



Redfern
Legal Centre

Annual Report
2020–2021

Redfern Legal Centre 2020–21 Annual Report

With COVID-19 continuing to exacerbate urgent legal problems in the community, Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) remained focused on providing targeted legal support, advocacy and education to assist people experiencing heightened vulnerability.

Our Annual Report highlights our impact and areas of focus across the 2020–21 financial year. We continue to work in partnership with volunteers, donors, pro bono firms, government, industry bodies and community, supporting people in need.



Cover: *Justice For All* (detail) by Sharon Smith, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 90 cm x 61 cm. Artwork commissioned for Redfern Legal Centre with funding support from City of Sydney.

Artist statement: This painting for Redfern Legal Centre is about welcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the community and giving them a safe place to access the RLC.

The bigger circle in the middle of the painting represents a meeting place at the RLC and the feet are our people travelling into the community to use the free services that the RLC offers. The two outer circles are women's resting places, the circles with the branches are the roots of our community and people.

I have used RLC a few times and I have found it to be a warm and friendly place so I hope when you look at the painting you will feel a warm and friendly place.

— Sharon Smith, Wiradjuri artist.

Editors: Finn O'Keefe and Joanna Shulman **Editorial Assistants:** Alice Gordon and Katie Price **Design:** Firestar Studios

Table of contents

Welcome from our Chair	04
Welcome from our CEO	05
Our vision	06
Our purpose	06
Our values	06
Our 2020–2025 Guiding Principles	06
Our Theory of Change	07
Our 2020–2025 Strategic Goals	08
Redfern Legal Centre’s Theory of Change	09
Our year at a glance	10
Measuring our impact: client surveys	11
Our Team	12
Our funding partners	12
Partnerships	13
Our Volunteers	15
RLC Young Professionals Committee	17
Financial Abuse Service NSW	18
First Nations Justice	22
Aboriginal and Legal Access Worker	22
Black Lives Matter	23
RLC Supports the <i>Uluru Statement from the Heart</i>	24
Health Justice Partnership	25
Police Accountability	28
International Student Legal Service NSW	32
Employment Law	37
Credit, Debt and Consumer Law	40
Inner Sydney Tenants’ Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS)	43
Community engagement and education	45
Our Board of Directors	46
Our Staff 2020–2021	48
Awards and recognition	50
Financial statements	51
Independent Auditor’s Report	52
Join us!	59

Welcome from our Chair

The world has moved from the unprecedented year of 2020 into a busy 2021. That doesn't mean 2021 has been easy for our Centre, for our staff or for the people that we work with – but Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) has continued to demonstrate resilience and strength.



This report speaks to the significant impact that RLC has in its local community and throughout NSW. The Centre has continued its significant contribution as a leader in the sector. Every case, legal task and opportunity to advocate stems from the courage of our clients to seek our assistance to address legal need and seek advice.

In 2021, our staff have continued to deliver high quality services to clients, who report to us that our services have had a material impact on their lives and increased their wellbeing. The achievements of our staff in this report are the product of daily skill and care, and many hours doing (at times) challenging work in challenging circumstances, particularly this year. Our staff, legal and non-legal, will have countless examples of their work that they can take great pride in and I want to acknowledge each staff member's contribution to the Centre, to the broader community that we all work to support and their personal support of each other at work.

As always, the Centre has relied on its volunteer networks, its partner organisations and strong relationships with other community organisations, including other community legal centres, to deliver our services, to refer and assist clients, or to lend strength to our voice for change. We are grateful for their contribution to our work; the impact of each contribution to our services is shown throughout this report and is greatly appreciated by us and our clients.

Following on from the publication of our *Strategic Plan 2020–2025* and our *Theory of Change*, the Centre has held itself to reporting, self-review and improvement practices over the past year, whilst remaining adaptable to ensure we can effectively complete our day-to-day work. Part of the Board's work in 2021 has been considering how to successfully manage our growth, with the most staff the Centre has ever employed on our books. This is exciting, and opens up opportunities to acknowledge the core functions that our non-legal staff carry out to facilitate our legal and community work.

The Centre has so much to celebrate in what was a difficult year. I am particularly proud of the establishment of the Centre's First Nations Cadetship position, which recruited its first employee this year. This cadetship, supported by the Board and funded yearly by donation, aims to address the lack of First Nations representation in the law, and is the subject of a successful exemption application to Anti-Discrimination NSW to advertise and employ a First Nations person in this position.

This year has been my first as Chair of the Board. From this position, I have had a greater level of exposure to the amount of energy and expertise that each director, employee, volunteer and partner brings to the Centre. I want to thank my Board colleagues for their work and support throughout this year, as well as acknowledge the remarkable and impressive leadership of our Chief Executive Officer, Jo, and broader management team, Jacqui and Alexis.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank each person who has given the Centre time and resources this year. The number of people who contribute to the Centre and support the work we do is enormous, and you are all incredible.

On behalf of the Board, the staff and the broader Redfern Legal Centre community, I would also like to share my deep gratitude to Jo Shulman, who will step down from the Chief Executive Officer position early in 2022 after a long and accomplished time leading the Centre. Personally, I am honoured to call Jo a friend and I know that she will continue her good work beyond our doors. We would not be where we are, or who we are, as an organisation without Jo. As everyone who has met or worked with Jo will attest to, her character, leadership and drive have made all the difference in the work we do and we will miss her as she embarks upon new opportunities.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Kerry O'Brien, Chair

Welcome from our CEO

This year, COVID-19 continued to bring much stress and uncertainty for our clients and ourselves. Once again, our incredible staff, volunteers and partners kept advising, representing and providing access to justice, and this year helped more people than ever before! Thank you to each of you who have worked harder than ever in extremely challenging circumstances to ensure that people experiencing disadvantage secure access to justice.



There are many other achievements documented in this report that warrant celebration. I want to highlight two of them: our work in advancing First Nations Justice and our work in strengthening measurement and evaluation for the Centre, both of which were goals in our strategic plan.

Our partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations have resulted in some incredible work in response to the Black Lives Matters movement, and in increasing access to justice for First Nations communities. Through the work of all our staff, and under the guidance of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker, these partnerships are deepening, and the representation of Aboriginal people amongst our clients, staff and volunteers is increasing.

This year, 36% of our casework was for First Nations clients, almost 10% of our staff are First Nations people, and our organisation is led by our wonderful Chair Kerry O'Brien, who is a proud Koori man. There is more work to be done: more truth-telling and listening to be had, and we will continue to walk together with First Nations people to achieve greater access to justice for all Australians.

This year, I am also extraordinarily proud to be launching our first Impact Report, which documents the measurement and evaluation of our Theory of Change and Outcomes Framework. This body of work allows us to better understand the difference our programs make to the communities we work with, helps inform and guide our partnerships, and allows us to continually reflect, improve and adapt to ensure that we maximise our impact.

After leading the organisation through a mix of great and challenging times – and after 11 years as CEO of this amazing organisation – this will be my last RLC annual report. It is time for a change, and I have resigned as CEO, and will be departing early next year. I would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge those who have been with me on this journey, and who have made RLC the incredible organisation that it is.

Everything done at RLC is a team effort – and I have been surrounded by the most incredible team. Jacqui Swinburne (who celebrated 20 years at RLC this year) and Alexis Goodstone, our Principal Solicitor, are true partners in the leadership of RLC. Our team of wonderful staff feel like family to me, the majority of whom have been with us for five or more years, and who are the most dedicated and highly skilled bunch of people I have worked with. The support and commitment of our exceptional Board, under the leadership of three incredible chairs during my time at RLC: Nic Patrick, Amy Munro and Kerry O'Brien, have also been integral to the success of the Centre.

When I started in this role, I was given a very clear brief from the Board: increase RLC's work in strategic change and raise its profile. I came in eager to increase RLC's impact and create change, and our team has done just that. We developed five innovative statewide services: NSW Police Accountability practice, International Student Legal Service NSW, Financial Abuse Legal Service NSW, and the Employment Rights Legal Service (in conjunction with Kingsford Legal Centre and Inner City Legal Centre).

We thought outside the box in order to achieve change for our clients. We embraced technology including the development of an app for international students. We embraced media as a tool of social change (we now have over 100 media mentions in the mainstream press annually). We also reviewed and elevated our partnerships, and forged partnerships with new entities, based on the concept of shared value, which recognises that our clients and corporate Australia can both benefit from improving systems and policies that perpetuate disadvantage. Our partnerships have led to increased work in law reform (232 activities in the last year) and have increased our impact (69% of stakeholders agreed we were effective or very effective at achieving systemic change in the law, policies or practices). We grew exponentially, with amazing new staff joining our team and additional premises to fit them all!

Having executed my brief, it's time for me to move on. But with some parting words: increasing profiles and embracing innovation is important – governments and funders are understandably attracted by the newest and most innovative projects on offer. However, the traditional CLC model pioneered by RLC some 43 years ago is one that still works – and at its core – always will. Solid legal advice and holistic assistance, delivered in partnership with the communities we serve – and giving these communities a voice – is what CLCs do so well. This is a need that will never disappear – and one that I am proud to have been a small part of addressing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'JS' followed by a surname, likely 'Shulman'.

Joanna Shulman, CEO



Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) staff and volunteers, October 2019.

Our vision

At RLC, we strive for:

- Fair and equal access to justice
- A just and fair legal system
- Empowered individuals and strong communities.

Our purpose

RLC promotes social justice by:

- Providing legal advice, legal services and education to people experiencing vulnerability in New South Wales, and to the groups who advocate for them, and
- Participating in activities that reduce inequalities and defects in laws, the legal system, and administrative and social practices that impact on people experiencing vulnerability.

Our values

- Equity and social justice
- Empowerment of individuals and communities to enjoy their rights
- Respect for clients, the communities we work within, and each other.

Our 2020–2025 Guiding Principles

In all our work, we will be guided by the following principles:

- We will respect our clients, communities we work with, and each other
- We will positively impact people experiencing vulnerability through strategic service delivery
- We will ensure innovation and sustainability in our service delivery.

Our Theory of Change

At RLC, we believe that:



Because ...

- There are gaps and flaws in the design of services, policies, and laws in the legal system that are failing people and communities
- People experience inequality and injustices
- Marginalised communities lack a voice.



We respond by ...

- Providing free legal services including legal advice and representation and referrals to provide holistic solutions
- Engaging in policy and law reform work to change the system
- Empowering and building capacity in the community and within the legal profession through legal education and providing an effective volunteer program.



Which results in ...

- Increased access to justice for people experiencing disadvantage
- Increased capacity in our community to understand and address legal issues
- Integrated and effective responses to the needs of people experiencing disadvantage
- Empowered and resilient individuals and communities
- Systemic injustices being addressed.



Ultimately this will lead to ...

- Equal access to justice
- A just and fair legal system
- Improved wellbeing for individuals and communities.



Our 2020–2025 Strategic Goals

In all our work, in 2020–2025, we will focus on:



Service operations

Strengthen our current service delivery and focus on addressing unmet legal need



Measurement and evaluation

Measure and evaluate our services



Collaboration and partnerships

Pursue effective partnerships to better serve our clients and communities



Growth and sustainability

Continue to diversify income sources and prioritise the wellbeing of staff and volunteers

Redfern Legal Centre's Theory of Change



Our year at a glance



RLC continued to meet increased legal demand during COVID-19, reflected by our growing client numbers in the 2020–21 financial year. For another year in a row amid the COVID-19 crisis, we supported more people in the current financial year than in the year preceding it. This is an incredible achievement, particularly given the additional challenges for our staff, volunteers and clients in providing remote service delivery.

We assisted **2,594 people with 3,966 occasions** of legal advice and information, completed **1,421 legal tasks**, and provided **3,265 referrals** during casework, representation and intake services.

We worked to identify and address urgent legal need among our clients, increasing access to justice through the completion of **184 occasions of casework and representation services**.

Of the clients we provided indepth casework and representation to:

- 29% were experiencing family violence
- 94% were experiencing financial hardship
- 36% First Nations people
- 25% people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 24% people with disability.

Measuring our impact: client surveys

When asked if the help from RLC made the following issues better, no difference or worse:*



75% reported better knowledge of the law and legal system



67% reported better stress levels



53% reported a better sense of control over their own life



36% indicated we helped them improve their financial situation



30% indicated their physical health was improved



30% indicated it improved their family wellbeing



25% reported increased safety



24% had improved housing



14% had an improved employment situation



35% said that without the help from RLC their situation would be worse overall

* Clients received a survey within one week of advice and again three months later. Responses are from clients surveyed three months after their initial advice.

At Redfern Legal Centre, we measure and track our performance against outcomes to hold ourselves accountable for the impact we have on people and communities. For more information about the impact of our work, see RLC's *Our Impact 2020–21*, available at www.rlc.org.au

Our Team

Our Funding Partners

RLC receives funding and in-kind support from a range of sources. We thank these departments, organisations and individuals for their ongoing support of the Centre.

- The General Legal Service is funded principally through the Community Legal Services Program, which is administered by Legal Aid NSW and the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department
- Legal Aid NSW provided additional short-term COVID-related funding to assist with Client Intake Services
- The Migrant Employment Legal Service, a joint project with three other community legal centres, is funded by Legal Aid NSW
- The Health Justice Partnership is funded by Legal Aid NSW, with additional support from the Limb Family Foundation
- Study NSW funds the statewide International Student Legal Service NSW. It also provided funds for additional legal services for six months, during COVID lockdown
- NSW Fair Trading funds the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service, and provided additional funding to employ an additional Tenants' Advisor to assist with accelerated demand due to COVID-19
- The International Student Employment Law Service was funded up to the end of 2020 under the Fair Work Ombudsman's Community Engagement Grants program
- DLA Piper provided funding to support the Police Accountability practice
- The Financial Abuse Service NSW is supported by Ecstra Foundation, who provided a three-year

grant for the policy, law reform and capacity building work. The legal arm of the service is a proud partner of CommBank Next Chapter, our Foundation Supporters are American Express, PwC Australia, Ashurst, Telstra and Commonwealth Government funding administered by Legal Aid NSW under the Community Legal Services Program

- City of Sydney provides RLC with premises at Redfern Town Hall.

Grants and donations

From time-to-time, RLC is successful in gaining grants or donations for specific projects. We thank the following organisations for their support:

- Thomson Reuters Australia supported the Lawyers' Practice Manual and our Annual Report
- University of NSW continued to support course modules on Police Powers
- University of Sydney Law School funded Social Justice clinical placements, whereby RLC provides high quality experiential learning for law students
- University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) funded a course module on legal support for international students
- City of Sydney provided funding for commissioning a First Nations artwork to be displayed at RLC
- City of Sydney and Study NSW provided funding to enable free access for international students to RLC's digital resource, *My Legal Mate*
- Additional grants to assist with COVID-related equipment and IT needs were provided by NSW Fair Trading and NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- Microsoft provided discounted software
- Many individuals and supporter organisations provided generous donations, including 1666 Foundation, Atlassian Foundation, and Sydney University Law Society.



An Australian Government Initiative



STUDY NSW
Creative. Dynamic. Alive.

Supported by NSW Fair Trading



Commonwealth Bank



ashurst



CITY OF SYDNEY



Partnerships

Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) employs a model whereby each area of practice is supported by a pro bono partner, which allows us to exponentially increase our reach and impact. RLC is highly appreciative of the assistance and partnership of the following firms.



Credit and Debt Partner

RLC's credit and debt team continues its pro bono partnership with Ashurst. Lawyers from Ashurst provide assistance with advice and research for casework and community legal information, enabling the team to take on more complex and difficult matters. They also accept referrals from the credit and debt practice, where possible. This partnership is an important resource for RLC and we greatly appreciate Ashurst's continued support.



Housing and Homelessness Partner

RLC's Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS) is fortunate to enjoy continued support from the Human Rights Law Group at King & Wood Mallesons. Their invaluable legal advice and support has assisted us to provide representation for additional people in Tribunal matters. King & Wood Mallesons also provides assistance to the inner-city community legal centres by providing a venue and support for the volunteer solicitors' training program.



Employment and Health Justice Partnership (HJP) Partner

RLC continues its highly successful partnership with Clayton Utz in the area of employment law, providing support for clients who have been underpaid or unpaid, representation in unfair dismissal and general protections conciliations and underpayment claims to the Federal Circuit Court. The scheme results in excellent outcomes for many of RLC's clients who would otherwise be unable to obtain representation and be unfairly disadvantaged in their disputes with employers.



International Student Legal Service NSW Partner

McCabe Curwood are the pro bono partner for RLC's statewide international students' service. McCabe Curwood assist with RLC's advice clinic for international students, providing advice on a range of legal issues, including credit and debt, consumer and tenancy matters, review of government decisions, victims' compensation applications, access to records and mental health and guardianship.



Police Accountability Partner

DLA Piper supports RLC's police accountability practice, both financially and through pro bono support. DLA provides solicitors to help staff RLC's police accountability advice clinic, and assists with the practice's advice and casework by drafting police complaints, undertaking research, developing resources and assisting in the investigation and conduct of test cases. The assistance provided by DLA Piper is invaluable to the police accountability practice, and it could not operate without it.

COVID-19 Partnerships and Support

**COLIN
BIGGERS
& PAISLEY**
LAWYERS

CLAYTON UTZ

Colin Biggers & Paisley have kindly assisted RLC's International Student Legal Service NSW to meet increased demand for legal advice during COVID-19. They provide a number of lawyers on a weekly basis to advise clients on issues such as tenancy, disputes with education providers and a range of other legal matters.

Clayton Utz has also been highly supportive of RLC's International Student Legal Service NSW during COVID-19, assisting with the provision of legal advice to students by telephone on a weekly basis. This has assisted us to meet the increased demand in this practice.

Financial Abuse Legal Service supporters

Trained pro bono solicitors from corporate firms including PwC Australia, American Express, Ashurst and Telstra advise clients attending Redfern Legal Centre's Financial Abuse Legal Service clinics on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Pro bono solicitors from Lander & Rogers also attend the clinic to advise clients on overlapping family law issues.

Watts McCray
LAWYERS

Family Law Partner

Watts McCray has been providing family law advice to clients of RLC on a weekly basis for many years, including in relation to divorce, children and property. Their support and expertise is invaluable to the people we assist, many of whom are victims of domestic violence and financial abuse. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Watts McCray for many years to come.

LANDER & ROGERS

Advice Clinic and Family Law Partner

Lander & Rogers assists with RLC's weekly pro bono advice clinic on a fortnightly basis, assisting people experiencing disadvantage with a range of legal issues, including credit and debt, consumer and tenancy matters, review of government decisions, victims' compensation applications, access to records and mental health and guardianship. Lander & Rogers also provides family law advice and assistance to clients of RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW.

Australiaonline

ACAE Advisory Centre
for Australian Education
澳洲留学辅导中心

MMM

MMMIGRATION

Globancy
Education | Migration

Migration Advice Partners

Michal Sestak, Managing Director, SIS Consulting/AustraliaOnline; Ursula Ng, Managing Director, Advisory Centre for Australian Education; Melanie Macfarlane, Managing Director, MMMigration; and Miguel Mudbidri, Executive Director, Globancy all generously donate their time to provide migration advice to RLC's international student clients on a regular basis.

Other Pro Bono Support

Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers, Hall & Wilcox, Kingston Reid, KPMG Law, Makinson d'Apice Lawyers, McCabe Curwood and the New South Wales Bar Association.

Special thanks to all the individual solicitors, secondees and pro bono coordinators and partners from all the firms included in the pages above, who have provided advice, casework and advocacy to our clients and strategic support to RLC.

Our Volunteers

The work of RLC is supported at every level by a team of passionate and dedicated volunteers.

In the 2020–21 financial year our volunteer team included:

- 75 volunteer solicitors
- 23 pro bono solicitors
- 67 volunteer legal assistants
- 103 practical legal trainees, clinic students and other specialist volunteers. (Some volunteers worked across more than one category.)



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Speak

28

different languages

Contributed over

15,000 hours

of volunteer time

Provide a commercial value of over

\$3 million

of volunteer time worth of benefit
to the Centre each year



Pictured above: Celebrating the achievements of RLC volunteers, December 2019; **and right:** Volunteers working remotely supported RLC to meet increased legal demand, 2020.

Listed below are the 256 volunteers who supported our work in 2020–21.

Aamna Butt	Christina White	Isabelle Alder	Marie Kambouroglou	Renz Hernandez
Adrian Rook	Christine Weekes	Isobelle Waller	Mary Hawkins	Romina Reyftmann
Aimee Chaffer	Christopher Aouns	Ivan Li	Maslia Mohammad	Sally Knox
Aleisha Vinoly	Chu Yin Wong	Jack Mars	Matilda Slater-Phillips	Samantha Kotsakis
Alexa Roach	Chuyi Wang	Jaipartek Singh	Matthew Churkovich	Samira Friis
Alexander Wright	Ciara Kenny	Jake Delaney	Maya Gonzalez	Sarah Avery
Alexis Edinburgh	Claire Wong	James Scully-Leaf	Mehak Verma	Sarah Doyle
Ali French	Clare Power	Jason Samurl	Mia Parkes-Talbot	Sarah McLenaghan
Ali Zein	Clariss Lai	Jemimah McLaughlin	Michael Baker	Sarah Morton-Ramwell
Alice Chong	Clarissa Mirarchi	Jess Dougan	Michael Gibson	Sebastian Gutierrez-Hood
Alice Gordon	Coda Danu-Asmara	Jessica Geelan	Michael Grinbergs	Selina Ta
Alicia McKenzie	Cormac Wilde	Jessica Go	Michael Nguyen	Seri Feldman-Gubbay
Alina Kaye	Craig Emery	Jessica Pereira	Michael Windsor	Shaun Chng
Allegra Peruch	Daniel Antoun	Jevan Griffiths	Michael Zhang	Sheree Kuan
Allison Rickett	Daniel Fellowes	Johannah Lowe	Miguel Mudbidri	Shona Scully
Allysha Merret	Daniel Roff	Joseph Murphy	Minerva Cano	Simon Rice
Amelia Schubach	Daniel Thompson	Joshua Kai	Dominguez	Sing Hau Yeap
Amir El-Roubaei	Darrell Bagang	Joshua Poon	Molly O'Brien	Sofia Bahas
Amy Munro	David Chong	Julia Lawford	Monica Bayas Inglis	Sophia Semmler
Amy Warren	Dean Tyler	Kamani Krishnan	Moonira Mamoon	Sophie Heithersay
Amy Zhao	Denea Bascombe	Karen Andersen	Morgan Ge	Sophie Norrish
Angharad Owens-Strauss	Dominic Longhurst	Karen Ann De Raya	Muhammad Olife	Stefanie Vogt
Anindya Krisna Paul	Duranka Jayasinghe	Karolyn Liu	Nachrawan Halawani	Stephanie Azzi
Chowdhury	Eleanor Wall	Katie Butterworth	Nadezna Wilkins	Stephanie Toovey
Ankita Singh	Elinore Rema	Keerthana Mohan	Nancy Bramley-Moore	Stephen Christodoulou
Ann Kwak	Elizabeth Parsons	Kelly Xiao	Narita Nagin	Sunil Puranikmath
Anna Camilleri	Ella Alexander	Kerry O'Brien	Nellie Tsang	Susan Winfield
Anna Glen	Eloise Boughton	Khai Der Lau	Nerida Mullally	Sylva Dankha
Anna Kedves	Elyse Methven	Kieran Pender	Nesha	Syvannah Harper
Anna West	Emily Capener	Kim Garth	Balasubramanian	Tamara Sims
Assil El-Ali	Emily Dong	Kiran Gupta	Nicholas Simpson	Tara Imrie
Audrey Meaden	Emily Slaytor	Kirk Simmons	Nicole Ellul-Thorn	Tarun Ramachandran
Aurhett Barrie	Emily Wittig	Kirstyn Ho	Nicole Smith	Tim Capelin
Barbara Sanders	Erika de Pellegrin	Kirtveer Sandhu	Nikila Kaushik	Tim Forrest
Bella Kosky	Erin Butterworth	Krishna Nand	Nikki Samuel	Tina Wu
Beth Agar	Erin Turner Manners	Krista MacPherson	Nizar Ali	Tina Zhu
Bob Liang	Eugene Fedoseev	Kristina Simic	Noah Bedford	Trent Wallace
Briana Regan	Ferdous Bahar	Kylie O'Reilly	Nuzuma Sama	Tylah Coskerie
Brittany Reeves	Fiona Gayler	Lachlan Wachter	Olivia Freeman	Vaidehi Mahapatra
Bronte McAlpin	Fiona Lin	Lauren Kovacic	Olivia Irvine	Vanja Bulut
Camilla Clemente	Francesco Mazzitelli	Lauren Rolfe	Olivia Tan	Virginija Jalozaite
Camilo Pena	Freya Appleford	Lauren Stefanou	Oscar Monaghan	Wei Zhang
Campbell Rice	Genevieve Howe	Leroy Angove	Patrick Trieu	Wendy Hu
Cara Cook	Georgia Chinchilla	Libby Leydon	Paul Hong	Xiaoou Zhao
Carla Cristina Massai	Georgia Stewart	Lily Jones	Penelope Parker	Xilin Chen
Fedatto	Grace Quiddington	Louise Press	Peter Alliot	Yi Weiliu
Catherine Vye	Guy Williams	Lucy Brown	Peter Anderson	Zemin Islam
Cecilia Ngu	Hadeer Sayed	Luke Wilson	Polina Churilova	Zi Wei Khoo
Celine Truong	Hae-Eun Park	Madeleine Huber	Prithi Sakthi Sivabalan	Zoe Anastassiades
Charlene Ko	Hallie Warnock	Madeleine Stevens	Rachael Chadwick	Zoe Papagiannis
Charlotte Smee	Harmanjot Kaur	Manny Zhang	Rebecca Dunkel	
Chloe Saker	Imogen Szumer	Margaret Fox	Renee Xue	
	Isabella Cavanagh	Maria Toma		

Barristers

We thank the following barristers for providing their services to our clients on a pro bono basis: Adrian Maroya, Ingmar Taylor SC, Marea Wilson, Vanja Bulut, Chris Ronalds SC, Brenda Tronson, Daniel Roff, Greg James QC, Felicity Graham, Larissa Andelman and Andrew Naylor.

RLC Young Professionals Committee

The RLC Young Professionals Committee (YPC) was founded in 2018 as a way for emerging professionals who have completed their volunteer term at RLC to stay involved and support the work of the Centre through fundraising and awareness raising activities. The YPC also works to create opportunities for current RLC volunteers to network with volunteer alumni. The YPC is a dedicated volunteer team who donates our time and energy, and leverages our combined networks to support RLC.

It has been a difficult year for our community during the ongoing COVID-19 situation. During times of crisis, it is often the already disadvantaged and vulnerable parts of our community who get hit the hardest. In these tough times, it is more important than ever to make sure those who need our support the most are not left behind, and access to justice plays a vital role in that.

Although the YPC was unable to hold any of our usual fundraising activities in 2020–21, we look forward to being able to return to face-to-face events again soon. If you have any questions about the YPC or ideas for future projects we could be involved in, please don't hesitate to contact us by sending an email to youngprofessionals@rlc.org.au. We would love to hear from you!

The YPC members for 2020–2021 are:

- Ali Zein, Treasurer
- Cecilia Ngu, General Member
- Ferdous Bahar, General Member
- Ivan Li, Co-Chair
- Lily Jones, Co-Chair
- Shona Scully, General Member
- Sofia Bahas, Secretary.



Pictured from top: YPC Co-chairs opening a financial abuse panel discussion raising funds and awareness, March 2019; Big smiles from the YPC at RLC's inaugural comedy fundraiser, March 2018; YPC celebrating the success of their sold-out financial abuse panel discussion, March 2019.

Financial Abuse Service NSW

The Financial Abuse Service NSW is a specialist service which provides free statewide legal assistance to people who have experienced financial abuse in an intimate partner relationship.

Through the legal service, we identify systemic policy and law reform issues that help guide government and industry responses to this widespread but under-reported form of domestic abuse. The service is an innovative model that brings together support from the corporate, government and philanthropic sectors.

Advice and casework

The legal arm of the service is a proud partner of CommBank Next Chapter, our Foundation Supporters are American Express, PwC Australia, Ashurst, Telstra and Commonwealth Government funding administered by Legal Aid NSW under the Community Legal Services Program.

This year, we welcomed two new solicitors to the team, which has increased the amount of assistance available to clients and expanded the team's expertise to address the significant demand for help with family law financial matters.

"I just want to say 'thank you'. Without the help provided by the Financial Abuse Service I don't know where I would be today. They not only gave me my financial independence back, they gave me my voice back - now that takes a special bunch of people to achieve something like that."

"I really appreciate this service. It's a life saver for women like myself trying to escape domestic violence."

— Client survey, 2021

Responsible lending

Consumer credit problems remain the most common areas that the Financial Abuse Service NSW assists with. We use consumer credit laws, specifically responsible lending obligations (RLOs), to seek legal remedies for many victim-survivors of financial abuse. When applied correctly RLOs can help uncover signs of financial abuse because lenders need to make reasonable enquiries about each borrower's requirements and objectives.

Debbie's Story: Responsible lending laws help remedy financial abuse

Debbie*, an Aboriginal woman in her late 50s, had been experiencing financial abuse from her partner for over 10 years. He was a gambler and exercised control over all areas of her life, refused her access to their bank accounts and forced her to live off a small allowance. Any resistance was met with severe violence and her allowance being cut off.

When Debbie separated from her partner, she discovered that the home they previously owned outright had been almost entirely mortgaged through successive loans. The current lender was threatening to repossess as the mortgage was in arrears. Debbie was pressured by her partner to quickly sell the home, leaving her with next to nothing once the mortgage was discharged.

Debbie was homeless and struggling to survive when she sought help from RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW. Debbie was shocked to learn the amount of debt her partner had put her in. When Debbie read the joint loan application, she identified that her partner had lied about how the funds would be used, understated their living expenses and failed to disclose their liabilities. She recalled that throughout their relationship her partner would force her to sign papers that she was not allowed to read or ask questions about. She had no recollection of ever speaking to the lender directly.

Despite Debbie being on the title for the secured property and jointly and severally liable for the mortgage, the lender's records noted they never attempted to contact Debbie about the mortgage application, or ask what the money would be used for. RLC assisted Debbie to negotiate substantial compensation from the lender on the basis they had ignored signs of financial abuse and failed in their responsible lending obligations. As a result, Debbie was able to obtain secure housing, and has plans to start her own business so she can move forward with her life, independent from her abuser.

Debbie's story is just one example of how responsible lending laws support access to justice for our clients.

*Name changed to protect client safety and privacy



Pictured: Rebecca Glenn (Centre for Women's Economic Safety) and Gayatri Nair (RLC) gave evidence on behalf of EARG NSW at the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Coercive Control, March 2021.

Working for change

Our change-making work, supported by the Ecstra Foundation aims to ensure that financial abuse is recognised and addressed by government and industry, leading to prevention and improved outcomes for people affected by financial abuse.

Our team regularly engages with community and industry networks, as well as contributing our expertise to state and national advisory groups. This year, we provided expert input to the following:

- Consumer credit reforms
- Debt Collection Guidelines
- Telecommunications Industry Working Group
- Office for Women in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet consultation to assist with the prevention of financial abuse of women
- NSW Coercive Control Inquiry
- Revenue NSW Fines Guidelines
- Victims Support NSW policy changes
- Australian Financial Complaints Authority review.

Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG)

RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW continues to coordinate the NSW chapter of the Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). The EARG is a network of community organisations which influences government and industry responses to the financial impact of domestic and family violence.

This year, we held the first National EARG meeting with members from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Australian Capital Territory. The new agenda features a greater focus on strategy and prioritisation, while still retaining time for members to share what they are seeing in their work and opportunities to collaborate. At the end of the national agenda, we break out into state groups to discuss state-based issues.

In February, EARG NSW provided a joint submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Coercive Control and presented evidence at the inquiry, sharing our knowledge and expertise with government with the aim of improving responses to financial abuse.

The submission was prepared by analysing casework, relevant research and consulting widely within the sector, as well as meeting with MPs. EARG NSW's submission recommended a thorough and robust consultation to ensure diverse engagement with all relevant groups. We recommended that the further consultation include consideration of:

- existing laws and policies
- adverse consequences for victim survivors
- evidence-based research on prevention and deterrence
- adequate funding to the sector to implement changes, and
- education, awareness raising and training for all sectors of society, not just the police and judiciary.



Pictured clockwise from top left: RLC Financial Abuse Service NSW staff Gayatri Nair and Laura Bianchi at Parliament House; Gayatri and Laura highlight the critical role of responsible lending laws in preventing financial abuse, Canberra, February 2021.

Consumer credit reforms

In September 2020, the government introduced consumer credit reforms proposing to wind back the responsible lending obligations in the current legislation. The Financial Abuse Service NSW coordinated a submission on behalf of EARG members expressing concern that these reforms will increase the frequency and severity of financial abuse, and remove vital legal remedies for victim-survivors.

In February 2021, the Financial Abuse Service NSW represented EARG members before the Senate Economics Legislation Committee in Canberra and gave

evidence about the impact of this legislation for people who experience family and domestic violence.

We also supported the ‘Save Safe Lending’ campaign led by Financial Rights Legal Centre, Consumer Action Law Centre and CHOICE, by providing expert input about financial abuse in meetings and correspondence to MPs, media interviews and a national open letter.

As a result of these collective actions, the Bill (as at 30 June 2021) has not passed. Key members of the crossbench have made public statements in support of upholding these important consumer protections, which align with the messages of the campaign.

RLC in the media

Government banking changes ‘perpetuate abuse’, domestic violence groups fear

Matthew Elmas and Josh Butler report for *The New Daily*, 25 February 2021

Advocates fear the federal government plan to wind back responsible lending laws will “perpetuate abuse” of domestic violence survivors, potentially locking them into poverty and even physical harm. The plan to dismantle the laws on credit contracts worth over \$2000 will slash safeguards that protect those in abusive relationships from being coerced into debt, according to family violence advocates.

“Economic abuse is one of the most significant barriers to leaving a domestic violence situation,” said Laura Bianchi, a solicitor at Redfern Legal Centre’s financial abuse service. “What we see with the reforms is the real risk of making it easier for perpetrators to commit economic abuse, so maybe more people will be experiencing this, with significantly larger debts.”

Full article available at: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/2021/02/25/banking-reforms-domestic-violence>

RLC in the media

Looser lending laws may lead to worse financial abuse, campaigners warn

Katina Curtis reports for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 2020

The government is consulting on planned changes to banking rules, including rolling back responsible lending obligations established in 2009. These mandate banks check the requirements, objectives and financial situation of each borrower applying for a loan.

A Treasury fact sheet about the changes says the “prescriptive obligations” have resulted in obtaining credit becoming more burdensome for borrowers “without necessarily improving a lender’s ability to understand if the loan is suitable”. But lawyers who represent victims of financial abuse by a partner say the responsible lending obligations provide vital protections that give them the ability to argue for debt waivers so victims can move on with their lives.

Laura Bianchi, the head of the Redfern Legal Centre’s financial Abuse Service NSW, said the responsible lending obligations were fundamental in these kinds of cases. “If the responsible lending laws are repealed, we expect to see an increase not only in the frequency but also the severity of economic abuse and also reduced legal options to help people,” she said.

Full article available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/campaigners-warn-looser-lending-laws-may-lead-to-worse-financial-abuse-20201116-p56eyl.html>

OUR IMPACT



People are less financially stressed



People feel more able to leave and remain out of an abusive relationship



People have increased capacity to navigate the legal and financial system



Families and children are safer and more financially secure



Greater public awareness of financial abuse and where to seek help



Reduction in poverty and homelessness

First Nations Justice

Access to Justice for First Nations Australians is central to our work at RLC. We work closely with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to address access to justice issues for First Nations people. We offer a priority service for First Nations clients across all of our intake and referral services, forge connections with other community organisations, and actively explore further work to promote First Nations justice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker

RLC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker works across the organisation to ensure that all of RLC's services are accessible and culturally safe, and conducts community outreach and builds relationships with external organisations to ensure that access to justice issues are addressed.

The Access Worker provides and reviews referrals to and from services who support First Nations people, as well as liaising with non-Indigenous service providers.

This work extends out into the community through weekly attendance (except during lockdown) at RedLink's Redfern Women's Social Group and other events, where she provides information about RLC's services, and networks with First Nations people and organisations that support them, including Aboriginal Medical Service, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA), and numerous public and private-sector agencies and NGOs.

The Access Worker also leads RLC's engagement in recognising and celebrating significant Indigenous events such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week, and contributes to Community Legal Centres NSW Quarterlies 'Yarn Up' sessions. Held four times per year, the 'Yarn Up' training, development and networking sessions provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working at NSW CLCs with opportunities to collaborate on strategies to engage local Aboriginal communities, and build solutions-led legal representation and access to culturally safe services.

Other achievements throughout the year included active participation as a First Nations Engagement Committee member to develop RLC's Reconciliation Action Plan, and consultation which informed RLC's submission to government on the *Indigenous Voice Co-design Process Interim Report* and statement in support of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

"We were in a very vulnerable position, I was overwhelmed and I don't know how I would have got through it without RLC."

"My mental health was restored, and my ability to parent and maintain an income as a single parent."

"The RLC made my life liveable and allowed me to be a parent. The RLC showed me respect, acknowledgement and love."

— Client survey, 2021



Pictured L-R: Maureen Randall, RLC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker; Margaret Macrae, District Housing Manager, NSW Department of Communities and Justice; and Dee, a local jewellery maker who ran workshops supporting participants at RedLink Women's Cave, March 2021.

Black Lives Matter - A Roadmap for Policing & Justice Reform in Australia

A FREE WEBINAR



National
Justice
Project



ALS

Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited



Jumbunna
Institute for Indigenous
Education and Research

Black Lives Matter

In Australia, the Black Lives Matter movement drew focus on the myriad ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are routinely propelled into criminal justice system as a result of discrimination, racial profiling and over-policing.

In response, RLC's police accountability practice worked in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to create a public conversation examining the over-policing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and deaths in custody, asking what reforms to the criminal justice system should occur here?

As part of this work we formed a coalition of stakeholder organisations to organise a free public webinar, working with National Justice Project; Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, UTS, Sydney; and Sydney and Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT). We assembled a panel of subject matter experts to tease out the key issues in an hour-long interactive online discussion on police accountability and the need for structural reforms to the criminal justice system.

The webinar engaged over 300 people watching and commenting live, and went on to reach over 16,000 people on social media. It was subsequently broadcast on ABC Radio's *Speaking Out* program, further expanding its impact and its reach.



Pictured top: RLC Chief Operations Officer, Jacqui Swinburne; RLC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker, Maureen Randall; Wiradjuri artist, Sharon Smith; and RLC Chief Executive Officer, Joanna Shulman, with Sharon's artwork for RLC, *Justice For All*, September 2020; **and above:** Sharon Smith, together with RLC staff and board celebrating NAIDOC Week, November 2020.



RLC supports the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*

Redfern Legal Centre supports the call for a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution. RLC's statement endorsing the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* was formally adopted by the RLC board on 21 April 2021. This statement was developed through a process of consultation between staff and board, facilitated by RLC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker.

Redfern Legal Centre supports the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* as an important step forward for all Australians. It is time to embed a First Nations Voice in Australia's Parliament. This is a priority, and we must progress without delay.

Fifty-four years ago, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were counted among Australia's Population Census for the first time. In 2021, First Nations people are still asking to be heard.

The Uluru Statement is an opportunity for all Australians to participate, and it must not be squandered. This powerful, yet humble statement was the culmination of five years of detailed consultations and regional dialogues driven by First Nations people, creating a robust call to action to address the injustices and inequities stemming from Australia's brutal past.

It is time for all Australians to acknowledge the atrocities of our history, and the ongoing impact of systemic racism and intergenerational trauma. It is time to walk with First Nations people towards a better future; one based on truth-telling, equality and trust.

First Nations people should not be denied the right to meaningful participation in political debates on laws and policies affecting them and their communities.

Redfern Legal Centre supports a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in Australia's Constitution. We see in our daily work how easy it is for legislation to be repealed. The Constitution sets out our nation's values and provides security and certainty that legislation cannot guarantee.

Redfern Legal Centre is dedicated to achieving greater access to justice for all Australians. We know that this process begins with the simple but powerful act of listening, which allows our clients to be heard.

It is time for us all to listen, and to amplify the voices that are the Uluru Statement. We need action, not more conversation. We need constitutional change so that the process of *Makarrata* ('truth-telling') and healing can occur.

Health Justice Partnership

First Nations communities can experience multiple forms of disadvantage, which has a compounding effect on legal vulnerability and health disparity.

Redfern Legal Centre's (RLC) Health Justice Partnership (HJP) with Sydney Local Health District (Sydney SLHD) works to redress the balance by co-locating lawyers at the Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Hospital, the Sydney Dental Hospital and community outreach settings to provide free, confidential and culturally sensitive legal advice to vulnerable health care consumers, with a priority focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The success of RLC's HJP adds to a growing body of research that demonstrates the synergies of providing health and legal support in partnership. Our pioneering work in NSW is also paving the way for other HJPs to be established across the nation.

Although COVID-19 prevented our usual weekly two-day attendance at RPA Hospital, and with our Dental Hospital HJP only able to resume face-to-face services in March 2021, we continued to respond effectively to the extensive network of health professionals who refer both inpatients and outpatients within the Sydney SLHD with unmet health-harming legal needs.

Working for change

The HJP service supports populations at risk of poor health and justice outcomes who may otherwise not access legal help: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability or chronic health conditions, people experiencing domestic and family violence, people at risk of elder abuse, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people experiencing poverty.

A significant aspect of RLC's HJP work involves care and protection advocacy/representation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Our collaborative policy work includes membership of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Care and Protection Legal Advisory Group; a co-facilitatory role with the Care and Protection NSW Community Legal Centres Committee; a member of the Legal Aid NSW Family Law Review Committee; a member of the Surry Hills Children's Court Care and Protection Network; and a key stakeholder with the Pregnancy Family Conferencing RPA/DCJ program.

"I feel like my community looked after me, and I have a renewed outlook on sense of community and justice. I can teach my son about the importance of looking after each other and being involved with the community.

— Jamie* (HJP client).
*Name has been changed

"I applaud the key benefit of Redfern Legal Centre's health justice partnership with the Health District as it continues to offer its innovative interdisciplinary approach, where access to legal advice may not have occurred if a lawyer was not onsite at RPA."

— Dr John Cass-Verco, Head of Department Paediatrics, RPA Hospital, (HJP partner).

A unique feature of our HJP is driving systemic change through the HJP lawyer educating health professionals to identify legal needs. The health professional, in turn, can respond to a client's health and wellbeing needs in a deeper, more holistic way.

Highlights of this work over the past year include:

- Joint presentation with RPA's Social Work Team Leader at the annual Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies conference speaking to themes of service connections, partnerships and collaborations
- 'Post final Guardianship Care Orders' submissions for the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Child Protection & Social Services
- Care and protection early intervention support worker's workshop.

Advice and casework

In collaboration with RLC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker, the HJP practice continues to assist clients to address legal issues in areas such as Victims Support; the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme and the National Redress Scheme; repairs and transfers in social housing; care and protection; and minor criminal offences.

The HJP lawyers work closely with social workers at the RPA Hospital and Sydney Dental Hospital to provide holistic socio-legal support to comprehensively address clients' multiple, complex needs.

Our practice continues to embrace systemic change through four key pillars:

- **Integration:** the HJP lawyer becomes part of the care team that delivers services to patients working together to enlarge and transform existing systems
- **Trust:** a shared commitment to common goals
- **Early intervention:** intervening in an issue early to minimise its impact and to maximise the utility of service provision
- **Person-centred/self-agency:** after-care engagement, flexibility of service delivery and client empowerment.

RLC's HJP provides court representation in the Local Court, Children's Court and Federal Circuit Court for clients with 'high level' vulnerability and/or in urgent circumstances related to criminal, care and protection and parenting matters. Our approach is aided by an integrative approach working with health professionals who may offer additional materials such a court support letter, affidavit or expert witness attendance.

Notable casework outcomes include obtaining contact for an Aboriginal mother and her children, preventing ongoing harassment of a vulnerable and homeless pregnant woman from a convicted perpetrator of



HJP solicitor, Luke Carr, with actor, Miranda Tapsell, June 2021.

domestic violence, and avoiding a custodial sentence for an Aboriginal client by successfully arguing the *Bugmy* principle, that childhood deprivation should be considered in sentencing and given full weight.

Engagement with partners, community and government

Our HJP continues to work closely with local government and non-government organisations including RedLink, WEAVE, Lou's Place, Women's and Girl's Emergency Centre, Aboriginal Medical Service, and Nelly's Healing Centre. Together, we work to Close the Gap for First Nations people in NSW.

John's story

John* cannot remember the incident when the ambulance staff attended his home after neighbours reported a large bang from inside his flat. Upon arrival, the ambulance staff observed John had a large hematoma on his eye. They reported John picking up a shard of glass and threatening to throw it at them. Police attended the scene, and in the aftermath, John threatened self-harm. He was sectioned under the now repealed Mental Health Act for involuntary admission at the RPA Mental Health Unit for 16 days. Police charged John with common assault, claiming it was aggravated by his threat against an emergency worker.

With the assistance of the HJP RLC lawyer, supporting medical evidence of John's extensive contact with a number of mental health services – both inpatient and community-based acute care teams – was gathered. A four-week adjournment in the Local Court was granted allowing time for a case to be made in relation to a strong defence that John was suffering a mental health impairment under the new *Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020* when the home incident occurred. The matter awaits Court adjudication.

*Name changed to protect client safety and privacy

Lisa's story

Lisa*, a 29-year-old Aboriginal woman with a significant history of family violence and drug use, was expecting the birth of her sixth child. She required legal assistance for three legal issues: an arrest warrant, care and protection, and an application to vary a police AVO. With the aid of the HJP lawyer, the arrest warrant was urgently dealt with in chambers by a regional magistrate, legal support was provided at a Pregnancy Family Conference and court representation for a successful AVO Local Court variation application was made.

*Name changed to protect client safety and privacy

Angela's story

As a result of a fluctuating mental health condition, Angela* had a history of altercations with police and a record of previous minor criminal offences. The Concord Hospital Mental Health Team had grave concerns for Angela's welfare if she received a custodial sentence following a recent mental health episode that had resulted in police intervention. Working closely with Angela's treating psychiatrist and social worker, RLC's HJP solicitor highlighted the impact of intergenerational trauma to successfully argue the full weight of the *Bugmy* principle; that Angela's experience in childhood informed by the Stolen Generations be considered in sentencing. As a result, Angela did not receive a jail term.

Working with a community housing provider, RLC assisted Angela to obtain stable accommodation. Angela's secure housing and her cat continue to support her mental health.

*Name changed to protect client safety and privacy

OUR IMPACT



Health care consumers are informed about legal rights and options



Health-harming legal issues are addressed



Improved health and wellbeing

People have better understanding of NSW Department of Communities and Justice care and protection processes



Greater access to legal and health services for Aboriginal people and people with complex needs



In the 2020–21 financial year, RLC's HJP partnership with RPA Hospital has led to improved outcomes for a number of vulnerable mothers, including the prevention of the removal of two children, three matters in which child contact orders were improved, and one matter where child restoration was achieved.

Police Accountability

RLC's statewide police accountability practice works to inform and educate the public about their legal rights and the limits of police power, to address systemic policing issues through law reform and litigation, and to seek greater police accountability by raising awareness about unlawful and unjust policing practices.

This year, we focused on three broad areas: policing and the Black Lives Matter movement, unlawful police strip searches in New South Wales, and police powers and public health orders.

Working for change

NSW strip search law

Our work to change NSW strip search legislation achieved some significant results this year. The pressure placed on NSW Police by our strip search campaign and complaints from the public led to a series of investigations by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) into policing practice, which saw a number of significant changes to the way NSW Police conduct strip searches. These included the introduction of new police guidelines and policies to inform officers of the legal requirements for conducting strip searches in NSW, along with changes to supervision, governance and accountability structures to ensure strip searches are being conducted lawfully, and that NSW Police Commands are reviewing, evaluating and auditing all strip searches being conducted.

While these were all extremely welcome outcomes, our casework demonstrates there is still more work to do. Over the past 12 months, we have been working with the law firm Slater and Gordon to investigate potential class actions against NSW Police for unlawful strip searches. Watch this space.

Emma's story: traumatic strip search reminiscent of sexual assault

Emma* was pulled aside by two male police officers as she entered a music festival, following a police sniffer dog indication. The male officers took Emma into a backroom where two female officers conducted a search. The officers gave Emma no warning that she was about to be strip searched.

Emma had been sexually assaulted a year earlier, and the lack of communication and consent during the strip search brought back the same feelings of powerlessness she felt during the assault. The officers asked her why she thought the sniffer dog had identified her and pointed to the tampon she had in.

Emma left the event in tears after police confiscated her ticket and escorted her out, despite having found no drugs or other illegal items in her possession. She has not returned to a music festival since and says she still feels anxious when she sees police and sniffer dogs. Emma says more needs to be done to ensure that consent is explained and granted before a police strip search is conducted. She also questions whether a young person under 17 should legally be able to consent to being searched.

*Name changed to protect client safety and privacy

“Appreciate [RLC's] advocacy role as you feel so alone up against police.”

“Your solicitor who helped me took time to explain/advise options and was empathetic towards me as i was distressed.”

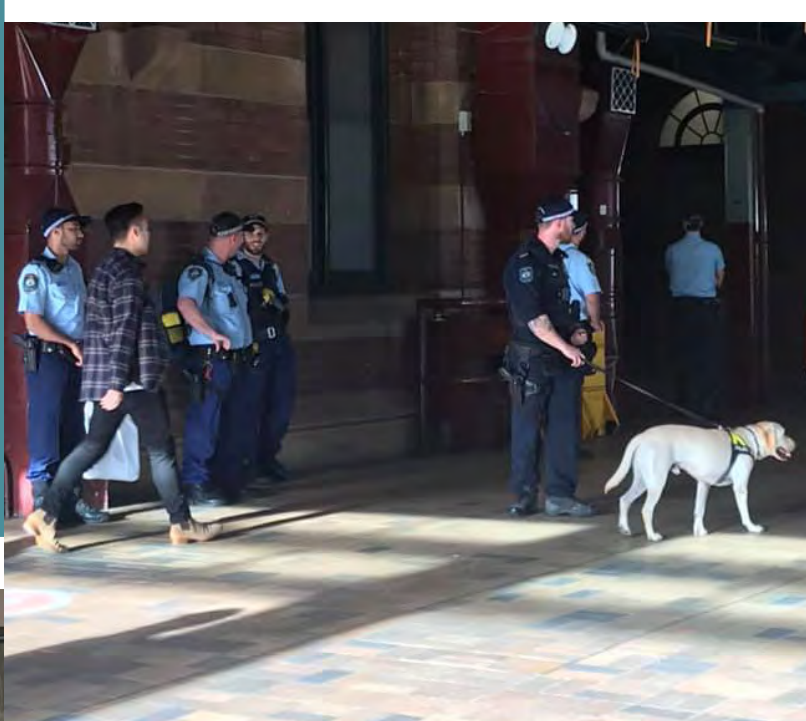
“Keep up with the good work, I hope a lot more people are able to get the help I received.”

— Client survey, 2021



RLC police accountability solicitor, Samantha Lee, attending a Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) strip search hearing, October 2020.

This year, the practice also gave evidence at two NSW parliamentary inquiries: Assaults on members of the NSW Police Force, and the Select Committee on the High Level of First Nations People in Custody and Oversight and Review of Deaths in Custody.



Quick Tips: Police Powers & Your Rights

Police can fine or arrest you if you breach the new COVID-19 laws

Police must tell you why they are stopping, searching or arresting you

Ask police for their name and police station

Tell police if you are 17 or younger

During an incident, ask police to turn on their Body Worn Video and have someone film from a distance

If police want to search you, say: "I do not agree to being searched" but cooperate with the search

If police ask you questions, tell them your name and say: "I do not wish to discuss anything further."

If you're under 14, a parent/guardian should be present for formal questioning

If you're 14-17, an adult of your choice should be present for formal questioning

You do not need to provide ID, unless something illegal is found or you are being fined/arrested

If you sustain any injuries from police conduct, go to a doctor ASAP, take photos and get legal advice

Free, confidential legal help
www.rlc.org.au/contact



Pictured L-R: Police drug dog operation, Central Station, 2019; and RLC's *Quick tips – Police Powers and your Rights*

Advice and casework

Through our casework, the practice is able to identify systemic policing issues. The practice also monitors and releases data from NSW Police to highlight potential discriminatory and unjust policing practices reflected in our casework.

Sexual assault reporting

We have identified a lack of transparency and consistency in regards to how police respond to reports of alleged sexual assault. This includes cases where women have been dissuaded by police from making a statement, and instances involving domestic violence

where the woman seeking help from police has been misidentified as the perpetrator, and taken into custody.

Stop and searches

A number of cases we assisted with involved unlawful stop and searches, and this was particularly prevalent in matters involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

We also identified that NSW Police have potentially not been meeting the legal thresholds when arresting and fining individuals, particularly in relation to public health order offences and during public protests.

RLC in the media

NSW Police watchdog releases report into strip search rules after two-year inquiry

Ursula Malone reports for ABC News, 15 Dec 2020

The final report of a two-year inquiry by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) into NSW Police strip search practices was released and made 25 recommendations. It found there was a "recurrent issue" with officers conducting unlawful strip searches and a "failure" to provide reasons to warrant the invasive procedure.

Redfern Legal Centre said the LECC report highlighted the need for legislative change. "The report has found that police are not applying the law correctly and that a number of people are being strip searched unlawfully and what this means is that the law needs to change," RLC police accountability solicitor, Samantha Lee said. "This is a time for the government to make real change and to ensure that police are adhering to the law when it comes to strip searches." Ms Lee said the report acknowledged that invasive searches can cause lasting traumatic harm. "I have taken many instructions now from young people who have been strip searched, most of them are in tears when they are describing what happened to them," she said.

Full article available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-15/report-into-nsw-police-strip-searches-released-after-inquiry/12984394>

COPS records

NSW Police data obtained by RLC from the 2018–19 and 2019–20 financial years, identified that over 5,500 people in NSW had their details recorded in the NSW Police central intelligence database (COPS) following a strip search, although nothing illegal was found.

We also obtained figures from the same two-year period which identified a rise in strip searches of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children.

Community legal education

The practice presented a series of free webinars with diverse experts on issues including protesting and police powers, COVID-19 and police powers, and Black Lives Matter – policing and justice reform in Australia. Our Blacks Lives Matter webinar, presented with UTS Jumbunna Institute, National Justice Project and Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) received over 600 registrations and reached over 16K people on social media.

Throughout the year, we released up-to-date information on NSW's rapidly changing public health laws. Our COVID-19 police powers factsheet, first published in March 2020 and updated throughout the pandemic, was one of the centre's most downloaded and shared resources.



The Black Lives Matter webinar, facilitated by Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt OA, examined the impact of over-policing on First Nations people and called for criminal justice reforms. Photo credit: Matt Hrkac (CC by 2.0).

The practice also worked with DLA Piper to facilitate a roundtable discussion with various organisations about the need for a centralised 'Legal Observer' project to monitor police behaviour at protests occurring in NSW.

Professor Rice's story: leg-swept by police at student protest

On 9 October 2020, Sydney University Law Professor Simon Rice was observing a 'National Day of Action' held in response to funding cuts to education, which commenced on the university campus. Professor Rice stood on the sidelines and had no intention of participating in the event.

While observing the crowd, Professor Rice saw a police officer push a young woman. He went to assist the woman and was grabbed by police, having his leg swept from underneath him, which caused him to fall quickly to the ground. Professor Rice was detained and issued with a \$1000 fine for breaching a public health order.

RLC took on the matter as a public interest case. The matter was contested at court, but after making submissions the police eventually withdrew the charge before hearing.

RLC is concerned by the excessive use of force by police at public protests, and the potential for unlawfully issued public health fines. COVID-19 public health laws are complex, making the legal thresholds police are required to meet difficult to interpret and to appeal. We are also concerned that COVID-19 fines are also not means-tested, making them particularly onerous for people already experiencing financial vulnerability.

It is unfortunate that Professor Rice's matter was not heard before a court, as few individuals elect to appeal COVID-19 fines at court.



Professor Simon Rice being forced to the ground by police, 9 October 2020. Photo: *Honi Soit*.

RLC in the media

More than 5,500 people get NSW police record after strip searches which found nothing

Michael McGowan reports for *The Guardian*, 23 April 2021

Data obtained by Redfern Legal Centre has revealed that between 2018 and 2020, over 5,500 people had their details recorded in the Computerised Operational Policing System, also known as Cops, despite their searches finding nothing illegal.

Sam Lee, police accountability solicitor at RLC, said this data showed that “more than half the people needlessly subjected to this traumatic procedure are left with a permanent record for no reason. Once a person’s identity has been logged in the police system, it is there for life,” Lee said. “The fact that this is frequently occurring in cases where no crime has been committed is not only unjust, it is a complete misuse of power. This can have a tremendously negative impact on a person’s life, especially if that person happens to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.”

Full article available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/apr/23/more-than-5500-people-get-nsw-police-record-after-strip-searches-which-found-nothing>

RLC in the media

Vast majority of COVID-19 fines remain unpaid

Anna Patty reports for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 3, 2021

Most people who have received \$1000 COVID-19 fines for breaching social distancing rules have not paid or can’t afford to pay them, leading to calls for a means-tested system and review of police conduct. Fewer than a quarter of the 1854 fines police issued in 14 months since they were introduced have been paid in full, figures obtained by the Redfern Legal Centre under freedom of information laws reveal.

Redfern Legal Centre solicitor Samantha Lee said many people, including those who had lost their jobs during the pandemic or who were on Centrelink benefits, were unable to pay the \$1000 fines, which are not means-tested. She said the process of applying for leniency due to financial hardship was complex.

“The fines are among the largest on-the-spot fines police can issue and the largest that can be issued to a child aged 10 to 18,” she said. “Few can afford to test the legality of these fines in court, nor take the risk of obtaining a criminal record if found guilty of the offence.”

Full article available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/vast-majority-of-covid-19-fines-remain-unpaid-20210426-p57mg2.html>

OUR IMPACT



Increased understanding of police powers and legal rights

Reduced stress and anxiety



People feel better equipped to address police misconduct

Police complaints are resolved



International Student Legal Service NSW

RLC's International Student Legal Service NSW (ISLS) is the only independent specialist legal service available to the approximately 196,000 international students enrolled to study in NSW (onshore and offshore). ISLS continues to provide free legal advice, advocacy and casework to international students experiencing unprecedented hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working for change

Submissions to government

ISLS plays a lead role in addressing exploitative practices affecting international students. This year, our submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics' Inquiry informed the development of a joint submission to the Select Committee on Job Security, co-authored by ISLS, RLC's employment practice, RLC's credit and debt practice, the Migrant Employment Legal Service (MELS), and Kingsford Legal Centre. The Select Committee was established to investigate the economic and social impact of insecure work and wage theft, particularly during the pandemic. This formed part of ISLS's ongoing work to address endemic levels of non-payment and underpayment of wages and entitlements.

Responding to sexual assault and harassment

In partnership with City of Sydney and Study NSW, ISLS finalised content for a follow-up to *Your Body, Your Choice*, our award-winning multi-language legal information resource on sexual assault. The new resource addressing sexual harassment will be made available in multiple languages and distributed to stakeholders across the state. This factsheet is part of our ongoing work to support students facing sexual assault and harassment on university campuses and in the workplace.

My Legal Mate (MLM)

ISLS continues to promote our interactive video and information resource, 'My Legal Mate' (MLM) to NSW international students and education providers. Thanks to generous support from our partners, Study NSW and City of Sydney, 77,500 licences of MLM have been made available to international students in NSW during COVID-19. The resource was developed specifically with the legal needs of international students in mind, and offers individualised legal assistance in seven languages, with MLM now provided to thousands of international students in NSW.

"This was the best legal service I have ever used, in any country, and it was amazing to me that this service was free. I cannot stress how valuable the legal support offered by Redfern has been to me".

"When I contacted your service, I was confused, scared, and at a loss for where to begin. Your staff was professional, empathetic, patient and clearly explained everything I needed to know to organise, protect myself, and move on with my life in Australia feeling legally protected and confident in how to pursue my legal rights".

— Client survey, 2021

My Legal Mate

A free, digital legal resource for NSW international students

Understanding your legal rights is a very important part of protecting yourself. My Legal Mate offers NSW international students instant access to free, confidential legal help, and answers commonly asked questions about the law in Australia.

Available in English and six other languages including Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Portuguese, Thai, and Vietnamese. My Legal Mate provides you with avenues to address urgent legal problems.

Using interactive video, and short questions and answers, My Legal Mate delivers legal information in a format that is friendly and easy to use.

My Legal Mate can help you with:

- Problems at work
- Education
- Housing issues
- Sexual assault

Sign up now

Step 1
Complete the [My Legal Mate sign up form](#)

Step 2
Practera will send you a 'Welcome & Register' email within 24 hours with a link to access the resource

If you're a NSW international student in need of legal advice, please call Redfern Legal Centre's International Student Legal Service NSW on 02 9696 7645.

My Legal Mate was launched in 2019, with the support of Study NSW, City of Sydney and the Fair Work Ombudsman. My Legal Mate was created by Redfern Legal Centre and is delivered on the Practera technology software platform.

NSW STUDY NSW CITY OF SYDNEY Fair Work Redfern Legal Centre Practera MyLegalMate

Need **free** and **confidential** legal support?

Do you have questions about the law in Australia?

My Legal Mate offers free and confidential legal support.



International students collecting food from Redfern Town Hall Hamper Hub, June 2020. Photo: City of Sydney.

RLC in the media

Supporting Sydney's international students through the COVID pandemic

City of Sydney News, 9 October 2020

More than 178,000 international students each year study in Sydney, bringing huge benefits to our local culture and economy. But the pandemic has highlighted just how vulnerable these students are. Many have insecure housing, rely on food aid and are isolated from their personal support networks.

"The three biggest issues we're seeing now are the same three that have always been dominant," says Sean Stimson, solicitor with the Redfern Legal Centre. "These are housing disputes, employment-related issues and disputes with education providers. But the scale of demand for assistance around these issues is greatly increased."

At the start of the pandemic, the Redfern Legal Centre saw an influx of disputes around housing. "Many landlords attempted to evict international students, out of fear they wouldn't be able to meet their rental commitments," explains Sean Stimson.

The City of Sydney's grant to the Redfern Legal Centre has been used to support free access to My Legal Mate, an app that provides individualised legal advice and resources to students. "The numbers of students we're seeing are just the tip of the iceberg, which is why My Legal Mate is so important right now, as it allows far more students to access legal resources," says Sean Stimson.

Full article available at: <https://news.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/articles/supporting-sydneys-international-students-through-the-covid-pandemic>

COVID-19 referral and information hub

Throughout the pandemic, ISLS has continued to be a significant referral point for international students and other organisations regarding the unprecedented impact COVID-19 has had on international students in relation to accommodation, travel restrictions, disputes with education providers and humanitarian issues.

ISLS has maintained a high level of engagement with international students during this time through our advice sessions and by participating in online outreach and via our dedicated international student Facebook page, providing educational material and referral information on issues including food crisis relief, employment, financial issues, accommodation, deferment of studies, and visa concerns. ISLS was able to refer thousands of students to partnership programs where they were able to access financial, accommodation, food and health and wellbeing crisis support.

Ongoing projects

ISLS continues to work on a number of ongoing law reform projects. One relates to international students' access to pregnancy-related health care, particularly within the first 12 months of their time in Australia, using their compulsory Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC). Other major ongoing projects include law reform work surrounding the Fair Entitlement Guarantee scheme (in conjunction with RLC's employment practice and MELS), and purpose-built student accommodation (in partnership with RLC's Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service).

Advice and casework

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, ISLS has maintained strong relationships with NSW's diverse international student population, including those estimated 100,000 international students who are either unable to travel to Australia, or have had to alter their education plans since their initial enrolment in 2020.

As a statewide service, online and telephone support has always been a part of our service delivery, seeing us well-placed to scale-up remote services during COVID-19. This agility has allowed ISLS and its pro bono partners to increase the number of advices provided almost three-fold during the pandemic. This has been critically important for international students impacted by COVID-related legal issues, which include a sharp increase in evictions and accommodation disputes, health issues, education provider disputes, homelessness, visa problems and psychological trauma.

Education and training

Education and training remain a core component of ISLS's work. In the past year, ISLS attended and conducted multiple events, including legal webinars, stakeholder advisory groups, orientation events, and student association events.

COVID-19 visa issues

International border closures have had unforeseen impacts upon many international students' visas. This resulted in many of our clients needing to extend the

Fahad's story: gig economy abuse

Fahad* is an international student who was working in the gig economy as a delivery driver after losing his long-standing casual job in hospitality due to COVID-19. Several months into the job, Fahad was assaulted one evening by an angry restaurant owner when he arrived at a Sydney restaurant to pick up three separate deliveries.

As one of the orders was delayed, the restaurant's owner demanded Fahad cancel the delayed delivery via the app used to book the job. Fahad asked if the owner would be able to do this himself, as Fahad would attract a penalty from the platform for doing so. The restaurant owner became angry and demanded Fahad leave the restaurant. As Fahad bent down to pick up his bag to leave, the restaurant owner pushed Fahad, threw him to the ground, and punched him multiple times. Fahad sustained significant injuries and medical expenses and was left unable to work for several months.

Employers have a legal obligation to look after their employees. If employees are injured at work, they can have their wages and medical care covered by workers' compensation, but independent contractors – such as delivery drivers – do not have the same protection. Fahad had very little power in this dispute with the food delivery platform. With the increasing casualisation of the workforce and a growing gig economy, RLC is seeing many international students like Fahad who are vulnerable to workplace abuses and exploitation.

RLC ISLS continues to assist Fahad in his civil action against the restaurant owner.

* Name has been changed.

COVID-19 & YOUR VISA

A free webinar for international students in NSW



end dates of their student visas or apply for temporary bridging visas. Many also faced looming visa end dates, or visa complications due to the sudden closure of education providers, all while being unable to return home.

With COVID-19-related demand for visa advice outstripping available appointment slots, ISLS enhanced our service delivery by creating information resources to assist international students in understanding their visa options. Our COVID-19 visa factsheet reached over 7,000 people via our dedicated social media page for international students alone.

ISLS and its pro bono migration agents have also commenced a series of webinars for international students to promote a greater understanding of visa options. The first of these, *COVID-19 and your Visa* was delivered in late 2020, with 530 registrations.

Working with government

ISLS remained engaged with all levels of government across the year. At a local government level, ISLS was part of the City of Sydney Food Security Operations Group, and promoted the food crisis relief initiatives to the international student community via ISLS's social media platform and network.

Factsheet
Visa information for international students in NSW

This factsheet provides visa information for international students studying in NSW during COVID-19.

It includes information for international students whose studies have been interrupted because of the coronavirus pandemic, and explains what to do if your current visa has expired. It also contains eligibility information for temporary COVID-19 visas.

Checking your visa status
You can access your Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) portal to check your visa expiry date and conditions; see <https://online.immi.gov.au/evo/firstParty/actionType=query> or download the myVEVO app from the [Apple](#) or [Google](#) app stores.

Extending your student visa
If you are an international student in Australia and the end date of your studies has been affected by COVID-19, you might need to extend your student visa. If this is the case, you will need to:

1. Apply to extend your Confirmation of Enrolment (or CoE) with your education provider. You should do this at least 1 month before your student visa expiry date. Your education provider will advise you in writing of the outcome of your application.
2. If successful, apply to the Department of Home Affairs to extend your student visa.
3. Extend your Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) to cover the period of your new Student Visa. You will need to provide evidence of your extended OSHC cover to the Department of Home Affairs when applying for your new student visa.

If you have finished your studies
If you are an international student in Australia and you have finished your studies, but you are unable to return to your home country due to COVID-19, you must apply for another visa before your student visa expires. An example of a visa you may be able to apply for is a visitor visa; see: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/Visa-subsite/Pages/visitor/600-visitor-landing.aspx>

The Department of Home Affairs provide a secure online Visa Application service at: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/student-500>

If you would like further information, or have questions, visit the [Department of Home Affairs website](https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/contact-us) (<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/contact-us>), or call them on 13 18 81.

COVID-19 Visa
If you are not eligible for a visitor visa, you may be eligible for the Temporary Activity (Subclass 408) Australian Government Endorsed Event stream (COVID-19 Pandemic Event) visa. In order to be eligible, you must:

1. Have a current visa that expires in 28 days or less, or your last substantive temporary visa expired less than 28 days ago.
2. Have evidence from your employer that you have ongoing work in a critical sector (including agriculture, food processing, health care, aged care, disability care and child care) and that an Australian citizen or permanent resident cannot fill the position.

Redfern Legal Centre address 73 Pitt Street Redfern NSW 2016 telephone 02 9698 7277
fax 02 9310 3586 email info@rlc.org.au web www.rlc.org.au

ISLS's *COVID-19 and your Visa* webinar and factsheet provided critical information to international students experiencing visa complications during the pandemic.

At a state government level, ISLS played a significant role in informing the development of a NSW government initiative to provide free crisis accommodation to international students. This program successfully placed over 6,000 individuals and their families in safe, secure accommodation during the pandemic.

At a federal level, ISLS continues to engage with Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TESQA) to discuss the possibility of a government organisation recommending that all Australian education providers subscribe to MLM due to the government-imposed

requirements that all education providers have adequate information and support available to students experiencing sexual assault.

ISLS continues to work closely with Study NSW and other stakeholders to provide critical legal information to international students throughout the duration of their time in NSW.

RLC in the media

Thousands of international students are running out of money

Anna Patty reports for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 2020

A national survey of more than 5000 international students and 1000 other temporary migrants conducted in July found 70 per cent had lost all or most of their work. Thousands of international visa holders said they were unable to pay for food and rent and unable to qualify for social security. More than a third have relied on emergency support including charity to meet essential needs.

Redfern Legal Centre's international student solicitor, Sean Stimson, said the legal centre has seen a growing number of international students "in extremely precarious situations". "In addition to legal advice, many of our clients require immediate referral to crisis accommodation and emergency food relief services," he said. "We welcome state government's recent introduction of COVID-19 support packages for international students and temporary migrants, including the international student COVID-19 crisis accommodation scheme."

Full article available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/thousands-of-international-students-are-running-out-of-money-20200915-p55w01.html>

OUR IMPACT



International students' rights are protected



Exploitation of international students decreases



International students can access secure accommodation and better living conditions

International students' financial situation improves



International students have stable employment and fair wages



Students' safety, wellbeing and mental health is enhanced



Employment Law

RLC's employment law practice supports people to assert their rights at work. We also work to achieve systemic change through law reform submissions, and by running test cases to improve workplace laws and conditions for our clients and the broader community.

Advice and casework

COVID-19

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, our advice work focused on providing a high level of service supporting clients to complete urgent legal tasks. We helped workers recover unpaid wages, drafted complaints to the Fair Work Ombudsman, lodged claims with liquidators for insolvent employers, and filed unfair dismissal and adverse action claims to the Fair Work Commission. For self-represented clients, this kind of assistance is very effective at helping them achieve good results.

As COVID-19 restrictions began to lift, we also saw a resurgence in traditional forms of exploitation, including sham intern matters and sham contracting. Recovering underpaid employment entitlements continues to form a large part of our caseload. We have also increased our focus on helping clients pursue their discrimination cases.

"Thanks to your expertise and prowess, my case not only saw the light of day, but was won. Justice was served. Your dedication, your attention to detail and diligence made this all possible."

"I don't know any other place where international students can get legal help. It's very important so it's nice that we have a place like [RLC] to go to."

"... I was in awe at their level of diligence and commitment to their clients. Thank you so much [to] everyone in the employment team ... If only more people like you existed, our world would have been a better place."

"I recommend those person who have a problem like, some employers take advantage of international student because they don't have all information about working right in Australia."

— Client survey, 2021

Una's story: taking wage theft to the cleaners

Una* was employed as a cleaner by a private company. The cleaning service had been underpaying a number of RLC clients.

Towards the end of 2019, the cleaning service went into liquidation, leaving significant outstanding wage debts to its workers. The employer 'phoenixed' the business to avoid paying workers their rightful entitlements, creating a new entity but continuing to provide cleaning services to the same clients.

Una came to RLC for advice about wage theft. After assisting Una to recoup her underpaid wages from the 'new' employer, Una circulated word in her community that RLC was supporting workers to access their unpaid entitlements. Over 30 workers of the liquidated company came forward to RLC. Almost all were international students from the same country, and most were women.

RLC advised these clients individually and calculated that the liquidated business, collectively, owed our clients more than \$200,000 in wages and superannuation. While some declined to take further action, often to protect their visas, we helped many other clients lodge proofs of debt with the appointed liquidator. We are hopeful that these workers will receive a dividend of over 70 cents in the dollar of their underpaid entitlements through the liquidation process.

*Name has been changed

Federal Court security guard matter

Since 2018, we have been pursuing unpaid employment entitlements for an international student security guard underpaid \$81K in wages and super. This client was paid a flat rate of \$16 an hour. He commonly worked very long shifts, including a 70-hour shift, with only one-hours' sleep taken during his breaks on a sofa in the security guard room. These extended hours and terrible pay had profound impacts on his studies and mental health.

We initiated proceedings against both his direct employers, the head contractor and several directors. At Federal Court mediation, the head contractor agreed to pay our client the whole amount of his claim, despite their continued claims that they were not our client's employer.

'Interns'

We represented three international students who applied for jobs at a consulting firm. The role was advertised as \$700 per week plus commission. Our clients applied and attended interviews with a director who confirmed the rate of pay. After one month of full-time work during university semester break, our clients still had not been paid. We assisted these clients to draft letters of demand for their wages, and in response, the firm's representatives called our clients 'interns' and 'liars'.

In negotiations with the firm, we established the strength of our clients' wage claims for the productive work they had performed and the unlawfulness of the firm's actions. The firm has settled all three claims for the entirety of each of our clients' wages.

Migrant Employment Legal Service

The Migrant Employment Legal Service (MELS) was a joint initiative of Inner City Legal Centre, Kingsford Legal Centre, Marrickville Legal Centre, and Redfern Legal Centre. The core aim of MELS was to end migrant worker exploitation by providing free legal advice and casework to temporary visa holders and migrant workers in NSW. Throughout the 2020–21 financial year, we worked collaboratively with many civil society organisations to educate and empower migrants and temporary visa holders to understand and enforce their work rights and increase access to legal remedies and other support services. In the 2019–20 financial year, we recovered over \$450,000 for our clients.

With MELS project funding being wound up in June 2021, a coalition of community legal centres commenced work on the establishment of a new initiative to support migrants and other vulnerable workers.

RLC in the media

Why most people won't report workplace sexual harassment

Eden Gillespie Reports for SBS *The Feed*, 16 February 2021

Most Australians who experience sexual harassment at work do not report it. The majority of those who experience sexual harassment at work are women, while four-fifths of those who perpetrate the abuse are men, according to the Australian Human Rights Commission 2020 inquiry.

Sharmilla Bargon is an employment lawyer at Redfern Legal Centre. She told *The Feed* that gender equity is a key driver of sexual harassment, stating that gender equity issues are enabling sexual harassment to flourish in many Australian workplaces.

Ms Bargon said sexual harassment is more likely to happen in male-dominated industries including mining, construction and transport. "Sexual harassment is an abuse of power," Ms Bargon said. In many cases, "nothing has happened against the perpetrator because they're a senior member of staff, they're meeting KPIs, so no action is taken against them."

Full article available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/why-most-people-don-t-report-workplace-sexual-harassment>



RLC Migrant Employment Legal Service solicitor, Regina Featherstone, presenting an interactive webinar on workplace exploitation, November 2021.

Working for change

Job Security Inquiry

In April 2021, the practice worked with Kingsford Legal Centre to make joint submissions to the Senate Select Committee on Job Security.

This inquiry was established to investigate insecure or precarious employment in Australia – including the ‘gig’ and ‘on-demand’ economy – and how COVID-19 has exacerbated insecure work conditions. Our clients have limited opportunities to obtain secure work and are disproportionately impacted by insecure employment. We made 29 recommendations for law and policy reforms to protect all workers equally, regardless of the nature of their employment. We called for law reform measures that aim to remove the underlying causes and structures that allow for the exploitation of workers.

Education and training

Migrant workers frequently do not engage with existing services to pursue underpaid wages and entitlements, often because they do not understand their workplace rights or are not supported to enforce them.

As part of our focus on educating migrant communities on workplace entitlements, we attended Addi Road in Marrickville to work with international students and migrant workers receiving food aid. We developed long-lasting referral pathways with University of Sydney staff that with international students.

We also helped stakeholders identify and better understand common workplace exploitation issues, delivering an interactive gameshow-style webinar inspired by ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire?’, entitled ‘Who Wants to be a Fairly-Treated Employee?’.

OUR IMPACT



Workers know their rights

Reduced stress and anxiety, and improved wellbeing



Workers are empowered to enforce their workplace rights

A more productive and harmonious workforce



Matters involving workplace harassment, discrimination, unfair dismissal or underpayment are resolved

Credit, Debt and Consumer Law

The Credit, Debt and Consumer Law practice focused its resources this year on providing assistance to the many clients impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, which has been particularly devastating for non-permanent residents and others who have not been eligible for government support.

The practice also teamed up with Makinson d'Apice Lawyers, who staffed a roster of volunteer solicitors to assist us in meeting the increased demand for our service and helped us adjust to the logistical challenges of maintaining our advice clinic during the pandemic.

Advice and casework

The pandemic has exposed many underlying and systemic consumer credit and debt issues, as people have lost their employment and fallen into financial hardship. Throughout the year, we continued to assist our clients to obtain relief from their car loans, personal loans, credit cards, mortgage and payday loans, which shows how crucial responsible lending laws are in protecting people who have been crippled by unsuitable credit.

Working for change

The credit and debt practice has worked closely this year with other RLC practice areas, external consumer advocates and government agencies on a number of vitally important law reform initiatives, campaigns and submissions.

Responsible lending

Together with RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW, the practice lobbied government and crossbench senators against the repeal of responsible lending laws, and contributed to submissions to the Treasury Consultation on the Consumer Credit Reforms; and to the Senate Standing Committees on the Economics *National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Supporting Economic Recovery) Bill 2020*.

Consumer rights for gig economy workers

The practice contributed to a timely submission highlighting issues for workers in the 'gig' and 'on-demand' economy, working with the Migrant Employment Legal Service, RLC's International Student Service NSW, and Kingsford Legal Centre.

Our joint submission to the Senate Select Committee on Job Security reported on the impact of insecure or precarious work arrangements in Australia with respect to RLC's client base. Informed by examples of issues we are seeing in the credit and debt practice, the report also

"If I ever come into money, I will not forget everything RLC has done for me and the community."

"Thank you, especially [Credit and Debt solicitor], he really saved my life."

"The team is so empathetic, thoughtful and know what they are doing. I wish I'd gone here first."

— Client survey, 2021

highlights the growing problems and risks associated with current independent contractor arrangements and calls for urgent law reform in this area.

Life insurance

The practice has been working closely with Financial Rights Legal Centre and the Financial Services Council Consumer Advocate Forum on the proposed changes to the Life Insurance Code of Practice to ensure it better reflects the needs of consumers, particularly in its dispute and hardship processes among people already experiencing disadvantage.

Fines

RLC identified a local and sector-wide problem, with many people who were already extremely vulnerable accumulating large amounts of fines debt. This often amounted to thousands of dollars in fines, with no simple or effective way to address much of this debt.

For many, this was having the effect of further entrenching disadvantage and financial hardship, especially among people already struggling with other forms of serious debt, whilst dealing with multiple legal issues related to their fines debt, such as those stemming from mental health issues, domestic violence or financial abuse.

Streamlined Electronic Fines Write-off Pilot

Building on the law reform work undertaken by the practice in response to changes to the *Fines Act 1996* (NSW), the practice directed its energy towards improving outcomes for clients affected by this kind of crippling fines debt.

In early 2021, RLC partnered with Revenue NSW to implement a streamlined electronic fines write-off pilot across the Centre, after consultation with key stakeholders through the NSW Legal Assistance Forum Fines Working Group and Revenue NSW's Hardship Support Community Consultative Forums.

The conclusion of the pilot successfully saw a significant amount of debt from fines written-off for some of the most vulnerable people in our society and provided

Traffic, parking and COVID-19 fines: What are your payment & review options?



A FREE REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE WEBINAR

vital relief for those experiencing severe financial hardship. The new system also simplifies the application process so solicitors can better redirect their time and resources to assisting others in need.

RLC continues to utilise the system for the benefit of its clients and has been working closely with Revenue NSW and other stakeholders such as Community Legal Centres NSW to test and improve the system with a view of expanding the system across NSW.

Education and training

Dealing with fines

The practice delivered a free webinar *Traffic, Parking and COVID-19 Fines*, presented in conjunction with RLC's police accountability practice. The event was live streamed on Zoom and Facebook, and attendees were also provided with links to download RLC's newly updated collection of fines factsheets on penalty notices, court fines and on-the-spot COVID-19 fines.

Unmanageable debts: Amir's story

Amir* and his young family of four lived in low-income rental housing, where Amir was the sole breadwinner. Amir and his wife were on temporary visas, with limited English language skills, and a poor understanding of financial products.

Amir received a low and unstable income derived from 'gig' economy-based independent contractor and casual shift work. He supplemented these unreliable wages with debt derived from a multitude of credit cards (including multiple low-limit increases) and payday loans. Each loan was approved with minimal effort via an online application process that required no face-to-face or verbal interaction, despite Amir's insufficient income to service the accumulating levels of debt.

Amir had been further disadvantaged by COVID-19, which made his efforts to maintain and secure additional work unsuccessful. He was making the difficult choice between paying for rent and food for his children or servicing his spiralling debt obligations for 13 loans to major banks, financial institutions and payday lenders. The family faced imminent homelessness, as they were not eligible for government support.

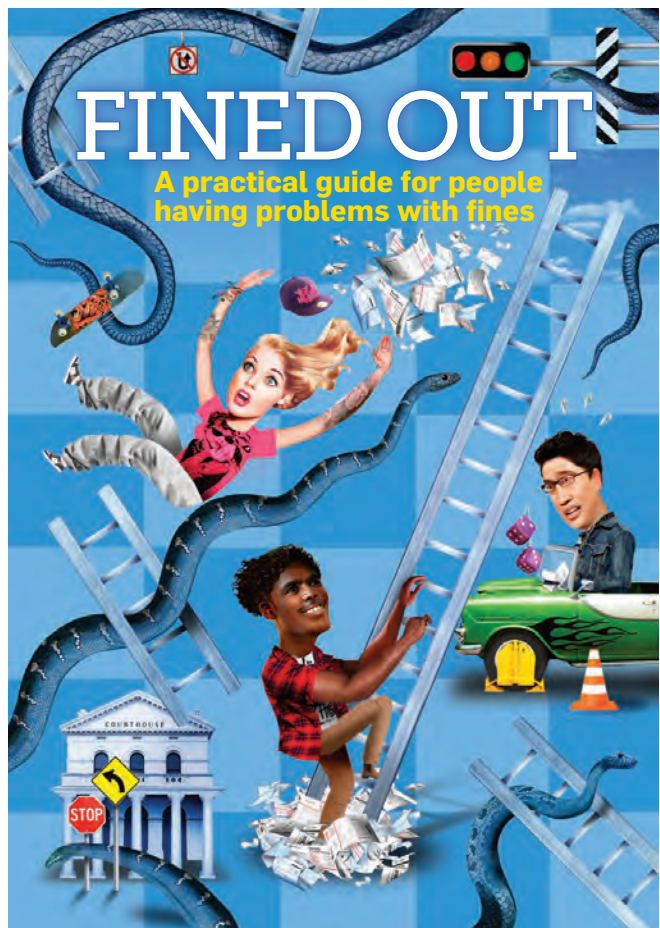
RLC submitted multiple complaints for non-compliance with responsible lending laws and successfully obtained relief from all of the mounting debts. This reprieve enabled Amir and his family to rebuild their lives.

*Name changed to protect client safety and privacy.

RLC also worked on revisions to the 5th Edition of the popular *Fined Out* booklet in conjunction with Legal Aid NSW, Inner City Legal Centre and Revenue NSW. *Fined Out* is a practical guide to the NSW fines system. It provides helpful resources, self-help tools, contact points and extensive information on the various options people have to deal with their fines.

Consumer law

The practice also partnered with Thomson Reuters to update the 'Guide to consumer law – civil remedies' contained in the *Lawyers Practice Manual NSW*, which can be accessed online through Westlaw.



Fined Out (5th ed.), published by Legal Aid NSW in collaboration with RLC, Inner City Legal Centre and Revenue NSW.

OUR IMPACT



People are empowered to take control of their finances

People feel less financially stressed



People can confidently navigate the legal and financial system



Families and children are more financially secure

Reduction in homelessness and poverty



Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS)

RLC's Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS) provides legal assistance to people with tenancy and housing issues. Our service ranges from legal advice and advocacy to representation in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Supreme Court of NSW and the Housing Appeals Committee. We also engage in targeted policy and law reform work and continue to educate on tenancy law through our community legal education (CLE) program.

Working for change

Public housing repairs

Repairs and maintenance in public housing remains a persistent issue in our community. We continued to assist our clients throughout the year by providing advice, advocacy and representation in Tribunal proceedings to resolve their repair issues, advising almost 90 social housing tenants on repairs issues this financial year.

We provided further advocacy or representation for about one quarter of those tenants, and were able to reach a positive resolution for almost all of our clients.

Our goal is that people who engage with our service are better able to understand and address their legal situation, feel less stressed and anxious about their housing issues, and find a resolution for their repairs. Over the longer term, we aim to increase access to justice for public housing tenants, improve overall tenant wellbeing, and to reduce the significant power imbalance between social housing tenants and their landlords.

Management of maintenance contracts

In spite of our direct client advocacy, people will still fall through the cracks unless the systemic failures that lead to persistent repair issues are addressed. Our service regularly engages with social housing providers to advocate for better outcomes for tenants around repair issues.

This year, we had an opportunity to make submissions to the NSW Public Accounts Committee in which we highlighted the many problems we perceive in the management of repairs and maintenance in public housing. These submissions will be considered as part of the Committee's review of the management of public housing maintenance contracts in NSW.

"I am very grateful for the assistance provided to me ... I don't feel so helpless and alone and with guidance am able to have a go at getting justice."

"RLC provides practical solutions that are easy to understand yet difficult to find elsewhere."

"I received the information I needed and it did ease my anxiety level. I was very impressed with the tenancy advocate who answered my questions and made me feel like I was heard."

— Client survey, 2021

This kind of systemic advocacy has the potential to provide the greatest benefit because, if successful, it will lead government and industry to take real steps to improve their policies and procedures, and deliver safer and better housing.

Responses to homelessness

In January 2021, ISTAAS made a submission to the Audit Office of NSW in response to the NSW Government's *Homelessness Strategy 2018–2023*. This submission highlighted systemic failures that we know place vulnerable people at risk of homelessness. In particular, we pointed to a lack of meaningful early intervention and support referrals, and a lack of connection and integration between relevant agencies and service providers.

The ensuing report from the Audit Office echoed our concerns, emphasising an inadequate government commitment to early intervention measures and the importance of an integrated system to combat homelessness.

Advice and casework

The most common way tenants reach ISTAAS is through its phone advice service, which received a huge volume of enquiries this year. As in previous years, ISTAAS has worked hard to focus our limited resources where the need is the greatest.

Homelessness prevention

A primary focus of ISTAAS is the prevention of homelessness through legal advice, advocacy and representation for tenants facing eviction. During the 2020–21 financial year ISTAAS provided nearly 450 tenants with advice relating to the termination of their tenancies. The majority of clients for whom ISTAAS

performed complex casework were social housing tenants and the most common issue we assisted clients with was termination and eviction from their home.

Social housing utility bills

Another priority area for ISTAAS is improving the experience of tenants living in social housing. In late 2020, ISTAAS successfully represented a tenant in Tribunal proceedings relating to his long history of excessive gas bills. As a direct result of that win, the NSW Land and Housing Corporation is implementing a scheme to repay excessive gas bills arising from 'common factor' hot water systems in its properties.

Education and training

With support from the City of Sydney, we delivered a series of legal information sessions to support Waterloo tenants who are affected by the proposed redevelopment of the Waterloo public housing estate. We covered the Department of Communities and Justice's (DCJ) relocations and transfers policies so that tenants would know where they stand and what to expect if they are to be relocated.

Sam's story: DCJ attempts to terminate public housing tenancy where mental health is significant factor in breach

Sam* contacted RLC for assistance after getting notice that his landlord was taking him to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) to terminate his tenancy. Sam was suffering from serious physical ailments and was diagnosed with depression. Because he was so unwell, Sam's friend offered to look after him. She ended up staying a couple of days a week as his informal carer. Unbeknownst to Sam, his friend started supplying drugs from the premises. She was arrested and charged by police, and a short time later Sam was issued with a notice of termination.

ISTAAS represented Sam in the Tribunal and argued that his tenancy should not be terminated, as he had no knowledge that drugs were being sold from his premises and he would suffer serious hardship if his tenancy were to be terminated. Sam had never had an issue with his tenancy before and had always paid his rent on time. The Tribunal accepted medical evidence that Sam's depression had resulted in him being taken advantage of by his carer, and agreed that his physical and mental health conditions would seriously worsen if he were made homeless.

While the end result was positive, Sam could easily have slipped through the cracks and ended up becoming homeless. This situation could have been avoided if better supports, early intervention and integrated case management services were available.

* Name has been changed

OUR IMPACT



Housing issues are resolved

Renters are less stressed



Renters have increased capacity to self-advocate

Homelessness is prevented



More people can access secure housing and reasonable living conditions

Community engagement and education

With pandemic restrictions in place for much of the year, all of RLC's regular face-to-face community engagement events were cancelled or otherwise constrained. In response, we increased our reach by engaging online more than ever.

We delivered many online events free of charge, with a strong focus on topics designed to respond to the evolving situation in NSW during the pandemic.

RLC's community worker training program presented three webinars, to a total audience of over one thousand community workers:

- *Identifying Financial Abuse in Intimate Partner Relationships, and Supporting Victim-Survivors*
- *Resolving Financial Abuse Legal Issues*
- *Reporting a Sexual Assault – NSW Police and NSW Health Procedure.*

RLC also presented a range of free webinars for a general audience, reaching thousands of people across Zoom and social media:

- *Traffic, Parking & COVID-19 Fines: What Are Your Payment & Review Options?*
- *Police Powers and Protests: What Are Your Legal Rights?*
- *COVID-19 and your Visa*
- *Black Lives Matter – A Roadmap for Policing and Justice Reform*, which was also broadcast on ABC Radio National.

We received strong feedback on the quality of our community education:

- Thanks so much, this was a great webinar
- It was an excellent webinar, and will inform my practise going forward
- I would like to pass on what a great webinar this was-highly informative and really useful!
- Just wanted to congratulate you on the training today. It was excellent. We had several staff log on and everyone agreed it was so helpful for frontline staff who are working with women who experience sexual violence. Please pass on our thanks to presenters and facilitators
- It was very helpful to view a well-prepared presentation. I gained more confidence what to do with [a] client who is experiencing DV. Thanks for the resources as well. Thank you for organising this workshop. Looking forward to participating another one in the future
- Thank you for providing this for free

"RLC is an extraordinary model for what a CLC can achieve. Love the innovation while maintaining solid base in a community practice."

"RLC are an important life line for people. Your assistance was really appreciated and helped resolve my issue with a positive outcome for me. RLC are the best legal service in Australia and I know lawyers take so much pride in having the opportunity to work there. As they should."

"Redfern has an excellent reputation with the quality of legal staff (whether voluntary or paid) who genuinely care."

— RLC Impact survey, 2021

"People like you are essential for a fair and functioning democracy plus you make the world a better place. Thank you."

— Client survey, 2021

- RLC is consistent in the provision of relevant and current information for workers in allied health and community service. Today's webinar was a good example of their work
- This has been an amazing eye opener. I thank you for highlighting the important information, and touching particularly on how to deal with clients in situations such as this, comparative to our usual nonengagement processes. I will be sharing the recording when I receive it
- I liked how the presentation had built a foundation of understanding financial abuse. The use of case studies helped me gain more insight into some situations
- Looking forward to attending more webinars
- Great delivery
- Very helpful and informative
- Thank you – this was my first webinar but definitely not the last
- Please keep on doing this free training. Thank you
- Thank you RLC your webinars are always informative and well put together
- It was great to have the different perspectives of the police and sexual assault services. I also greatly appreciated your freely opening it up to participation for all online. I was able to recommend it to a number of people who I thought might find it helpful given their roles. Thanks again!

Our Board of Directors

Redfern Legal Centre is a company limited by guarantee. It has a Board of eight elected directors who delegate responsibility for day-to-day management of the Centre to the Chief Executive Officer.



Kerry O'Brien (Chair)

Kerry is a proud Koori man and lawyer. Kerry is a senior associate in the Employer Relations and Safety team at McCullough Robertson. Kerry has experience in both advisory work and litigation, with expertise in employment law, discrimination law and work health and safety. Kerry is also a director of Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network Ltd. Kerry was admitted to practice as a solicitor in NSW in 2014 after completing his legal studies at the University of New South Wales. Kerry also completed a Master of Laws from the University of Sydney in 2017. Kerry has worked in-house in state and federal government agencies, including the Fair Work Ombudsman, and at Colin Biggers & Paisley. Kerry was first appointed to the Board in 2018, and was appointed Chair of the Board in 2020.



Tamara Sims

Tamara Sims is a lawyer and Head of Pro Bono and Responsible Business at Colin Biggers & Paisley. Tamara heads the Colin Biggers & Paisley Foundation; her legal practice covers human rights, administrative law, discrimination, victim compensation, tenancy, guardianship and refugee claims. Prior to joining Colin Biggers & Paisley, Tamara worked as a pro bono lawyer at Gilbert + Tobin. She has also worked in the community legal sector practising criminal law, undertaking policy and law reform work and community legal education particularly in matters involving people with intellectual disability. Tamara first became involved with RLC as a volunteer legal assistant, then worked with the Sydney Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service and the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service before becoming a Director.



Alexandra Finley

Alexandra Finley is a governance expert with over 20 years' experience across the financial services and energy sectors. She has extensive experience in governance, legal, risk and compliance, business management and strategy, across a range of industries. Alexandra is also an experienced not-for-profit director. She is currently Chair of children's charity Rainbow Club Australia Inc., and is a Member on the Board of Macarthur Family and Youth Services. Alexandra is the Executive Director – Commercial for Energy Corporation of NSW working with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on the delivery and implementation of the NSW Energy Infrastructure Roadmap. Alexandra holds a Masters of Law and Management and is a member of the Association of Corporate Counsel GC100, Global Leaders in Law, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Governance Institute of Australia.



Craig Young

Craig Young is the Australian Managing Director of Engine, a global marketing services and media group offering consulting services in customer and employee experience, digital transformation and digital advertising services. Craig has 25 years of experience providing research consulting services to support the development of communications campaigns and policy and service delivery in relation to public health and Indigenous affairs. Since 2013, he has served on the board of ADIA (The Australian Data and Insights Association), Australia's industry association for data and research companies, and was President and board chair of ADIA between 2017 and 2019.



Linda Tucker

Linda Tucker is a retired solicitor, based on the far south coast of NSW where she volunteers with a local women's and domestic violence service. She ran RLC's employment and discrimination law practice before going to Hanoi as a volunteer legal advisor for a women's organisation. She was chair of CLCNSW and has worked at many other CLCs in NSW. Apart from her CLC fixation, Linda has worked for human rights organisations in Australia, Cambodia and the UK and was previously a legal academic and journalist.



Ben Lipschitz

Ben Lipschitz is Managing Director and co-founder of FoodByUs, an online business involving food supply to restaurants. FoodByUs is venture capital backed and is the current leader in its field. Ben has a broad range of commercial experience and holds a strong interest in customer experience, strategy, technology, social impact and how these elements can join together to push social improvement and innovation.



Gregory Masters

Greg Masters is a consultant with more than 25 years' experience consulting to government and community sectors. He is the Director of Nexus Management Consulting, a company he founded in 1996 to assist government and community organisations to plan, implement and evaluate strategies to improve the results they achieve for clients and the community. Prior to establishing Nexus, Greg held a number of senior management and executive roles in the areas of policy, planning and research within NSW Government agencies.



Kylie O'Reilly (Board Observer)

A proven executive with more than 20 years' experience in growing digital, software and technology companies. Kylie's most recent role was as the CEO of GEO Ltd, the NZX listed Software as a Service (SAAS) business for two years. Previous to this role, Kylie was GM of Bluewater/Telestar launching the Mobile Device Management (MDM) SAAS into Telstra's Enterprise and Business channels for its foundation year. Prior to this role, Kylie spent over eleven years as the Managing Director of AAP's Agency Enterprise businesses, working across digital, media and finance sectors. Kylie has also served as Chairperson of All Together Now, a committee member for Squash Australia and is both a Telstra Women in Business and Telstra Business Awards judge. She holds an MBA from UTS Business School and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Our Staff 2020–2021

Permanent and Fixed Term Staff

Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice & Advocacy Service (ISTAAS)

– Tenancy and Housing Team

Amanda Brooker	Tenants' Advocate/Acting Coordinator
Ned Cooke	Coordinator
Alison Mackey	Tenants' Advocate
Janice Yeung	Tenants' Advocate

General Legal Team

Brian Attard	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Sharmilla Bargon	Employment Solicitor
Luke Carr	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
David Hofierka	Credit and Debt Solicitor
Samantha Lee	Police Powers and Admin Law Solicitor
Alexis Goodstone	Principal Solicitor
Sophie Parker	Police Powers and Admin Law Solicitor
Sophie Leaver	Police Powers and Admin Law Solicitor
Sean Stimson	International Student Legal Service NSW Solicitor
Maureen Randall	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker
Regina Featherstone	Migrant Employment Legal Service Solicitor
Zoe Papagiannis	International Student Legal Service NSW Solicitor
Nadezna Wilkins	International Student Legal Service NSW Solicitor
Manny Zhang	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Amy Colquhoun	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Tara Ellevson	Legal Admin Assistant
Sahana Sateesha	Legal Admin Assistant

Financial Abuse Team

Laura Bianchi	Financial Abuse Team Leader
Destiny Valencia	Legal Support Officer
Gayatri Nair	Policy Officer
Jasmine Opdam	Solicitor
Maria Monastiriots	Solicitor
Will Dwyer	Solicitor

Administration, Support and Management

Hilary Chesworth	Finance Officer/Administrator
Nick Manning	Community Engagement and Education Officer/ Front Desk Supervisor
Finn O'Keefe	Communications and Volunteer Manager
Joanna Shulman	Chief Executive Officer
Jacqui Swinburne	Chief Operations Officer
Wendy Wang	Administration Assistant/Data Entry Officer
Rosie Jimson-Healey	Front Desk Supervisor
Phillip Byrne	Operations & IT Support Officer
Joseph Murphy	Client Intake Supervisor
Shirley Yau	Marketing and Engagement Project Officer



Casual Staff 2020–2021

Inner Sydney Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service – Tenancy and Housing Team

Maralyn Schofield Tenants' Advocate

Administration, Support and Management

Alexandra Roach Project Officer
Amy Zhao Supervisor, Day Information Service
Denea Bascombe Supervisor, Day Information Service
Alice Gordon Communications Assistant
Amy Warren Supervisor, Day Information Service
Hadeer Sayed Supervisor, Day Information Service
Harmanjot Kaur Supervisor, Day Information Service
Madeleine Stevens Supervisor, Day Information Service
Sally Knox Supervisor, Day Information Service

Consultants

Systemnet IT support
Social Ventures Australia Strategic planning
Practera International student app
 (My Legal Mate)
Engine Group Staff Wellbeing survey



Pictured top: RLC staff and volunteers celebrating National Reconciliation Week, June 2021; **and above:** Team RLC in between sessions at the Community Legal Centres NSW State Conference, May 2021.

Awards and recognition

RLC staff named among 30 best and brightest young lawyers in Australia

The annual Lawyers Weekly '30 Under 30' awards program identifies the finest young lawyers across Australia. Achieving 30 Under 30 status offers industry-wide recognition for professional competency while highlighting a passion for the law and dedication for personal advancement.

RLC solicitors, Jasmine Opdam (Financial Abuse Service NSW) and Regina Featherstone (Migrant Employment Legal Service), were both nominated in the Community Legal Centre category this year, with winners announced at a black-tie gala dinner held in Sydney on 11 June 2021.

RLC was delighted to see financial abuse solicitor, Jasmine Opdam, win the Community Lawyer Award and proud to see both RLC solicitors acknowledged.

On accepting the award, Jasmine said: "I am honoured to receive this award and greatly encouraged by the recognition it brings to financial abuse as a hidden form of domestic violence. This really goes out to Redfern Legal Centre, to all the volunteers, and to Regina who was nominated tonight as well. Thank you for leading the way in the work that you do and honestly making a difference in people's lives. Thank you to our clients for their resilience and for trusting us to tell their stories. And congratulations to all the other finalists tonight."



Pictured top: Jasmine Opdam with her '30 Under 30' award; **and above:** RLC's Migrant Employment Legal Service solicitor, Regina Featherstone, and RLC's financial abuse solicitor, Jasmine Opdam, were both nominated in the Lawyers Weekly '30 Under 30' awards, June 2021.

Directors' Declaration

Redfern Legal Centre

ABN: 31 001 442 039

The directors of the company declare that:

1. The financial statements and notes, as set out on pages 7–20, are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*; and
 - (a) comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013*; and
 - (b) give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2021 and performance for the year ended on that date of the company.
2. In the directors' opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.
3. Pursuant to Schedule 1, Section 7(3) of the *Charitable Fundraising Regulations 2008*;
 - (a) the Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of income and expenditure of the company for the year ended 30 June 2021 with respect to fundraising appeals;
 - (b) the Statement of Financial Position is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at 30 June 2021 with respect to the fundraising appeals;
 - (c) the provisions of the *Charitable Fundraising Act 1991* and the Regulations under the Act and the conditions attached to the company have been complied with for the year ended 30 June 2021; and
 - (d) the internal controls exercised by the company are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received and applied by the company from any fundraising appeals.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



Director: _____

Kerry O'Brien

Dated this 27 day of October 2021



Level 16, Tower 2 Darling Park
201 Sussex Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Postal Address
GPO Box 1615
Sydney NSW 2001

p. +612 9221 2099
e. sydneypartners@pitcher.com.au

REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE
ABN: 31 001 442 039

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

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Redfern Legal Centre, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of Redfern Legal Centre is in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the Company's financial position as at 30 June 2021 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* "ACNC Act" and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* "the Code" that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other Information

The Directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Company's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2021 but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Independent Auditor's Report

REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE
ABN: 31 001 442 039



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE

Other Information (Continued)

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the Directors for the Financial Report

The Directors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the ACNC Act and for such internal control as the Directors determine 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.

In preparing the financial report, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Directors either intend to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Directors are responsible for overseeing the Company's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit 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 Company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

- 23 -

Pitcher Partners is an association of independent firms.
ABN 35 415 759 892
An independent New South Wales Partnership.

Independent Auditor's Report

REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE
ABN: 31 001 442 039



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report (Continued)

We communicate with the Directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

In our opinion:

- (a) the financial statements of the company show a true and fair view of the financial results of charitable and fundraising activities for the year ended 30 June 2021;
- (b) the financial statements and associated records of the company have been properly kept during the year in accordance with the *Charitable Fundraising Act 1991*;
- (c) money received as a result of charitable and fundraising activities conducted during the year has been properly accounted for and applied in accordance with the Act; and
- (d) the internal controls exercised by the company are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received and applied by the company from any of the fundraising appeals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark Godlewski'.

Mark Godlewski
Partner
29 October 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Pitcher Partners'.

Pitcher Partners
Sydney

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021	2020
		\$	\$
Revenue		3,877,768	3,628,234
Less: expenses			
Salary, wages and on-costs		(2,857,159)	(2,366,679)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	5	(208,846)	(26,777)
Advertising expense – Program Related		(6,646)	(7,174)
Consultancy – Program Related		(24,544)	(35,560)
Finance costs – lease assets	5	(17,650)	—
Fundraising and venue costs		(2,194)	(4,284)
IT Support		(40,192)	(58,430)
Occupancy expense		(180,558)	(326,287)
Printing and stationery		(5,829)	(9,118)
Repairs and maintenance expense		(59,435)	(28,268)
Telephone		(32,119)	(30,119)
Travel & accommodation		(1,376)	(17,333)
Website		(27,734)	(40,746)
Other expenses		(143,587)	(196,658)
		<u>(3,607,869)</u>	<u>(3,147,433)</u>
Surplus from operations		269,899	480,801
Other comprehensive income for the year		—	—
Total comprehensive income		<u>269,899</u>	<u>480,801</u>

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	7	1,306,671	1,110,723
Receivables	8	94,908	198,842
Other financial assets	9	1,200,000	1,000,000
Other assets	12	38,616	47,597
Total current assets		<u>2,640,195</u>	<u>2,357,162</u>
Non-current assets			
Lease assets	11	233,399	420,118
Property, plant and equipment	10	27,886	50,012
Total non-current assets		<u>261,285</u>	<u>470,130</u>
Total assets		<u>2,901,480</u>	<u>2,827,292</u>
Current liabilities			
Payables	13	1,009,154	1,116,139
Lease liabilities	11	182,052	167,298
Provisions	14	371,882	313,319
Total current liabilities		<u>1,563,088</u>	<u>1,596,756</u>
Non-current liabilities			
Lease liabilities	11	94,407	276,459
Provisions	14	120,414	100,405
Total non-current liabilities		<u>214,821</u>	<u>376,864</u>
Total liabilities		<u>1,777,909</u>	<u>1,973,621</u>
Net assets		<u>1,123,571</u>	<u>853,671</u>
Equity			
Reserves		190,000	—
Retained surplus	15	933,571	853,672
Total equity		<u>1,123,571</u>	<u>853,672</u>

Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 30 June 2021

	Reserves	Retained surplus
	\$	\$
Balance as at 1 July 2019	—	372,870
Restated balance as at 1 July 2019	—	372,870
Balance as at 1 July 2019	—	372,870
Surplus for the year	—	480,801
Total comprehensive income for the year	—	480,801
Balance as at 30 June 2020	—	853,671
Balance as at 1 July 2020	—	853,671
Surplus for the year	—	269,899
Total comprehensive income for the year	—	269,899
Transfer to Special reserve	190,000	(190,000)
Balance as at 30 June 2021	190,000	933,571

Statement of cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021	2020
		\$	\$
Cash flow from operating activities			
Receipts from funding agreements, customers and donations		4,081,268	4,069,321
Payments to suppliers and employees		(3,530,490)	(3,082,433)
Interest received		12,468	24,403
Net cash provided by operating activities		<u>563,246</u>	<u>1,011,291</u>
Cash flow from investing activities			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		—	96
Payment for property, plant and equipment		—	(47,346)
Payment for investments		(200,000)	(300,000)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		<u>(200,000)</u>	<u>(347,250)</u>
Cash flow from financing activities			
Principal portion of lease payments		(167,298)	(116,400)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		<u>(167,298)</u>	<u>(116,400)</u>
Reconciliation of cash			
Cash at beginning of the financial year		1,110,723	563,082
Net increase in cash held		195,948	547,641
Cash at end of financial year		<u>1,306,671</u>	<u>1,110,723</u>



Join us!

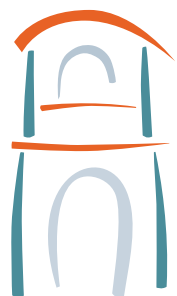
- Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/redfernlegal
- Follow @RLC_CEO on twitter
- Follow @TeamRLC on Instagram
- Connect with us on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/redfern-legal-centre>
- Subscribe to Redfern Legal Centre's ebulletin via our website www.rlc.org.au
- Volunteer with us: www.rlc.org.au/jobs-volunteers

Donate to support our work

Generous support from individuals, foundations, law firms and others is vital for RLC to continue providing its services. Your contribution helps RLC provide free legal advice services to people who would not otherwise be easily able to access the justice system.

Donate online at:

www.givenow.com.au/redfernlegalcentreappeal
or call us on (02) 9698 7277 to make a donation.
Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.



Redfern Legal Centre

73 Pitt Street, Redfern NSW 2016

Phone: (02) 9698 7277

info@rlc.org.au www.rlc.org.au