



**Redfern
Legal
Centre**

**Annual Report
2021–2022**

Redfern Legal Centre 2021–22 Annual Report

Over the past 12 months, the flow-on effects of the pandemic, including rapidly changing public health orders, coupled with extreme weather events and increasing social and economic disadvantage, were among the many factors contributing to urgent legal problems among the communities we serve.

Housing and homelessness, unstable employment, increasing levels of fines debt and the financial dimension of domestic and family violence are just some of the core issues we assisted with throughout the year, through legal assistance services as well as policy and advocacy work.

We continue to strengthen partnerships with pro bono firms, government, and industry bodies, working in collaboration with other community organisations, donors and funders, to advocate for a fair and just society. Our dedicated volunteer team have continued to support our work enthusiastically throughout these tumultuous times. We remain committed to working together to increase access to justice.

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Welcome from our Chair and Interim CEO

What a year! It won't shock any reader to learn that 2022 has been a busy and productive year for Redfern Legal Centre. This year has also been a year of change, with the Centre moving away from the pandemic years and recommitting to its strategic goals and objectives.

This year saw increased legal need in the areas of housing and homelessness, employment, fines debt and financial abuse. RLC rose to the challenge, providing legal assistance services, policy and advocacy work and community legal education in these areas.

We fought for the rights of migrant workers, advocated for a fairer COVID fines system, continued our work seeking reform of strip search law and policy by NSW Police, contributed towards a range of law reform initiatives in relation to financial abuse and responded to the big issues affecting our clients such as the collapse of the Youpla Funeral Fund and potential changes to responsible lending laws.

This report outlines what each of our practice areas has achieved over the year, and highlights key impacts of our work. Further detail is available in our *2021–22 Impact Report*, available at rlc.org.au.

The successes of our Centre are greater than any report can showcase. Behind each statistic sits the personal contribution of every single RLC staff member – the legal and non-legal expertise of our people, their skill at providing trauma informed and culturally safe services, the emotional investment in the work, the professional relationships with volunteers, firms, partners and one another all contribute towards achieving positive outcomes for our clients and projects.

All staff are integral to the Centre's work, whether in management, legal, intake, administration, policy, community work, and other stakeholder engagement roles. Every person at the Centre should feel extremely proud of their achievements within and outside of this report.

This year saw a cautious return to face-to-face social gatherings, allowing the board, staff and volunteer networks to catch up in person and say thank you. We'd like to recognise and thank everyone for their hard work and acknowledge the valuable contribution of the teams of volunteers and supporters who make much of the Centre's work possible and amplify the Centre's impact.

This year has been an opportunity to commence some big projects including an Organisational Support Review and bargaining between RLC board and staff for a new enterprise agreement. These projects form part of our *Strategic Plan 2020–2025*, originally slated for 2020, but delayed due to the pandemic. Important projects like strategic planning are invaluable opportunities to consult with staff and develop a shared vision of the Centre and for the board to demonstrate its support.

The Centre also finalised its new *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) this year, which has been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia. The Centre will use our RAP to guide deeper collaborative connections with our local community and with First Nations clients, lawyers, organisations and stakeholders. RLC recognises the need to continuously demonstrate respect and support through meaningful partnerships, and the need to support our own First Nations staff, and grow this cohort.

There have been some recent changes among familiar faces at RLC it would be remiss not to mention here. We began the year with Jo Shulman stepping down from the role of Chief Executive Officer after 12 years. We will end the year with the highly skilled Camilla Pandolfini stepping into the role.

Camilla is an experienced solicitor and passionate advocate who is well known in the sector. The board and staff are extremely excited to have her lead the Centre in its next chapter. Big, big thanks to Jacqui Swinburne for stepping up as acting CEO for part of 2022.

We farewell Hilary Chesworth, who retired as our Administrator and Finance Officer after a remarkable 20 years of service. Hilary's contribution to the Centre is unmatched. Her dedication to her role, her colleagues and the work of the Centre has literally kept the lights on. We all wish Hilary well in her retirement. We also farewell Finn O'Keefe, our Communications and Volunteer Manager, after six years. Finn is an expert in his field, and his output throughout his time at the Centre boggles the mind. Thank you, Finn for all that you have done, with special mention to our recently updated website and branding, and best of luck in your new role.

We also farewell other much-loved members of our team, including three exceptionally skilled intake/client

We provide free legal advice and casework, deliver community legal education and engage in law reform.



support staff – Rosie Jimson-Healey, Joseph Murphy and Destiny Valencia. All three went above and beyond ensuring the wellbeing of our clients during COVID-19.

The board is also farewelling Tamara Sims, our long-serving director, clocking up 13 years on the board. Tam first came through the Centre's doors as a volunteer. She is an invaluable source of perspective, direction and deep knowledge of our sector and has been a barometer of common sense and practicality for the board and management over her long tenure. Always ready to laugh, quick witted and with words of support on hand, Tam's energy and dedication as a director will be missed.

We are excited for what is to come at RLC. Next year will be another busy year of change and growth, but for now, we acknowledge and feel proud about the work outlined in this report and this year's successes.



Kerry O'Brien
Chair of the Board



Alexis Goodstone
Interim CEO



Pictured top: RLC's new website and visual identity, developed by Folk and Morpht. The website homepage features a photo of Clare Petre, a social worker and RLC's first paid staff member; and **above:** RLC's Administrator and Finance Officer, Hilary, retired from her post this year, after more than 20 years of dedicated service. Hilary is pictured here with RLC's Administration Officer, Wendy, October 2022.



Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) staff, 2022.

Our vision

At Redfern Legal Centre (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
- 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:

- Respect our clients, communities we work with, and each other
- Positively impact people experiencing vulnerability through strategic service delivery
- 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

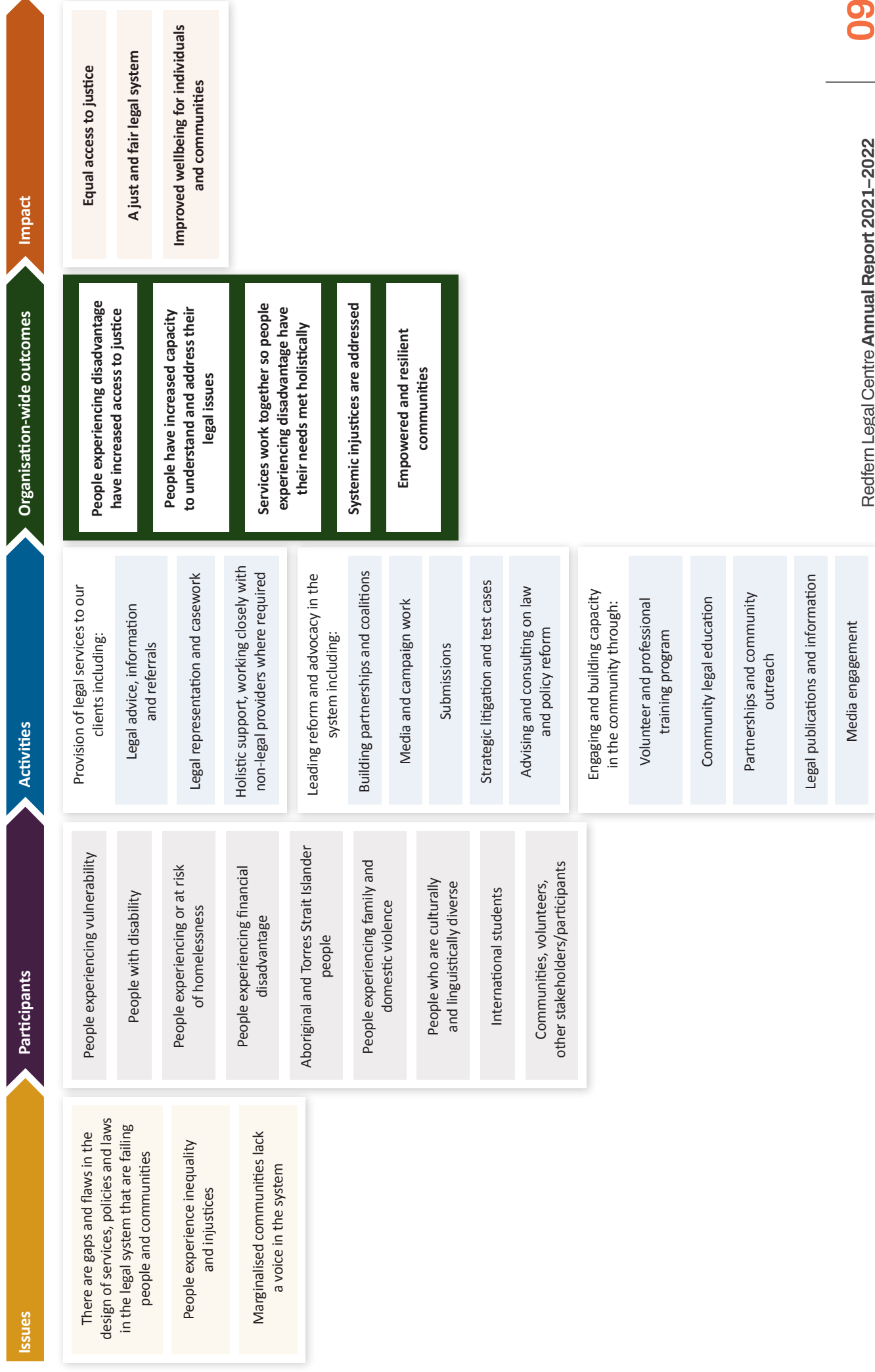
Pursue effective partnerships to better serve our clients and communities



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



We assisted **2,759 people with 4,546 occasions** of legal advice and information, completed **1,261 legal tasks**, and provided **2,145 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 people we helped:

- 16% were experiencing family violence
- 80% were experiencing financial hardship
- 7% identified as First Nations
- 35% spoke English as a second language
- 2% were homeless
- 10% were people with disability or a mental health condition

We worked to identify and address urgent legal need among our clients, increasing access to justice through the completion of **274 new casework and representation services**.

Of the clients we provided in-depth casework and representation to:

- 29% were experiencing family violence
- 91% were experiencing financial hardship
- 21% identified as First Nations
- 36% spoke English as a second language
- 16% were people with a disability or a mental health condition.

Measuring our impact: client surveys

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



72%

said our help made their knowledge of the law and legal system better



63%

reported better stress levels



51%

reported better sense of control over their own life



40%

indicated our help made their financial situation improve



26%

indicated their physical health was improved



25%

said our help improved their family wellbeing



19%

reported increased safety



18%

said our help improved their housing situation
(36% of tenancy law service)



9%

said our help improved their employment situation
(14% of employment law service)



4%

reported a better visa situation
(19% of international student service)



57%

said that overall the help from Redfern Legal Centre made their situation better



71%

were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received

* 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 see *RLC's 2021–22 Impact Report*, 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:

- The General Legal Service is funded principally through the Community Legal Services Program (CLSP), which provides Commonwealth and NSW Government funding administered by Legal Aid NSW.
- Legal Aid NSW provided additional short-term COVID-related funding to assist with Client Intake Services.
- The Employment Rights Legal Service, a joint project with Inner City Legal Centre and Kingsford legal Centre, is funded by CLSP.
- The Health Justice Partnership is funded by CLSP.
- Study NSW funds the statewide International Student Legal Service NSW. It also provided funds for additional migration and tenancy legal services for 12 months, during and after the COVID lockdowns.
- NSW Fair Trading funds the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service, and provided funding to employ an additional Tenants' Advisor to assist with accelerated demand due to COVID-19.
- DLA Piper, and the Limb Family Foundation, 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 and Telstra.

- City of Sydney provides RLC with premises at Redfern Town Hall.
- The Department of Communities and Justice Social Sector Transformation fund provided grants to support upgrades to the RLC website, equipment, support RLC's move to an online document library, and integrate staff mobile phones with the onsite telephone system.

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 some of our print production needs
- The University of NSW continued to support course modules on Police Powers.
- The University of Sydney Law School funded Social Justice clinical placements, whereby RLC provides high quality experiential learning for law students.
- City of Sydney and Study NSW provided funding to enable free access for international students to RLC's digital resource, My Legal Mate.
- Microsoft provided discounted software.
- A bequest, distribution from a trust, and donations have enabled us to establish a First Nations Justice Unit.
- Many individuals and supporter organisations provided generous donations, including 1666 Foundation, Wellthy Foundation, Southern Cross Postgraduate Association, SforP Foundation, Sydney University Law Society, Colin Biggers & Paisley.



An Australian Government Initiative



STUDY NSW
Creative. Dynamic. Alive.

Supported by NSW Fair Trading



Fair Work
OMBUDSMAN



ecstra



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.

CLAYTON UTZ

Employment Partner, Health Justice Partnership (HJP) Partner, International Student Legal Service NSW Supporter

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.

Clayton Utz also supports Redfern Legal Centre's innovative health justice partnership with the Sydney Local Health District, which delivers legal advice to people in a hospital setting and trains hospital staff to identify legal issues affecting their patients.

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.



Police Accountability Partner

DLA Piper supports RLC's police accountability practice, both financially and through pro bono support. DLA Piper 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.



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.



International Student Legal Service NSW Partner

McCabe Curwood are the pro bono partner for RLC's statewide international students' service. McCabe Curwood assists 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.

International Student Legal Service NSW Supporter

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.

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.

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 and Barry Nilsson Lawyers also attend the clinic to advise clients on overlapping family law issues.

Other Pro Bono Support

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

Australiaonline



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 have all generously donated their time to provide migration advice to RLC's international student clients on a regular basis.

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 2021–22 financial year our volunteer team included:

- 161 volunteer and pro bono solicitors
- 83 volunteer legal assistants
- 54 practical legal trainees, clinic students and other specialist volunteers. (Some volunteers worked across more than one category.)

Speak

27

different languages

Our volunteers

Contributed almost

20,000 hours

of volunteer time

Provide a commercial value of over

\$3.5 million

of volunteer time worth of benefit
to the Centre each year



Pictured clockwise from top left: RLC Intake Volunteers, together with Intake Supervisors Joe and Rosie, Redfern Town Hall, June 2022; Intake Volunteers; and RLC's International Student Solicitor with volunteers at Australian Sports Program, April 2022.

Listed below are the 293 volunteers who supported our work in 2021–22.

Adam Zvi Liskowski	Christina Choi	Isabella Cavanagh	Maria Andreou	Samantha Kotsakis
Akhil Prasad	Christine Weekes	Isabella Jiang	Maria Stewart	Samira Friis
Alexa Roach	Christopher Mueller	Isabella Newton	Maria Toma	Sandra Russo
Alexandra Gillan	Chuyi Wang	Isabella van Leer	Mariah Latina-Cohen	Sarah Doyle
Alexis Edinburg	Ciara Kenny	Isabelle Nicolas	Mariam Jaber	Sarah Gore
Ali Zein	Claire Wong	Isabelle Carpenter	Mary Hawkins	Sarah McLenaghan
Alice Chong	Claire Bourke	Ishana Srivastava-Khan	Marya Atmeh	Sarah Morton-Ramwell
Alice Gordon	Clara Kelly	Ivan Li	Maslia Mohammad	Sarah Sekandar
Allegra Peruch	Clarissa Mirarchi	Jack Mars	Matthew Churkovich	Savannah Michie
Allison Rickett	Coda Danu-Asmara	James Scully-Leaf	Maya Gonzalez	Sebastian Gutierrez-Hood
Amber Hu	Colin Taylor	Jane Spencer	Mehak Verma	Selina Ta
Amelia Barrow	Craig Emery	Jaslyn Ng	Melissa Gok	Sevin Pakbaz
Amelia Schubach	Damien Payard	Jasmin Zamprogno	Mia Parkes-Talbot	Shaun Chng
Amir El-Roubaei	Daniel Cheng	Jasmine Sheng	Michael Gibson	Sheree Kuan
Amy Wang	Danielle Iacono	Jennifer Hilliar	Michael Grinbergs	Shona Scully
Amy Warren	Danielle Tweedale	Jessica Geelan	Michael Nguyen	Simon Mee
Amy Zhao	Darrell Bagang	Jiada Jiang	Michael Squires	Simon Moran
Anastasia Pochesneva	David Vallance	Joanne Lim	Michael Windsor	Simon Rice
Anders Mykkeltvedt	Dean Tyler	Joshua Kai	Michael Zhang	Simon Zhao
Andrea Guzina	Denea Bascombe	Joshua Raj	Moonira Mamoon	Skye Owen
Angharad Owens-Strauss	Desiree Chong	Julia Cassis	Muhammad Olife	Sophie Ma
Anindya Krisna Paul	Diana Lambert	Julian Charters	Nachrawan Halawani	Stefanie Vogt
Chowdhury	Dominique Roth	Justin Penafiel	Nadezna Wilkins	Stephanie Brown
Ankita Singh	Donna Tan	Karen Andersen	Narita Nagin	Stephanie Toovey
Anna Camilleri	Dusan Stevic	Karolyn Liu	Natasha Molina	Stephen Christodoulou
Anna Kedves	Eden Weller	Kate Houghton	Nathan Greenfield	Sunil Puranikmath
Anna Molihan	Elise Fordham	Katie Butterworth	Nell Cohen	Susan Winfield
Anne Sneddon	Elizabeth Parsons	Katie Price	Nesha Balasubramanian	Sylva Dankha
Antonia Berg	Ella Alexander	Katrina Woodforde	Nicholas Simpson	Tamara Sims
Ariella Buckley	Ella Krygier	Kayla Stathis	Nick Bateman	Tammy Wong
Ashley Lieu	Ellen Mackinnon	Kelly swann	Nick Wigney	Tany De Almeida
Ashraf Olife	Elyse Methven	Kelly Xiao	Nicole Juric	Tara Ellefsen and her Mum (catering for Yabun)
Assil El-Ali	Emily Carpenter	Khai Der Lau	Nicole Smith	Tarun Ramachandran
Audrey Meaden	Emily Dong	Kieran Pender	Nikila Kaushik	Thalia Park
Ayesha Moosani	Emily Slaytor	Kim Garth	Noah Bedford	Tim Capelin
Beatrice Zhang	Emily Wittig	Kirk Simmons	Nuzuma Sama	Timothy Lawson
Bella Kosky	Emma Curry	Kirstyn Ho	Olivia Freeman	Tina Wu
Bennett Walsh	Emma Hetherington	Kirtveer Sandhu	Olivia Raiman	Tom Sapountsis
Bob Liang	Eryn Leddy-Rebecchi	Klara Herz	Oscar Monaghan	Tony Zhang
Brian Whelan	Essi Merivaara	Krishna Nand	Patrick Trieu	Tylah Coskerie
Brittany Reeves	Estella Shi	Kristina Simic	Paula Yu	Umeya Chaudhuri
Bronte McAlpin	Esther Chen	Krystin Low	Peter Alliot	Vanja Bulut
Bryan Do	Eugene Fedoseev	Kylie O'Reilly	Peter Anderson	Vijhai Uthayan
Callum Christodoulou	Fatima Benel	Lachlan Wachter	Prithi Sakthi Sivabalan	Virginija Jalozaite
Camilla Clemente	Feier Chen	Lachlan Lugg	Priti Joshi	Weilin Zhang
Camilo Pena	Ferdous Bahar	Lauren Biniaries	Rachael Chadwick	Will Dwyer
Campbell Rice	Fiona Kim	Lauren Kovacic	Raul Sugunananthan	William Davidson
Carla Cristina Massai	Fiona Lin	Lauren Stefanou	Rebecca Dunkel	Yi Weiliu
Fedatto	Francesco Mazzitelli	Lia Kingston	Rebecca McLeod	Yuqiao Cheng
Carmen Gawthorpe	Gab Hedge	Libby Leydon	Rebecca Richardson	Yvonne Khoo
Carmen Maatouk	Gabrielle Piesiewicz	Lily Jones	Rebecca Wahl	Zelie Appel
Carolina Arricobene	Garen Douzian	Liz Stanaway	Renae Moretto	Zita Rush
Cassian Ho	George Cramer	Lori Middlehurst	Renz Hernandez	Zoe Anastasiades
Catherine Ogilvie	Georgia Lewis	Louise Press	Reuben Heim	Zoe Papagiannis
Cathie Day	Habriele Hedge	Lucia Guo	Rhea Karunukar	
Cecilia Ngu	Hadeer Sayed	Lucinda Sive	Rosie Rand	
Celine Truong	Hae-Eun Park	Lucy Brown	Ryan Rayfield	
Chanelle Sleiman	Hannah Chen	Lucy Forbes	Sally Knox	
Charlene Ko	Imogen Sumer	Maggie Laing	Samantha Brandon	
Chris Drayton	Isabel Harrison	Margaret Fox	Samantha Butt	

Barristers

We thank the following barristers for providing their services to our clients on a pro bono basis: Andrew Naylor, Brenda Tronson, Chris Ronalds SC, Corrie Goodhand, Damien Payard, David Mulligan, Dev Bhutani, Felicity Graham, George Thomas, Hugh Dillon, Ingmar Taylor SC, Kate Richardson SC, Larissa Andelman, Michele Fraser, Morgan Hunter, Reg Graycar, Tim Smartt and Vanja Bulut.

RLC Young Professionals Committee

The RLC Young Professionals Committee (YPC) was founded in 2018 by a group of former intake volunteers who were in the early stages of their careers and passionate about finding ways to continue supporting the work of the Redfern Legal Centre. The committee was founded thanks to the inspiration and support of RLC's former CEO, Joanna Shulman, and former fundraising manager, Liz Clarke.

Since its inception, the YPC has been involved with a number of fundraising and awareness raising activities such as hosting a panel discussion on the topic of financial abuse in domestic relationships, assisting with the fundraising raffle at the annual RLC comedy night and setting up a fundraising page in the Blackmores Sydney Running Festival.

The YPC also seeks to create opportunities for current RLC volunteers to network with volunteer alumni and share perspectives about ways of contributing to social justice in different career paths. It hosted a networking dinner with current and former volunteers to meet, reconnect and reminisce about experiences volunteering for RLC.

The YPC was recognised with an award at the 2022 Counterpoint Volunteer Awards for its contributions to the community, in keeping with the National Volunteer Week theme of the year, 'Better Together'.

As we slowly emerge from the past two years of lockdowns, the YPC is looking to reconnect with RLC and its community and rebuild its network. Keep a look out for the YPC at upcoming RLC volunteers' events!

In the meantime, if you have any questions about the YPC or ideas you would like to share, please reach out to its current Co-Chairs, Lily Jones and Ivan Li by sending an email to youngprofessionals@rlc.org.au.



Pictured from top: YPC Co-chairs opening a financial abuse panel discussion raising funds and awareness; Big smiles from the YPC at RLC's comedy fundraiser; and RLC volunteers and staff running for justice in the Blackmores Sydney Running Festival.

Financial Abuse Service NSW

The Financial Abuse Service NSW is a specialist service providing free statewide legal assistance to people who have experienced financial abuse in an intimate partner relationship. Our innovative model brings together experts in family law and credit, debt and consumer law, with support from the corporate, government and philanthropic sectors.

Through the legal arm of the service, we identify systemic policy and law reform issues that play a key role in guiding the work of government and industry to address this widespread but underreported form of domestic abuse. We are currently seeking funding to expand our service, both in terms of our legal and non-legal expertise and increasing the capacity of the service to meet ever-growing demand.

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 engages regularly with community and industry networks and contributes our expertise to state and national advisory groups, roundtables and panels. This year, we provided specialist input to:

- Credit reporting reforms and review of the Credit Reporting Code
- Review of the Australian Banking Code
- Review of the Financial Services Council's family and domestic violence policy under the Life Insurance Code
- Proposed reforms to the bankruptcy system
- Australian Financial Complaints Authority approach to family law settlements
- Australian Communications and Media Authority approach to customer vulnerability
- Revenue NSW approaches to financial hardship and domestic and family violence
- National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children.

As part of our law reform work, we coordinate the NSW chapter of the Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG) – a network of community organisations which influences government and industry responses to the financial impact of domestic and family violence. Membership continues to grow, with national meetings attended by representatives from over 25 organisations around Australia.

“They listened to my whole story and validated it for me. They gave me hope that I could ask for a debt waiver. It was empowering to hear that and I felt supported.”

Fairer outcomes for consumer and family law complaints

With in-house expertise in consumer credit and family law, RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW is uniquely placed to identify systemic issues where these areas of law intersect.

One of our clients, Peta*, was successful in her complaint against the bank but the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA) only awarded her 50% of the compensation for the bank's misconduct, despite the Family Court ordering that she should receive 100% of any compensation.

Through our coordination of the EARG, we have been consulting with AFCA to improve its approach to banking and finance complaints that have interconnected family law financial matters.

As a result of our advocacy, AFCA is now developing a fact sheet to guide its handling of complaints by consumers who say their financial firm enabled wrongful conduct by their ex-partner, and to clarify that it can still resolve complaints where there has been a family law settlement. The EARG has consulted regularly with AFCA about this issue and has provided guidance and feedback on its approach. This fact sheet will provide certainty for consumers who have complaints against financial firms and will lead to fairer outcomes for victim-survivors, regardless of where they are at in the Family Court process.

Piloting a holistic model for legal and non-legal support

In 2021, we engaged Consulting & Implementation Services (CiS) to design a best practice holistic model to support people who have experienced financial abuse from an intimate partner, a project developed as part of CommBank Next Chapter. Designed in consultation with community organisations, sector experts, academics and people with lived experience, the model brings together legal and social service supports for people impacted by financial abuse.

The CiS report *Addressing Financial Abuse: A Collaborative Service Model for Legal and Non-Legal Support*, launched in March 2022, recommends that RLC pilot this model by expanding our Financial Abuse Service NSW to include social workers, financial counsellors and specialist lawyers in areas such as company and immigration law.

We are currently seeking funding to pilot this holistic model in NSW, which will see an expansion of our existing service both in terms of the legal and non-legal expertise we can provide, and increasing the capacity of the service to meet demand. We look forward to sharing our learnings and supporting other organisations to establish similar models around Australia.

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. We are grateful for the pro bono legal support we receive from Lander & Rogers and Barry Nilsson.

As many of our clients have intersecting legal issues, we have developed a 'co-advice model' where clients meet with a team of experts in family law, consumer law and other specialist areas from RLC as needed, as well as their financial counsellor or social worker if appropriate. This means the client only has to tell their story once and our experts can give the client complementary advice about their options in one or more jurisdictions.

Cars as a tool of financial abuse

In addition to the consumer credit problems we continue to assist with, this year we have seen an increase in legal problems arising from cars being used as a tool of financial abuse.

An example which often persists long after the relationship has ended is a perpetrator taking out a car loan in our client's name, accruing fines while driving the car leading to suspension of our client's licence, and refusing to pay toll debts attached to the car.

We also see cases where the perpetrator refuses to transfer the vehicle registration to our client after the relationship has ended, despite our client having paid for the car and all expenses. Currently, the only way to resolve this in NSW is for the victim survivor to engage a family lawyer and seek property settlement orders in the Federal Circuit and Family Court. The cost of such proceedings often far exceeds the value of the car, not to mention the time and emotional toll involved in going to court.

We have been consulting with Revenue NSW to improve outcomes for victim-survivors whose partners have accrued fines in their name, including through developing a domestic and family violence (DFV) policy and ensuring that frontline staff receive specialist domestic and family violence training. We will continue our advocacy on the transfer of vehicle registration with NSW government agencies.

Hidden motor vehicle debt: Denise's story

Denise* and Justin's* relationship was characterised by physical, emotional and financial abuse. Justin often consumed illicit drugs which caused him to become violent and paranoid. After Justin had been unemployed for two years, Denise took out finance to purchase a car solely in her name and made all the repayments herself. Shortly after buying the car, Denise separated from Justin and returned to her home country to see her family. She left her financed car in Justin's possession for safekeeping, with around \$50,000 left owing under the contract. She returned to Australia several months later to find that her ex-partner had accrued more than \$3,000 of fines in her name and her license had been suspended as a result. Justin had also accrued hundreds of dollars of toll debt. Although Justin had hidden her car and refused to return it, she discovered that he had listed the car for sale online with a new licence plate.

Denise did not want the car back, but came to the Financial Abuse Service NSW for advice because she was stressed about how she would repay the car loan and the debts Justin had accrued. She did not feel safe disclosing to Revenue NSW that Justin was responsible for the fines, in case he retaliated against her.

RLC helped Denise write to the lender and request that they repossess the vehicle on the grounds that the contract had been breached when Justin allowed the registration to expire. This saved Denise from having to locate the vehicle herself and put her safety at risk. The creditor repossessed the car and sold it to pay off the debt, so Denise did not have to pay any shortfall. We also helped Denise to get the toll debts waived, the fines and demerit points withdrawn and her licence reinstated, without having to contact Justin. She was finally able to move forward with her life, free from the financial burden and stress of Justin using her car to perpetrate financial abuse.

*Names changed to protect client safety and privacy

Education and training

We seek to build capacity within the community sector to identify and respond to financial abuse by providing training, sharing and developing resources, and working with academics to contribute to research in this area.

We have also recently collated a list of available resources on financial abuse as a central source of information for government, industry and the community sector, to assist with screening, referral pathways and the implementation of best practice policies.

We run a series of education initiatives year-round, including our 'phone a friend' service to build the capacity of financial counsellors supporting clients experiencing financial abuse, and our popular webinar series, attended by hundreds of community workers across Australia each year.

"[The lawyers] have been so wonderful, considerate, understanding, non-judgemental and generous with their time. My circumstances are very sensitive and highly emotional and triggering for me and they could not have communicated with me in a more compassionate and informative way. They have been and continue to be so tolerant and understanding."

"[The Financial Abuse] team were always there for me ... It's an amazing service that I never knew existed but appreciated so much. So many people could benefit from their help. Thank you again, my children and I will be forever grateful."

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.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker

RLC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker identifies and breaks down barriers to ensure culturally appropriate services are available to First Nations' people accessing our Health Justice Partnership. The Access Worker also works across the organisation to ensure a welcoming, friendly, and culturally safe environment is created for First Nations people accessing all of RLC's diverse legal services.

An important part of this work is providing and reviewing referrals to and from services that 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 the RedLink Women's Social Group and other events, providing information about RLC's services and networking with First Nations people and services that support the community.

During periods of lockdown, the Access Worker maintained phone contact with Aboriginal community essential services, including weekly contact with RedLink Women's Social Group, Aboriginal Medical Service (Redfern), Social Workers at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Weave Youth & Community Service, Sydney Dental Hospital – the Dalarinji Oral Health Clinic and Mudgin-Gal (Women's Place).

Throughout the year, the Access Worker supported many clients with applications for compensation under the Stolen Generations Reparation Scheme, as well as sending information on this scheme to over 3,000 community workers, and successfully advocating for the deadline to be extended for people to make a claim.

The Access Worker also led RLC's engagement in recognising and celebrating significant First Nations events such as NAIDOC, Yabun, and Reconciliation Week, and contributed to CLCNSW Quarterlies 'Yarn Up' sessions and the inaugural 'Big Yarn Up', a three-day meeting held on Gumbaynggirr Country in June. The 'Yarn Up' sessions include training, development and networking sessions, providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working at NSW community legal centres the opportunity to collaborate on the development and implementation of strategies to engage with local Aboriginal communities, and build solutions-led legal representation and access to culturally safe services.

During 2022 Reconciliation Week, RLC had the privilege of listening to Professor Jakelin Troy articulate the Sydney language of the Dharug and Iyora. The Professor has been generous in sharing her expertise and knowledge by providing a cultural description through storytelling and advising RLC on the incorporation of First Nations' languages within aspects of our work, including a project to rename the rooms at RLC.

Other achievements throughout the year included active participation as a First Nations Engagement Committee member in the preparation of RLC's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, and providing feedback on the publication of the Law Society's Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients: resources for solicitors in NSW.

First Nations Solicitor

In May 2022, RLC employed a First Nations Solicitor to expand its capacity to provide legal services to First Nations clients and to achieve systemic change in areas affecting First Nations communities.

The role of this position is to:

- Consult and engage with local Aboriginal organisations, community and relevant external organisations to identify areas of unmet legal need for First Nations people
- Assist to design and develop a new First Nations Justice Practice that responds to that need, in partnership with Aboriginal community controlled organisations, and
- Undertake a combination of advice, casework, stakeholder engagement, community legal education and law reform activities to work towards addressing identified legal need issues.

Gail Brennan is RLC's first First Nations Solicitor. She is a proud Ngarrindjeri and Adnyamathanha woman from the Coorong and Flinders Ranges in South Australia.

Over the past few months, the First Nations Solicitor has been attending stakeholder meetings alongside the CEO and Principal Solicitor. The meetings have been successful in identifying key legal issues that the First Nations community in Redfern are experiencing, scoping systemic advocacy opportunities and discussing ways we can provide an effective legal service.

The First Nations Solicitor provides legal advice to First Nations clients that do not fall into the specialised practice areas via a Monday clinic with appointment and drop in capacity, and established a fortnightly outreach clinic at Tribal Warrior, a local Aboriginal organisation.

The First Nations Solicitor has been providing advice on a range of different legal issues such as tenancy, guardianship, collapse of the Youpla funeral fund, victim's compensation, rights of victims in giving evidence, lawyer's billing, reclaiming animals from RSPCA and the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme.

The First Nations Solicitor has also been actively involved in the community by attending local meetings, open days and events.



Pictured clockwise from top left: First Nations Solicitor at RedLink, June 2022; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker conducting outreach at Poets Corner, May 2022; RLC stall at NAIDOC in the City, July 2022; and outreach at RedLink, June 2022.

Health Justice Partnership

Since 2015, Redfern Legal Centre has continued its collaborative and strength-based relationship with the Sydney Local Health District (SLHD). In March 2022, RLC was successful in gaining ongoing funding for this service for a further three years.

RLC's Health Justice Partnership (HJP) provides free and confidential legal advice and representation to health care consumers of the SLHD, including at Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Hospital, the Sydney Dental Hospital, and RedLink (an initiative facilitated by the Department of Communities and Justice located in Redfern). In 2021–22 the service was staffed by two lawyers working in close collaboration with RLC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker.

Despite COVID-19 preventing our ability to place a lawyer on-site at RPA Hospital until June 2022, the client referral pathway has benefitted from the adaptive RPA Virtual Hospital platform. Phone, video conferencing and face-to-face court attendances have also played a valuable role in supplementing client/lawyer relations throughout this period. Our in-person attendance at the Dental Hospital also recommenced in early 2022, following a significant period of remote work due to the pandemic.

Working for change

RLC's HJP assists people experiencing extreme vulnerability and marginalisation. Beyond acute medical needs that mostly require hospitalisation, the complexities of our clients' situations are often accompanied by lived experience of significant injustice and discrimination, poor mental and physical health, and harmful use of alcohol and drugs. All too often, these deleterious forces follow a history of intergenerational trauma, childhood abuse, long-term unemployment and homelessness.

Much of our advocacy occurs in the area of care and protection. A key example of our early intervention work is our involvement with the Pregnancy Family Conference (PFC). This confidential forum facilitates meetings between families, health care professionals, child protection workers and services providers, overseen by an independent facilitator.

Through this process, participants are supported to develop an action plan that aims to safeguard the wellbeing of the baby and formulate strategies to empower families to implement change. Among a number of multi-agency stakeholders attending these meetings, RLC often represents first time or returning mothers-to-be whose history or present circumstances

"The majority of patients the team refers to the HJP solicitor are pregnant women who may be experiencing domestic violence, have pending criminal charges or are involved in care and protection matters with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). We have received positive feedback from patients that HJP legal consultations and representation by the HJP solicitor have significantly reduced their stress and improved their mental health during pregnancy. This in turn has enabled HJP clients to focus on her own health needs and wellbeing, the baby's health, along with attachment and bonding."

"Legal support through the HJP has been invaluable for many vulnerable families in the RPAH community. My team greatly values and appreciates the HJP with RLC and recognises the HJP as an essential service for our vulnerable patients with legal issues."

"Thank you very much for all your help and support you are greatly appreciated from the bottom of my heart."

have triggered a 'birth-alert' with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

The PFC offers the vulnerable expectant mother an opportunity to find her voice with a lawyer sitting by her side. RLC lawyers' involvement often facilitates better transparency and accountability around the DCJ's role and expectations, and helps to identify pathways and options for expectant mothers. As part of the process, questions about AVOs, criminal law matters and other legal issues may arise that the lawyer can answer.

Our participation at the DCJ Care and Protection Legal Advisory Group has afforded us an opportunity to voice our strong support for this innovative approach to early intervention planning and parent participation. In May 2022, DCJ confirmed their intentions to expand this effective model subject to available funding in the new financial year.

Advice and casework

Our generalist HJP practice covers a broad range of legal issues, with many clients who experience vulnerability requiring assistance with multiple matters.

Intervention from the HJP is often done within a framework of mental health management or drug and alcohol treatment, to address underlying comorbidities and triggers. Accordingly, our sentencing submissions strategically draw the Court's attention towards rehabilitation rather than punitive outcomes. As a result, many clients with long Court antecedents are not jailed but directed to community correction supervised plans incorporating sustainable health promoting pathways.

Our casework during the second half of the year has also addressed an increase in Local Court criminal matters. HJP lawyers have been adept at acting quickly and flexibly to assist clients who are due in court, for example, the following day.

Some examples of our work are provided below:

- RLC's HJP lawyer obtained a mental health diversion order for a client with schizoaffective disorder for a drug possession charge and five earlier bond breaches, successfully avoiding a criminal conviction and sentence. This case illustrates the effectiveness of the HJP's close working relationship with the RPA Drug Health team, who provided crucial medical evidence in support of the application.
- RLC's HJP lawyer supported an older Aboriginal client with a long criminal history to obtain a Community Corrections Order (without supervision directions or community service work) rather than

being sentenced to jail. We supported the client through seeking written material from her social worker, TAFE teacher and religious leader and via oral submissions emphasised the longstanding impact that significant childhood trauma had on the client.

- RLC's lawyer supported a young Aboriginal woman and her partner, each with a long-history of harmful drug use, have their ten-year-old daughter return home. We also advocated on their behalf for an appropriate public housing transfer, to support the family's reunification.

Law reform and policy work

During this period, there was renewed focus on care and protection law reform. Our work focused on the impact on First Nations communities, who remain the most over-represented in out-of-home child placement. In the care space, the practice was pleased to contribute to a forum organised by DCJ about key recommendations from the *Family is Culture Report* – a landmark report highlighting the need for significant systemic reform in the care and protection system.

Education and training

As co-convenors of the Family Law/Care and Protection Network – Community Legal Centres NSW, HJP lawyers arranged keynote speakers, including the recently appointed Magistrate Mark Whelan, to speak to representatives from community legal centres across NSW.

OUR IMPACT



Health care consumers are informed about legal rights and options



Health-harming legal issues are addressed



Improved health and wellbeing

Better understanding of DCJ care and protection processes



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



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; address systemic policing issues through law reform; and seek greater policy accountability by raising awareness about unlawful and unjust policing practices.

Key areas of focus for the year included the impact of COVID fines on communities from low socio-economic areas; lobbying around the impact of fines on children; preparation of a test case challenging the validity of COVID-19 fines, and collaboration with Slater and Gordon Lawyers on a landmark strip search class action filed in the NSW Supreme Court.

Working for change

COVID fines

During periods of COVID lockdown in 2021, people in NSW living outside of 'areas of concern' were lawfully able to undertake exercise and outdoor recreation with one other person, members of their household, or their nominated person. Despite this, RLC's free statewide COVID-19 fines advice service received many enquiries from people issued with penalty notices for lawful recreation activities such as sitting in parks away from others, not gathering, and not in an area of concern.

Data uncovered by RLC throughout the pandemic has also continued to reveal a disproportionate issuing of COVID-19 fines in lower-social economic areas and regional towns where high numbers of First Nations people reside. COVID fines are not means tested, and for many of our clients, the impact of a \$1,000 or \$3,000 on-the-spot fine can be devastating. Unpaid fines can lead to serious financial outcomes including loss of licence and property.

COVID fine: Rohan's story

One afternoon during lockdown in August 2021, Rohan met up with his partner to exercise in a park near his house. After taking a lap around the park, the couple sat down to rest, being careful to sit far away from anybody else. After sitting for a short while, the pair were approached by a group of police officers who asked why they were there. The officers asked the couple if they were aware they were in breach of the Public Health Orders and told them they would each receive a \$1,000 fine. The officers then directed them to leave the park.

Rohan believed he had been abiding by the rules. The park was not in a designated 'area of concern', and the incident occurred at a time when outdoor exercise and recreation were permitted. Rohan sought a review of his fine with Revenue NSW on two occasions but was unsuccessful, and came to RLC for assistance.

RLC filed a test case on behalf of Rohan and two others in the Supreme Court of NSW seeking to challenge the validity of COVID-19 fines. Shortly after filing, Rohan's penalty notice was withdrawn. The test case continues with the remaining two applicants.

"I couldn't have had a better outcome ... the assistance from [the police accountably solicitor] was at such a high level and I wasn't charged a cent. It is an incredible service."

"I feel more empowered and knowledgeable in dealing with police and legal issues."

By the end of the financial year, over 61,500 COVID fines had been issued in NSW, around three quarters of which remained unpaid, with many fines potentially issued incorrectly.

Throughout the year, RLC and other community legal organisations, including Aboriginal Legal Service (ACT/NSW), Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) and Community Legal Centre NSW, took collective action. This included issuing two open letters signed by prominent members of the legal profession and other concerned stakeholders calling on the NSW government to revoke all COVID fines that have been issued incorrectly, or convert such fines to a caution.

COVID fines and children

RLC is concerned by the high number of fines issued to minors in NSW since the start of the pandemic. From March 2020 until 30 June 2021, 3,840 children aged 10–17 received a COVID-19 fine, the majority of which were issued for not wearing a mask, or for being out of the home without a 'reasonable excuse'. More than half the children received a fine of \$1,000, 17 were fined \$5,000, and 39 were fined \$3,000. The fines are worth approx. \$2.3 million.

Children and their families, particularly those living in socially disadvantaged and poorer communities, cannot afford these large fines and failure to pay them has long term impacts both financially, socially and legally.

RLC has retained a strong focus on advocating for change on this issue with decision-makers in collaboration with other CLCs, and through the media and broader community.

NSW strip search law

Ten years ago, the average number of strip searches undertaken by NSW was around 300. Now it is 5000, with young people and First Nations people among those disproportionately represented:

- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being strip searched was 9% (2020–21) and 11% (2021–24 May 2022), while only comprising 3.4% of the NSW population.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represented 4.2% (2020–21) and 3.6% (1 July 2021–24 May 2022) of the total of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander searches.
- Dubbo continues to be a place where the highest number of strip searches are carried out on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with a total of 46 searches conducted in less than two years.

The majority of strip searches find nothing illegal.

Over the past 12 months, RLC has been working with the law firm Slater and Gordon on a class action against NSW Police for unlawful searches. The class action seeks to achieve judicial consideration of police power to strip search and to add pressure to our multi-faceted

campaign to achieve law reform and practical change in relation to strip searching by police in NSW.

Protest law in NSW

On 1 April 2022, new legislation came into effect in NSW which makes it an offence to cause damage or disruption to major roads and major facilities during a public protest.

The maximum penalty for this offence is \$22,000 or imprisonment for two years, or both. RLC has worked to raise awareness about the new laws through community legal education and engagement with media outlets.

RLC is concerned that the new legislation will essentially make it mandatory for most large-scale protests to seek approval from NSW Police Force in order to avoid prosecution. This could prove especially difficult for protesters wanting to speak out about deaths in custody and other policing issues impacting First Nations people.

Advice and casework

The NSW fines system treats children the same as adults even though children predominantly do not have an income. During the pandemic, RLC provided advice to children and their parents issued with a COVID-19 fine. We also assisted these clients to seek internal review and advised clients about electing to take their matter to court.

RLC also provided advice to many adults with COVID fines, assisting them to seek internal review from Revenue NSW and/or to elect to take their fine matter to court.

RLC in the media

Almost 3,000 children in NSW hit with fines of up to \$5,000 for minor COVID rule breaches

Christopher Knaus reports for *The Guardian*, 10 December 2021

Almost 3,000 COVID-19 fines totalling just over \$2.1 million dollars have been issued to children aged 10-17 years since 1 July last year, data obtained by Redfern Legal Centre reveals. Redfern Legal Centre's police accountability solicitor Samantha Lee said she had seen examples of children with intellectual disabilities receiving fines.

"These fines are enormous ... it's just absurd to even think we should issue such a fine to a child, there's no way they can pay," Lee said. "We're doing this for families on Centrelink, and not only is it a financial impact, there's an emotional impact. There's often a parent who will ring me with the child near them and the stress and the tension that the fine has created in the relationship between the child and the parent cannot be underestimated."

In response, Redfern Legal Centre, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited and Public Interest Advocacy Centre are calling on government to revoke all COVID-19 fines issued to children, and issue cautions instead.

Full article available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/dec/16/almost-3000-children-in-nsw-hit-with-fines-of-up-to-5000-for-minor-covid-rule-breaches>

We also advised and assisted people with policing issues such as stops and searches, strip searches, the use of excessive force and arrest powers. We lodged a number of complaints on behalf of First Nations clients with various Local Area Commands and the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission.

Community legal education

The police accountability practice presented a series of free talks to community organisations and legal practitioners about how to appeal and navigate COVID fines. Many practitioners have struggled to navigate this area of law due to the rapidly changing public health

orders and the complex and untested elements of the offence. RLC has delivered a significant number of webinars and seminars to assist legal practitioners and the wider community to better understand the appeal and payment process.

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

RLC in the media

'People are struggling': \$42 million in unpaid COVID fines after lockdown blitz

Caitlin Fitzsimmons reports for *The Sydney Morning Herald*

Three out of four COVID-19 fines are overdue, with more than 46,000 NSW residents owing \$42 million between them. Revenue NSW figures show police issued nearly 62,000 fines totalling \$56.4 million from March 2020 to April 2022 for various COVID public health order breaches.

Redfern Legal Centre solicitor Sam Lee said many people on low incomes could not afford to pay the fines, which were as high as \$5,000 at the height of the lockdown in 2021. "What we found with these COVID fines is a majority of them, in our experience, were not issued according to law, so it's a due process issue rather than a public health issue," she said.

Full article available at: <https://amp.smh.com.au/national/nsw/people-are-struggling-42-million-in-unpaid-covid-fines-after-lockdown-blitz-20220517-p5am57.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 for international students enrolled to study in NSW (onshore and offshore). ISLS provides free, confidential legal advice, as well as advocacy, information, resources and education. This has been of critical importance during the unprecedented hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and following the long-awaited return of international students to Australian shores.

Working for change

ISLS has maintained its leading role in addressing exploitative practices affecting international students. The practice provides access to free legal information, resources and education to help resolve legal issues before they escalate and negatively impact the health, wellbeing, education, and overall experience of living and studying in NSW.

ISLS also works to identify systemic issues and engages with government and other agencies and stakeholders to remove inequalities that prevent international students from accessing justice. This work has significantly increased with the onset of COVID-19.

Overseas Student Health Cover

Following a successful joint submission to the Select Committee on Job Security in 2021, co-authored by ISLS, RLC's employment practice, RLC's credit and debt practice, the Employment Right Legal Service (ERLS), and Kingsford Legal Centre, ISLS has been drafting submissions regarding the impact of Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) restrictions on pregnancy-related care for international students.

These broad, and often inconsistent, restrictions have resulted in students being unable to access contraception, pre-natal or ante-natal care through either their OSHC or Medicare for the first 12 months of their arrival in Australia. This often results in students incurring large debts they are unable to pay, potentially placing the lives and health of parents and children in danger. In turn, this can result in students withdrawing from studies, and negatively impact Australia's reputation as a destination to study.

This work forms part of ISLS's ongoing work to address system issues impacting the international student community.

"The valuable help reduces my anxiety and I feel hope for my problems."

"You saved my family \$9,000 as well as the feeling that all hope and justice had been removed from the system. My faith in our system has been restored and I am calm again. I am so grateful for your work."

"RLC is a pillar of our community. I have worked along side and at times accessed the RLC. RLC is simply outstanding in its quality of service and care for the community."

Responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment

The follow-up to *Your Body, Your Choice*, our award-winning multi-language legal information resource on sexual assault, will be published in multiple languages and distributed to stakeholders across the state later this year.

In partnership with City of Sydney and Study NSW, this new factsheet – called *Speak Up, Speak Out* – addresses sexual harassment, and 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)

Following the rollout of the Western Australian version of our interactive video resource, 'My Legal Mate' (MLM) earlier this year (following delays caused by COVID-19), extensive content updates are currently underway for both the NSW and WA versions of MLM.

MLM offers individualised legal assistance in seven languages, developed specifically with the legal needs of international students in mind. These content updates will ensure that MLM continues to offer the most up-to-date advice and information to international students in the areas of law that most affect them, including employment, tenancy, issues with education providers, sexual assault and harassment, and general FAQs about the law in Australia.

ISLS continues to promote MLM to NSW international students and education providers. Thanks to the generous support of our partners, Study NSW and City of Sydney, 77,500 licences of MLM continue to be rolled out across NSW.

COVID-19 referral and information hub

Throughout the pandemic, ISLS has remained a significant referral point for NSW 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 students during this time through our advice sessions and by participating in online outreach 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 referred thousands of students to partnership programs during the height of the pandemic, where they were able to access financial, accommodation, food and health and wellbeing crisis support.

Other law reform projects

ISLS continues to work on a number of ongoing law reform projects including seeking cover for international students under the Fair Entitlement Guarantee scheme (in conjunction with RLC's employment practice and ERLS), and protection under the Residential Tenancies Act and/or fairer contracts in relation to purpose-built student accommodation (in partnership with RLC's Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service).

Advice and casework

ISLS continues to see high levels of wage theft and other exploitation issues for students working in an increasingly 'gig economy' workforce. Financial strain and mental and physical health issues are all flow-on effects for international students employed in the pandemic environment, resulting in educational debts and deferment issues.

Rolling international border closures and other travel restrictions have had unforeseen impacts on many international students' visas, resulting in a large number of our clients needing to extend the 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 deferment of studies required because of COVID-19. Study NSW provided additional funding for the ISLS to employ a part-time migration lawyer, whose services have been invaluable to students during this time.

In addition, ISLS has seen a sharp increase in accommodation rental disputes. In particular, rent increases and evictions are an increasingly common issue, directly related to interest rate rises, which will likely be ongoing. Study NSW also provided some additional funding for ISLS to employ a part-time tenants' advocate, who has provided advice to the many international students with tenancy disputes.

Education provider debt: Samantha's story

Samantha* was an international student enrolled to study at a university in NSW. As part of her studies, Samantha had to meet the specified requirements of an external placement. Samantha experienced unforeseen circumstances which prevented her from completing her placement. Samantha sought special consideration, which was denied, resulting in a fail grade. As the placement was a required component of her studies, Samantha commenced a second placement. However, she experienced racial discrimination at this second placement, which she immediately reported to her university.

The university did not act in Samantha's best interest, failing Samantha a second time and then implementing an exclusion, leaving her unable to continue with her studies. Samantha had paid the university \$6,987 to undertake the placement, which the university refused to refund. The university also refused to release Samantha's transcripts due to an outstanding payment (\$256) in regard to the second placement.

RLC's ISLS drafted a number of letters to the university, outlining the university's legal obligations and requirements across multiple pieces of legislation. This resulted in the university refunding Samantha the \$6,987, waiving the \$256 fee, and releasing Samantha's transcripts. Samantha has now enrolled with another university.

* Name has been changed

Publications

Welcome Back Guide

ISLS created a *Welcome Back Guide* to support the return of international students. This comprehensive information pack provides international students with access to information to support their transition into full-time study in NSW.

Created especially for international students in NSW, the guide was released in late December 2021 and contains information on topics such as employment, tenancy, health care, how to access banking services and how to apply for an Australian tax file number. The guide also includes important information on obtaining free COVID-19 tests and vaccinations, and advice on Overseas Student Health Cover and claiming medical expenses while in Australia.

The NSW Lawyers Practice Manual

The *NSW Lawyers' Practice Manual* invited ISLS to review and update an international student-specific chapter about making a complaint to the Overseas Student Ombudsman. Additionally, ISLS has been invited to create and write an entirely new chapter for the manual that is specific to international students and their unique legal needs, with drafting currently underway.

Factsheets

ISLS maintains a range of factsheets to support international students, which we distribute online and at face-to-face events. This year, we released eight new and revised factsheets, including several factsheets on visa options announced by Government during

the pandemic to support COVID-impacted students and a range of factsheets to assist students deal with education providers, as well as a factsheet on visa information for Ukrainian Nationals fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Legal outreach

Following the return of international students to NSW and the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, ISLS was pleased to attend its first face-to-face student event since the beginning of the pandemic in June 2022.

The Australian Sports Program, held for the first time since 2019, is an important opportunity for international students to meet and connect with a range of support services and service providers. Pre-pandemic, events such as this had been an important and regular part of ISLS's work and engagement.

The event was also attended by other key stakeholders including Study NSW, City of Sydney, the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations, International Students for Sydney, Surf Life Saving NSW, Sydney Alliance and Sydney Community Forum. The event allowed ISLS to engage with NSW's international student community in person, provide them with critical legal information, and continue our dialogue with other stakeholders on the issues impacting international students.

We look forward to once again being able to participate in more engagement opportunities such as this over the coming year.

OUR IMPACT



International students' rights are protected

International students' financial situation improves



Exploitation of international students decreases

International students have stable employment and fair wages



International students can access secure accommodation and better living conditions

Students' safety, wellbeing and mental health is enhanced



Employment Law

The Employment Rights Legal Service (ERLS) is a partnership between Redfern Legal Centre, Kingsford Legal Centre and Inner City Legal Centre. It was established in August 2021 to deliver specialist employment law services to vulnerable and migrant workers and build the capacity of other NSW community legal centres (CLCs) to undertake employment law work.

Among the people we assisted in our first year of operation, 65% were experiencing financial hardship and 42% spoke English as a second language. We provided services to 137 NSW Local Government Areas, with 96 of these being outside of Sydney.

We added value to our advice work by providing 63% of additional assistance or task work to culturally and linguistically diverse clients. We did almost all our representation work for workers who speak English as a second language (85%).

Working for change

In May 2022, ERLS coordinated an open letter from a coalition of concerned community legal centres and civil society organisations calling on governments to make pre-election commitments to end the exploitation of migrant workers. The letter built on the findings of a March 2022 senate committee report which highlighted the “deliberate and systemic” exploitation of migrant workers in Australian workplaces and made significant recommendations for reform.

We requested three core pre-election commitments to address wage theft and end the exploitation of migrant workers: strengthening visa protections to empower migrant workers to speak out against exploitative employers; providing fast-tracked pathways for exploited workers to recover unpaid wages through the courts; and offering equal protections to all workers under the Fair Entitlements Guarantee. There was good media coverage of the open letter.

Advice and casework

ERLS provided a high level of service to clients, providing a significant volume of advice and supporting them to self-represent in managing their disputes with employers.

In the second quarter of 2021–22, we managed huge demand for advice as workers across NSW grappled with returning to work under Public Health Orders and employer vaccination and mask directions. Over 40% of our annual service targets were provided in a

“Without your service I would have had nowhere to go and no tools to help me.”

“Consulting with your team made me more confident that what my former employer was doing was not legal, which in return made me more confident in standing up to him and standing my ground in the matter ... had great help from great people.”

“What you are doing for the community is fantastic thank you.”

single quarter. Many of these requests were urgent and involving dismissal, often requiring advice within 1–2 days of contacting us.

The employment law-scape was developing very rapidly: at our regular lawyers’ meetings, we discussed these changes and shared factsheets and position papers to ensure the provision of consistent advice to our shared client base.

Education and training

As part of the ERLS partnership, we have focused on capacity building in the CLC sector, assisting lawyers to provide quality advice to vulnerable workers. To do this, we convened a statewide network meeting for employment and discrimination practitioners, with quarterly training sessions.

We have also delivered tailored community legal education presentations to meet the specific training needs of various CLCs as well as providing a ‘phone a friend’ service to CLC lawyers to support their advice and representation of vulnerable workers. We also met with peak employment law referral organisations, such as the Fair Work Ombudsman and Law Access NSW to provide extensive training to their staff about employment law, the issues faced by our clients, and the range of services provided by ERLS.

ERLS provided training to a number of multicultural networks, including refugee and international student forums about employment law rights and entitlements.

We also created an online knowledge hub to assist the ERLS lawyers and volunteers across each partner centre to provide advice and task work to clients. This is proving a highly effective way to share resources and reduces the need for each partner centre to undertake research or create template documents separately.

Stakeholder engagement

We provided targeted information about the ERLS to all of the NSW-based federal senators and members of parliament and NSW parliamentarians, in the most common community languages in their electorates.

Throughout the year we also provided information about ERLS to over 5,000 community workers and caseworkers, both legal and non-legal. Many of these stakeholders work with vulnerable employees and are trusted referral points to our service.

Hàoyǔ's story: forced to hand his wages back to his employer

Hàoyǔ* was unfairly dismissed by his employer, a convenience store in the Sydney CBD, after the franchisee's head office found out Hàoyǔ was paying a portion of his wages back to his employer each week in cash. RLC represented Hàoyǔ in both his unfair dismissal claim at the Fair Work Commission and his \$30,000 coerced cashback claim at the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia. This was a complicated matter, as the client, an international student, had returned to China and could not return to Australia. The employer made a wide range of unsubstantiated claims against its ex-employee. We settled the matter at court-ordered mediation favourably for the client.

* Name has been changed

RLC in the media

Australia is bringing migrant workers back – but exploitation is still rampant. Here are three changes needed now

The Conversation, 16 May 2022

Exploitation flourishes because regulators do not routinely detect or punish labour law noncompliance. Most workers cannot pursue their employer directly because the system is stacked against them at every stage of the wage claim process. The Employment Rights Legal Service (ERLS), which helps exploited migrant workers in NSW and coordinated the open letter, has said many migrant workers don't complain because they fear losing their visa or job. For many, their fear is well-founded. One ERLS client, Sofia, told them: 'I might quit and try and recover my wages and my power in the future but for now, my visa is my main concern and I just want to leave this stress behind me.'

Sofia had submitted to her employer's unlawful demands to repay part of her wages, and unwittingly committed a migration offence. This could result in cancellation of her visa if brought to the immigration department's attention. Another international student client, a cleaner, put it: 'My visa is my main concern: 100%. I'm not going to risk my visa to chase my wages if there is only a chance or a hope that the government will protect me.'

Full article available at: <https://theconversation.com/australia-is-bringing-migrant-workers-back-but-exploitation-is-still-rampant-here-are-3-changes-needed-now-182761>

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

RLC's Credit, Debt and Consumer Law practice provides advice, advocacy and community legal education in areas including consumer credit, banking, insurance, superannuation, debt recovery, and consumer complaints. We also assist people in navigating the legal system through claims to the Ombudsman services, NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal and Local Court Small Claims Division.

Advice and casework

Drawing on our extensive casework experience, the credit and debt practice was proud to provide support to a broad coalition advocating to save responsible lending laws.

Access to the full protections of the *National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009* (Cth) (NCCPA) remains extremely important to our clients, and we shared a number of clients' stories as part of the successful nationwide advocacy campaign.

The practice continues to observe worrying trends, including lenders continuously using refinancing together with the increasing of debt limits as a stop gap measure to address unsuitable lending, or evading responsible lending laws altogether by offering consumers sham business loans without any verification checks, excluding vulnerable people from the consumer protections in the credit laws.

"[The solicitor] was amazing. She explained everything super clearly and helped me with next steps. Having her experience and advice made my stress levels drop because I was no longer unsure whether I was pursuing my case validly and correctly."

"[The solicitor] has been very empathetic and friendly towards me. One of the best person I've ever spoken to in my life. I'm very grateful for his help."

"I really felt heard and understood. Thank you so much."

"Keep doing the great work! Really appreciate this service and the volunteers that help to keep the lights on."

Working for change

The credit and debt practice centred its law reform and advocacy on issues that continue to perpetuate hardship on those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and collaborated with government on programs to streamline and make hardship supports more accessible.

The practice also worked closely with other RLC practice areas, external consumer advocates and government agencies on funeral insurance, fines issued to young

Not an Entrepreneur: Maria's Story

Maria*, a widowed elderly migrant with low English proficiency, was surviving only on a disability support pension and living on her own in her home unit. She had never had a loan or financial product before and her financial literacy skills were limited. Having no savings and not owning a computer, when a medical emergency arose for a close family member overseas, Maria asked a friend to help her obtain some funds. After searching the internet, Maria's friend found an online broker who organised a business loan for Maria, despite Maria having no experience in business or means to start one. Most of the loan application was arranged via her friend's email and via text and Maria was just instructed by the lender to have the application forms signed and witnessed.

As the credit was classified 'for business', the lender did not undertake any responsible lending assessment or ask for any income or expense verification documents from Maria to confirm if she could meet the loan repayments or to check if it was suitable in her circumstances. As Maria was desperate for the money, she arranged for the documents to be signed without properly reading or understanding them, nor did she understand the implications of the lender's requirement to put a caveat over her home. The interest repayments on the loan were so high that Maria soon found herself having to cut back on essentials like food and medication. When an impending balloon payment that she could not afford became due, she faced the risk of her home being sold by the lender and being made homelessness.

RLC assisted Maria with a complaint to the lender to bring their attention to the unconscionable nature of this predatory lending, and negotiated a stop to all interest charges and an affordable payment arrangement for a reduced loan balance.

*Name has been changed

people, legal issues affecting gig and on-demand economy workers, and credit issues, particularly concerns surrounding unregulated short-term lending models such as Buy Now Pay Later and wage advance products.

Funeral Insurance – Collapse of Youpla/ACBF

In March 2022, the collapse of funeral insurer Youpla Group (formerly known as Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund [ACBF]) saw more than 10,000 First Nations policyholders lose their benefits. In response, RLC joined 140 organisations to call on government to compensate victims through a remediation scheme to enable Aboriginal families the opportunity to provide a dignified burial for their loved ones.

Over the many decades that Youpla was permitted to operate, the company was well known for its aggressive sales tactics targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and low value insurance products. Customers were also misled into believing the company was Aboriginal owned and operated, and directly of benefit to their communities.

Working closely with RLC's First Nations Justice Unit, the credit and debt practice advised the local Aboriginal community of the changing circumstances by attending community events, publishing and distributing a factsheet on the legal issues and offering legal advice and assistance.

Fines

The practice continues to advocate on behalf of people on low incomes affected by large COVID-19 fines and quarantine fee debts. Together with Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW) and NSW Legal Assistance Forum (NLAF), we have also been working on law reform to improve the effectiveness and reach of the NSW Government's 50% fine reduction scheme to assist those most affected by fines.

In collaboration with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Ltd, Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) and other organisations, RLC called on the NSW Government to provide meaningful relief from COVID-19 fines debt, while providing additional support to challenge COVID-19 fines incorrectly issued to vulnerable people, including children, pensioners and people experiencing homelessness.

Streamlined Electronic Fines Write-off Program

Following its initial inception as a pilot at RLC, the subsequent expansion of the streamlined electronic fines write-off program by Revenue NSW to all community legal centres in NSW has resulted in an exponential increase in the amount of fines debt written-off for people experiencing heightened vulnerability, including young people and people in remote and regional Aboriginal communities.

Education and Training

Throughout the year, the practice also continued to provide training and support to other CLCs to assist them with implementation of the streamlined electronic fines write-off program, after jointly presenting to the community and Aboriginal legal services sector.

In response to requests from the local community, the credit and debt practice worked with other practices at RLC to develop resources and design a community legal education (CLE) program focusing on elder abuse and tenancy issues impacting elderly migrants from the Chinese community.

The practice also reviewed and updated a suite of factsheets on various areas of credit, debt and consumer law, including court and tribunal processes for debt recovery and internal and external dispute resolution.

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

RLC provides legal assistance to people with tenancy and housing problems under the banner of the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS). Our service ranges from legal advice, advocacy and representation in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Supreme Court of NSW and before 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

ISTAAS has been engaged with the proposed redevelopment of public housing in Waterloo since it was announced in 2015. The process so far has been long, stressful and frustrating for residents and for the organisations that support the Waterloo community.

A major milestone was finally reached in April 2022 when the Waterloo South planning proposal went to public exhibition. We are keenly aware of the issues faced by tenants facing relocation and redevelopment through our work providing City of Sydney funded tenants' advice services for tenants of the Millers Point and Waterloo communities. RLC made a formal submission to the exhibition advocating for an increased allocation of social, affordable and Aboriginal housing, and highlighting the need to cater to the current and future housing and support needs of the Waterloo community.

Advice and casework

The most common way tenants reach ISTAAS is through its phone advice service. We received a huge volume of enquiries this year, conducting almost 1900 individual advices. As in previous years, ISTAAS has worked hard to focus our limited resources where the need is the greatest. Around 80% of clients we provided with additional services, such as representation, advocacy or document preparation, were tenants living in social housing, or marginal renters.

Homelessness prevention

A primary focus of ISTAAS is the prevention of homelessness through legal advice, advocacy and representation for tenants facing eviction. During the 2021–22 financial year, ISTAAS provided over 500 tenants with advice relating to the termination of their tenancies. The majority of clients for whom ISTAAS performed complex casework were social housing

"The people I spoke to were [knowledgeable] and empowered me with the information that I needed to go to Tribunal and settle the dispute."

"They made me understand the landlord was trying to do unfair enrichment."

"The advice received gave me confidence and additional information to pursue the case and not to be bullied by the landlord/agent."

tenants, and the most common issue we assisted our clients with was termination and eviction from their home.

Rain and flooding

2022 saw record rainfall and flooding impacting many areas of NSW. This led to a spike in enquiries from tenants seeking advice about roof repairs, flooding and mould.

Another service in our statewide network, the Northern Rivers Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service based in Lismore, had their offices inundated with flood waters. Coordinated by the Tenants Union of NSW, all of the services in the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program banded together to provide tenants in the Northern Rivers area with urgent assistance through the provision of advice and information.

This was a great reminder of how lucky we are to be part of a strong and united network of tenancy advice services, and the great service that this network consistently provides to renters in NSW.

Education and training

The tenancy team continued to provide legal information to the local community through RLC's webinar program. We presented webinars about repairs, social housing law and policy, and money matters in social housing. We also worked alongside the RLC credit and debt practice and officers from the City of Sydney to develop housing information resources for the local Chinese-speaking community.

Mushrooms in the carpet: Amy's story

Amy* is a single mother with two children living in social housing. Amy sought assistance from RLC in relation to serious repairs issues in her property, including water leaks and extensive mould throughout her home. The mould was so bad that mushrooms had been spotted growing in her carpet after a period of heavy rain. Amy had reported these urgent repair issues to her housing provider on numerous occasions, but after six months, nothing had been done. With the assistance of RLC, Amy lodged an application in the Tribunal to get the repairs addressed, along with rent reduction and compensation. After initial resistance, the matter eventually settled with an agreement to do repairs within six weeks of the date of the agreement, a 70% rent reduction for the period the repairs were outstanding and compensation totalling \$5,000.

There are many other people like Amy who risk falling through the cracks unless systemic failures are addressed to help ensure landlords undertake necessary repairs.

*Name has been changed

RLC in the media

Renters' rights in mouldy homes: can you get a rent reduction or compensation for damages?

Katie Cunningham reports for *The Guardian*, 1 August 2022

Theoretically, tenants in all three of Australia's La Niña-hit east coast states could be eligible for discounts and damage payments, but seeking them is complex. Whatever part of the country you're in, as with most rental disputes, your best bet is to create a paper trail.

Ned Cooke, a solicitor from the Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service at Sydney's Redfern Legal Centre, agrees. "The key to all of these things is your landlord being on notice or aware of the issue." If your landlord or agent fails to act, you can escalate to your state's civil and administrative tribunal with as much evidence as you can muster.

If the mould is down to recent weather, it is unlikely to be deemed the landlord's fault. Even when mould is a longstanding issue, determining its cause could still be tricky. "A very typical situation would be a tenant complaining about mould and their landlord saying, 'Well, it's a ventilation issue – you guys aren't using the bathroom fan, you're not opening the windows'," says Cooke. "If it really turns into a fight, then it might be a matter of getting ... Fair Trading to send an inspector out to the property."

Full article available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/aug/01/mould-rental-renters-rights-home-property-can-you-get-rent-reduction-compensation-who-is-responsible>

OUR IMPACT



A better standard of living

Tenants are less stressed



Improved housing policy

Prevention of homelessness





RLC's International Student Solicitor with volunteers at Australian Sports Program, April 2022.

Community engagement and education

Despite COVID-19 once again limiting opportunities for face-to-face community education over the past 12 months, RLC's advocacy training program continued to engage with a broad range of community workers, advocates and lawyers online.

We presented the following webinars throughout the year to a total audience of over 1,500 people:

- Police street powers
- Repairs in public housing and private rentals
- Introduction to Social Housing Law and Policy
- Money Matters in Social Housing
- Resolving financial abuse issues: Family Law and Credit and Debt
- Resolving financial abuse issues: Telecommunications
- Resolving financial abuse issues: financial control after separation
- Resolving financial abuse issues: car loans.

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

- Very informative. Professionally delivered and managed.
- Thank you, the webinars are always fantastic and sooooo useful.
- Webinar was informative and relevant. Information was presented in manner that was easy for all to understand without legal jargon. Appreciate the Links and references being provided for further follow up. Thank you. Will definitely register for further webinars.
- Thanks for these bite size training sessions.
- Grateful for the recording for the ability to go back over the session to consolidate understanding and knowledge.
- Time keeping done well; moves at perfect pace; no wasting of time; covers many situations/scenarios that have come across as Financial Counsellor/FV worker. Always finish sessions with new learning or understanding.
- Very useful information provided. Good presentation format and availability of resources for later use i.e. recordings and the presentation slides available on your website. Thank you.
- Great information and background. I found it very clear to understand with relevant examples.

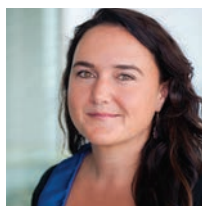
Our Board of Directors

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 lawyer. Kerry is a senior associate in the Employment Relations and Safety team at McCullough Robertson in Sydney. Kerry is a specialist in employment law, discrimination law and work health and safety across disputes, investigations and advisory work. 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 Big Village, a global research, consulting and advertising group. He has 25 years of experience providing consulting services to evaluate and improve government services and communication campaigns. Craig is currently on the board of Super Consumers Australia and is on the Advisory Board of the ACT Gambling & Racing Commission. He also served on the board of ADIA (The Australian Data and Insights Association), Australia's industry association for data and research companies for nine years, and was ADIA Chair between 2017 and 2019.



Linda Tucker

Linda Tucker is an almost retired solicitor, based on the far south coast of NSW where she works part-time as a locum solicitor for Shoalcoast CLC and 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 the CEO and co-founder of FoodByUs, a venture capital-backed online marketplace facilitating wholesale food supply into restaurants. 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. He holds a Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Laws (Hons) from UNSW.



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.



Naysla Edwards

Naysla Edwards is Vice President of Brand, Marketing & Member Experience at American Express, one of the world's most iconic brands. For over 20 years, Naysla has created meaningful connections that unite brands with their customers to create long-term advocacy. Her work has spanned across travel, lifestyle, leisure, luxury and financial services industries across Australia, Singapore, France, UK and South America. Naysla is passionate about fostering innovation and building loyalty through customer insights and data, developing strategic partnerships and continuously challenging the status quo. Naysla is a passionate advocate of Diversity and Inclusion, she is the Co-Executive sponsor of Amex Pride ANZ, leads all efforts towards elevating marketing practices to remove stereotypes and showcase a realistic Australia and is an active member of the Real Mates Program and Women Interest Network at American Express.

Our Staff 2021–2022

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
Elle Triantafillou	Tenancy Advisor
Leanne O'Reilly	Tenancy Advisor
Julia Murray	Tenancy Advisor
Sousan Ghecham	Tenancy Advisor

General Legal Team

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
Manny Zhang	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Tara Ellevson	Legal Admin Assistant
Sahana Sateesha	Legal Admin Assistant
Amy Zhao	Legal Admin Assistant
Chia-jung (Shannon) Lin	International Student Legal Service NSW Solicitor
Elle Triantafillou	Police Powers and Admin Law
Ellen O'Brien	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Leanne O'Reilly	International Student Legal Service: Tenancy
Rashini Fernando	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor

Financial Abuse Team

Laura Bianchi	Financial Abuse Team Leader
Destiny Valencia	Legal Support Officer
Gayatri Nair	Policy & Capacity Building Officer
Jasmine Opdam	Solicitor/Acting Team Leader
Maria Monastiriotis	Solicitor
Will Dwyer	Solicitor
Amelia Klein	Solicitor
Rebecca Campbell	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 and IT Support Officer
Joseph Murphy	Client Intake Supervisor
Shirley Yau	Marketing and Engagement Project Officer
Alexandra Roach	Project Officer, My Legal Mate
Katherine McKernan	Chief Executive Officer

First Nations Justice Solicitor

Gail Brennan	Solicitor
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First Nations Cadet

Sally Knox

Casual Staff

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

Maralyn Schofield	Tenants' Advocate
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General Team

Umeya Chaudhuri	Employment Legal Support
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Financial Abuse Team

Jennifer Hilliar	Legal Support Officer
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Administration, Support and Management

Amy Warren	Supervisor, Day Information Service
Sally Knox	Supervisor, Day Information Service
Katie Price	Communications Assistant

Consultants

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

Awards and recognition

Responsible lending campaign

RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW coordinates the Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). On 16 June, EARG was acknowledged at the Australian Competition and Consumer Tribunal (ACCC) National Consumer Congress, alongside other organisations who successfully campaigned against the proposed federal government rollback of responsible lending protections in 2020–21.

The National Consumer Congress is an annual event hosted by the ACCC that brings together consumer groups, community organisations and government to develop strategies to improve consumer justice and welfare.

RLC and the other members of the responsible lending campaign received the Consumers' Federation of Australia award for outstanding work. RLC's Gayatri Nair spoke at the ceremony alongside Roberta Grealish from Consumer Credit Legal Service Western Australia and Tom Abourizk from Consumer Action Law Centre (also EARG members). Responsible lending laws play a

key role in protecting victim-survivors of financial abuse and other vulnerable consumers from unscrupulous lending practices. RLC uses these laws as a tool to help ensure successful outcomes for many of our clients. As a result of the campaign, the government's proposed Bill did not pass, with key members of the crossbench making public statements in support of upholding these important consumer protections.

Counterpoint Volunteer Awards

After a two-year hiatus, the annual Counterpoint volunteer awards returned this year, paying tribute to all the fantastic grassroots volunteer activity supporting our local Redfern/Waterloo community. This year's awards were held at Hoyts, Fox Studios. Top honours went to Viral Kindness, a small but mighty org that formed under the steam of just two people and a team of 50 volunteers, and distributed 35,000 care packages to people in need during COVID-19.

RLC also received an award in recognition of the incredible work done by our Young Professionals Committee and our 250+ volunteer team. The award was accepted by one of our recently onboarded intake volunteers, Andrea, and RLC's volunteer manager, Finn.



Pictured L–R: Roberta Grealish from Consumer Credit Legal Service Western Australia, Gayatri Nair from RLC/EARG, Tom Abourizk from Consumer Action Law Centre, and Patrick Veyret from CHOICE. Photographer: Riley Hogan from Consumer Federations Australia.

Directors' Report

Redfern Legal Centre
ABN: 31 001 442 039

The Directors present their report together with the financial report of Redfern Legal Centre for the year ended 30 June 2022 and auditor's report thereon.

Directors names

The names of the Directors in office at any time during or since the end of the year are:

Kerry O'Brien, Chairperson

Tamara Sims

Alexandra Finley

Gregory Masters

Craig Young

Linda Tucker

Ben Lipschitz

Naysla Edwards Appointed 13 April 2022

The Directors have been in office since the start of the year to the date of this report unless otherwise stated.

Principal activities

The principal activity of the company during the year was to promote community education in matters relating to law and the legal system and to provide legal advice to persons otherwise unable to afford legal services. No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the year.

Results

The surplus of the company for the year amounted to \$146,072.

Review of operations

The company continued to engage in its principal activity, the results of which are disclosed in the attached financial statements.

Company objectives

Redfern Legal Centre has four major strategic goals and related performance targets. To assist in achieving our strategic goals and performance targets, we have also identified a small number of key supporting strategies.

Directors' Report

Redfern Legal Centre
ABN: 31 001 442 039

Company performance

The company has established performance targets for each strategic goal. These targets focus the efforts of the Board, management and staff and help us measure success in achieving the strategic goals stated below.

Strategic goals

Strategic goals	Supporting strategies
Equal access to justice, by ensuring people experiencing disadvantage have increased capacity to understand and address their legal issues	Provision of legal services to our clients including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Legal Advice, information and referrals> Legal representation and casework> Holistic support, working closely with non-legal providers where required
A just and fair legal system, by addressing systemic injustices	Leading reform and advocacy in the system including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Building partnerships and coalitions> Media and campaign work> Submissions> Strategic litigation and test cases
Improved wellbeing for individuals and communities, by promoting empowered and resilient communities	Engaging and building capacity in the community through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Volunteer and professional training program> Community legal education> Partnerships and community outreach> Legal publications and information> Media engagement

Directors' Report

Redfern Legal Centre
ABN: 31 001 442 039

Information on directors and company secretary

Kerry O'Brien	Solicitor
Qualifications	BA, JD, GDLP, LLM
Experience	Senior Associate, McCullough Robertson Senior Associate, Colin Biggers & Paisley, Lawyer, Fair Work Ombudsman
Special responsibilities	Chair
Tamara Sims	Solicitor
Qualifications	BA LLB
Experience	Head of Pro Bono & Responsible Business, Colin Biggers & Paisley.
Alexandra Finley	Lawyer and Senior Executive
Qualifications	MLM, Dip Law, Exec MBA
Experience	Executive Director - Commercial, Energy Corporation of NSW (DPIE)
Gregory Masters	Management Consultant
Qualifications	B SC (Psych) Hons, UNSW, Masters of Management, UTS
Experience	Director of Nexus Management Consulting Pty Ltd and part-time lecturer at the Queensland University of Technology
Craig Young	Marketing Services Consultant
Qualifications	B. Econ (UQ), Grad Dip. Asian Studies (ANU), M. Indigenous Studies (UNSW)
Experience	Australian Managing Director of Big Village and serves on the board of Australian Data and Insights Association.
Linda Tucker	Solicitor
Qualifications	BA/ LLB (UNSW) PhD (UoW)
Experience	Senior Lawyer, Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre
Ben Lipschitz	Managing Director
Qualifications	BA, LLB (Hons) UNSW (2008)
Experience	FoodByUs, Managing Director & co-founder (2016 – Present)
Naysla Edwards	Vice Present, Marketing & Member Experience, American Express
Qualifications	Bachelor Business Management
Experience	Business Development, Partnerships & Marketing E2E

Directors' Report

Redfern Legal Centre
ABN: 31 001 442 039

Meetings of directors

Directors	Directors' meetings	
	Number eligible to attend	Number attended
Kerry O'Brien	6	6
Tamara Sims	6	6
Alexandra Finley	6	3
Gregory Masters	6	6
Craig Young	6	5
Linda Tucker	6	4
Ben Lipschitz	6	6
Naysla Edwards	3	3

Members guarantee

The company is incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* and is a company limited by guarantee. If the company is wound up, the Constitution states that each member is required to contribute to a maximum of \$20 each towards meeting any outstandings and obligations of the company. At 30 June 2022 the number of members was 21. The combined total amount that members of the company are liable to contribute if the company is wound up is \$420.

Auditor's independence declaration

A copy of the auditor's independence declaration under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit for the financial year is provided with this report.

Signed on behalf of the board of directors.



Director: _____

Kerry O'Brien

Dated this 12th day of October 2022

Directors' Report

Redfern Legal Centre

ABN: 31 001 442 039

Auditor's independence declaration

To the directors of Redfern Legal Centre

In relation to the independent audit for the year ended 30 June 2022, to the best of my knowledge and belief there have been no contraventions of APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (including Independence Standards).

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*; and
- (ii) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct.



Mark Godlewski
Partner

Pitcher Partners

12 October 2022

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022	2021
		\$	\$
Revenue	3,4	3,901,232	3,877,768
Less: expenses			
Depreciation and amortisation expense	5	(204,998)	(208,846)
Employee benefits expense	5	(3,209,060)	(2,857,159)
Occupancy expense		(29,942)	(180,558)
Consultancy – program related		(7,747)	(59,435)
Advertising expense – program related		(9,315)	(6,646)
Finance costs	5	(8,676)	(17,650)
Consultancy – program related		(10,235)	(24,544)
IT support		(28,800)	(40,192)
Telephone		(32,645)	(32,119)
Travel and accommodation		(1,313)	(1,376)
Printing and stationery		(2,584)	(5,829)
Fundraising and venue costs		(1,593)	(2,194)
Website		-	(27,734)
Other expenses		(208,252)	(143,587)
		<u>(3,755,160)</u>	<u>(3,607,869)</u>
Surplus from operations		146,072	269,899
Other comprehensive income for the year		—	—
Total comprehensive income		<u>146,072</u>	<u>269,899</u>

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	8	2,011,103	1,306,671
Receivables	9	36,809	94,908
Other financial assets	10	1,000,000	1,200,000
Other assets	13	31,057	38,616
Total current assets		<u>3,078,969</u>	<u>2,640,195</u>
Non-current assets			
Lease assets	12	46,680	233,399
Property, plant and equipment	11	22,604	27,886
Total non-current assets		<u>69,284</u>	<u>261,285</u>
Total assets		<u>3,148,253</u>	<u>2,901,480</u>
Current liabilities			
Payables	14	1,241,307	1,009,154
Lease liabilities	12	52,317	182,052
Provisions	15	462,315	371,882
Total current liabilities		<u>1,755,939</u>	<u>1,563,088</u>
Non-current liabilities			
Lease liabilities	12	—	94,407
Provisions	15	122,671	120,414
Total non-current liabilities		<u>122,671</u>	<u>214,821</u>
Total liabilities		<u>1,878,610</u>	<u>1,777,909</u>
Net assets		<u>1,269,643</u>	<u>1,123,571</u>
Equity			
Reserves	17	262,500	190,000
Retained surplus	16	1,007,143	933,571
Total equity		<u>1,269,643</u>	<u>1,123,571</u>

Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 30 June 2022

	Reserves	Retained surplus
	\$	\$
Balance as at 1 July 2020	—	663,672
Restated balance as at 1 July 2020	—	663,672
Balance as at 1 July 2020	—	663,672
Surplus for the year	—	269,899
Total comprehensive income for the year	—	269,899
Transactions with owners in their capacity as owners:		
Transfer to IT reserve	190,000	—
Balance as at 30 June 2021	190,000	933,571
Balance as at 1 July 2021	190,000	933,571
Surplus for the year	—	146,072
Total comprehensive income for the year	—	146,072
Transfers from retained surplus	—	(72,500)
Transfer to Special reserve	72,500	—
Balance as at 30 June 2022	262,500	1,007,143

Statement of cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022	2021
		\$	\$
Cash flow from operating activities			
Receipts from funding agreements, customers and donations		4,633,397	4,081,268
Payments to suppliers and employees		(3,896,219)	(3,530,490)
Interest received		4,393	12,468
Net cash provided by operating activities		<u>741,571</u>	<u>563,246</u>
Cash flow from investing activities			
Payment for of property, plant and equipment		(12,997)	—
Payment for (proceeds from) investments		200,000	(200,000)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		<u>187,003</u>	<u>(200,000)</u>
Cash flow from financing activities			
Principal portion of lease payments		(224,142)	(167,298)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		<u>(224,142)</u>	<u>(167,298)</u>
Reconciliation of cash			
Cash at beginning of the financial year		1,306,671	1,110,723
Net increase in cash held		704,432	195,948
Cash at end of financial year		<u>2,011,103</u>	<u>1,306,671</u>

Directors' Declaration

Redfern Legal Centre

ABN: 31 001 442 039

The directors declare that:

1. there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable; and
2. the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.
3. Pursuant to Schedule 1, Section 7(3) of the *Charitable Fundraising Regulations 2008*;
 - (a) the Statement of Profit or 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 2022 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 2022 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 2022; 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.

Signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2013*.



Director: _____

Kerry O'Brien

Dated this 12th day of October 2022

Independent Auditor's Report to the members of Redfern Legal Centre

Redfern Legal Centre
ABN: 31 001 442 039

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 2022, 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 2022 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures 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 2022 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.

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.

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 2022;
- (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.



Mark Godlewski
Partner



Pitcher Partners
Sydney

14 October 2022



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