

**ILLAWARRA  
LEGAL CENTRE  
ANNUAL  
REPORT 2020**

*ilc*



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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

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Illawarra Legal Centre Inc. Annual Report 2019-2020  
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7 Greene Street (PO Box 139) Warrawong NSW 2502  
Telephone 02 4276 1939 / Fax 02 4276 1978  
[www.illawarralegalcentre.org.au](http://www.illawarralegalcentre.org.au)

Front Cover Photography - [iStock.com/tsvibrav](https://www.istock.com/photographer/tsvibrav)  
Graphic Design - Kerri Webster



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FREE LEGAL ADVICE  
276 1939  
OPENING HOURS  
Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm  
Sat 9am - 12pm  
Sun 10am - 2pm  
SANTS SERVICE  
274 3475  
ILLAWARRA  
LEGAL CENTRE  
COUNSELLING  
SERVICE  
276 1939



Illawarra Legal Centre Inc  
7 Greene Street



Community Lunch



## The impact of COVID-19 has been so broad and far reaching that, regardless of whether or not we have previously considered ourselves to be vulnerable to social and economic change, we now know that we all are

Tenancy and financial problems, unemployment, health concerns, social isolation and Centrelink issues, which may have previously been for “others” are now being experienced across communities and social groups, and not just by people who have historically been more marginalised.

Perhaps this represents an opportunity to wake up to our common humanity and inter-relationship, and to deepen our compassion for those most affected by the pandemic and its related impacts.

This should not be the only beneficial outcome of COVID-19. The interim measures put in place by governments to support those who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19, the increases in weekly payments, the moratoriums on evictions, and more flexible working arrangements should not be temporary measures.

We need structural change that recognises that it has never been possible to live on weekly Centrelink payments for those looking for work or with disabilities that limit engagement in employment.

This fact was acknowledged during the early days of the pandemic, and increased payments to a living wage for people facing old age, disability and long term unemployment need to be implemented as a feature of our income security system.

We need structural change that recognises that long-term renting continues to increase significantly, and will be increasingly the norm in a housing market where fewer and fewer people are able to enter affordable home ownership.

Such structural changes needed include significant increases in affordable and social rental stock, tenancy laws appropriate to long-term and permanent renters, better protection for the rights of tenants, and that

genuinely address the growing problem of homelessness through “housing first” solutions with appropriate support.

We need structural change in our labour markets and employment law that recognises the need for a better work-life balance and can sustain the more flexible work arrangements that have characterised many industries during COVID-19; and that also acknowledges the vital role of front line health, aged, community service, retail and other workers, whose conditions and remuneration do not adequately reflect their skills and their social importance.

Like other services, the ILC is seeing groups and individuals who have not previously approached us for support in relation to welfare rights, financial counselling, tenancy problems and mortgage stress, child support and general legal issues.

This has implications for our service targeting and direction. Understanding that people generally come with a constellation of legal needs, we also know that we are fortunate to be able to offer these services within a holistic, multi-service that is flexible, responsive and adaptable to changing needs and issues.

*Judy Stubbs*  
Chairperson  
Illawarra Legal Centre



# In 1985, when we first opened our doors it was a direct result of community action and support. Since then Illawarra Legal Centre has become very much a part of the fabric of the Illawarra

The Centre's sole staff member, a part-time solicitor, was assisted by a local solicitor to develop our inaugural advice roster. This enabled us to provide free legal advice to the local community, and in particular, to those who had little hope of accessing affordable legal help.

The Centre has grown substantially since 1985 but our primary focus remains on helping those living with disadvantage and marginalisation.

Over the years the essence of what makes the ILC a real Community Legal Centre still remains the same, 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.

The ILC is one of nearly 180 independent, non-profit community legal centres across Australia.

## 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.

"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."

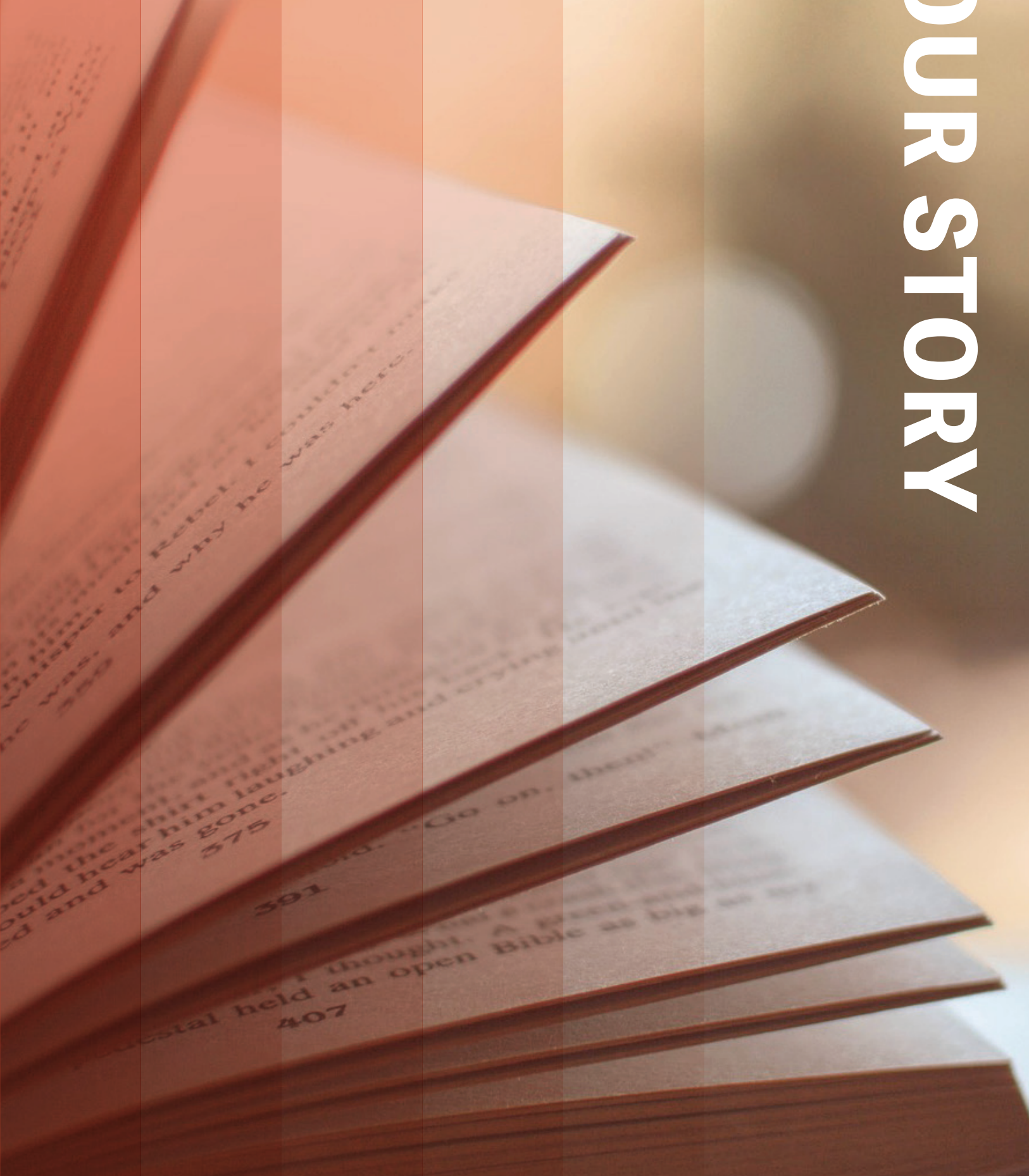
## Our Management Committee

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
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 STORY



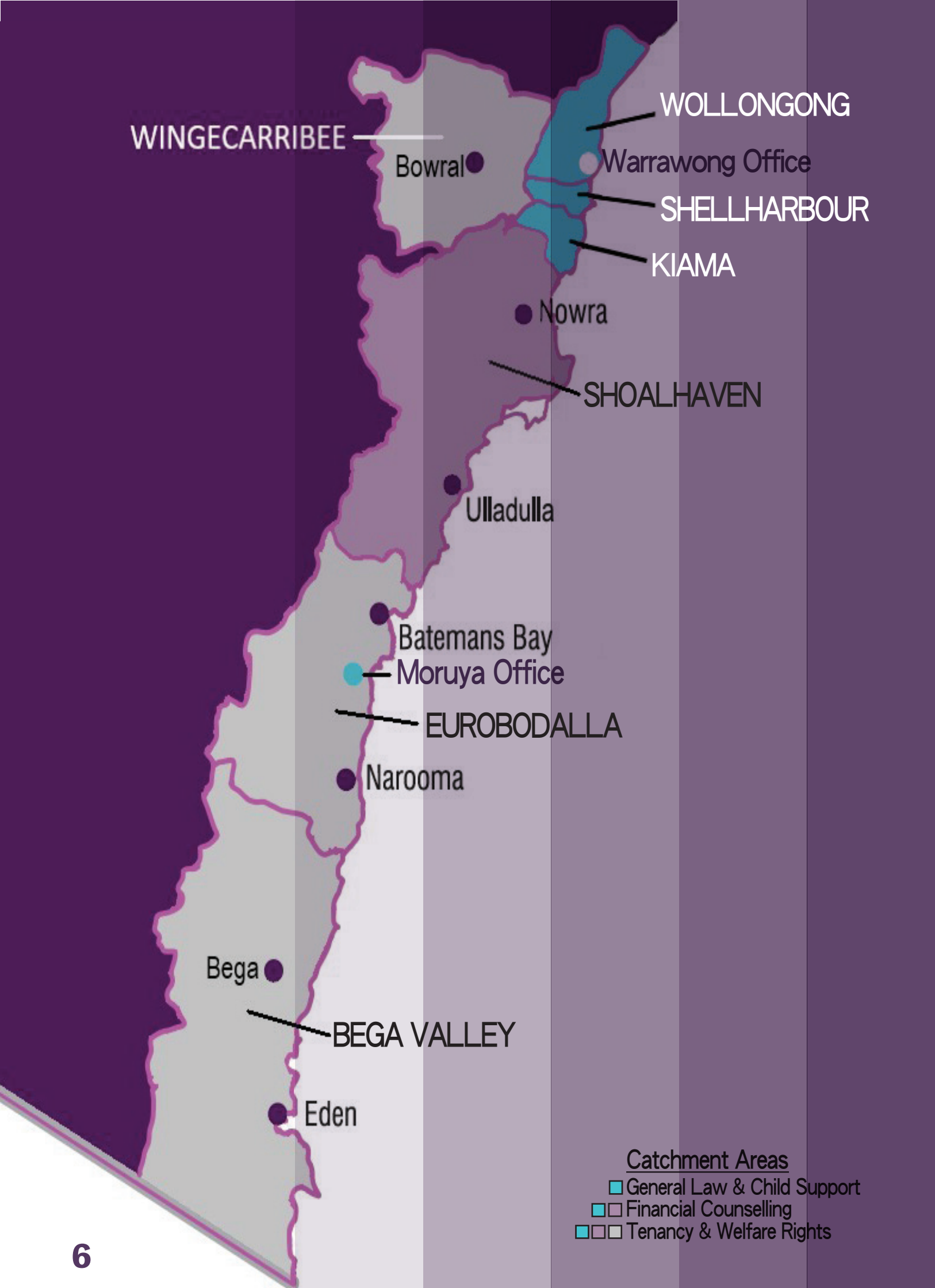
...whisper to Rebel. I couldn't make  
...and why he was here.  
...the shirt right off his back  
...him laughing and crying  
...Go on. They  
...thought. A piece of  
...held an open Bible as big as his

375

391

407







## ILC's Integrated Multi Service Model Approach

ILC prioritises assistance to the most vulnerable members of our community, with particular emphasis on working with people living with economic and social disadvantage.

People using our services often present with more than one problem.

As a result ILC delivers a wholistic service and is able to act as a 'one-stop-shop' where our clients can access a range of legal and community services that are housed under one roof.

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.

### Services

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.

Our diverse and committed staff deliver thousands of hours a year across the following services:

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

### 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.

### 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.

### Law & Policy Reform

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

### Advice Sessions

For General Legal, Financial Counselling, Welfare Rights and Child Support call 4276 1939 during business hours to organise an over the phone or face-to-face appointment.

The advice line for our Tenants Service is available between: 9am - 1pm Mondays & Fridays or 1 - 5pm on Tuesdays & Wednesdays and can be reached by calling 1800 807 225.

Qualified accredited interpreters are used when needed.

### Community Legal Education

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



# ILC is committed to providing our clients with professional legal services, which are tailored to their needs and circumstances

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

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

- 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 & refugees
- 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.

## Client Satisfaction Survey

**98%**

said it was easy to contact us



**100%**

said they were treated in a friendly & respectful manner



**100%**

said we listened to their legal problem



**98%**

would recommend ILC to other people



**98%**

said we understood their legal problem



**98%**

said that the advice was clear & easy to understand



**"I don't have the words to thank you enough!! Please have my sincere thanks and gratitude, your help means more to me than I can say!"**

## 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 & young people (<25 years), as well as older people (>65 years)
- People experiencing financial disadvantage
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People

## Our CLE Activities

**"We believe in bringing about self-empowerment through education."**

ILC provides a wide variety of CLE activities across a broad range of legal topics and audiences.

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 94 Community Legal Education (CLE) sessions, reaching more than 2,000 participants. We also appeared in the media on 22 occasions, highlighting a number of community and law reform issues. For a full list of CLE activities, please see page 36.

## Our Outreaches

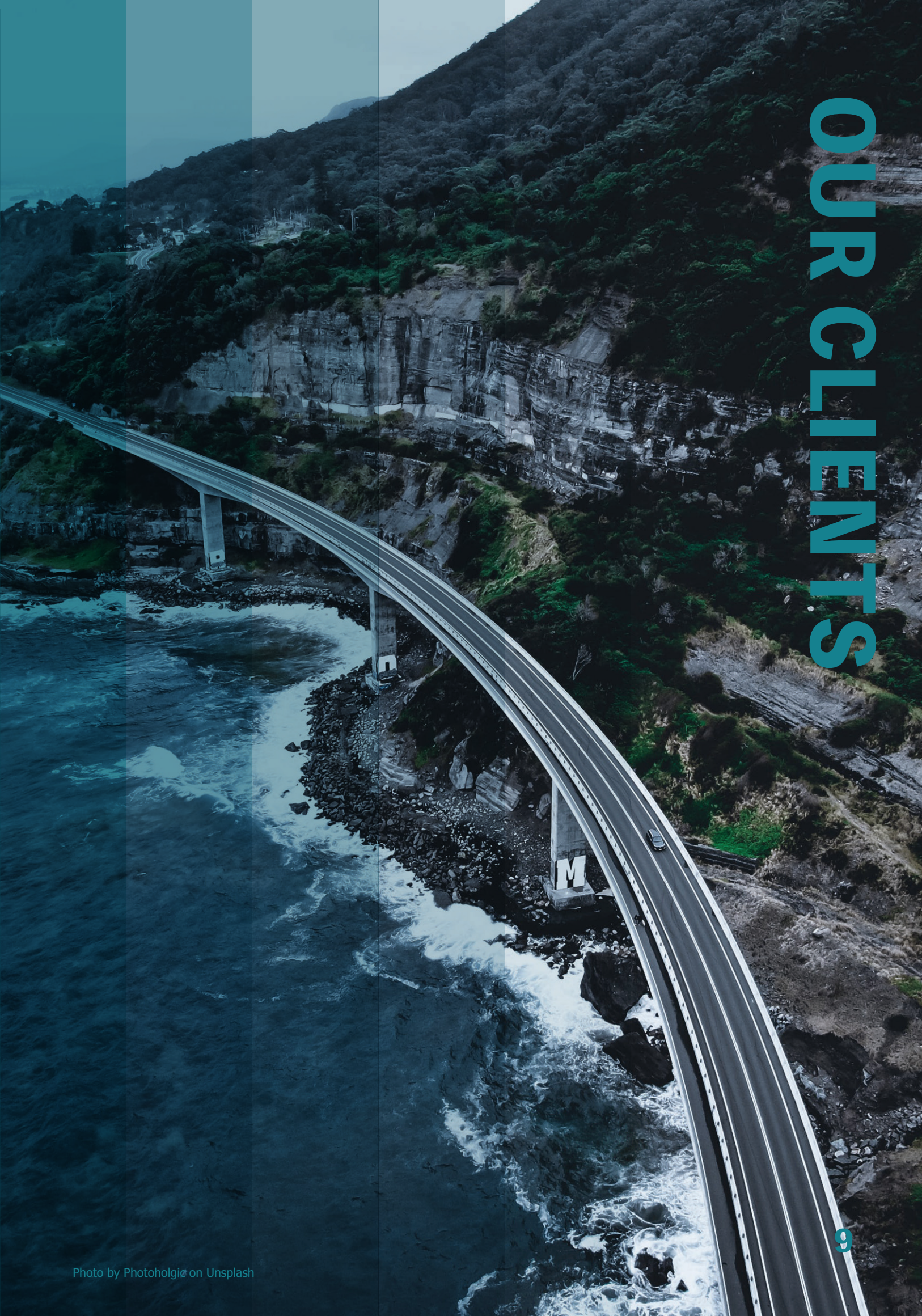
ILC believes that people should have the opportunity for face-to-face contact no matter where they live. Our teams provides legal or support services at the following locations:

- Batemans Bay • Dapto • Unanderra
- Bega • Moruya • Warilla
- Berkeley • Nowra • Wollongong
- Corrimal • Port Kembla

For a detailed list of our Outreach offices and services, please see page 37.



# OUR CLIENTS





# The staff and volunteers of the ILC continue in their unwavering commitment to social justice

## Centre Workers

### Administration

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

### Aboriginal Legal Access Program

Levenia Clulow	Access Worker
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### Children's Court Assistance Scheme

Levenia Clulow	Project Coordinator (locum)
Georgina Pike	Project Coordinator (on leave, then resigned)

### 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
Carol Brain	Generalist Solicitor (locum)
Alison Oyston	Generalist Solicitor (locum)

## Tenants Service

Phoenix Van Dyke	Tenants Service Team Leader (May 2020)
Olivia Todhunter	Tenants Service Team Leader (Acting until Feb2020)/ Tenants Advocate
Julia Murray	Tenants Service Team Leader (locum Feb-May 2020)/ Tenants Advocate (locum)
Warren Wheeler	Tenants Service Team Leader (on leave, then resigned)
Jenna McConnachie	Tenants Advocate (on leave)
Leah Farrell	Tenants Advocate (South Coast)
Elizabeth DeFreitas	Tenants Advocate (locum)
Sofi McNamara	Tenants Advocate (locum)
Les Farrell	Parks Researcher/ Tenants Advocate (locum)

## Welfare Rights

Ian Turton	Welfare Rights Solicitor
Liz Turnbull	Welfare Rights Solicitor (on leave, then resigned)

## Volunteers & Pro Bono

### Volunteer Solicitors

Ann Woods	Marion Benjamin
Anne Mowbray	Martin Culleton
Anthony Neve	Matthew Forshaw
Caitlin Drabble	Michael Mandicos
Cherie Wright	Michelle Walsh
David Potts	Natalee Davis
Diana Foye	Peter Moggach
Emma Thomson	Peter Robinson
Helen Volk	Tom Ellicott
Jim Isabella	Wendie Thompson

### RMB Lawyers Friday Volunteers

Aimee Lanyon	Emma Thomson
Anne Barlow	Matthew McCulloch
Bradley Peterson	Olivia Yeatman
Claire Bourke	Steve Baker



# OUR TEAM

## Pro Bono Barrister & Firms

Brenda Tronson      Mirren Waters  
Herbert Smith Freehills

## Centre Volunteers & Students

Berk Eker      Jim Milne  
Isabel Hernandez      Jackson Cocks

## Student Volunteers -Thursday Night

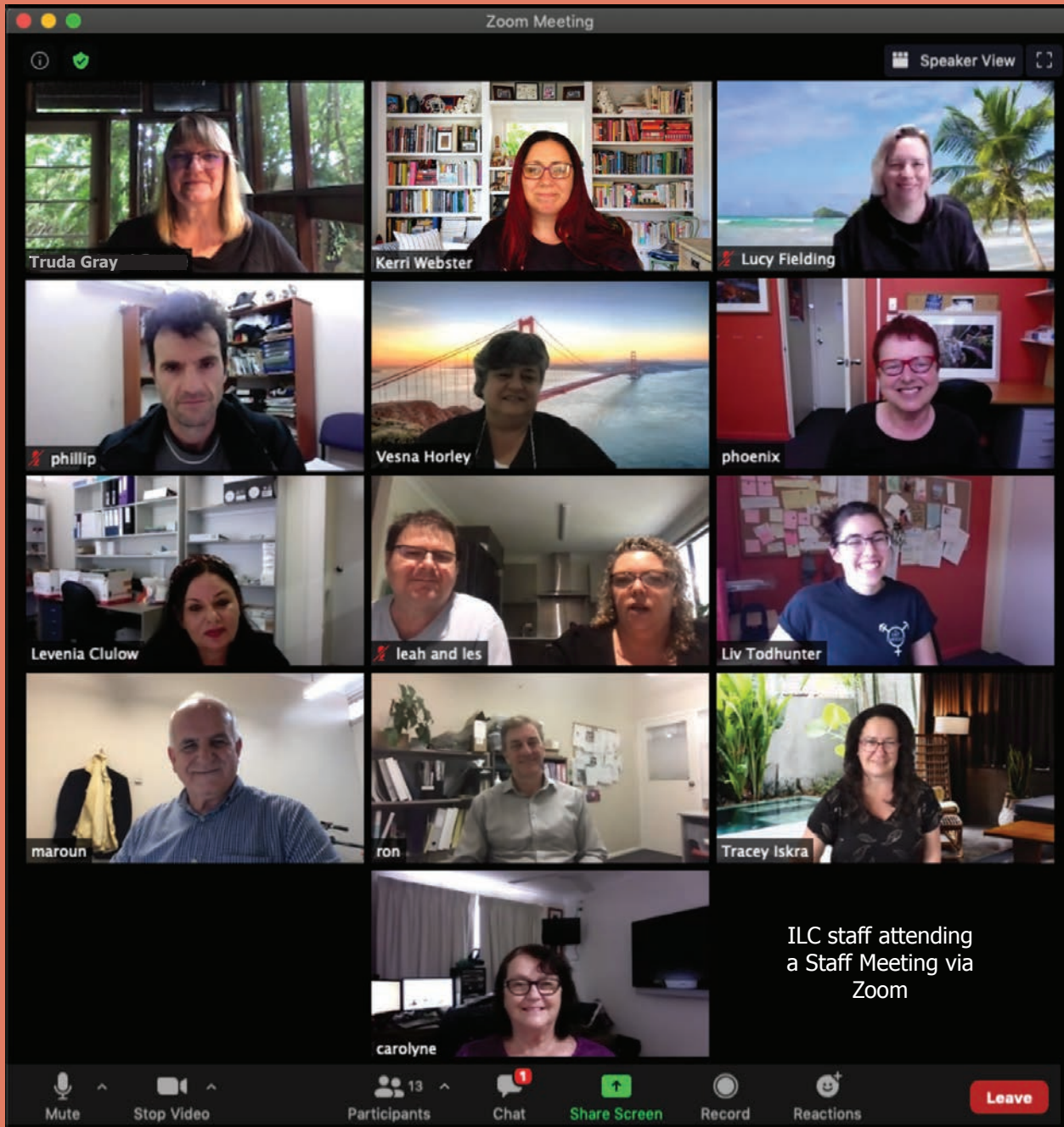
Aliessa Bailey      Janelle Te Pairi  
Amy Forwood      Laura Tagliapietia  
Bethany McGhie      Libby Newton  
Cassandra Fairhurst      Liezel de Castro  
Choeli Cooper      Maddison Ker  
Fiona Cowlin      Merve Nur-Duman  
Georgia Grant      Peeraya Kuanpoth  
Hannah Lennon-Mather      Tegan Poidevin  
Isabel Hernandez      Zena Sultan

## Children's Court Assistance Scheme Seconded Staff

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

## Bushfire Seconded Staff

Kishaya Delaney





# More than ever we understand that the ability to partner effectively with our community is absolutely essential for succeeding in our goal of promoting social justice for all

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 many members of our community.

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

For a detailed list of our networks and partnerships, please see page 35.

## Australia's 'Black Summer'

Record-breaking temperatures and months of severe drought fuelled a series of massive bushfires across Australia. Australia's 'Black Summer' was unprecedented in its extent and intensity.

Although Australia has always had bushfires, this season was the worst on record for New South Wales in terms of the scale of the bushfires, the number of properties lost and the amount of area burned.

- » Parts of Sydney experienced air quality more than 12 times the hazardous level
- » 2,439 homes destroyed in NSW – worst on record
- » 25 deaths from bushfires in NSW and 33 Nationally
- » 3 seven-day state of emergency declarations were made for NSW in November, December and January
- » 5.4 million hectares burned in NSW<sup>1</sup>

Just after the New Year, bushfires down the South Coast flared up dramatically, closing roads to our Moruya Tenancy office and our Tenancy worker Leah was pressed into service defending Batemans Bay properties including her own.

Power outages, no postal deliveries, and people needing to be relocated made our capacity to carry on work with many of our South Coast clients tricky - document exchanges in particular.

There was, and later this year will be, huge pressure on the South Coast for affordable rental properties, scarce at any time, but with houses burnt down and holiday rentals further reducing the properties available, the end of this year, when insurance rent support ceases, will see many people in trouble.

We are supporting on ground actions to help make them as effective as possible, providing information, support and advice to our community.

During times like these, serious legal issues can escalate quickly if not addressed. ILC is one of the many Community Legal Centre's across the state located in bushfire affected areas that are ready to support the individuals and families that need us.

General Legal services for the South Coast region area are provided by our sister Community Legal Centre, Shoalcoast, who were on the front foot during the crisis with representatives in the emergency evacuation centres. Our Tenancy, Financial Counselling and Welfare Rights services have also been working in these areas, providing assistance throughout the bushfire season to people negotiating tenancy, financial hardship and Centrelink issues.

Bushfires also affected the areas west of Illawarra Legal Centre in the Wollondilly and Wingecarribee LGAs. We have begun work in this area connecting with other organisations supporting bushfire affected people and linking them up with our services.

<sup>1</sup> Lesley Hughes, Will Steffen, Greg Mullins, Annika Dean, Ella Weisbrot and Martin Rice. 2020 'Summer of Crisis' Climate Council of Australia Ltd, <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/summer-of-crisis/>



## Supporting our community during COVID-19

The 2019 novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has acted as a magnifying glass, highlighting the larger pandemic of social inequities in Australia.

While reported figures do not show significant differences in infection rates across class, race or gender, there is other evidence that COVID-19's effect has differed across social groups.<sup>1</sup>

People who were already living with disadvantages such as unemployment or underemployment, with high levels of existing debt, suffering homelessness, or facing existing difficulties with access to health and social services were likely to be further marginalised.<sup>1</sup>

Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC) works with some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We have clients and potential clients who do not have access to computers, scanners, smartphones, or even phones to call us on (many on only Centrelink payments or not even this).

When these people come to us for help it is no good to be given a number to call to get phone advice. We must always make our services accessible to all so we have to be there to talk at the door and make suitable arrangements.

The pandemic has demonstrated the power and importance of a strong community service sector.

Community legal centres and other community based services have shown that being grounded in community and having that connectedness, has allowed us to operate flexibly and responsively to unexpected developments.

We are now six months into the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our centre, staff, clients and communities. COVID-19 has thrown our whole centre out of our usual mode of service delivery.

A large proportion of our staff are working at home and continue to do so. Luckily for those still working from the office(s) we work across 3 buildings in Warrawong and have been able to spread out.

New procedures /workarounds were developed to make this work and our IT set up moved well into the new modes. We have been able to just pick up our computers and phones and walk them out the door to set up at home. Thank you to our patient and supportive IT team.

What has always been a highly personalised approach to our casework, with focus on face-to-face appointments, has been forced into remoter forms such as phone advice and scanned exchange of documents.

Phone advice has its limits, as too does the online delivery of legal advice. Having previously conducted a research project, 'Searching Questions – A qualitative study of the accessibility and effectiveness of online information for communities living with disadvantage', we discovered that all groups surveyed found it very difficult to frame what their legal problem was let alone get any understandable answers.<sup>2</sup>

When people need legal help, they are usually in a fairly high level of distress themselves and talking to someone in-person often contributes to feeling better about the problem/s. The remoteness of both phone and online legal advice does not lend itself to this added benefit.

*We know* that the personal/ in-person is by far the better way to give people true access to justice. We look forward to COVID-19 restrictions easing in the future.

*Truda Gray*

Centre Coordinator  
Illawarra Legal Centre

<sup>1</sup> Dominic O'Sullivan, Mubarak Rahamathulla and Manohar Pawar, 'The Impact and Implications of COVID-19: An Australian Perspective' Sage journals, Volume: 2 issue: 2, page(s): 134-151, accessed 2 October 2020, <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2516602620937922>>

<sup>2</sup> Linda Tucker, 2016, 'Searching Questions' Illawarra Legal Centre, [https://illawarralegalcentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SearchingQs\\_final.pdf](https://illawarralegalcentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SearchingQs_final.pdf)



## Our Centre Numbers



People accessing our services



Advices



Referrals



Information Services



Community Legal Education (CLE)



CLE Participants



Law reform Activities



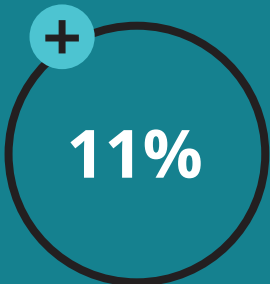
Opened Cases



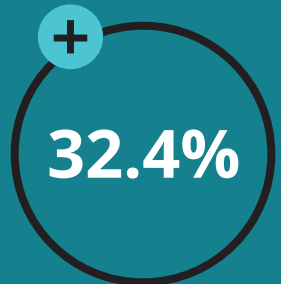
Closed Cases



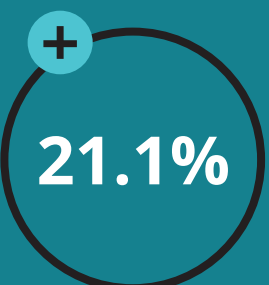
Indigenous Australians



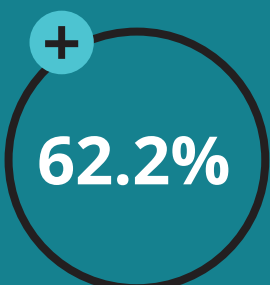
Nil to Low English



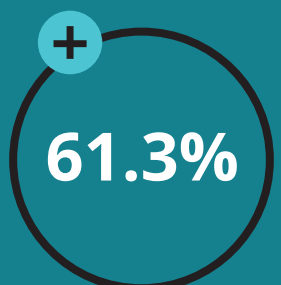
People with a Disability



Young People



Female



New Clients

## General Law, Child Support & Welfare Rights

1,449

Legal Advices

202

Legal Tasks

141

New Cases

73

CLE Activities

### TOP 10 MATTERS

1. Welfare Rights
2. Employment
3. Victims' Support
4. Wills/ Guardianship/ POA
5. Credit & Debt
6. Traffic & Vehicle Offences
7. Child Support
8. Neighbourhood Disputes
9. Family Law
10. Family & Domestic Violence

## Financial Counselling

454

Advices

487

Clients

54

New Cases

4,883

Client Sessions

## Tenants Service

1,076

Advices

811

Clients

81

New Cases

4,114

Client Sessions

### TOP 10 MATTERS

1. Termination
2. Bond/ Compensation
3. Repairs
4. Rent
5. Access
6. General Rights
7. Privacy
8. Agreements
9. Share Accommodation
10. Other tenancy matters

## Children's Court Assistance Scheme

408

Young People

30%

Indigenous Australians

70%

Male

7%

Attended with a Solicitor



F<sub>4</sub>

I<sub>1</sub>

W<sub>4</sub> O<sub>1</sub> R<sub>1</sub> K<sub>5</sub>

F<sub>4</sub> R<sub>1</sub> O<sub>1</sub> M<sub>3</sub>

Y<sub>4</sub>

H<sub>4</sub> O<sub>1</sub> M<sub>3</sub> E<sub>1</sub>

T<sub>1</sub>

P<sub>3</sub>

E<sub>1</sub>



## The Year of Living Dangerously Again!

Both the Bushfire season and COVID-19 have demonstrated the power and importance of a strong service sector. Illawarra Legal Centre has shown that being grounded in our community and having that connectedness, has allowed us to operate flexibly and responsively to unexpected developments.

It's times like these that our multi-service model with General Legal, Financial Counselling, Tenancy, Welfare Rights and Child Support services all available here at the Centre comes into its own as clients do not have to make separate contact with all these services but can be jointly managed in the one place.

There have been a few firsts for us (even though we have been around 35 years):

- Meetings over Zoom - It's all been said! We are getting used to them (overused). But some great benefits. We can gather remote people like never before and our far-flung staff down the South Coast now feel they are more part of the Centre than they ever have.
- Volunteers – No surprises here, our wonderful volunteers (who have been mostly local private sector lawyers who do face-to-face appointments 3 sessions per week) stayed with us but had to convert to phone advice.
- Vicarious trauma now at home - A large proportion of our staff are working at home and continue to do so. A serious disadvantage of working from home, despite the many advantages, has been the trauma of our clients now being received into our homes. The hurt and anger of our clients and the empathy that goes to them from our workers is now coming directly into our homes electronically. Previously, we had each other to talk to after particularly difficult calls, and there is our telephone support line (EAP) but the debriefing we give as colleagues is the best and on-the-spot and we sorely miss this.

Our feeling of all being in it together during difficult times is put to the test as we are so scattered.

**"Thank you!"**

Thank you to our *staff* for all the extra (often unseen and unsung) work they have done in supporting each other and supporting our clients and making it all possible.

A special thanks to our *Management Committee* who have been called on above and beyond the usual commitment to cope with these unusual circumstances.

It is a tribute to our staff and to the *Community Legal Centre sector* that we have been able to move quickly and adjust our service delivery as required. CLCNSW have been there at all turns negotiating with funding bodies and making sure the whole sector was able to talk to each other about new developments and how we were all going about coping with the changes needed.

As always, thank you to our *Volunteers*, for hanging in there and so readily adapting.

Thank you to all the other organisations we have partnered and networked with this year:

- Particularly, Southern Youth & Family Services for always being there for us.
- Wollongong City Council for our buildings and support wherever needed.
- Our local Aboriginal Organisations who are joining us in a RAP.

And last but not least thank you to our *Funding Bodies*: Legal Aid NSW (CLCP), Fair Trading NSW and DSS (Cth). They have been understanding and supportive throughout. It is much appreciated.

*Truda Gray*  
Centre Coordinator  
Illawarra Legal Centre



# 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 and staff.

## Financial Accountability

The financial accountability of the Centre was over the past year handled by Catherine O'Neill and Tracey Davis (since resigned). A financial report is provided at the end of this report.

## Reception

Wendy Mills and Maria Sewell have shared the task of looking after the front desk/ reception over the past year. The front desk deals with telephone enquiries, walk in clients, intake and referral.

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

- Fielding and triaging **13,214** calls in the last 12 months (averages out to about 51 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.
- Securing interpreters for clients as required.
- Management of roster for volunteer solicitors.
- Carrying out client satisfaction surveys for review of ILC service performance.
- Satisfying WH&S requirements (eg. researching data on products used at the Centre, conducting emergency evacuation drills)
- Day-to-day assistance in the coordination of the Centre.
- Provision of information and referral to clients

This year the language most in demand was Arabic. We also had requests for Punjabi, Vietnamese, Spanish, Serbian, Kirundi, Macedonian, Albanian and Filipino. At times it has been a challenge finding a qualified interpreter for the not so common languages such as Kinyarwanda, Tigrinya, Tedim Chin and Swahili.

## Record & File management

Database management, record keeping, information storage and reporting are key elements that support all of ILC's services.

Data Entry staff update, maintain and retrieve information which is held in our primary database, CLASS, and other databases that the centre uses. Our data entry worker is Kerri Webster.

## Information Technology

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

Vesna 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.

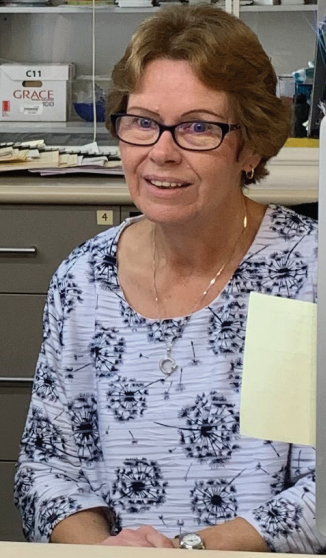
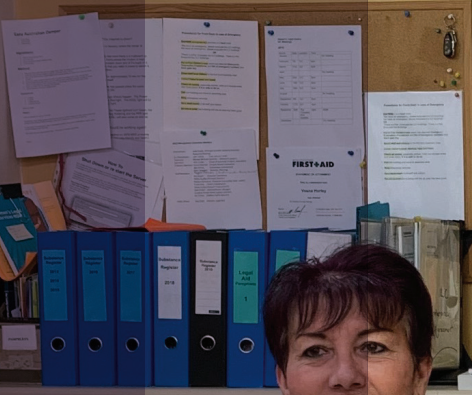
When the coronavirus pandemic was announced and shut down the country, the ILC, needed to work out how to continue delivering services. Demand for an IT solution was required so that staff could be setup to work from home.

Our service, as well as, all other government and non-government services, went from face-to-face services to phone services. ILC needed to purchase extra hardware in order to make this transition possible. There was extra demand on our IT support team in reconfiguring phones and computers to operate from other locations. It has been an extremely challenging year for all.

A big thank you to Trevor, Patrick and all staff from Max Computing for all their efforts throughout the year around IT.



# ADMINISTRATION &



## Dealing WITH A dispute?

Community Justice Centres can help you resolve your dispute quickly and for free using mediation.

Mediation is people coming together to talk about their dispute and trying to reach an agreement that everyone can live with.

Trained mediators who don't take sides will assist you.

Community Justice Centres can help resolve disputes involving:

- + neighbours
- + families
- + associations
- + workplace
- + money matters
- + and more.

Our services are:

- + FREE
- + QUICK
- + CONVENIENT
- + VOLUNTARY
- + CONFIDENTIAL

## BOARDING HOUSE RESIDENTS HAVE RIGHTS!

"The landlord tried to forcibly enter me with no notice. Luckily a crowd gathered and stopped him. I ended up going to the Tribunal about it."

"There are ten rooms and I know all of the residents. There's a sense of community in this house."

"It's a safe house in a good street."

Do you live in a boarding house?

Get questions? Get free advice. Call 1800 767 126

www.tenants.org.au

## Online Safety Start the Chat

Keeping kids safe online starts with you

We all have a role to play in keeping our kids safe online.

確保兒童和青少年安全  
確保互聯網、我們都有應盡的責任。這是我們應有的做法。採取工具、提示和技巧。

我們都有責任發揮作用，確保兒童和青少年安全使用互聯網。尋求工具、提示和建議。

ههه ما در امن گه داشتن  
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مخاری قشاق برای ایوان.  
تکات حید و رقاصو به وب  
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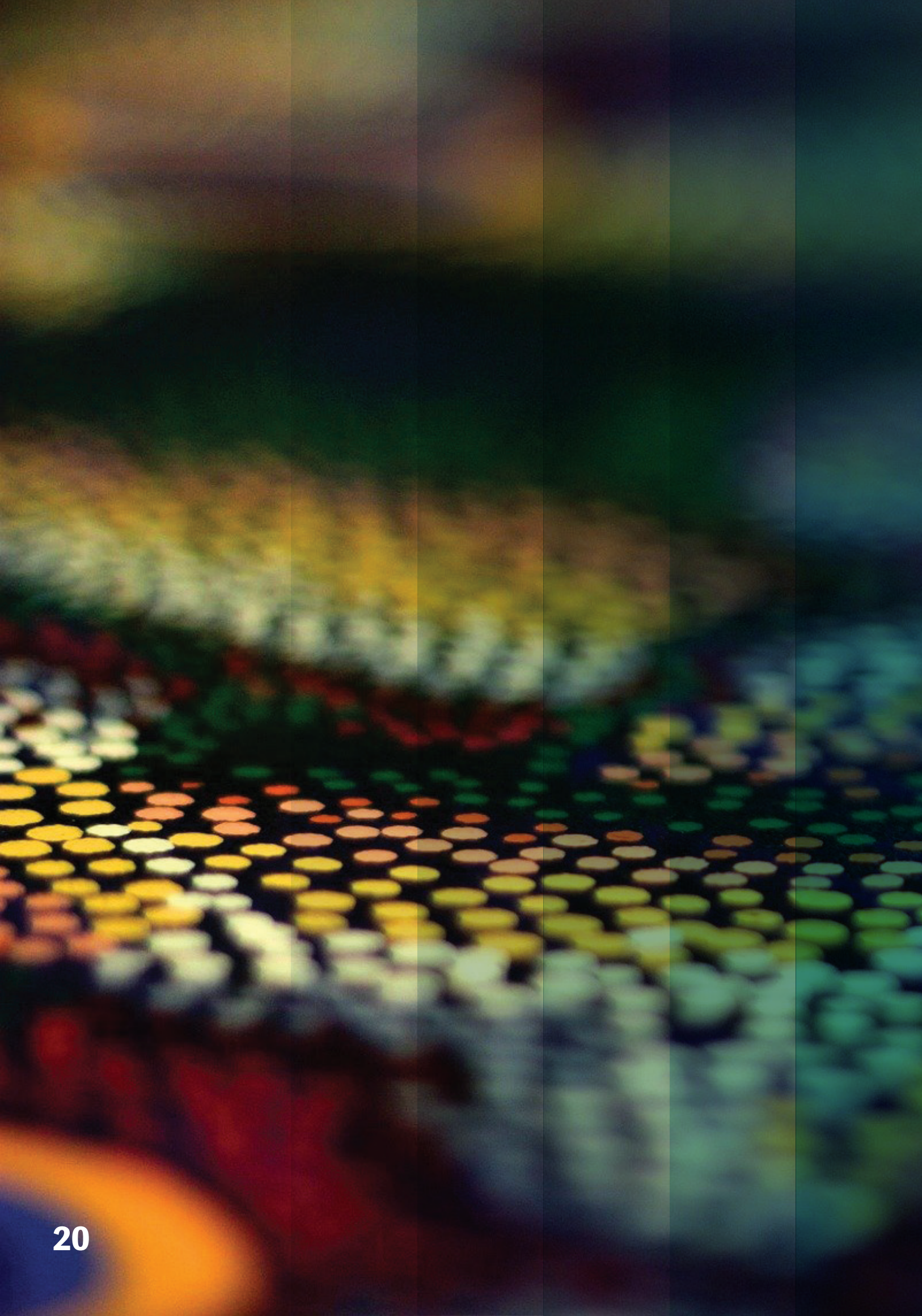
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eSafety.gov.au/languages

eSafetyCommissioner

eSafety.gov.au







# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face disproportionate disadvantage across the legal system, including substantial barriers to accessing legal assistance services

The goal of our Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP) is to promote access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW by delivering culturally appropriate legal assistance services to ensure that Indigenous Australians receive the help needed to overcome legal problems and fully exercise their legal rights.

## How it works

Our ALAP worker, Levenia Clulow, works in conjunction with ILC's services and is there to offer free socio-legal support. Including providing information, support and referrals. Levenia seeks to connect clients with services that meet the diversity of their needs; like housing, money, employment, relationships, health & wellbeing.

The success of this program is evidenced by increased awareness of and access to services by Aboriginal community members since its establishment.

In ILC's catchment area, clients from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities represent the following proportions (ABS 2016) of each Local Government Area: Wollongong 2.6%, Shellharbour 3.8% and Kiama 1.8%.

ILC statistics indicate that for the 2019/20 period Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients made up 7.6% of our legal work with a high of 22% in our casework (including Court and Tribunal representation).

**"Our goal is to promote access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."**

## ALAP in the community

Levenia works closely with local Aboriginal community organisations and groups to create and maintain productive, respectful, working partnerships and by attending relevant networks, interagencies and consultations in the Illawarra region.

Levenia has established relationships with many local services and is a member of the Salt Water Festival Place Making Committee and the Illawarra Place Plans Conference Advisory Group. Some of these local services are:

- Police Local Area Command
- Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation
- Mission Australia
- Barnardos Australia
- Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service (IAMS) – Community Service Team
- Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation
- Warrawong Residents Forum
- Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS)
- Wollongong Youth Services
- Bundaleer Community Centre
- Legal Aid - Wollongong
- Aboriginal Legal Service
- Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre

Our legal outreaches create a way to build rapport and have assisted community to obtain access to legal and culturally appropriate services within the ILC and Illawarra.

ILC ALAP activities and community engagement in 2019/20 have included:

- » **Aunty Jean's Chronic Care Group** - We continued visits on the first and third Tuesday of each month accompanying our ILC Generalist Solicitors, Child Support Solicitors and Welfare Rights Solicitors, until shut down by COVID-19.
- » **Children's Court** - We also continued to visit Port Kembla Children's Court regularly to provide direct support for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending court. 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.

Thankfully we have been able to maintain support to these groups during COVID-19 restrictions remotely.



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

Despite COVID-19 CCAS continued each week on Tuesdays at the Children's Court in Port Kembla.

The main part of this service is carried out by our subcontracted staff from Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS). The staff from this organisation both coordinate the day at court and provide seconded staff from their trained youth workers at SYFS. Our partnership is so beneficial for the delivery of this service and for the benefit of the children/youth at court.

We continue to recruit more staff to join the roster although this is harder to do now with COVID-19 so the numbers are dropping. When we gather a few new recruits we train them in the work of the Scheme and include them in our Community Legal Education training on legal issues for youth and youth workers throughout the year.

During COVID-19 the numbers of young people appearing at court have dropped however the numbers are picking up again in the last couple of months.

## How we work

As usual, our service first works to bring the young people in (they tend to gather outside in the open-air foyer) to contact Legal Aid, the Aboriginal Legal Service or a private solicitor if they have one. We also work with the young person's family or support people or friends to see what each person needs. We call these "short contacts" or "long contacts". We include examples of these below.

### 'HEADS UP' Program

Throughout the year the ILC CCAS & ALAP Coordinator, Levenia, and our Children's Court Solicitor, Lucy, worked on a committee to set up a drug & alcohol counselling program for young people to access prior to their sentencing.

The committee was made up of staff from ILC (as listed above), the Port Kembla Children's Court, Legal Aid, Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS), Youth Justice, Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service (IAMS) and Justice Health.

Working from the knowledge that alcohol and drugs contributed to a lot of cases before the Children's Court, together the committee developed the 'Heads Up' program and decided to run the initial trial with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the Children's Court.

'Heads Up' is an 8 week program, case managed by IAMS – Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) program. The IAMS AOD worker receives referrals from ALS & Youth Justice and then case manages the young person around AOD issues, mental health, education, family dynamics and referrals to other organisations such as Warrigal Employment.

Any work done whilst in the program may be credited to the young person if/when they are sentenced by the Court.

Having been initially set up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth, the program is expected to be extended to include any interested and eligible youth.

**" We could not run this program as successfully as we do without the assistance and support of our partner organisations."**

These organisations give us their worker for the day (paid for by these organisations). In particular we thank SYFS and their staff. They are an invaluable source of support and expertise.





CHILDREN'S COURT ASSISTANCE SCHEME







## Child support is the financial support for children provided by one parent to the other parent

Our Child Support Service provides free legal advice, advocacy and representation (where appropriate) in relation to child support to the parent who has the child the majority of the time. The Child Support Service is part of the ILC Generalist Law Service.

Solicitor Carlyne Turner manages the service with Judi Teesdale, who has continued in a one day per week position. Carlyne has been managing the service for almost 15 years.

When a client with care of the children (at least 50% of the time), a family law enquiry, or specific child support need, contacts the ILC for help they are referred to the Child Support Solicitor.

We may provide phone advice, casework, or legal representation in the areas of:

- Child Support Assessments
- Change of Assessment
- Limited Child Support Agreements
- Collecting Child Support
- Enforcement
- Child Bearing Expenses
- Over 18's Maintenance
- Paternity Matters
- Liaising with Services Australia - Child Support

The service often drafts simple, short Parenting Plans for parents who are newly separated which can keep family law problems from escalating. Parenting Plans help to sort out the level of care for parents which helps to provide certainty in child support.

The Child Support Solicitor assists clients in Tribunal cases. One that stands out concerned a teenager who often resided between his parents' homes and a friend's home against the parenting orders. When the father applied for the child support to be reassessed, causing a large debt against our client, we assisted with her objection by drafting her objection and collating evidence. Our client was successful in having the Registrar's decision reversed.

Our service also provided representation in the Federal Circuit Court. In particular, this past year we have helped a client be granted an order for a large arrears debt owed by the other parent.

We have been successful in gaining several court Declarations of our clients' entitlements to receive child support.

**"I'm used to losing in this kind of situation, and YOU have made all the difference resulting in a win and lovely feeling I'll never forget!"**

The Child Support Service focused on providing community legal education at preschools & playgroups and advice and assistance for Aboriginal people during the past year.

During the year Carlyne, with the help of Kerri, designed a new, updated child support brochure that was distributed widely.

COVID-19 has meant that advice, casework, advocacy and representation have continued largely by telephone throughout the changes caused by the COVID-19 challenges. Court listings were managed by telephone attendance.

### Case Study

Casey\* had a 4 year old child. She received Centrelink payments and had received a letter several years ago that required her to take action to get child support from the father. Although she knew the father was working and lived in the same area, she simply did not understand the consequence of not following up with Centrelink. As a result Casey received a Centrelink payment much lower than she would have been entitled to. Casey came to the Child Support Solicitor by referral from our Welfare Rights Service. We were able to give immediate assistance and write to Centrelink to let them know Casey was taking maintenance action. Her full entitlement of Centrelink was reinstated while a court Declaration as to her entitlement to child support proceeded through the courts.

\*Name has been changed



# The Illawarra Region Financial Counselling Service looks after clients across the Illawarra and Shoalhaven

We assist clients experiencing financial difficulty and are funded by the State Office of Fair Trading and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

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

Like many services across Australia, our Financial Counselling service experienced 2 distinct periods as a result of COVID-19.

Despite those distinctions, the service continued to operate seamlessly, a matter about which the Financial Counselling team are very proud.

**"We continued to provide valuable advocacy, support and assistance to clients facing various forms of financial hardship."**

We have developed a highly cohesive service based on team-work, aided by the fact our Financial Counsellors have all worked together for over 5 years.

In the period to February 2020, the team provided regular outreach services at 7 different locations in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions.

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.

As always, we have been very grateful for the support of other organisations that have allowed us to regularly see our clients at their premises.

We also delivered many Community Legal Education seminars during that time.

From March 2020, our Financial Counsellors were able to be very responsive to changing circumstances and were able to commence working remotely quite quickly for the safety of our clients, staff and community.

This responsiveness was made possible by the fact Financial Counsellors had ready access to equipment as a result of doing a large amount of work off-site.

Since then, we made use of all of the resources at our disposal to ensure that the needs of vulnerable clients continued to be met and our clients were largely positively impacted upon by changes to our service delivery.

## Case Study

### Joint and several liability severed

Our client had experienced domestic violence and contacted our service about a joint loan she had obtained with her former partner.

The lender was unwilling to allow her to repay only half of the loan, given she was legally responsible for it on a joint and several basis.

Our Financial Counsellor made submissions about the difficulties the joint loan was causing our client in all of the circumstances, both financially and psychologically. After establishing that the lender was able to limit our client's responsibility to 50% of the balance of the debt without compromising its ability to recover all of the debt from the co-borrower, the request was granted and our client was able to deal with her "share" of the loan immediately.

## Case Study

### Waiver of credit card debts

Our client contacted our service in relation to two credit card debts. His only income was the Age Pension and he was renting very modest accommodation.

He had fallen behind on his minimum credit card repayments for 2 months and said that every time he did make the minimum repayments he didn't have enough left over to pay for essentials like suitable food, electricity, medication and rent.

Our Financial Counsellor contacted his creditors, outlining his situation and providing relevant documents. The creditors were requested to consider waiving each of the debts and the creditors agreed.



# FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE 27







"We 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 offer a range of free legal services to residents of the Illawarra including information, referral, advice and representation

The General Law Project provides both phone & face-to-face advice along with casework services to clients in the following areas of law:

- » Discrimination
- » Victims' Support
- » AVO applications
- » Debt matters
- » Employment matters
- » General Civil law
- » Other matters of public interest

This last year covers the pre COVID-19 period and current COVID-19 period. Our services have continued largely by phone due to COVID-19. We had to shut down our outreaches when the locations/ organisations we outreach to closed down themselves. Some of our staff have been working at home and some from the office.

Our centre closed for face-to-face interviews and drop ins but we have continued to see some clients face-to-face when matters are/ were urgent.

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 legal advice and representation in employment matters, including unfair dismissal, has been in high demand. This was followed closely by victim's support matters.

During the past year the centre continued to receive a high number of calls from people with road traffic and motor vehicle regulatory offences, neighbourhood complaints and credit & debt issues.

### Volunteers/ Pro Bono

We have volunteer solicitors who fill the roster for our Thursday night face-to-face appointments. Volunteer solicitors give advice on Friday afternoons and an Immigration solicitor gives advice once per month.

Fragomen Immigration Lawyers continued to partner with us by volunteering to check our immigration advices.

Volunteer law students have continued to assist staff and volunteer lawyers during the Thursday evening advice roster.

Law firm Herbert Smith Freehills provided us with our bushfire secondee, Kishaya Delaney on 17 April 2020. They also agreed to assist a victim of the January 2020 NSW bushfires, in a bushfire matter with international aspects.

Pro bono barristers who assisted in recent matters include Brenda Tronson and Mirren Waters. The matter with which they assisted is a race discrimination case. They have agreed to not only give advice but to also appear at any hearings of the main matter plus any freedom-of-information-type matters (GIPA).

### Case Studies

We successfully negotiated a settlement for a client who had lodged a race discrimination complaint against the government.

We succeeded in finding out who had fraudulently nominated our Aboriginal client as the driver of a car that failed to pay road tolls. Our client was the victim of domestic violence and suspected that her ex-partner was behind the penalty notices. She had asked the toll operator to tell her, but the toll operator had refused to tell our client.

We won 2 victims' support claims for one client. In one of those claims we persuaded the Assessor that a fractured tail bone constitutes grievous bodily harm. The Assessor thanked our staff directly for our detailed submissions. The client was very happy and said she was "stoked".

We won from Victims Services a \$5,000 recognition payment for a client who had recently arrived in Australia. The client had been the victim of domestic violence which resulted in 2 miscarriages. Victims Services had initially found that did not constitute grievous bodily harm (GBH). On review we succeeded in showing that each of the miscarriages had happened very shortly after our client had been kicked and elbowed in the stomach. We had also claimed a television as immediate needs but they rejected that claim as not being a basic item despite us providing evidence that "more than 99% of Australian metropolitan households had one or more television sets".



# While overall, we had fewer clients this year, the need for advocacy on behalf of our clients increased exponentially

Tenants in our area of service experienced a tumultuous year, with bushfires and COVID-19 restrictions and provisional changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*.

It certainly kept our tenant advocates on their toes, and at times it was hard to keep up with new COVID-19 provisions, which seemed to change weekly, if not daily.

**"It was a tough year for our tenant advocates."**

At the height of the bushfire emergency, our worker down the South Coast had the power cut off at her home and the roads were closed between her home and the office in Moruya.

This was followed by COVID-19 fears and restrictions, resulting in tenant advocates having to adjust to working from home, and no longer being able to provide duty advocacy at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal who now conducts all hearings on the phone. It also put a stop on advocates being able to meet tenants in person.

The combination of losing their houses or tenancies to bushfires in an already tight rental market, and losing their jobs due to COVID-19, resulted in some tenants expressing suicidal thoughts when contacting us. Tenant advocates found themselves in the role of accidental counsellors and underwent training on how to assist in these situations while at the same time taking care of their own wellbeing.

While overall, we had fewer clients this year, the need for advocacy on behalf of these clients increased exponentially. Each matter took more time than usual, with tenant advocates assisting in negotiations, providing intensive advocacy and making lots of follow-up calls.

Changes to the Residential Tenancies Regulations, as well as the impact of bushfires and COVID-19 restrictions on tenants caused media interest, and tenant advocates and the acting team leaders Liv and Julia did a number of interviews on ABC Radio as well as with the *Illawarra Mercury*.

This was especially important as there was a misconception by some tenants that the moratorium on evictions meant that they would no longer have to pay rent if they were affected by COVID-19.

On the bright side, the tenancy service was pleased to secure a further three years of funding from NSW Fair Trading. Not many tenants are aware that they are indirectly paying for our service through some of the interest on the bond money they paid.

We express our heartfelt thanks to the tenancy team who soldiered on during a particularly stressful and challenging year and continue to provide a high level of casework advocacy and phone advice.

## Case Study

### Sarah's story

The police unlawfully tipped off Sarah's\* landlord about a raid at her house. Despite nothing being found and no charges being laid, the police advised the private landlord to evict her because of her ties to an abusive ex partner, who at the time was in prison and subject to an AVO.

Sarah was facing homelessness, together with two grandchildren in her care.

The tenant advocate assisted her to secure an agreement that she could stay at the house, but could leave any time without penalty. The landlord would cease turning up at her premises, and he credited her four weeks' rent as compensation for his harassment.

## Case Study

### Kim's Story

Our tenant advocate negotiated a "pay to stay" agreement for Kim\* living in Community Housing. "Pay to stay" means that you will not be evicted if you pay all your arrears.

Despite the tenant paying back all her arrears in compliance with the Tribunal orders, her housing provider continued to seek termination and obtained a warrant for the Sheriff.

The tenant advocate tried to explain that this was in breach of the *Residential Tenancies Act* and could incur a fine of \$24,200. However, it was not until she contacted the Registrar for Community Housing, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the Sheriff's Office, that the housing provider stopped pursuing eviction.

\* Names have been changed



# TENANTS SERVICE









## It was a busy year!

Ian Turton is working three days per week within the Welfare Rights (WR) project. Over the course of 2019/2020 he saw 299 clients, gave 488 advices and opened 41 files.

We are flexible in our provision of advice to clients, often going to agencies to interview our clients. We maintained an outreach at Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre, until the impact of COVID-19 meant that we are now doing most of our work by telephone.

### Advice and Casework

There has been no real change in our client group over the course of the year which is not surprising given the nature of the Illawarra. The majority of our work remains appeals against decisions to reject an application for the disability support pension.

**"Our casework brings positive changes to people's lives beyond the simple application of the law."**

A big part of our role is helping a person understand a Centrelink decision and whether they have a good case to appeal.

Our project has built up a strong working relationship with various agencies within the region, with many clients being referred by community organisations and medical professionals. We also maintain a strong working relationship with Centrelink whose staff also refer clients to us from time to time.

Ian continues to mentor students and one of the more pleasing aspects has been to see our one time volunteer Julius Golab go on to find work as a solicitor at the Sydney Welfare Rights Centre.

This year, Ian has been very ably assisted by Jackson Cocks a student at Wollongong University Law School, who works regularly as a volunteer within the project. Jackson is very helpful in researching matters and has a fine eye for detail.

Ian has also been helped out by Kishaya Delaney, a law student seconded one day per week from law firm Herbert Smith Freehills. Kishaya has been of great value to the project all round.

### Case Study

**Often, we get payments for people who really need it** - We were contacted by a Homeless Person's support service regarding Janelle\*, a homeless person who was sleeping in her car but unable to obtain payments because of being subject to a compensation preclusion period.

We visited the Homeless service where we interviewed Janelle and then helped her lodge a claim for job seeker payment with assistance from a Centrelink social worker. Janelle suffered from problems with addiction and had spent most of her money in an uncontrolled manner. We were able to assist her by gathering medical evidence as well as information from a lawyer who has previously represented her in a compensation matter.

Although Janelle's initial application was at first rejected, we successfully appealed on her behalf to an Authorised Review Officer who granted her payment. With the help of the Homeless service Janelle was then able to find secure accommodation.

### Case Study

**We help people to change their circumstances** - Jake\* suffered from long term problems of addiction, having spent many years in rehabilitation. In addition to this he suffered from chronic mental health problems which can be traced back to an abusive childhood. Jake applied for the disability support pension but his application was rejected on the grounds that his conditions were not fully diagnosed and treated.

We lodged an appeal against this decision on his behalf. The very nature of these problems meant that it was difficult to obtain instructions from Jake and there were times when we lost contact with him.

We represented Jake up to the General Division of the AAT with Centrelink offering terms of settlement after we filed our statement of facts and contentions, with payments to be backdated to his date of application in 2017. Jake was a client of our service for more than two years which meant he received over \$20,000 in payment arrears once he was placed on payment.

\* Names have been changed



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

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

- **Federal government's homelessness inquiry**- Jointly with Public Interest Advocacy Centre and 8 other homelessness CLCs across Australia, we raised issues of welfare rights, tenancy and general law.
- **Residential Tenancies Act Regulations Amendment** – policy discussion and submissions.
- **United Nations**- We became signatories of a letter to the United Nations opposing changes that will make it harder to claim victims' support.
- **Victims Services Proposed Changes-1**. We endorsed 2 letters prepared by CLCNSW's sub-committee, asking them to permanently cancel their proposed changes. The 2nd letter to Victims Services implored them not to make the changes which would severely impact victims. Jointly again we contributed to another submission to implore them not to make the changes they proposed even at the end of their 2 week extension. Victims Services eventually responded by agreeing to delay the worst changes indefinitely.
- **NSW Police**- Police completed their formal investigation into their failure to take out ADVOs for our client and failing to action breaches of ADVOs at other times. The head of the police station acknowledged that it is a difficult matter but found that his officers followed correct procedures.
- **COVID-19 & temporary visa holders**- We endorsed a letter to the government seeking COVID-19 protections for temporary visa holders (TVH). In response to the letter the NSW government agreed to provide some extra funding to organisations assisting TVH.
- **Centrelink Tip Off Line**- Domestic Violence and Compliance Processes.
- **Fair Trading** - Letter to Minister Dominello re: lack of training for park operators in accordance with RLLC Act
- **Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)**- We gave constructive feedback to AHRC about their conciliation process. AHRC had excused a party from attending even though negotiations were still underway. And AHRC did not require that party to attend in person at all even though that party's office was within walking distance and it was before COVID-19.
- **National Social Security Rights Network** - Changes to Centrepay had negative consequences for tenants with old debts to landlords.
- **Victims Services systems**- We asked Victims Services to improve their systems to avoid the 8 months they took to acknowledge receipt of our client's claim. Victims Services apologised and said they would improve their systems.
- **FACS and victims' support claims**- When FACS (CareSouth) has a child in their care it seems they wait until the child is about 17yo before claiming any victims' support to which the child may be entitled. We told them that this delay results in evidence like medical records being destroyed.
- **Commissioner's Review in a victims' support matter**- Victims Services are saying that a report of domestic violence by Centrelink is not sufficient. Victims Services say it is a mere receipt but even Centrelink say it is a report.
- **Victims Services payments**- They agreed to start checking every week whether they had made the required payments to victims. This was the direct result of our complaint that they had not paid our client within their own timeframe and despite our repeated reminders.
- **Domestic Family Violence**- Provided case studies for Economic Justice Australia submission re Being a member of a couple.



## We are deeply engaged with our community, forming partnerships, joining networks and talking to our stakeholders

### Partnerships

Our Volunteer Solicitors are from the following law firms.

- Access Law Group
- Acorn Lawyers
- Carroll & O’Dea Lawyers
- Culleton Lawyers
- Foye Legal
- Fragomen
- Good Legal Lawyers
- Helen Volk Lawyers
- Kells the Lawyers
- Marion Benjamin Solicitor
- McAneny Lawyers
- Peter M Woods & Associates
- RMB Lawyers
- Turner Freeman
- Williamson Isabella Lawyers

### Subcontracting Arrangements

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

### Premises

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

### Seconded Workers

#### Children’s Court Assistance Scheme

- Southern Youth & Family Services

#### Bushfire Project

- Herbert Smith Freehills Lawyers

### Rooms for Outreaches

- 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

- CLCNSW Coordinators & Directors
- CLCNSW Finance and Administration Network

- CLCNSW Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) Network
- CLCNSW Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Network
- Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program Coordinators
- Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program Network
- Community Legal Educations Workers (CLEW) network
- Children’s Court Assistance Scheme State Network
- Economic Justice Australia (EJA) Network
- NSW Child Support Liaison Group
- Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group
- Southern Suburbs Taskforce
- Aboriginal Police Liaison Committee – Lake Illawarra Command LACACC
- Port Kembla Court Users Meeting
- Community Industries Group
- Financial Counsellors Association of NSW
- Illawarra Multicultural Services Network
- Illawarra Refugee Issues Forum
- Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Prevention of Older Persons Abuse in the Illawarra
- Domestic Violence Interagency Kiama / Shellharbour
- Local Implementation and Coordinating Committee
- Combined Legal Services Delivery
- Trauma Recovery Centre Working Group
- Warrawong Residents Forum
- Wollongong Legal Information Network
- Wollongong Youth Network
- Wollongong Legal And Civil Agencies
- Tenancy Legal Working Party
- Illawarra Social Housing Forum
- Regional Homelessness Action Group
- NCAT Consultative Forum
- Residential Parks Forum
- Housing and Mental Health Agreement /District Implementation & Action Committee
- Wollongong Homeless Hub
- Far South Coast Homelessness Network
- Housing Working Group

# Our CLE Activities

## Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP)

- Aboriginal Legal Issues & Rights - Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre (BNC)
- Aboriginal Legal Issues & Rights - Lake Illawarra High School
- Aboriginal Legal Issues & Rights - Port Kembla Children's Court
- NAIDOC Family Fun Day - Warrawong
- Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service NAIDOC Celebration - Wollongong
- Unanderra Community NAIDOC Family Fun Day Event
- ILC & Tenancy Services - Bundaleer Estate
- ALAP & ILC Services - Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service
- ILC Services - Mission Australia
- ILC Services - R U OK Day Morning Tea @ Workways
- ILC Services - Tenants Forum
- ILC Services - Warrigal Employment, Drug & Alcohol Round Table

## Child Support

- ILC & Child Support Services - Barnardos Aboriginal Playgroup, Koonawarra
- ILC & Child Support Services - Barnardos Aboriginal Playgroup, Berkeley
- ILC & Child Support Services - Aboriginal Playgroup, Bundaleer Community Centre
- Child Support Services - Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service

## Financial Counselling

- Financial Counselling (FC) Services - Kedesh Rehabilitation Services (KRS)
- Financial Counselling and Bankruptcy Law - Shoalcoast Legal Centre
- FC Services, BYO Bills Day - Warrawong Residents Forum
- FC Services - Koori Strong Group
- Bankruptcy and debt agreements, dealing with unmanageable debt - ABC Radio
- FC Services - Mental Health Unit (MHU) Wollongong Hospital
- FC Services - Women's Domestic Violence Program, Wollongong Women's Information Service (WWIS)

## Generalists

- Victims' support & ILC Services - KRS
- ILC Services - LIACC Complex Casework Mtg
- Illawarra Disability Expo - Fairy Meadow

- ILC Services - University of Wollongong (UOW)
- ILC Services & Family Law - ABC Radio
- Wills & POA - Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Wollongong
- ILC Services & Victims' Services - MHU Wollongong Hospital
- Introduction to Australian Law - AMEP, Wollongong
- R U OK Stall - Warilla High School
- ILC Services - WWIS
- Children & the Law - UOW
- Prevention of Older Persons Abuse Stall - Shellharbour
- Legal Planning session; Wills, Power of Attorney and Guardianship - Wollongong Hospital Carer Program
- Wills & Powers of Attorney - AMEP, Wollongong

## Tenancy

- Tenancy Rights for DV Survivors - Road To Home Workshop, St Vincent De Paul
- Collaborative Service Planning Pilot - Shoalhaven
- Moratorium on Evictions- Tenants Union
- Renting Changes in COVID-19 - Mission Australia
- General Tenancy Rights for Social Housing Tenants - Batemans Bay
- Changes to Residential Tenancies Act (Regulations) - ABC Radio
- Refugee Housing Working Group - Illawarra Refugees Issues Forum
- Tenancy Rights - NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC)
- Illawarra Social Housing Forum - FACS, Coniston
- Tenancy Rights - Mission Australia Illawarra Tenant Forum
- Tenancy Rights - MHU Wollongong Hospital
- Tenancy Rights - AMEP, Wollongong
- Tenancy Rights - Homeless Hub

## Welfare Rights

- Centrelink Robo Debts - ABC Radio
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - MHU Wollongong Hospital
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - Families in Cultural Transition Program
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - AMEP
- Centrelink Rights & Responsibilities - Koori Strong Group



## Our Outreaches

### ALAP

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

### 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
- ARAFMI, Mental Health Carers, Wollongong - Every 2nd Friday

### 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



# Financial Report Overview

Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC) financial result for the 2019-2020 was a slight surplus of \$1,394.

Grants received for the year were \$1,965,327. Interest earned was \$27,572. 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 Centre staff such as Finance, Coordination, Front Desk, Information Technology and office expenses such as rent, postage etc.

Grants carried forward from 2018-2019 used in this financial year were \$46,595 and unexpended grants carried forward to 2020-2021 are now situated at \$44,858.

Cash-flow position for ILC is strong and has remained strong for the duration of the 2019-2020 period. Cash flow is situated at \$1,887,409 an increase from the 2018-2019 financial year of \$55,804. Illawarra Legal Centre received Non-Recurrent NSW Fair Trading funding for the Tenancy project as a result of COVID-19 in the amount of \$102,985 which is to run the project till April 2020.

Annual leave provisions had increased from \$309,406 as at 30th June 2019 to \$316,021 as at 30th June 2020. Annual leave earned and not used was situated at approximately 25% for the 2019-2020. ILC had a couple of resignations which reduced the annual leave provisions for 30th June 2020.

## Highlights 2019-2020 Financial Year

Interest rates continue to stay relatively low throughout the year at an average of 0.9-1.2%. Interest earnings were situated at \$27,572 with a significant variation from the previous financial year of \$12,798 less interest earned. Legal Aid programs have had their funding levels wound back to the 2016-2017 financial year. This grant has not only been cut but shall also not receive indexation increments moving forward. This financial year all of the CLSP programs have been consolidated into one Profit & Loss statement. These programs were at break-even after transferring \$41,886 into grants carried forward for the 2020-2021 period. A few staff took leave without pay through this period and were not replaced to achieve these results.

State Financial Counselling Programs ran at a deficit for the 2019-2020 period of \$11,005. Indexation of 2.5% was received on this grant. Financial Counselling federal funding for Gambling received an additional one-off payment of \$10,018 funding for COVID-19.

The service ran at break-even point. Financial Counselling federal funding for the Financial Wellbeing program ran at break-even for 2019-2020. This project received an additional \$8,240 non-recurrent funding for COVID-19.

Tenancy ran at break-even after transferring a slight surplus of \$2,971 into grants carried forward for the 2020-2021 period.

New telephone handsets were purchased for the Centre at a cost of \$5,670.

COVID-19 affected the Centre from March 2020 and saw approximately 60-75% of staff working from home and ceasing outreaches. A flow on affect was a reduction in travel costs.

The significant loss budgeted for was kept at bay by the receipt of additional funding of a non-recurrent nature and by not replacing around 35 hours per week when staff went on leave without pay and/or resigned.

## Looking Forward

The next financial year is budgeted to perform much better in the 2020-2021 period as ILC reduces its staffing levels by natural attrition to balance the budget. In the next financial year ILC has also received small to medium amounts of non-recurrent funding as a result of COVID-19 and bushfires.

ILC will be looking to replace a large number of computers in the 2020-2021 period at a cost of around \$40,000. Many computers are from 2013 period, we are also looking to update some computers as laptops (not desktops) to assist with working from home setups.

## Audit Report

An audit was conducted on the financial reports for 2019-2020 by KH Accounting & Financial Group Pty Ltd and immediately follows this report. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lou Kinnas and Anthony Kinnas for all their efforts.

## Acknowledgements

Big thank you to Tracey Davis for her assistance in her role as Bookkeeper.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Peter Moggach for carrying out his duties as Treasurer over the past year. Peter always offers great insight on the Financial Advisory Group and is accessible at a moment's notice.

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.



## Funding Information

Project Name	Amount P.A.	% of Total
Commonwealth (Cth) - Legal Aid - Generalists	568,857	28.94%
State - Legal Aid - Generalists	352,307	17.93%
Cth - DFACS&IA - Financial Counselling Gambling	120,659	6.14%
Cth - DFACS&IA - Financial Counselling WellBeing Program	99,251	5.05%
State - Fair Trading - Financial Counselling	324,473	16.51%
State - Fair Trading - Financial Counselling Aboriginal Support	24,036	1.22%
State - Fair Trading - Tenancy	449,127	22.85%
State - Fair Trading - Residential Parks Act Review	9,077	0.46%
State - Fair Trading - Tenancy Non-recurrent COVID-19	17,540	0.89%
	1,965,326	100%





## 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 general purpose financial report, of Illawarra Legal Centre Incorporated which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020, 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 2020 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:**

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

**Auditor's Address:**

Suite 4, 29 Princes Highway  
FAIRY MEADOW NSW 2519

**Dated this 30 day of September 2020**

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

**CONSOLIDATED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020**

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Cash Flow Boost COVID-19	50,000	-
Centre Contribution	391,250	385,179
Grants Received	1,975,701	1,968,280
Interest Received	27,573	40,070
Membership Fees	83	96
Miscellaneous Income	2,776	1,809
Unexpended Grants Carried Forward	46,596	65,728
Transfer from Provisions	-	12,182
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<u>2,493,978</u>	<u>2,473,344</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Advertising	5,135	9,163
Auditor's Remuneration	6,464	7,586
Bank Charges	702	672
BAS COVID-19	49,077	-
Centre Contribution	391,251	385,179
Cleaning	8,044	6,690
Computer Stationery and Supplies	36,976	19,856
Conference Expenses	6,800	5,446
Contracted Services	23,269	36,512
Depreciation – Furniture and Fittings	22,205	39,967
Electricity	3,533	3,309
General Expenses	3,901	6,808
Holiday Pay	6,615	43,794
Insurance	12,832	11,484
Legal Disbursements	-	2,177
Locum Provisions	22,716	-
Long Service Leave	(13,887)	24,468
Minor Equipment Purchased	414	1,938
Postage, Printing and Stationery	7,811	10,515
Reference Materials	1,055	1,785
Rent	28,976	27,476
Repairs and Maintenance	1,764	2,382
Security	1,532	1,091
Staff Amenities	5,236	2,085
Staff Training	-	312
Storage/Shredding	2,276	2,148
Subscriptions	22,255	15,308
Superannuation Contributions	146,004	144,202
Technical Support	-	22,131
Telephone	9,529	9,271
Translations	2,913	5,552
Travelling Expenses	1,426	5,449
Wages	1,600,826	1,571,961
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<u>\$2,417,650</u>	<u>\$ 2,426,717</u>



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

**CONSOLIDATED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020**

	2020 \$	2019 \$
<b>EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE</b>	76,328	46,627
<b>Less: AMOUNTS TRANSFERRED TO UNEXPENDED GRANTS</b>	<u>74,933</u>	<u>55,672</u>
<b>EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE</b>	<u>\$ 1,395</u>	<u>\$ (9,045)</u>

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

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**AS AT 30 JUNE 2020**

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3	1,887,409	1,831,605
Prepayments		5,993	31,444
Receivables		440	-
Accrued Interest		3,624	14,795
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>1,897,466</u>	<u>1,877,844</u>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Property, Plant and Equipment	4	15,151	27,698
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>15,151</u>	<u>27,698</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<u>1,912,617</u>	<u>1,905,542</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Creditors and Borrowings	5	99,103	92,385
Provisions	6	1,424,494	1,371,607
Grants in Advance		-	181,288
Other – Grants Unexpended	7	196,921	55,672
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>1,720,518</u>	<u>1,700,952</u>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Provisions	6	159,934	173,820
<b>TOTAL NON--CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>159,934</u>	<u>173,820</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<u>1,880,452</u>	<u>1,874,772</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>\$ 32,165</u>	<u>\$ 30,770</u>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Retained Earnings		32,165	30,770
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<u>\$ 32,165</u>	<u>\$ 30,770</u>



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

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020**

	<b>Retained Earnings \$</b>
<b>BALANCE AT 1 JULY 2018</b>	39,815
Profit/(Loss) for the year	<u>(9,045)</u>
<b>BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2019</b>	<u>\$ 30,770</u>
<b>BALANCE AT 1 JULY 2019</b>	30,770
Profit for the year	<u>1,395</u>
<b>BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2020</b>	<u>\$ 32,165</u>



