community Centre/ Koonawarra Public School
- CLE - ILC/Child Support visit to WDVCS
- NAIDOC - 2019
 - Greene St Community Event ILC Stalls
 - Unanderra Family Fun Day ILC Stalls



Levenia (ALAP Worker), Sofi (Tenants Advocate) and Natalie (Student) at Unanderra NAIDOC Celebrations

CHILDREN'S COURT ASSISTANCE SCHEME

(CCAS)

The Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS) provides support to young people who appear at Port Kembla Children's Court each Tuesday.

With Georgina Pike, the usual Coordinator of the CCAS program taking leave, Levenia Clulow, our Aboriginal Legal Access worker at ILC has taken over as the Coordinator for 1 year.

Amy Hans from Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS) coordinates the support service at Court, and our CCAS service works in partnership with a roster of seconded youth workers from organisations such as SYFS and Wollongong Youth Centre, who accompany our paid workers on the day.

Amy and the seconded workers who are rostered on organise all comers to see the Legal Aid solicitor or ALS lawyer in attendance and support families and unattended young people with referrals or advice about options available in areas as diverse as for example, education, housing, counselling, material assistance, Work and Development Orders to pay off fines, healthy living programs.

There is a range of other support at the Court including:

- We have organised Barnardos Family Referral Service to attend Court one day per month to assist in connecting families in need of assistance for young people in need of early intervention.
- Our ILC Generalist solicitor Lucy Houweling continues to run a youth civil law outreach at the Court for all the non-criminal matters that the young people need help with.
- Other assistance at the Court includes the Department of Education Court Liaison Officer whose work has had a 55% success rate in returning young people to Department of Education settings.
- Our ILC Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP) worker also attends Court regularly engaging with Aboriginal families and young people and referring them to culturally appropriate supports and resources.

Other activities of CCAS

- We are working to develop a MERIT program (voluntary) for youth to engage with to assist in their recovery from drugs or alcohol and to assist in getting them on the right path for the Court to see when they attend.
- We are working with local schools to develop presentations on legal issues identified by youth as important to them.
- Training sessions for our seconded workers in legal issues affecting their work
- Liaison between the Aboriginal Legal Service, Legal Aid, Port Kembla Court, Illawarra Legal Centre Youth Outreach, other Court Services.

We could not run this program as successfully as we do without the assistance and support of our partner organisations who give us their workers for the day (paid for by these organisations).

In particular we thank Southern Youth and Family Services and Wollongong City Council Youth Centre. They are invaluable sources of support and expertise. We thank both the organisations and the workers for all they do.

441 Young People Assisted

27% Indigenous Australians

77% Young Males



SOPHIE'S STORY

CCAS staff provided support to Sophie*, who was in her mid teens.

Sophie had been coming through the court system with matters relating to family breakdown and domestic violence issues occurring in her home.

There had been extensive supports previously provided to the family which had been unsuccessful.

Sophie had various AVO matters including breaches of AVO.

CCAS staff provided advocacy and support referrals for accommodation with the support of Juvenile Justice. However due to Sophie's young age the Specialist Homelessness Services were unable to provide accommodation without Family & Community Services (FACS) involvement.

After extensive advocacy with FACS Sophie was placed into temporary care and accommodated at the youth refuge, whilst further interventions were attempted in her home, but they too failed.

Sophie has now been placed into an Out of Home Care long term residential placement. This has made a significant difference to her life. Sophie now has a stable environment and regularly attends school.

Through the collaborative approach with Illawarra Legal Centre's CCAS program, Southern Youth & Family Services, Juvenile Justice and Legal Aid, this young person has achieved great outcomes.

*name has been changed

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICE

Child support is the financial support for children provided by one parent to the other parent. These payments go towards the cost of raising the children and can be in the form of money (i.e. cash) or “non agency payments” (eg. School fees, rent, orthodontic costs).

Both parents have a duty to support their children financially regardless of whether they spend time with the children or not.

A parent who contacts the Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC) is offered either immediate advice by the child support solicitor or a call back at a more convenient time. The service takes telephone enquiries at any time.

The Child Support project is part of the Generalist Law service provided by the ILC. The position is filled by Carolynne Turner (3 days pw) and Judi Teesdale (2 days pw).

Parents with child support questions, issues or in need of assistance, contact the service by phone or through referral by another service in the centre.

Our Child Support service also receives referrals from Centrelink, the Legal Aid NSW's Child Support Service, the Child Support Agency (CSA), other Community Legal Centres, the Family Relationship Centre, Illawarra Women's Health Centre, Courts and Refuges.

Our clients come from within the service area of Illawarra. Child support clients may also be assisted at our outreach to the South Coast as well as being referred from other areas of the state, where the client needs experienced help.

The Child Support solicitor will assess the circumstances of the enquiry and if further assistance is needed an appointment will be made for a face-to-face consultation.

The underlying strength of the ILC Child Support service is in the way we provide information and assistance that aims to empower our clients and give skills so they are able to deal with their child support issues in the future.

We can provide information face-to-face, through our brochures and by providing Community Legal Education.

The Child Support solicitor position covers all legal forums including negotiation, submissions to the government agency, Tribunal appearance, Local Court and Federal Circuit Court.

Throughout this financial year, the project has focused on partnering with our Aboriginal Legal Access Program worker Levenia in providing up to date Child Support presentations to Aboriginal playgroups and other significant organisations and stakeholders.

Child Support advices given and client numbers have increased while representation files have remained steady. We assist both mothers and fathers depending on which parent the child lives with most of the time.

We have given assistance to parents with their child support issues as well as some matters of family law where there is a connection to child support. Around 40% of Child Support clients are experiencing family violence.

100 Advices

103 Clients

29 Cases

SARA'S STORY

Sara* has two children. Sara had separated from her partner and he had not done his tax returns for years. Her ex-partner has a very high paying job but reported that he was earning less.

Sara objected to the child support assessment of this income, knowing that when with her, her ex-partner split his salary to bring his income down.

Sara put in an Application for Change of Assessment under reason 8 prior to coming to the ILC and the Child Support Assessor rejected her request.

We assisted Sara with writing an objection due to the fact that anomalies were not addressed and the Assessor did not use due diligence and that the decision was not just and equitable.

Her ex-partner owned properties, had been promoted to director and is a shareholder of the company he works for. Sara was on a low income.

Our main argument was that the Assessor did not look beyond the corporate veil. Our objection was successful in getting Child Support to identify the anomalies and that Sara's ex-partner was not declaring fringe benefits etc.

JOANNE'S STORY

We assisted Joanne* who has 2 children, one with autism and the other with an anxiety disorder. Her child with autism is totally dependant on her. Joanne receives a pension.

Joanne separated from her husband and although the father said during the family law proceedings he had no money for child support, her solicitor found he had plenty of money. He was to pay \$3,000 per month in child support.

Joanne's ex-husband then left Australia and now lives in a country with which Australia does not have a reciprocal child support arrangement. He has several properties over there and Joanne believes he may have a property here in Australia.

At the time of assisting Joanne she was in a very bad financial position. The father possibly travelled to Australia every 6 months. At the time of agreeing to assist the mother the arrears were over \$15,000.

A Departure Prohibition Order was applied for at the Child Support Agency and if granted it would mean that when the father re-entered Australia he would not be able to depart unless he entered into an agreement regarding payment of his arrears.

This was granted and Joanne has now received a total of \$15,000 in arrears. This issue is still ongoing however Joanne is now in a much better financial position. She has been referred to our financial counsellors to assist with budgeting.

*names have been changed



FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE

The Illawarra Region Financial Counselling Service (The Service) at the Illawarra Legal Centre continued to provide valuable advocacy, support and assistance to clients facing various forms of financial hardship in a number of outreach locations throughout the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven during the 2018-2019 financial year.



Maroun, Vesna, Ron with Sharon Bird MP and Stephen Jones MP & Tracey

The Service employs Financial Counsellors who are accredited or associate members of the Financial Counsellors' Association of New South Wales.

The Service operates from the following outreach locations:

- Wollongong
- Dapto
- Warilla
- Corrimal
- Nowra
- Unanderra

We have always made it a priority to take the service to our clients which makes it accessible to those who don't have transport or are unable to travel due to reasons such as illness, young children etc.

Funding

The Service is able to exist because of the funding received from both State and Federal governments.

The State funding is from the Office of Fair Trading to service the Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven LGA's.

The Federal funding is from the Department of Social Services for a specific financial counselling service focusing on people affected by problem gambling.

Casework services

The Service is provided to clients who present with many different financial problems causing financial hardship.

Many of our clients also suffer from a range of other issues including mental health illness, trauma, domestic violence, addictions, elder abuse, chronic pain, physical disability and acquired brain injury.

Accredited interpreters are provided when needed.

Some of the presenting problems this past year were:

- Debt recovery action taken by creditors
- Budgeting
- Financial hardship as the result of family breakdown, loss of employment, sudden illness etc.
- Financial over-commitment
- Mortgage arrears
- Rent arrears and threat of eviction
- Voluntary and forced bankruptcies
- Utilities debts such as electricity, gas and telephone etc.
- Fines
- Tax debts

Many of the cases that we dealt with were complex and required the counsellor to spend more time on talking with the client and advocating on their behalf. In some of the cases we assisted them to lodge disputes with various alternative dispute resolution schemes on their behalf such as the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS), the Energy & Water Ombudsman (EWON) etc.

The Service receives referrals from Government departments, banks, finance companies and various community service organisations within the region such as Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra (SAHSSI), Anglicare, South Coast Baptist Centre Community Assist Inc, Family Services Illawarra and Indigenous Community Links/ (Warrigal Employment), referrals from the National Debt Hotline (1800 007 007) and a large number of referrals from former clients.

In addition, referrals were made by other projects within the Illawarra Legal Centre, such as our Generalist, Child Support and Welfare Rights Solicitors, our Tenancy Service, workers and our Aboriginal Legal Access worker.

651 Advices

593 Clients

67 Cases

6084 Client Sessions

CAROL'S STORY

Carol* attended her interview with a financial counsellor in a very distressed state. She said she had taken out a car loan but her partner had recently lost his job and decided to separate.

Carol was no longer able to make payments on the car loan and was terrified the bank might try to take her car.

Carol's only income was the Disability Support Pension.

The financial counsellor contacted the bank and provided details about the Carol's financial situation and health problems.

The bank agreed to reduce the car loan payments, reduce interest and extend the terms of the loan which allowed the client to afford the payments without increasing the cost of the loan.

AMY'S STORY

Amy* had been refused credit after applying at several banks. Amy was eventually told it was because of her credit report.

The financial counsellor helped Amy to request a free copy of her credit report and it was found that there were entries relating to a small business she had run some years earlier.

The original entries by the creditor were apparently accurate but it was found that they were more than 5 years old. Without knowing of any extenuating circumstances, it was likely these should have been automatically deleted.

To delete these entries the creditor would need to contact Equifax and request deletion.

The financial counsellor contacted the creditor and was referred to their legal team. After several phone calls and written submissions, the creditor agreed to immediately ask Equifax to delete the entries.

Amy was very happy with the result and said she felt she was now finally free from that part of her life.

***names have been changed**

GENERAL LAW PROJECT

The Generalist team provides advice and casework to clients in the following areas of law:

- » Discrimination
- » AVO applications
- » Employment matters
- » Other matters of public interest
- » Victims' Support
- » Debt matters where the creditor is a financial institution
- » General Civil law

The General Law Project offers the following advice services:

Phone Advice

- Phone advice sessions on general legal matters.
- Phone advice covering child support and welfare rights available as required.

Face-to-Face Appointments

- Appointment sessions with a volunteer solicitor one afternoon each week for clients who require an interpreter, have a disability or some other need for a face-to-face interview.
- Appointment sessions with volunteer solicitors every Thursday evening.
- A volunteer solicitor and registered migration agent continues to give free migration advice at the Centre on a monthly basis.

Casework

The team adopts a strategic approach to casework so that our limited resources can be put to matters that have strong social justice effects. Much of the work of the generalist team is on matters (such as victims' support) that are not traditionally taken up by private solicitors.

This year the team has provided advice and representation in discrimination matters and acted in complex victim's support matters that typically involve childhood sexual assault and domestic violence that were never reported.

During the past year the Centre continued to receive a high number of calls from people who had apparently been unlawfully terminated or discriminated against in the workplace.

Volunteers/ Pro Bono

- We have volunteer solicitors who fill the roster for our Thursday night face-to-face appointments
- Volunteer law students have continued to assist staff and volunteer lawyers during the Thursday evening advice roster.
- Pro Bono Solicitors gave advice on Friday afternoons
- We conducted orientation for new volunteer solicitors and students. RMB Lawyers provided support and the venue.
- Fragomen Immigration Lawyers continued to partner with us by volunteering to check our immigration advices.
- Pro Bono Barristers who assisted in recent matters include Larissa Andelman, Rabih Alkadamani and Lester Fernandez. The matters they assisted with included acting for a refugee client, discrimination and administrative law matters.
- We succeeded in obtaining reimbursement from the Pro Bono Disbursement Fund of subpoena conduct money that we had paid. The Fund also paid for travel expenses and accommodation for our pro bono barrister.
- We met Baker McKenzie Lawyers' Pro Bono Counsel to arrange for them to assist us further with a case and they did so.
- We obtained pro bono advice from Pam Suttor solicitor.
- We leveraged pro bono assistance from Kingsford Legal Centre in a racial discrimination matter.

Networking with Legal Aid NSW & others

We continue to attend Wollongong Legal and Civil Agencies (WLACA) meetings held at the offices of Legal Aid NSW. We met with Health Justice Forum agencies on topics for young people and we attended a University of Wollongong event in relation to internships and found new volunteer solicitors.

Networking in CLC sector

We networked with Senior Rights Service and they told us about their Strata Legal Service and the new strata laws.

We discussed University of Wollongong research with the Care and Protection lawyers from Aboriginal Legal Service and Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

We conducted the cross checks of our Centre and 2 other Legal Centres. This was an excellent opportunity to discuss improvement to case management and law reform especially victims' support.

We recently joined a committee established to look at issues for the Prevention of Older Persons Abuse (POPA) in the Illawarra.

We attended the NALCL national conference including sessions on policing and racism, silencing of legal centres advocacy and legal centre innovation.

We attended CLCNSW training and law reform discussion on notifiable data breach scheme.

966 Advices

830 Clients

52 Cases

ROBERTO'S STORY

Roberto* initially came to ILC for help in obtaining a financial management order for his wife, who has late stage dementia and was hospitalised.

There was no power of attorney in place and the hospital was concerned over Roberto's ability to make the necessary financial decisions for his wife.

We engaged with the social workers at the hospital and eventually we were able to successfully assist Roberto in making an application to the Guardianship division of NCAT.

Unfortunately due to her dementia, Roberto's wife was unable to return home and as English was Roberto's second language he needed further assistance in navigating Centrelink systems, including the income and assets assessment, in order that his wife may obtain a place in a nursing home.

This was also made difficult due to Roberto's lack of identification documents even though he had been living in Australia for more than 30 years.

After a lot of back and forth we were able to assist Roberto and his wife in getting the age pension and also getting the assessment she needed for her nursing home placement.

PETER'S STORY

Peter* had worked for his employer for several years. He had received accolades for being the best customer service employee of the month and also received much praise from his customers.

Peter was dismissed due to a "no tolerance drug and alcohol" policy. When Peter started with his employer he did not receive the full training he was entitled to, as the company was short staffed.

We lodged an unfair dismissal claim with Fair Work on Peter's behalf and we were successful, through conciliation, in getting a good outcome for Peter.

Peter received compensation, was able to get his employment record changed to resignation and also got a Statement of Duties covering his years of service.

Now able to put this all behind him, Peter is happy and has started training in his new job.

*names have been changed

TENANTS SERVICE

Housing stress is in the news and on our minds more than ever. As a service, we are increasingly stretched beyond capacity in a desire to meet the demands of tenants, homeless persons and residents in land lease communities.

Tenancy matters are increasingly coupled with a myriad of other financial stressors, health concerns and welfare issues which makes our advocacy more important than ever.

A number of changes to the housing sector have also had a significant impact on the nature of our service and the advocacy that we deliver.

Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act relating particularly to domestic violence have led to a marked increase in the number of clients who are disclosing and seeking advice relating to their experiences of domestic violence. While we are proud of the new ways that we can advocate and support these clients, we are disappointed that the amendments to the Act did not go far enough to support other vulnerable tenants.

We continue the fight to reform the law to best meet the needs of tenants, in particular through the removal of the “no-grounds” termination which we are disappointed to see is being used more and more, including in the social housing sector.

The expansion of community housing along the South Coast and into the Southern Highlands has also had a significant impact on the work that we do, as the decentralisation of housing has led to a lack of overall supervision for many housing providers.

While tenants’ advocates are superheroes, massive stock transfers have been a difficult transition for tenants and advocates who are forced to respond to new policies, new expectations and new workers that may vary quite dramatically from their previous providers.

We continue to provide a high level of case work advocacy, in addition to our phone advice sessions and duty advocacies at Tribunals including Wollongong, Moss Vale, Nowra, Bega, Batemans Bay, Eden and Narooma.

As a service, we have also assisted in more mortgagee repossession matters than ever before. This is an area of the law where tenants have very little autonomy and negotiation power and are often kept in the dark until the sheriff comes to their door.

Tenants advocacy is always a lesson in creative thinking and this was highlighted in a case involving a young mother with more than 5

children, several of whom had disabilities who our advocate met at the Tribunal.

At the time that we met this client, she had fled interstate to escape domestic violence, was unable to work due to her own health concerns as well as those of her children, and each charity in the Illawarra had withdrawn services because there was no end in sight for her situation.

Despite being able to manage private tenancies for years while she patiently waited on the social housing waitlist, the size of her family meant that she was expected to wait for a suitably sized house for many more years, and the family would be homeless in the meantime.

Our advocate was able to duck, weave and bargain with a large number of support services and housing providers to ensure that this didn’t happen, instead convincing a housing provider to headlease her current tenancy, meaning that all current arrears were waived, and she and her family were able to remain in the current home now on a subsidised and affordable rent for years to come.

This year has also seen us farewell our fearless leader, Mr Warren Wheeler who continues his work in tenant’s advocacy now south of the border. We thank him for his advocacy and leadership over the years, and look forward to seeing the changes he makes for Victorian tenants.

Despite our challenges, our dedicated team of tenants’ advocates keeps on fighting to defend the rights of tenants along the South Coast.

1323 Advices

102 Cases

1135 Clients

1915 Client Sessions

BETH'S STORY

Beth*, was faced with an immediate eviction into homelessness by the sheriff after she found out that despite paying her rent on time, her landlord had defaulted on his mortgage and his property was being repossessed.

The Tenants Advocate was able to not only hold off the sheriff for Beth, but after lengthy negotiations with the bank, we were able to secure Beth an ongoing lease on nil rent until she found an appropriate new rental, with the bank also agreeing to cover the relocation costs for the young family.

PETER & ALEXANDER'S STORY

Peter* and Alexander*, brothers who each had significant physical and mental disabilities were threatened with eviction from their social housing provider. Their current home met all of their complex medical needs and Peter and Alexander had been tenants living at the family house for decades.

The social housing provider relentlessly pursued termination for many months even though they met the eligibility criteria for priority housing, and were both facing imminent homelessness if they were evicted from their current housing.

Our service assisted Peter and Alexander at the Tribunal, at a HAC hearing, and with subsequent representations to the Housing Minister Pru Goward and the Anti-Discrimination Board.

Despite winning every small victory and having the support of the entire community, the provider continued to pursue termination.

At the end of the day, our unyielding advocacy won out and Peter and Alexander were offered the continued tenancy at their home, a massive relief for all.

ZOE'S STORY

Our service assisted Zoe*, a vulnerable older woman. Zoe had multiple disabilities which worsened after she moved into a house that she later discovered was contaminated by methamphetamine. Once discovered, Zoe reported this to her landlord and asked for repairs.

Her landlord instead accused her of causing the contamination and immediately attempted to recover in excess of \$20,000 in remediation costs from her. They also sought to evict her, forcing her into homelessness.

The tenants advocate not only assisted Zoe to defend these applications successfully, but they also navigated an unprecedented area of the law and were able to secure Zoe in excess of \$12,000 compensation, as well as assisting Zoe to secure a new tenancy.

*names have been changed

WELFARE RIGHTS SERVICE

Being flexible is important for our clients, especially when they are experiencing legal problems, we provide advice by telephone and face-to-face appointments at the Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC) and at other locations. The Welfare Rights Service (WR) provides regular Monday afternoon appointments at ILC and conducts outreach clinics at Nowra, Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre and the Wollongong Homeless Hub.

Advice and Casework

The largest category by age group of our clients is 50-64. This is not surprising given the nature of the Illawarra. Many clients have worked with chronic injuries over a number of years in very physical jobs, and find themselves unable to continue with employment as a result of this.

With over 60% of our clients having a disability and/or mental illness, naturally a large proportion of our advice and casework relates to Centrelink refusals of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) claims.

Many clients are directly referred to us by psychologists, medical practitioners and job network agencies, which shows the integration of our project into the local community. We also have a strong working relationship with the staff at local Centrelink offices which facilitates the success of our work.

Impact on Individuals

Our casework brings positive changes to people's lives beyond the simple application of the law and a big part of our role is helping a person understand a Centrelink decision and whether they have a good case to appeal.

Broader Impact

As well as providing advice and assistance, WR represents clients at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). WR acts for vulnerable clients and is also strategic in prioritising cases that will influence policy and have broader application.

WR continues to be actively involved with the National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN) and has held the position of Vice-Chair since the NSSRN Annual Conference in Canberra in August 2017. In addition to this we have participated in delegations as well as made submissions to the Productivity Commission in relation to its inquiry into the Disability Support Pension.

As a member of the NSSRN we participated in the development of "Specialist Social Security Community Legal Services Impact Report" about the impact of its member centres' work as specialist social security community legal services in Australia, released in October 2018. We also participated in the development of "How well does Australia's social security system support victims of family and domestic violence?" Report.

Community Legal Education (CLE)

Our service works in the community to make welfare rights more understandable and accessible. Our full schedule of community legal education sessions is set out in the CLE section of this report. Organisations we have worked with in the last year include:

- Aboriginal Medical Service
- Southern Youth & Family Services
- Illawarra Community Mental Health Service
- Multicultural Communities Council Illawarra
- Mental Health Unit, Wollongong Hospital
- Macedonian Women's Welfare Association
- Cringila Neighbourhood Centre
- Warrawong Residents Forum
- Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Illawarra Multicultural Services
- Wollongong Homeless Hub
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
- Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre, and of course, our friends at
- NSW Legal Aid.

Welfare Rights Solicitor's Ian & Liz



We help people to change their circumstances.

MAUREEN'S STORY

Maureen* applied for the DSP in 2017. Centrelink took more than a year to process her claim and then rejected it on the grounds that her medical conditions were not fully diagnosed and treated. The delay in processing her application meant that it was very difficult to gather evidence which had to relate to her state of health at the time of her application for the pension and not the date upon which Centrelink rejected her claim.

We represented Maureen at the Social Services & General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), and it took us more than a year to gather medical evidence that would satisfy Centrelink that Maureen's medical conditions were fully diagnosed and treated at the relevant time.

Luckily, the project has a good working relationship with Disability Support Services along the South Coast and they were able to convey Maureen to the relevant medical appointments.

554 Advices

362 Clients

43 Cases

MICHAEL'S STORY

We represented Michael*, an Aboriginal client, in a compensation preclusion period matter who had been refused payment by Centrelink.

Michael had a brain injury which meant that he often embarked on uncontrolled and spontaneous expenditure without regard to the need to budget. Michael also suffered from problems of gambling and addiction, and had been a victim of family violence.

For more than a year Michael had survived on charitable payments because Centrelink had refused his application for benefits.

We were able to gather medical evidence to support his application for payment on the grounds that special circumstances existed within his case for the ending of the compensation preclusion period.

Although Michael's initial application was rejected, we successfully appealed on his behalf to an Authorised Review Officer who granted his payment. After this, we then assisted him with his application for the DSP which was also granted.

*names have been changed



CENTRE WORKERS

ADMINISTRATION

Truda Gray	Centre Coordinator
Catherine O'Neill	Financial/ Administration Manager
Tracey Davis	Bookkeeper
Laine Summer	Bookkeeper (locum)
Sri Pasztor	Bookkeeper (locum)
Maria Sewell	Legal Intake & Referral Officer
Wendy Mills	Legal Intake & Referral Officer
Joanna Leggett	Legal Intake & Referral Officer (locum)
Vesna Horley	IT Worker
Kerri Webster	Data Entry

ABORIGINAL LEGAL ACCESS PROGRAM

Rebecca Simon	Access Worker
Levenia Clulow	Access Worker (from Jan 19)

CHILDREN'S COURT ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Georgina Pike	Project Coordinator
Levenia Clulow	Project Coordinator (locum)

CHILD SUPPORT

Carolyne Turner	Child Support Solicitor
Judi Teesdale	Child Support Solicitor

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

Kerri Webster	CLE Worker
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FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

Maroun Germanos	Financial Counsellor Team Leader
Ron Bryant	Financial Counsellor
Tracey Iskra	Financial Counsellor
Vesna Horley	Financial Counsellor

GENERAL LAW PROJECT

Phillip Dicalfas	Principal Solicitor
Judi Teesdale	Generalist Solicitor
Lucy Houweling	Generalist Solicitor

TENANTS SERVICE

Warren Wheeler	Tenants Service Team Leader
Olivia Todhunter	Tenants Service Team Leader (Acting)/ Tenants Advocate
Jenna McConnachie	Tenants Advocate
Leah Farrell	Tenants Advocate (South Coast)
Phoenix Van Dyke	Tenants Advocate (locum)
Sofi McNamara	Tenants Advocate (locum)
Les Farrell	Parks Researcher

WELFARE RIGHTS

Ian Turton	Welfare Rights Solicitor
Liz Turnbull	Welfare Rights Solicitor
Julius Golab	Welfare Rights Solicitor (locum)

YOUTH ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Georgina Pike	Project Worker
---------------	----------------



Carolyn



Ian



Judi



Liv



Tracey & Catherine



Jenna



Standing: Kerri, Catherine, Phillip, Wendy & Ron

Front: Truda, Ian & Maroun

VOLUNTEERS & PRO BONO

VOLUNTEER SOLICITORS

Ann Woods	Marion Benjamin
Anne Mowbray	Martin Culleton
Anthony Neve	Matthew Forshaw
Caitlin Drabble	Melanie Munro
Cherie Wright	Michael Mandicos
David Potts	Michelle Walsh
Diana Foye	Natalee Davis
Helen Volk	Peter Moggach
Jim Isabella	Peter Robinson
Kaitlin Isabella	Simon Haag
Lauren Dunn	Tom Ellicott

RMB LAWYERS FRIDAY VOLUNTEERS

Aimee Lanyon	Matthew McCulloch
Anne Barlow	Meg Connell
Bradley Peterson	Olivia Yeatman
Claire Bourke	Rebecca Watts
James Parrish	Steve Baker

PRO BONO SOLICITORS/ BARRISTERS/ FIRMS

Baker McKenzie	Lester Fernandez
Kingsford Legal Centre	Pam Suttor
Larissa Andelman	Rabih Alkadamani

CHILDREN'S COURT ASSISTANCE SCHEME SECONDED STAFF

Amy Hans (Coord.)	Janaya Dean
Charo Serventy	Jenean Chattam
Eileen Gibson	Jonny McMullan
Erin Masters	Lisa Boyse

CENTRE VOLUNTEERS & STUDENTS

Isabel Hernandez	Natalie Griffin
Jim Milne	Tegan Poidevin
Julius Golab	

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS -THURSDAY NIGHTS

Aliessa Bailey	Liezel de Castro
Amy Forwood	Maddison Ker
Bethany McGhie	Madison Zend
Charlie Gonzalez	Marcus Morgan
Choeli Cooper	Melissa El-Faham
Cinea Huang	Merve-Nur Duman
Fiona Cowlin	Olivia Poate
Hannah Lennon-Mather	Peeraya Kuanpoth
Isabel Hernandez	Sam Hibbard
Isabella Rosandic	Sarah Gore
Janelle Te Pairi	Tegan Poidevin
Julius Golab	Taylah Spirovski
Libby Newton	Zena Sultan





Staff & Management Committee - Standing: Vesna, John C, Judy S, Wendy, Catherine, Peter, Karyn, Ron Front: Maroun, Kathryn, Tracey I, David & John L



FINANCIAL REPORT

Overview

- After a threatened deficit of close to \$227,000 the Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC) financial result for 2018-2019 was a slight deficit of \$9,044. Many things went towards this!
- Grants received for the year were \$1,924,893.23. Interest earned was \$40,070. Administration Income is an internal entry and is off set by an administration expense account. This is a fee levied across all services to cover shared costs of personnel staff and office expenses such as rent, IT etc.
- Grants carried forward from 2017-2018 used in this financial year were \$10,055 and unexpended grants carried forward to 2018-2019 are now situated at \$55,672.
- Cash-flow position for ILC is strong and has remained strong for the duration of the 2018-2019 period. Cashflow is at \$1,831,605, a decrease from the 2017-2018 financial year of \$153,788.
- Illawarra Legal Centre received NSW Fair Trading funding for the 2019-2020 period in June 2019 to the amount of \$199,417.

Highlights from the 2018 - 2019 Financial Year

Interest Rates

Interest rates continued to stay relatively low throughout the year at an average of 2.3-2.5%. Interest earnings were situated at \$40,070 for period with no significant variation from the previous financial year.

Community Legal Services Program (CLSP) Funding

ILC has signed a contract for core funding with Legal Aid until June 2022. These funding levels have gone back to the 2016/2017 financial year. This grant has not only been cut but shall also not receive indexation increments moving forward.

Financial Counselling

State Financial Counselling Programs ran at a deficit for the 2018-2019 period of \$26,622. The Federal funding for gambling specific financial counselling has been reduced from 1st January 2019 by around \$13,000. ILC received a new federal financial counselling grant which will run from 1/1/2019-30/6/2023. There are no CPI increases on this funding for duration of the 4.5 years. Indexation is only received on the state financial counselling grant at 2.5%.

Funding Information

Project Name	Amount P.A.	% of Total
Commonwealth (Cth) - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (DFACS&IA) - Financial Counselling Gambling	115,613	6.01%
Cth - DFACS&IA - Financial Counselling Gambling Well Being Program	44,429	2.31%
Cth - Community Legal Services Program (CLSP) - Generalists	448,680	23.31%
Public Purpose Fund (PPF) - Aboriginal Legal Access Program	41,726	2.17%
State Top Up - Aboriginal Legal Access Program	16,916	0.88%
PPF - Children's Court Assistance	63,325	3.29%
Cth - CLSP - Welfare Rights	111,346	5.78%
State - CLSP - Generalists	276,956	14.39%
State - Fair Trading - Financial Counselling	313,643	16.29%
State - Fair Trading - Financial Counselling Aboriginal Support	23,234	1.21%
State - Fair Trading - Tenancy	433,530	22.52%
State - Fair Trading - Residential Parks Act Review	35,493	1.84%
	1,924,891	100%

Increasing costs of Information Technology (IT)

External Max Computing IT costs in 2017-2018 were \$15,562 compared to 2018-2019 at \$22,130. The Centre also has dropped its internal IT support to 1 day from 2 days as hours of support externally are now unlimited with our new contract arrangements. The Centre purchased 10 new computers which were fully depreciated at a value of \$24,383 collectively. A new email system was introduced at ILC moving us from a BBS system to Kerio at a cost of \$11,460.

Tenancy

Tenancy ran at a deficit of \$16,076. ILC now pay an annual rental fee of \$6,122 to run its outreach down the south coast.

Community Building Grant

The Illawarra Legal Centre received a \$10,000 Community Building grant which was fully expended on setup costs for the newly acquired rental of Cowper Street.

Funding Sources

The Illawarra Legal Centre's core operation sources of funding are the State and Commonwealth Governments through the Community Legal Service Funding Program (CLSP). These grants are administered by Legal Aid NSW.

NSW Fair Trading also represents another one of the Centre's major funding bodies which supports our Tenancy and Financial Counselling programs.

Looking Forward

Whilst the stability of funding is more resolved, ILC still faces the battle of grants not keeping pace with wage increases, (both CPI & Equal Remuneration Order).

The Centre will need to start reviewing individual projects that are running at deficits and start to assess ways to reduce overruns.

Audit Report

An audit was conducted on the financial reports for 2018-2019 by KH Accounting & Financial Group Pty Ltd and it immediately follows this report. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lou and Anthony for all their efforts.

Acknowledgments

A big thank you to Sri Pasztor and Laine Summer who filled in for Catherine O'Neill whilst she was on extended leave. Welcome back to Tracey Davis who has returned from extended leave.

I would also like this opportunity to thank Peter Moggach for carrying out his duties as Treasurer over the past year.

The Illawarra Legal Centre would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all of our funding bodies for their continued support of our services.





ACCOUNTING & FINANCIAL

**ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE INCORPORATED
(INCORPORATED UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS
INCORPORATIONS ACT, 2009)**

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS
OF ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE INCORPORATED**

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Illawarra Legal Centre Incorporated which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2019, the income and expenditure statements for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the certification by members of the committee on the annual statements giving a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the association.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of Illawarra Legal Centre Incorporated is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and has determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (New South Wales) and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee's responsibility also includes such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the association's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the association's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.



We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

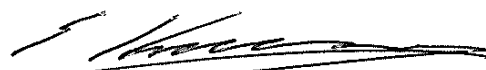
Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report of Illawarra Legal Centre Incorporated presents fairly, in all material respects Illawarra Legal Centre Incorporated as at 30 June 2018 and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the Associations Incorporated Act New South Wales, and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and not-for-profit Commissions Act 2012

Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Illawarra Legal Centre Incorporated to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (New South Wales). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Auditor's signature



**KH ACCOUNTING & FINANCIAL
GROUP**
Registered Auditor
Chartered Accountant

Auditor's address:

Suite 4, 27-29 Princes Highway
FAIRY MEADOW NSW 2519

12 November 2019

**ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE INCORPORATED
(INCORPORATED UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS
INCORPORATIONS ACT, 2009)**

**CONSOLIDATED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019**

	Note	2019 \$	2018 \$
INCOME			
Grants Received		1,968,280	1,817,011
Unexpended Grants Carried Forward		65,728	75,656
Interest Received		40,070	42,067
Membership Fees		96	86
Miscellaneous Income		1,809	279
Transfer from Provisions		12,182	37,385
Centre Contribution		<u>385,179</u>	<u>338,361</u>
TOTAL INCOME		<u>2,473,344</u>	<u>2,310,845</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Advertising		9,163	11,834
Auditor's Remuneration		7,586	6,223
Bank Charges		672	1,150
Centre Contribution		385,179	338,361
Cleaning		6,690	5,771
Computer Stationery and Supplies		19,856	28,665
Conference Expenses		5,446	6,992
Contracted Services		36,512	100,305
Cross Subsidisation of Grant		-	11,652
Depreciation – Furniture and Fittings		39,967	7,143
Electricity		3,309	2,807
General Expenses		6,808	7,275
Holiday Pay		43,794	34,383
Insurance		11,484	12,166
Legal Disbursements		2,177	568
Long Service Leave		24,468	22,536
Minor Equipment Purchased		1,938	313
Postage, Printing and Stationery		10,515	8,638
Rates and Taxes		-	591
Reference Materials		1,785	2,341
Rent		27,476	9,891
Repairs and Maintenance		2,382	1,801

**ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE INCORPORATED
(INCORPORATED UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS
INCORPORATIONS ACT, 2009)**

**CONSOLIDATED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019 (Continued)**

	Note	2019 \$	2018 \$
Security		1,091	1,448
Staff Amenities		2,085	2,472
Staff Training		312	11,179
Storage/Shredding		2,148	2,332
Subscriptions		15,308	16,444
Superannuation Contributions		144,202	131,058
Technical Support		22,131	15,562
Telephone		9,271	10,728
Translations		5,552	6,945
Travelling Expenses		5,449	7,757
Wages		<u>1,571,961</u>	<u>1,431,052</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>2,426,717</u>	<u>2,258,383</u>
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		46,627	52,462
Less AMOUNTS TRANSFERRED TO UNEXPENDED GRANTS		<u>55,672</u>	<u>65,728</u>
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		<u>\$ (9,045)</u>	<u>\$ (13,266)</u>

**ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE INCORPORATED
(INCORPORATED UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS
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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2019

	Note	2019 \$	2018 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	1,831,605	1,985,393
Prepayments		31,444	6,940
Receivables		-	275
Accrued Interest		<u>14,795</u>	<u>14,434</u>
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>1,877,844</u>	<u>2,007,042</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment		<u>27,698</u>	<u>28,706</u>
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		<u>27,698</u>	<u>28,706</u>
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>1,905,542</u>	<u>2,035,748</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Creditors and borrowings	4	92,385	121,843
Provisions	5	1,371,607	1,357,530
Grants in advance		181,288	300,736
Other – Grants unexpended	6	<u>55,672</u>	<u>66,472</u>
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>1,700,952</u>	<u>1,846,581</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Provisions	5	<u>173,820</u>	<u>149,352</u>
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>173,820</u>	<u>149,352</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>1,874,772</u>	<u>1,995,933</u>
NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)		<u>\$ 30,770</u>	<u>\$ 39,815</u>
EQUITY			
Retained Earnings		<u>30,770</u>	<u>39,815</u>
TOTAL EQUITY		<u>\$ 30,770</u>	<u>\$ 39,815</u>

**ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE INCORPORATED
(INCORPORATED UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS
INCORPORATIONS ACT, 2009)**

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019**

	Note	2019 \$	2018 \$
Balance at 1 July 2018		39,815	53,081
Profit attributable to members		<u>(9,045)</u>	<u>(13,266)</u>
Balance at 30 June, 2019		<u>\$ 30,770</u>	<u>\$ 39,815</u>



Illawarra Legal Centre Inc. Annual Report 2018-2019

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