

# REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



STUDENT  
ACCOMMODATION

REDFERN  
LEGAL  
CENTRE

WELCOME TO  
  
THE BLOCK

**We acknowledge that Redfern Legal Centre is located on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to all the First Nations people, organisations and communities that we work in solidarity with. Always was, always will be.**



The illustrations in this report are by Oumoula Mckenzie

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# Message from the Chair

**Redfern Legal Centre continues to move from strength to strength, through the dedication and expertise of our staff.**

As this report shows, a huge volume of work has flowed through our doors across a wide range of areas and legal issues. Each practice area has risen to that challenge and delivered for clients with big and small matters and both common and uncommon issues. There are some conspicuous wins and cases, both in social impact, dollar figures and the wellbeing of clients, but the numbers also tell us that RLC remains a true support for the people we exist to help. All staff members, our many volunteers and our wonderful collaborators should feel very proud of what has been done and, on behalf of the Board, thank you for your care and skill.

This is the fourth annual report that I've been lucky enough to have my name up front to introduce our achievements as Chair, and the sixth since I joined the Board from the ranks of vullie solicitor. I intend to resign from the position soon so my membership of the Board frees up for another energetic director to take up the gig, following a season of change at the Board level in line with our constitution and the departure of some fantastic Board colleagues.

I have shared in many conversations and when speaking at events how, as a fresh faced solicitor living on Wells Street in Redfern literally next to Redfern Town Hall, I thought I could add some value to the Tuesday night employment service with the best of the best, Linda Tucker, who would later be my peer on the Board.

**Kerry O'Brien**  
Chair

I love telling that story – even if everyone has heard it by now – because I get to show how far I've come as an Aboriginal lawyer who wanted to give back, and as an example of how RLC will soak up as much of your free time as you give it!

I am so grateful to people like Linda, and to Jo, Amy, Tam, Jacqui, Hilary, Finn, Sharmilla, Regina and Alexis for being front and centre for me since 2018 and being wonderful support, in addition to so many staff and fellow directors who have made the work rewarding. I am particularly proud of our staff representatives who worked with the Board in the last year to rebuild our enterprise agreement, the expansion of the Financial Abuse Service, the increase in First Nations staff and of the expert advocacy of our teams whether its about tenancy, COVID fines or migrant worker justice, because these changes go beyond our clients and have far reaching impacts.

I am also proud of the work of our CEO, Camilla Pandolfini and want to thank you for her leadership, her drive and her achievements in her time with us.

RLC has been around for almost 50 years, and I am so grateful to have been part of its history as Chair and a director. Once I hand the reigns over to a new Chair, I hope to return to the vullie roster if the team will have me back and to continue to contribute to the amazing work this organisation delivers each day.



# Message from the CEO

**This year, Redfern Legal Centre has worked in partnership with people, communities and organisations to drive incredible positive change for equality and justice.**

We strengthened our connection to the local community through new outreaches, including to Oznam House, Waterloo Neighbourhood Centre and Kinchella Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation. We assisted thousands of people experiencing disadvantage, in our local community and statewide to seek justice. We worked in coalition with the community and the sector to highlight inequality and drive change in practices, policies and laws.

Sharmilla Bargon the inaugural Social Justice Practitioner at the University of Sydney, along with Redfern Legal Centre alumni Regina Featherstone launched their report, 'Let's Talk About Confidentiality: NDA Use in Sexual Harassment Settlements Since the Respect@Work Report'. In March 2024. The report has received widespread media attention and engagement from the sector – leading to concrete, positive change in the use of NDAs in sexual harassment matters Australia wide.

Together with the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Justice and Equity Centre, we launched a report on Children and Fines in New South Wales. The report evaluates the COVID fines issued to children in NSW and makes positive recommendations for reform of the fines system generally in New South Wales. The report highlighted significant issues in the use of COVID fines against children and will be a catalyst for systemic change for the use of fines against children in NSW.

We were part of a national coalition invited by the Department of Home Affairs to co-design world first visa reforms to ensure migrant workers can address workplace exploitation and seek justice. The two-year pilot of the reforms launched in July 2024 and includes a new short-term workplace justice visa with work rights to enable a migrant worker to stay in Australia to enforce their labour rights; and protections from visa cancellation for exploited migrant workers who have breached their visa and want to take action against their employer.

We are incredibly pleased that RLC's Financial Abuse Service, launched in 2019 with philanthropic and corporate seed funding, has now received sustainable, ongoing funding from the New South Wales Government. We are so grateful to the corporate and philanthropic funders, as well as the pro bono firms, who supported the service and allowed it to demonstrate its urgent need and impact. The Financial Abuse Service is now a statewide, multidisciplinary service that includes social workers, financial counsellors and multiple legal specialisations and ensures victim survivors of financial abuse can recover and thrive. The recognition of the need for the service to continue and expand is a testament to the fantastic work that the Financial Abuse Service staff do with individual victim survivors of financial abuse but also through coordination of the national Economic Abuse Reference Group to drive the systemic change needed to address and prevent financial abuse.

Redfern Legal Staff were honoured with several awards, recognising our commitment to the community legal sector and the community. Sharmilla Bargon, Senior Solicitor, Employment Law Practice, was recognised as the 2023 Community Lawyer of the Year at the Women Lawyers Achievement Awards. Our Tenancy advice and advocacy service won the 'Golden Warren' award, the most coveted award at the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program conference, for their efforts contributing to policy and law reform over the last year. Leanne O'Reilly, tenancy lawyer, won a TAAPstar award for 'best performance in a conciliation, negotiation or behind the scenes machination'.



I am very grateful to all the staff at Redfern Legal Centre who work so hard with such incredible skill to achieve justice for our local community and statewide. I am also very grateful to Redfern Legal Centre's Board of Directors – including Linda Tucker and Craig Young who stepped down this year, and our new Directors who joined more recently. Linda Tucker has had an incredibly long association with Redfern Legal Centre, including as a lawyer, volunteer and then Board Director and we will miss her longstanding experience and wisdom.

Thank you to all the students and lawyers who have volunteered with such enthusiasm and commitment, to our partners and stakeholders, and to all our funders and supporters, who have amplified our reach and capacity.

**Camilla Pandolfini**  
CEO

# Our impact

## 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



RLC staff at NAIDOC Week Celebrations.

# Our Theory of Change

➤ At Redfern Legal Centre, we believe that:



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, and



Marginalised communities lack a voice

➤ We work with:

- ✓ People experiencing vulnerability
- ✓ People with disability
- ✓ People experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- ✓ People experiencing financial disadvantage
- ✓ First Nations people
- ✓ People experiencing family and domestic violence
- ✓ People who are culturally and linguistically diverse
- ✓ International students
- ✓ Communities, volunteers, other stakeholders/participants

➤ We respond by:

- ✓ Providing free legal services including legal advice, information and referrals, case work and representation and referrals to provide holistic solutions working closely with non-legal providers when required
- ✓ Engaging in policy and law reform work via media, campaigns, advocacy to and consulting with government and strategic litigation to change the system
- ✓ Building capacity in the community via volunteer and professional training programs, community legal education, partnerships and community outreach and legal publications and information
- ✓ 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

➤ Impact:



Equal access to justice



A just and fair legal system



Improved wellbeing for individuals and communities

# Our impact

## Activities

**8539**

total legal services provided

**2700**

clients

**3761**

legal advices

**1710**

legal tasks

**872**

legal information

**1858**

referrals

**338**

representation matters

**76**

community legal education resources

**640**

community legal education activities

**300**

law reform activities

**158**

stakeholder engagement activities

**214**

media mentions

## Outcome 1: People experiencing disadvantage have increased access to justice

### Client Satisfaction:

**86%** of our clients report they would recommend RLC to other people

**85%** of stakeholders surveyed agreed we were effective or very effective at providing access to justice for people experiencing disadvantage

**86%** of clients from non-English speaking backgrounds or living with disability agreed or strongly agreed that RLC provided a culturally appropriate or responsive service

### Representation and casework:

Our representation and casework matters increase access to justice. Of those clients we assisted with representation and casework:

**35%** were experiencing family violence

**97%** were experiencing financial hardship

**32%** identified as First Nations

**10%** spoke English as a second language

**44%** were people with a disability or a mental health condition

## Representations and Casework Outcomes

**Redfern Legal Centre empowers and assists the community in a number of ways – through legal information, community legal education, advice and legal tasks. In many cases, our advice ensures a positive outcome for our clients without the need for representation and casework.**

These outcomes relate to our casework and representation matters only – and represent just a fraction of the free legal assistance we provide and outcomes we achieve each year.

In **child protection**, we assisted with early intervention in our Health Justice Partnership. RLC HJP lawyers prevented two children from removal from their families and improved family contact for five children and their families.

**RLC Health Justice Partnership** lawyers assisted 14 clients to have their charges, related to their mental health conditions, dismissed pursuant to section 14, and improved the outcome for nine clients experiencing disadvantage and mental health crises.

**RLC Health Justice Partnership** lawyers successfully secured nearly \$10,000 in victims compensation for a client who was a victim of domestic violence, significantly improving their financial situation.

**RLC police and government accountability lawyers** obtained information through freedom of information laws for 17 clients to increase transparency and accountability. We provided advice and identified matters appropriate for civil claims for 10 clients who experienced police wrongdoing. Out of all police complaints made, we had three complaints substantiated, two complaints substantiated with a police officer disciplined and counselled, three referred to the Professional Standards Command, and two result in LECC investigations.

**RLC's Employment law practice**, which includes our Respect @Work Practice and collaborative Employment Rights Legal Service with Inner City Legal Centre and Kingsford Legal Centre, successfully recovered compensation of \$75,000 in six matters relating to unfair dismissal or adverse action and recovered unpaid wages and entitlements for 25 clients to a value of \$310,000.

**RLC Inner Sydney Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service** prevented four evictions for clients in social housing, achieved repairs for seven families in social housing, and five orders for compensation totalling \$31,585 for social housing tenants related to the habitability of their homes.

12 clients had 26 debts waived or written off to a total of \$534,582 and 16 clients had 14 fines waived or written off to a total of \$15,263.

## Outcome 2: People have increased capacity to address and understand their legal issues

We supported self-represented clients in the completion of **1710** legal tasks such as writing a letter or filing an application with a court or tribunal.

We built legal capacity in the community by publishing community legal education resources and conducting

**64** community legal education sessions, both in the community and online.

**72%** of our stakeholders agreed we were effective or very effective at services working together to meet clients' needs holistically.



Gail Brennan and Lauren Gillin at Yabun Festival.

## Outcome 3: Services work together so that people have their needs met holistically

Redfern Legal Centre values our relationships with local and statewide organisations to ensure holistic support and build capacity in the community sector to assist our clients.

We conduct outreach services and work collaboratively with services at:

- Royal Prince Alfred Hospital including to the Professor Marie Bashir Centre
- Sydney Dental Hospital
- Common Ground
- Redlink
- Mudgin-Gal
- Kinchella Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation
- Oznam House
- Waterloo Neighbourhood Centre.

During the delivery of advice and casework, we provided **1858** referrals to additional services, ensuring holistic wraparound support to address clients' complex and overlapping legal and non-legal needs.

We conducted **158** stakeholder engagement activities, working collaboratively with community services, government and industry to raise awareness, expand our impact and increase our reach.

### RLC in the media

#### More young people behind bars

▶ [Camilla Pandolfini quoted in SBS online](#)

Redfern Legal Centre CEO Camilla Pandolfini told NITV the new laws will not make community safer, despite that being the key driver of the change.

“They will only have a damaging affect on young children we are trying to divert from the criminal justice system,” Ms Pandolfini said.

“Evidence shows that place based positive solutions are what divert children from the criminal justice system.”

With the laws yet to be passed in parliament, Ms Pandolfini hopes the NSW government will pull the pug before they are enacted.

“We are calling desperately on the NSW government not to pursue these laws,” she said.

## Outcome 4: Systemic injustices are addressed

RLC forges collaborations and partnerships that assist us to make positive changes in laws and the legal system. We work to address systemic issues by engaging with government, industry and community organisations.

In 2023 – 2024 we conducted **300** law reform activities which included reports, submissions to state and federal government, participation in consultations and working collaboratively with our stakeholders.

## Outcome 5: Empowered and resilient communities

Our work aims to improve the wellbeing of our clients and the communities we work with.

In a survey conducted of our clients:

**81%** agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to contact RLC when they first needed help

**90%** agreed or strongly agreed that RLC listened to their legal problem

**86%** agreed or strongly agreed that RLC helped them to understand how to deal with their legal problem

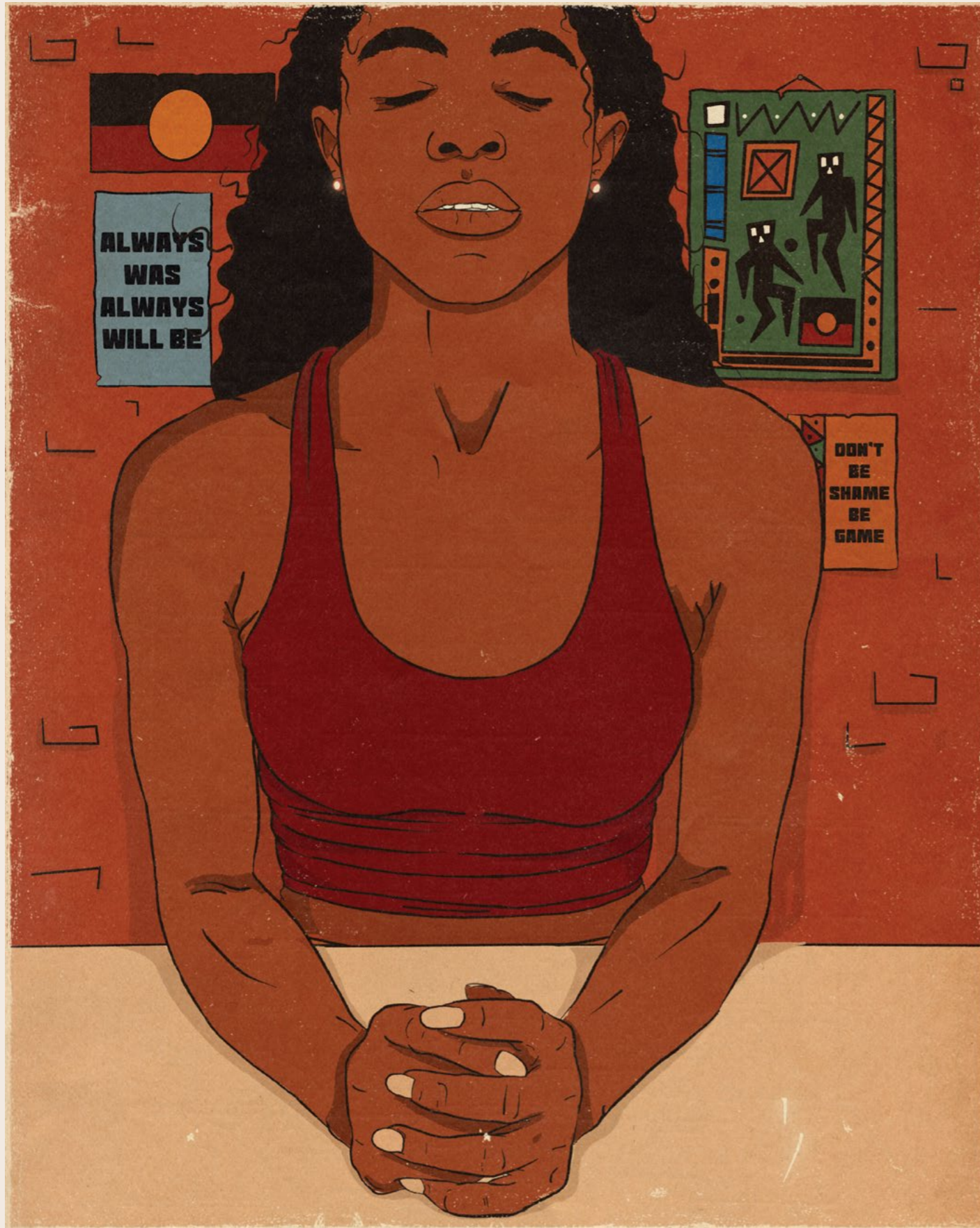
**86%** agreed or strongly agreed that they know where to get help with a legal problem in the future

“**Thank you so much for existing – your advice was invaluable for my legal and mental well-being.**”

“**It’s great to have you guys! Thank you! We need more Legal centres as yours here in Australia. For most of us, it’s our family, our life that is at stake and being told the right advice at the right time does make a difference.**”

“**I am eternally grateful to the team at Redfern Legal Centre for assisting me legally (thus saving my life!) and, even more so, for your genuine understanding, empathy, compassion & kindness. You are honestly the only team I have come across, in over 4 years of searching, that seems to understand what ‘support’ actually is. Thank you so much for your amazing & extremely professional legal assistance, for restoring my faith in humanity and, most of all, for allowing me to walk away feeling empowered!**”





# First Nations Justice

The First Nations Legal Officer, Tobias Elliott-Orr, a proud Wiradjuri and Māori man whose family come from Cootamundra, and the First Nations Engagement Worker Ashleigh Bridge, a proud Wiradjuri woman with matriarchal lines across Cowra and Dubbo collaborate in the First Nations Justice Practice to empower First Nations people and communities and facilitate access to justice.

The commitment of the First Nations Justice Practice to improving access to justice for First Nations people is central to our work at Redfern Legal Centre.

RLC provides priority legal services to First Nations people across all practice areas. The First Nations Justice Practice ensures our services are accessible, culturally sensitive and safe, and trauma informed.

The First Nations Justice Practice addresses the ongoing impacts of colonisation by assisting clients to navigate the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme and addressing ongoing oppression and injustice in institutions such as the police, criminal justice system, and child protection services. The service also assists with general legal issues, including credit and debt problems, NSW Trustee and Guardian matters, and victims' compensation.

## Case study

The First Nations Justice Practice successfully supported a client who experienced child sexual assault. Initially, the client was too distressed to proceed with an appointment. Because of our strong connections to local First Nations organisations we were able, with the client's consent, to arrange for an appointment to proceed at Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) with a KBHAC support worker present. The KBHAC worker provided ongoing support through the application process to the National Redress Scheme. The client expressed gratitude for the support and said it helped him feel less alone.

## Case study

We also assisted a very distressed client grieving because of sorry business. She and some of her siblings wanted to arrange a funeral and bury her mother in accordance with her mother's wishes. We assisted the client in understanding her rights in relation to the burial of her mother and provided practical advice, with the assistance of a pro bono partner, which resulted in the client feeling empowered to negotiate a satisfactory resolution, and to proceed to bury her mother as desired.



Ashleigh Bridge, Tobias Elliot-Orr and Camilla Pandolfini meet with Tribal Warrior and Babana Men's Group.

We worked with Weave, a local place service, to design and develop factsheets and a resource on driving rights and responsibilities in New South Wales – designed to educate and empower the people and communities our services work with.

We are excited to join the new Justice Hub at KBHAC, a weekly community services space. This opportunity allows us to provide on-the-spot legal advice and strengthen our connection with the local community. KBHAC has also invited us to run Community Legal Education sessions, open to all local residents and community workers, on topics such as tenancy rights, police powers and scams.

We developed new relationships with local First Nations organisations, Babana Men's Group and Tribal Warrior, and look forward to conducting outreach in partnership with them.

We continued our outreach at Mudgin-Gal Women's Place, an Aboriginal organisation delivering support, referrals and community-based services to Aboriginal women and families.

Within the CLCNSW First Nations Justice Network, we highlighted a systemic issue: significant barriers for non-lawyers with criminal records seeking employment or volunteer roles in legal practices, which require NCAT approval. We have started consultation on a project examining First Nations peoples' access to Working With Children Checks. These processes disproportionately affect First Nations people, who are targeted by police and overrepresented in the criminal justice system.



RLC stall at Redfern Community Centre and the Aboriginal Medical Service NAIDOC week event.



Gail Brennan at the AWAN event held at NCIE.



RLC at the NCIE NAIDOC week event.



# Financial Abuse Service NSW

The Financial Abuse Service NSW offers free legal, financial counselling and social work assistance to individuals who have experienced financial abuse in intimate partner relationships. Our state-wide service is the only one of its kind in Australia. Our unique approach provides holistic support to victim survivors facing complex legal problems in family law, credit, debt and consumer law and immigration. We also advocate for policy and law reform to address and prevent this often-overlooked form of family violence.

## Case study - Simone's Story

Simone, a 30-year-old woman living with her parents in regional NSW, fled Queensland where her former partner is incarcerated for domestic violence offences against her. She is a single parent caring for three children, all under the age of five.

Simone was financially abused by her former partner who fraudulently obtained a payday loan using her identification information without her knowledge or consent.

When Simone first contacted the Financial Abuse Service, she had no income and was struggling to establish a new life for herself and her children in NSW due to residual debts from her former relationship.

Initially, we represented Simone in her case against the payday lender, which agreed to waive the debt. However, the lender did not follow through, having sold the debt to a collector, who subsequently began pursuing Simone.

When Simone returned to the Financial Abuse Service for additional help with the payday loan, we conducted a holistic assessment using our new interdisciplinary model and discovered that she also had two utility debts from her previous home, incurred when she had to flee Queensland for safety reasons.

We provided both legal and financial counselling support to help Simone finalise these debts that occurred because of financial abuse. Our financial counsellor obtained a waiver for each of the electricity accounts and confirmed the accounts had been closed. Our lawyer raised the pay day loan error and negotiated for the lender to apologise for their conduct and stop the debt collection action.

Simone is now receiving income support. She has no outstanding debts from the relationship and she aspires to run her own business in the future.

\*Name changed

“I just wanted to thank you so much. You have put my mind at ease about a lot of things. Before this call, I thought my only option was to go bankrupt, which I really didn’t want to do.”

### RLC in the media

**‘My whole life is in that house’: survivors fleeing domestic violence can lose much more than their home**

▶ **Jasmine Opdam quoted in The Gaurdian**

“It’s another aspect of the legal system that is quite vulnerable to exploitation by perpetrators,” said Jasmine Opdam, a supervising solicitor for Redfern Legal Centre’s financial abuse service.

In Australia, victim-survivors can only take out property recovery orders before an apprehended domestic violence order (ADVO) is finalised.

This leaves victim-survivors a short timeframe to get their property – during a time when they are also dealing with leaving a violent relationship. Once an ADVO is finalised, they have few options.

“If the victim-survivor doesn’t think to mention certain belongings they can miss the boat and it can then be too late to recover property without going through a civil legal process,” Opdam said.

If a perpetrator disputes ownership over belongings listed in the recovery order, victim-survivors face a lengthy and costly legal process. Opdam said the centre often sees this issue with assets, particularly cars.

“Even if the car is worth say \$5,000, and it’s their only mode of transport, the minimum they would have to pay a private family lawyer can be \$8,000,” she said.

### Case study - Kiara’s Story

Kiara’s boyfriend pressured her into taking out two loans from the same bank within three days, totalling \$40,000, and then immediately took the funds for his own use. At the time, Kiara was 19 years old and working in a low-paid traineeship. The Financial Abuse Service filed a responsible lending complaint with the bank, arguing that the loans were unsuitable for her under the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009 (NCCPA).

When the bank did not provide a satisfactory outcome, the matter was escalated to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA). Throughout the AFCA process, the bank repeatedly requested evidence of Kiara’s current financial hardship, despite the complaint being based on alleged breaches of the bank’s responsible lending obligations under the NCCPA, making her current financial position irrelevant.

FAS supplied the requested evidence of Kiara’s financial hardship but also inquired about the outcome of the maladministration investigation the bank had reportedly commenced. Ultimately, the bank offered to waive the outstanding debt based on her current financial hardship, which Kiara accepted as it was the best financial outcome under the circumstances. Despite continued pressure from FAS, the bank never provided the outcome of the maladministration investigation, nor did it take accountability for any breaches of responsible lending obligations. The bank closed the complaint as a financial hardship matter, leaving the maladministration investigation unresolved.

In a recent federal parliamentary inquiry into the financial services regulatory framework and financial abuse, FAS presented this case study to highlight how financial hardship remedies can be used by financial institutions to evade accountability for facilitating financial abuse. The Parliamentary Committee agreed that such resolutions obscure the responsibility of financial institutions to detect indicators of financial abuse and prevent their products from being misused. As a result, the Committee questioned banks about their practices, data collection, and reporting of responsible lending breaches. We will continue to advocate for increased regulation, data sharing, and independent reporting of responsible lending breaches in cases of financial abuse.

\*Name changed

### New holistic interdisciplinary service

We are incredibly grateful that the Financial Abuse Service received a commitment to four years of funding from the NSW Government this year. This funding has allowed us to continue and expand our service, enhance its legal expertise and recruit social work and financial counselling professionals. The expanded Financial Abuse Service provides multidisciplinary collaborative support to victim survivors across New South Wales to support them to recover and thrive.

### Federal Financial Abuse Inquiry

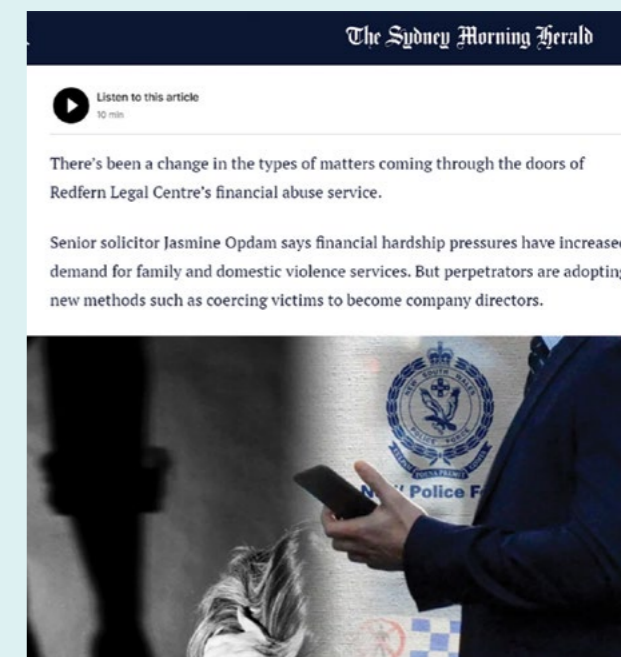
In April, the Federal Government announced a national inquiry into the financial services regulatory framework concerning financial abuse. The inquiry investigated the role of financial institutions and government systems in preventing and responding to financial abuse. RLC submitted a detailed report on the Financial Abuse Service NSW’s holistic model and authored the National Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG) submission, which includes 103 recommendations for improving business practices, laws, policies, and systems within the financial services industry and government.



### RLC in the media

**Sexually transmitted debt: How financial services are fighting financial abuse**

▶ **Jasmine Opdam quoted in The Sydney Morning Herald**





Rebecca Campbell at an International Women's Day forum.

RLC and EARG presented evidence before the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services in Melbourne, advocating for a comprehensive government response to address this complex and insidious form of abuse.

### National Economic Abuse Reference Group

This year, we formally took over the coordination of the National Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG). EARG is an informal group of 59 Australian community organisations that contribute expertise to government and industry responses to the financial impact of domestic and family violence. Members include domestic and family violence services, community legal services and financial counselling services. The Financial Abuse Service are responsible for leading joint advocacy in accordance with the strategic plan as well as coordinating 8-weekly meetings and communications.

### Bankruptcy improvements

In October 2023, RLC made a submission in relation to the Attorney General's Department's discussion paper on personal insolvency, providing expertise on how the proposed amendments will impact people who have experienced financial abuse. In July 2024, the Government introduced positive reforms to the Bankruptcy Act, which are mostly consistent with what we recommended. We also used this consultation to highlight the impact of bankruptcy on removing a victim survivor's standing in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA).



Jamine Opdam and Laura Bianchi at federal parliamentary inquiry into the financial services regulatory framework and financial abuse.

### Introducing financial abuse as a consideration in family law property settlements

In November 2023, FAS drafted the EARG submission to the Family Law Amendment Bill (No 2) 2023 which proposed to introduce family violence, specifically financial and economic abuse, into the property provisions of the Family Law Act 1975. We were supportive of the exposure draft and recommended some additional amendments. We also coordinated a cohesive position across the legal assistance sector for greatest impact. In August 2024, the Federal Government introduced the Family Law Amendment Bill 2024 into Parliament. The Attorney-General's media release states that the Bill will 'ensure the economic impact of family violence is considered' in settlements, and that financial information is disclosed at the earliest opportunity. This is an important step in ensuring better financial outcomes for victim survivors and we are pleased to see many of our recommendations reflected in the final Bill. We expect this Bill will pass in the next financial year. We will then deliver training to the sector and monitor the developing case law.



Laura Bianchi, Rebecca Campbell and members of the Economic Abuse Reference Group meet with the NSW Minister for Women.



Rebecca Campbell and Jasmine Opdam from the Financial Abuse Service delivering training to students at the UNSW Tax Clinic induction day.



# Health Justice Partnership

Our Health Justice Partnership (HJP) collaborates with the Sydney Local Health District, operating at two sites: Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the Sydney Dental Hospital. Through this partnership, we provide legal services to clients experiencing deep and persistent disadvantages within health settings. Our lawyers are co-located at both hospitals two days a week, and we also offer outreach services at Redlink Housing in Redfern and Common Ground in Camperdown. We work closely with health staff, including social workers, nurses, allied health professionals, and doctors, to improve client overall health and wellbeing.

## Case study - Beth's story

Beth\*, a single mother of three, escaped a violent relationship. HJP supported her through representation in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal regarding an ongoing public housing dispute. At the final hearing, Beth was awarded \$5,700 in compensation for loss of amenity, quiet enjoyment, and damage to personal property, after rejecting a pre-hearing settlement offer of \$1,500 based on our advice. We provided trauma-informed legal assistance that significantly improved her and her children's living situation by securing safe and stable housing.

\*Client has been de-identified for privacy

### Case study - John's story

John\*, a resident of Redlink Housing Towers, was charged with theft of a \$40 wallet. John, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease, had no recollection of the incident. Despite his attempts to inform the police of his condition, he was met with little understanding and faced considerable frustration. We represented John in his criminal matter, filing a Section 14 application for diversion on the grounds of mental health to have the theft charge dismissed due to his cognitive condition. We coordinated with John's support service and health workers to gather evidence, which we presented to the court, successfully securing a Section 14 order.

\*Client has been de-identified for privacy



The establishment of a weekly clinic at the Professor Marie Bashir Centre for mental health inpatients has increased criminal referrals to the HJP. We assist clients who might not otherwise receive legal assistance, or require wraparound holistic legal and health services working closely together.

With the recent implementation of domestic violence (DV) screening at the Dental Hospital, issues related to DV and its impact on housing and tenancy have emerged. The HJP lawyer developed and presented a community legal education (CLE) session on these issues to Dental Hospital staff, enhancing their preparedness to identify, assist and warm refer these matters.



Sam Lee, Rashini Fernando, John Mewburn at a legal outreach event.



Sam Lee, Rashini Fernando, Amelia Klein at Deadly Connections End of Year Party at NCIE.



# Police Accountability Practice

The Police Accountability Practice offers free legal advice to people throughout New South Wales. Through our casework, we identify systemic issues that inform our systemic policy, advocacy and strategic litigation.

This year, we have worked towards systemic change in four key areas of police accountability:

Developing an alternative model for first responders' to mental health crises;

Reforming the NSW fines system to ensure fairness for children;

Reforming strip search laws to better protect children and young people; and

Advocating for procedural fairness on COVID-19 fines.

## Case study

We worked with a client whose son was fatally shot by NSW Police, the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS), Justice and Equity Centre and the National Justice Project to organise a public forum on alternatives to the current first responders' model for mental health crises conducted by NSW Police. Speakers at the public forum at NSW Parliament House included a range of experts and the Minister for Mental Health, Rose Jackson. During the forum, the Minister made a public promise to develop an alternative first responder framework by the end of the year. To address this critical issue, we will continue collaborating with our client and other organisations to ensure this commitment is honoured.

## Case study

A client received a \$3,000 COVID-19 fine for leaving Greater Sydney without a permit while being homeless and seeking to travel to South Australia for accommodation. We assisted the client in filing a judicial review with the NSW Supreme Court, arguing that the fine was invalid. After the case was initiated, Revenue NSW withdrew the fine and refunded the amount with interest.

We consulted with the sector, government and the cross bench on new knife laws, which we are concerned will result in greater over representation of the communities already disproportionately targeted by NSW Police and will not increase community safety. We developed fact sheets on the new laws and a video explaining the laws to increase community awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

We continue to advocate for systemic reform and highlight the impacts of strip searches, particularly on young people. We are working with Slater and Gordon on a class action against NSW Police for unlawful strip searches. The case has been scheduled for a hearing in 2025. We released a report highlighting that over a thousand children aged 10-17 were strip-searched by NSW Police between June 2016 and July 2023. The report, authored by RLC solicitors Samantha Lee and Josh Raj and titled "The Need for Reform: Strip Searches of Children by NSW Police," presents data on these searches and underscores the urgent need for reform. The report was featured on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald. We were pleased to meet with the Police Minister to discuss our recommendations for reform across a number of policing practices, including strip searches.

We have continued to work in coalition with other organisations to draw upon our work on COVID fines and advocate for more general reform of the fines system for children. Redfern Legal Centre, the Justice and Equity Centre, and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited (ALS) commissioned a report titled "Children and COVID-19 Fines in NSW: Impacts and Lessons for the Future Use of Penalty Notices."





Josh Raj, Sam Lee and Alexis Goodstone outside the NSW Supreme Court.



A public forum on alternatives to the current first responders' model for mental health crises conducted by NSW Police held at NSW Parliament House.

Prepared by academics from the University of Wollongong, the University of New South Wales, and the University of Technology Sydney, the report reveals that marginalised groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with cognitive impairments, and those facing socio-economic challenges, were disproportionately issued with COVID fines. The report makes positive recommendations for reform of the NSW fines system for children.

We stood with the ALS and the Coalition of Peak Organisations to speak out on the devastating impact that new bail and criminal laws would have on the overrepresentation of First Nations children in prison. While the laws were introduced, our work with the sector highlighted the inevitable negative impacts and the importance of better consultation with First Nations organisations.

RLC worked with a coalition of organisations to advocate for the abolition of the NSW Police Suspect Targeting Management Plan for many years. The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's final report on Operation Tepito and the NSW Police's decision to abolish the STMP is a significant win for the sector and a testament to the impact we can have when working in coalition, including with academics such as Vicki Sentas who was instrumental in this work and leads the police powers clinics at RLC.

## RLC in the media

### Tasering, beanbag-round deaths spark calls for changes to mental health responses in NSW

#### ▶ Sam Lee quoted in the ABC online

Redfern Legal Centre senior solicitor Sam Lee said it had become clear that police should not be the first to respond to such incidents.

"The clients that we get in our practice have concerns for their safety and wellbeing, and sometimes those concerns relate to previous interactions they've had with police," she said.

### Report finds First Nations and disadvantaged children were targeted by COVID-19 fines

#### ▶ Report featured in SBS online

Coverage of the report, commissioned by Redfern Legal Centre, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Aboriginal Legal Service found young people living with cognitive impairment, experiencing homelessness, socio-economic challenges or unsafe home environments were also over-represented.



Camilla Pandolfini and leaders from the community justice sector at a press conference advocating against the introduction of draconian bail laws.



## RLC in the media

### Girls aged 12 and 13 strip-searched by NSW Police

#### ▶ Front page Sydney Morning Herald

Front page coverage of work highlighting the harmful practice of subjecting children to strip searches. Our data shows that a 12-year-old child was subject to a strip search. The law must change to protect children.

## RLC in the media

### Fines for breaking Covid rules could be cancelled after major NSW Supreme Court decision

#### ▶ Sam Lee quoted News online

Samantha Lee, Senior Solicitor at Redfern Legal Centre, said the judgment has implications for the 29,000 other Covid fines issued during the pandemic, many of which have already been fully or partially paid.



# International Student Legal Service NSW (ISLS)

Redfern Legal Centre's International Student Legal Service NSW (ISLS) is the only independent legal service dedicated to the over 269,000 international students in NSW. ISLS offers free, confidential legal advice and support to protect students' rights and resolve legal issues before they affect their health, well-being and education experience.

We assist with housing disputes, fines, debts, employment issues, family law, discrimination, domestic violence, and conflicts with educational institutions and more.

By offering tailored free legal support, ISLS assists international students in NSW to thrive. We address exploitation and emerging socio-legal issues by engaging with stakeholders and advocating for systemic change. Our proactive approach ensures international students can assert their rights, maintain their studies, and contribute to Australia's reputation as a premier study destination.

## Case study - Danny's story

When Danny's education provider closed, a liquidator was appointed to manage the shutdown, leaving Danny unable to complete his studies. Danny was unable to access his academic record making it difficult for Danny to transfer to another provider and continue his studies. The potential financial burden of restarting his degree added to his distress. The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) regulations require the provision of necessary documentation for students impacted by closures. ISLS advocated on Danny's behalf, and after sustained pressure, the liquidator eventually provided the required records. This enabled Danny to enrol in a new provider and continue his studies without restarting his degree. Our intervention for Danny had a broader impact on other affected students, ensuring they all received their academic records.



Sean Stimson from ISLS at the Lord's Mayor Welcome for International Students.



UNSW students at a ISLS community legal education event.



Camilla Pandolfini and Sean Stimson meeting with students from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.



Sean Stimson from ISLS at NEAS Australia's inaugural Homestay Symposium.

### Case study - Tommy's story

Tommy, is an international student in the private rental market supporting himself by working as a food delivery rider. Tommy purchased an e-bike and battery, followed the manufacturer's instructions and charged the e-bike battery in his bathroom. The battery exploded, causing a fire that resulted in \$80,000 worth of damage to the unit. Tommy is now being held liable for the repair costs. ISLS assisted Tommy in navigating the complexities of legal claims related to defective products. Under Australian Consumer Law, consumers are protected from unsafe and defective products. ISLS helped Tommy file a crossclaim against the e-bike manufacturer, seeking relief and compensation for the damages. ISLS continues to support Tommy in addressing the complex legal issues arising from this incident. The issue of faulty batteries in e-bikes is an emerging issue that particularly impacts gig-economy workers and migrant workers including international students.

ISLS also attended the inaugural Homestay Symposium in Sydney, organised by NEAS. We played a key role in establishing the world's first set of quality standards for homestay accommodation. ISLS is committed to ensuring safe, high-quality living conditions for international students, improving their overall experience in Australia.

Additionally, ISLS participated as a panellists at an international symposium hosted by the University of Sydney and Glasgow University, titled "Housing Precarity Among Migrants, Minoritised Ethnic, and Marginalised Communities in Times of Polycrisis."

### RLC in the media Indian student Raghav found a place to rent. The catch? It was a garden shed

▶ Sean Stimson featured in the Sydney Morning Herald

Sean Stimson, who heads the international student legal service at Redfern Legal Centre in Sydney has seen how ugly things can get in the open rental market when property-owners try to profiteer from the scarcity of accommodation: excessive rent increases, arbitrary evictions and so on.

"Students are regarded as a bit of an easy target by some landlords."



Sean Stimson from ISLS at Study NSW 2023 NSW International Education Awards.



# Employment Law

Our employment law practice supports workers across NSW who are targeted for exploitation. We assist migrant workers, First Nations people, people with disabilities, and low-income workers, with a particular focus on ensuring that people living in regional, remote, and rural communities have access to legal resources and assistance.

The Employment Rights Legal Service (ERLS) is a collaboration between the Inner City Legal Centre, Kingsford Legal Centre, and Redfern Legal Centre. Its primary aim is to provide specialised employment and discrimination law services while enhancing the capacity of other community legal centres (CLCs) across NSW to effectively meet the high demand for employment law advice.

We prioritise sex discrimination advice, representation, and advocacy through our Respect@Work Funding. Our ambitious approach has resulted in increasing damages for our clients and ensures that deeds of release adequately reflect their needs and community standards for these claims.

## Case study

We assisted a young woman who experienced severe and repeated sexual harassment by her direct manager. When she sought our help, she had been dismissed due to poor performance, which stemmed from the mental health impact of the harassment. By leveraging the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) new sexual harassment dispute provisions, we represented our client through several unsuccessful FWC conciliations. With the support of pro bono counsel, we initiated proceedings in the Federal Court of Australia. The case was successfully settled following mediation, leading to the business updating its sexual harassment and grievance policies and procedures.

## Case study

We assisted a group of 20 factory workers, many of whom were migrant workers, in recovering unpaid redundancy entitlements following a business restructuring by their employer. The employer sought to deny these entitlements through an application to the Fair Work Commission. We advised all the affected workers and represented several of them in negotiations with the employer. As a result, we secured a commitment from the employer to pay nearly \$250,000 in owed entitlements.

In March 2024, Sharmilla Bargon and Regina Featherstone, RLC alumni, launched their report titled 'Let's Talk About Confidentiality: NDA Use in Sexual Harassment Settlements Since the Respect@Work Report'. This report is the result of their participation in the inaugural Social Justice Practitioners Academics-in-Residence program at the University of Sydney in 2023. The report uses both quantitative and qualitative research to examine how sexual harassment practitioners are handling out-of-court settlements and the approach they take to confidentiality terms. Their findings reveal that NDAs are often treated as a standard practice, with many lawyers not informing clients that the use of NDAs is optional. Through publishing model confidentiality clauses aimed at facilitating trauma-informed settlements, targeted media stories, speaking engagements, and meetings with the NSW Legal Service Commissioners and the AHRC Sex Discrimination Commissioner to discuss the implementation of the report's recommendations, we are driving positive change on employer attitudes towards settlement practices in sexual harassment cases.

We were part of a national coalition invited by the Department of Home Affairs to co-design the world first visa reforms to ensure migrant workers can address workplace exploitation and seek justice. We consulted with the Department, together with a coalition of organisations, over a year on the proposed reforms. The two-year pilot of the reforms launched in July 2024 and includes a new short-term workplace justice visa with work rights to enable a migrant worker to stay in Australia to enforce their labour rights; and protections from visa cancellation for exploited migrant workers who have breached their visa and want to take action against their employer.

As part of the ERLS, we collaborated with the Mid North Coast Legal Service (MNCLegal) to design an annual schedule for our lawyers to deliver employment law training via video conference and conduct two workshops at their legal centre conference in Bellingen. Seri Feldman-Gubbay, an employment law solicitor at RLC, co-delivered a highly regarded workshop on an intersectional and trauma-informed approach to sexual harassment disputes. This workshop examined the intersections between various areas of discrimination law and trauma-informed lawyering, with a particular focus on the overuse and misuse of NDAs.

To support employment law advice and assistance, we developed an Employment and Discrimination Law Knowledge Hub. This resource provides materials such as sample file note wording, research memos, template letters of demand, and spreadsheets for underpayment of wages. MNCLegal lawyers have access to this hub, and we also offer 'phone-a-friend' advice to assist them with challenging employment law questions in their advice and representation matters.

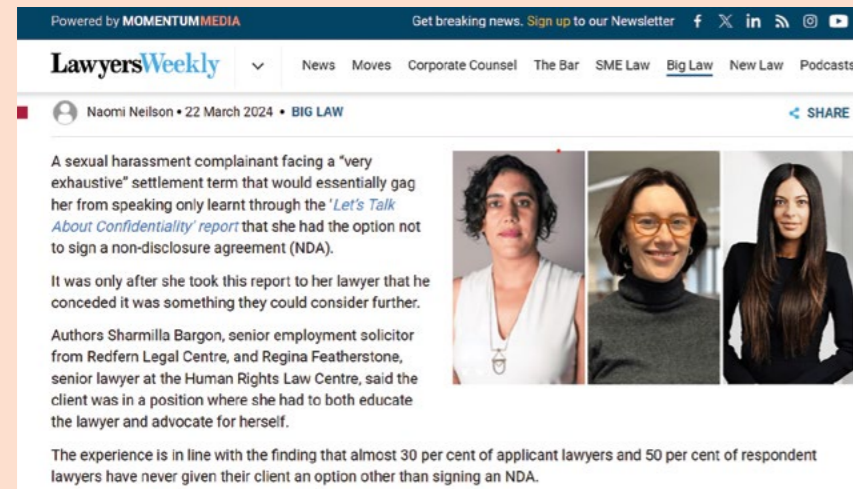
Sharmilla Bargon, Senior Solicitor in the Employment Law Practice, was honoured with the 2023 Community Lawyer of the Year award at the Women Lawyers Achievement Awards. The award recognises Sharmilla's exceptional advocacy for her clients and the issues that impact them.

## RLC in the media

### Let's Talk About Confidentiality report

#### Lawyers Weekly

Authors Sharmilla Bargon, senior employment solicitor from Redfern Legal Centre, and Regina Featherstone, senior lawyer at the Human Rights Law Centre, said the client was in a position where she had to both educate the lawyer and advocate for herself. The experience is in line with the finding that almost 30 per cent of applicant lawyers and 50 per cent of respondent lawyers have never given their client an option other than signing an NDA.



## RLC in the media

### Annie was harassed at work. Her story was kept secret for years

#### Sydney Morning Herald

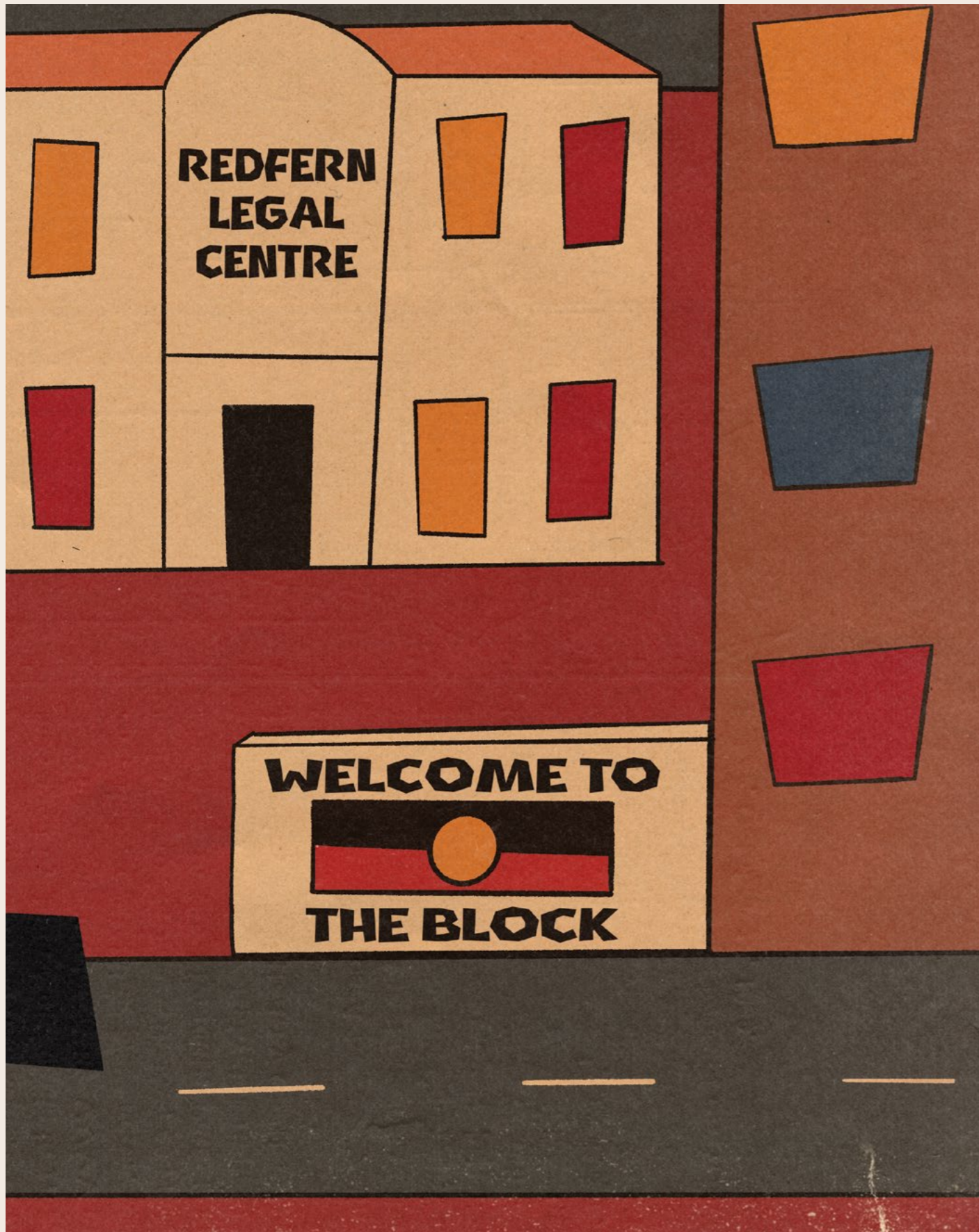
In a groundbreaking report titled *Let's talk about confidentiality*, launched on Wednesday, lawyers and social justice practitioners-in-residence at the University of Sydney, Regina Featherstone and Sharmilla Bargon, examined the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in sexual harassment cases. The authors surveyed 145 Australian lawyers working on harassment cases about the prevalence of non-disclosure agreements and found approximately 75 per cent had "never resolved a sexual harassment complaint without a strict NDA".



Seri Feldman-Gubbay, co-delivers a workshop on an intersectional and trauma-informed approach to sexual harassment disputes for Mid North Coast Legal.



Sharmilla Bargon at the launch of Let's Talk about Confidentiality.



# Credit, Debt and Consumer Law

Our credit, debt, and consumer law practice provides essential advice, advocacy, and community legal education to clients. We assist those dealing with harassment from debt collectors, bankruptcy, lawsuits, and significant debts with Revenue NSW. Our clients often experience financial hardship and are frequently targeted by schemes designed to capitalise on the poverty premium. In collaboration with consumer advocates across Australia, we address the issues we encounter in our casework through law reform, advocacy, and community legal education. We help individuals navigate the complex legal system, resolve internal and external debt issues, and achieve fair and reasonable outcomes.

## Case study - Katherine's story

Katherine, an aged pensioner living in social housing, reached out to the Credit and Debt team when her caravan was towed. She was faced with a fine and an additional demand of \$1,500 for its return. Her caravan and car were her only assets, providing her with the freedom to travel occasionally outside the inner city.

We confirmed that the fine amount was accurate but discovered that the Council had subcontracted the towing services, requiring negotiation with the subcontractor. This situation revealed significant concerns with the legislation under which the debt was enforced. To prevent her caravan from being auctioned, Katherine took an advance on her pension and borrowed money from a friend to cover the full amount. Had the legislation included a financial hardship process, she could have arranged a manageable payment plan. RLC applied to Revenue NSW for a fine write-off, as their guidelines allow for debt write-offs and payment plans. Recognising the circumstances, Revenue NSW agreed to write off the fine rather than require payment. RLC is now exploring opportunities for law reform based on Katherine's experience to address gaps in the current legislation.



Amelia Klien, Rebecca Campbell, and Jillian Scahill at AWAN event held at NCIE.



John Mewburn and RLC volunteer Ruby Summer on the Green.



Amelia Klein and Henrietta McRae at the Financial Counselling Australia Conference.

### Case study - Liam's story

In 2018, Liam worked for an employer until he left the job due to a workplace injury. During his employment, he had a minor accident while driving his work truck. He reported the accident to his employer, and since the truck was safe to drive, no further action was required from him. In early 2024, Liam received a statement of claim suing him and his former employer for over \$40,000 related to the accident. Confused, Liam thought his former employer had already addressed this claim. Seeking help, he contacted Redfern Legal Centre, which provided advice and representation through its credit, debt, and employment practices. RLC assisted Liam in court and filed a cross-claim against his former employer. As a result, the employer and their insurer resolved the issue, and Liam was not required to pay any amount. The claim, which should have been handled by the employer and insurer years earlier, was finally settled without financial burden to Liam.

The credit and debt team's advocacy and reform priorities have been developed in collaboration with colleagues both within RLC and across the broader sector in Australia.

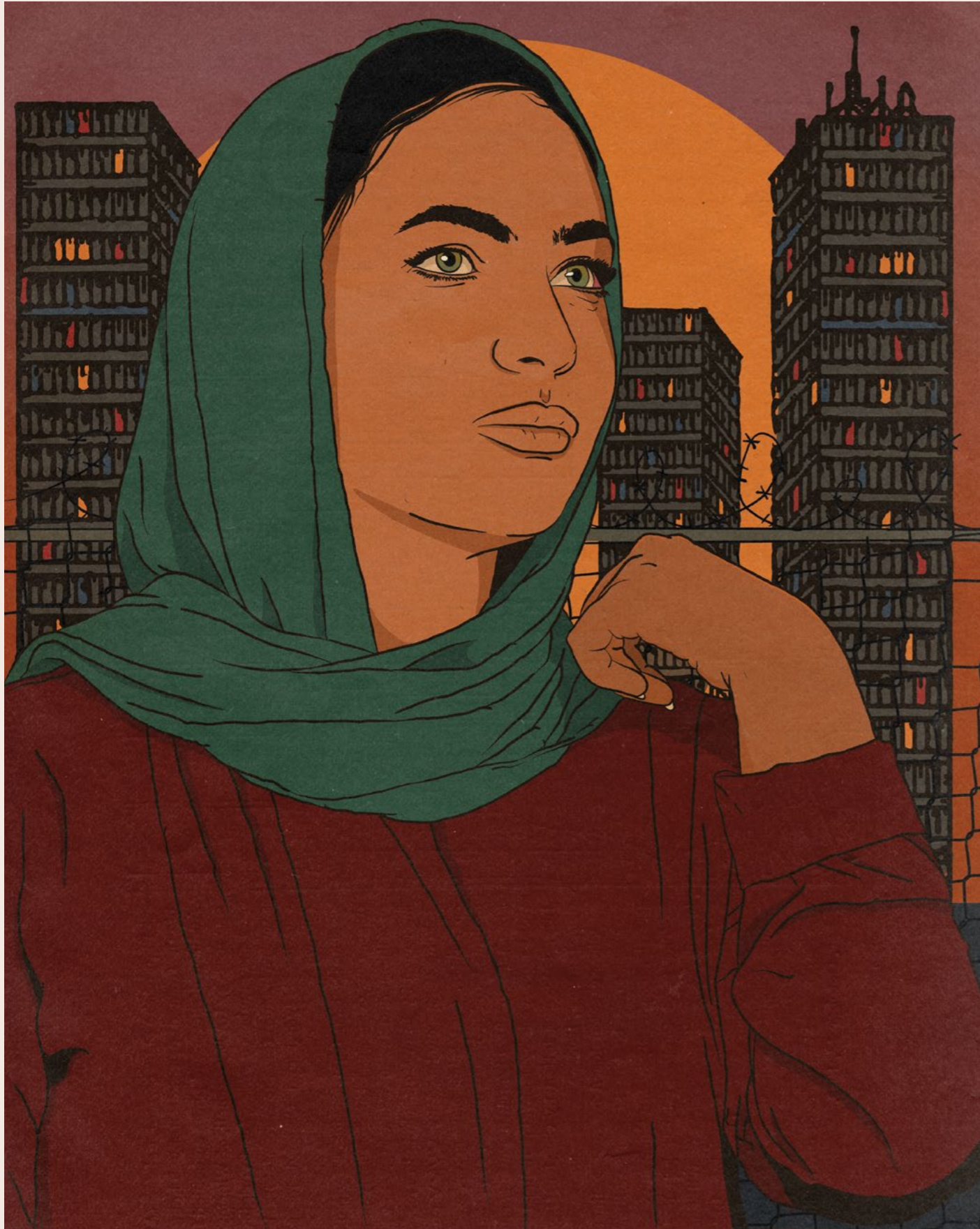
The Credit and Debt practice and the Employment Law practice jointly submitted an RLC-ERLS response to the FWC consultation on managing challenging conduct by paid agents. Paid agents are not lawyers but charge fees to represent individuals at the FWC. They lack minimum requirements for professional conduct, experience, or qualifications. Our written submission, which we presented in person at the FWC, raised concerns about issues such as the retention of settlement amounts as part of retainers, misrepresentation as lawyers, and the provision of unqualified legal advice.

In collaboration with other practice areas at RLC, we have provided specialised advice from two lawyers with expertise in different fields. This has enabled us to offer comprehensive guidance on complex issues, such as uncertain jurisdiction for vulnerable tenants. With the rising cost of living, we have seen an increase in clients seeking assistance and have supported them with financial hardship arrangements and issues related to inappropriate credit.

We continue to engage with the community through events like the Energy and Water Ombudsman of NSW Community Assist Day and the Waterloo End of Year Celebration.



Gwyneth Angaddjaja and Amelia Klein at Waterloo Neighbourhood Centre Outreach for NAIDOC week.



# Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service

RLC offers legal support on tenancy and housing issues through the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS). We provide legal advice, advocacy and representation, engage in policy reform, and educate the community on tenancy law through our community legal education program.

ISTAAS provided advice to over 1800 tenants this year. We continue to allocate our resources where they are needed most, offering additional services like representation, advocacy, application drafting, document preparation, and written advice to clients experiencing deep and persistent disadvantages. We attend monthly outreach clinics at Ozanam Learning Centre in Woolloomooloo, provide weekly duty advocacy services at the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), and regularly provide duty advocacy services at the First Nations list of NCAT.

In NSW, landlords can terminate a tenancy agreement without providing any reason once the agreed term expires. This practice leaves tenants unable to safely assert their rights regarding repairs or disputes over rent increases, out of fear that their landlord might issue a termination notice instead of negotiating a fair resolution. ISTAAS regularly receives calls from distressed tenants facing no-grounds termination notices, and nearly 20% of the private tenants we advised in the past year had received such a notice.

Following over a decade of advocacy on this issue by the sector, including by Redfern Legal Centre, the NSW Labor Government has now announced plans to introduce legislation to end no-grounds evictions for both fixed-term and periodic tenancy agreements. This is a significant victory for tenants in NSW. We will continue to advocate for appropriate grounds for landlord terminations and ensure robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

ISTAAS continued to educate and inform the community on tenancy rights and issues. We featured in media articles on the rights of tenants in share houses, and issues related to repairs and mould in social housing. We conducted information, education and training sessions for tenants and community support workers on a broad range of issues, including NCAT's jurisdiction and processes, a session on rental stress, and webinars about social housing law and policy and how tenants can get repairs carried out at their properties.

One of the most common issues ISTAAS encounters is related to repairs in public housing – where social housing tenants are forced to live in uninhabitable conditions due to the failure to properly address crucial and urgent repairs. Approximately 10% of our advice in the past year has been about social housing repairs, and over 40% of our public housing clients have sought assistance with repair issues. We are leading advocacy to improve the repairs in the social housing system in NSW in collaboration with the Tenants' Union of NSW and other members of the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program statewide. We have been pleased to consult with the NSW Government on this issue. We have established regular meetings with senior staff from local Homes NSW offices to discuss individual client cases and negotiate positive outcomes for complex matters often involving major unresolved repairs.





Camilla Pandolfini, Alison Mackey and leaders from the housing sector meet with the Housing Minister.



Leanne O'Reilly with TAPP award.



Leanne O'Reilly and Alison Mackey with Golden Warren Award.

### Case study - Anne's story

Anne, a single mother with four children (one of whom has a disability), lives in public housing. In 2022, her property experienced severe flooding due to a roof leak, which she promptly reported to the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC). Although LAHC sent contractors to inspect the property, no repairs were carried out. Over the following months, Anne and her family endured six additional episodes of flooding, resulting in significant damage to their personal belongings. The ceiling in her daughter's bedroom also collapsed, and black mould spread throughout the premises.

Despite repeatedly reporting these issues to both the maintenance line and their client service officer, and enduring multiple inspections by contractors, LAHC only undertook minor "patch repairs" and failed to address the broader repair problems. This situation caused considerable distress for Anne and her children.

We represented Anne in proceedings before the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), where we successfully obtained repair orders and secured nearly \$15,000 in rent reduction and compensation for the damages suffered by Anne and her family. We continue to work with Anne to ensure that the repairs, ordered by NCAT, are appropriately completed and her home becomes habitable.

### Case study

We assisted an Aboriginal elder with significant connections to the local community. She had been residing in a public housing for over 30 years. Her premises had been in a very poor standard of repair for her entire tenancy; it was riddled with mould and moisture due to leaking, the paint was peeling, and the oven and stove were not working. Our client had reported the repair issues many times but didn't have copies of any reference numbers or other evidence that she had made the reports. She also instructed us that she had issues with her memory which made it difficult for her to remember exact details of the time and dates of the reports she has made. We made an NCAT application and requested that the matter be listed in NCAT's First Nations list.

Ultimately, the client was transferred to another premises and at conciliation the NSW Land and Housing Commission (LAHC) agreed to pay our client over almost \$3000 as compensation for the condition of her premises. This outcome would have been unlikely to have been achieved without the hard work of the ISTAAS team and demonstrates the importance of the new NCAT Aboriginal List to achieving positive outcomes for clients who otherwise may not have achieved the same outcome.

At the annual Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Program regional network meeting in Port Macquarie in November we were thrilled to be acknowledged for the incredibly hard work and great outcomes being achieved by the ISTAAS team. Leanne O'Reilly was awarded the "TAAPstar" award for "best performance in conciliation, negotiation and behind the scenes machination" for her incredible work in getting a fantastic outcome for a client with significant vulnerabilities who was facing homelessness. As a team, ISTAAS also took home the coveted "Golden Warren" award, for the TAAP service that contributed most significantly to policy and law reform work in 2023.

### RLC in the media

#### Mushrooms on the wall, ruined clothes, brain fog: The Sydney tenants living with mould

➤ Alison Mackey quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald

Redfern Legal Centre Tenants' Advocate Alison Mackey said the mould was a "chronic issue" affecting tenants across the city, with humidity in summer exacerbating issues.

"It's really difficult for public housing tenants to get mould issues rectified simply by raising it with their landlord [the LHC]," she said.



# Community Legal Education

Redfern Legal Centre delivers community legal education (CLE) to the community, community workers and lawyers to build capacity in the sector, educate and empower people to understand their rights and responsibilities and take action to improve their wellbeing and achieve justice.

We deliver community legal education sessions in partnership with local and statewide organisations, in person, as well as in webinars online that are then available on demand.

We delivered a CLE session at Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal on Elder Abuse, which opened up conversations about scams and fines, important topics for further community education. Our tenancy and Financial Abuse Service teams provided training on rental stress and financial stress to financial counsellors and social workers from the Salvation Army as part of their professional development day.

Our work as part of the Employment Rights Legal Service aims to increase the capacity of the community legal sector and others to identify, address and warm refer employment law issues. We have worked closely with Mid North Coast Legal Centre to build their capacity to provide excellent employment law advice to their community. In October 2023 we delivered a workshop about sham contracting to Mid North Coast Legal Centre. We presented to University of Sydney student support staff to assist them to 'spot the signs of exploitation'. We also delivered an 'Employment Law 101' workshop in Campbelltown. We participated in a Law Society of NSW Panel discussing the introduction of AHRC compliance of the positive duty on employers to ensure staff are not sexually harassed at work.

We delivered webinars online including:

- Repairs in Social Housing & Private Rentals in NSW
- Underpaid Wages
- Introduction to Social Housing Law & Policy in NSW
- Dealing with Unpaid Fines in NSW: Instalments, Waivers & WDOs.

# Redfern Legal Centre's Reconciliation Action Plan

This year we continued our commitment to justice for First Nations people with our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

We have implemented new First Nations room names and acknowledgment of country signs at both office locations.

We hosted a stall at Yabun on Survival Day in January and supported Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation events during Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week with stalls and exciting new RLC branded merchandise to give away.

During Reconciliation Week, we engaged in yarn bombing, decorating Redfern Town Hall in the colours of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags. On Sorry Day, we encouraged community reflection with an interactive display and supported the Coota Girls Sorry Day Event, by providing and staffing a sausage sizzle.

In our Not Just a Book Club, which encourages deeper engagement with First Nations culture, activism and history, we read Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poetry, 67 Days by Yvonne Weldon, which explores local stories and watched and discussed the film In My Blood It Runs, that highlights racism in the education and child protection system and the resilience of First Nations families.

Our staff participated in two days of decolonisation training with Garuwa, and our RAP working group reflected on our learnings and how to put these into practice organisation wide.



Camilla Pandolfini and Sam Lee at the Coota Girls Sorry Day Event.

We are excited to join the new Justice Hub at Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, a weekly community services space where we provide weekly on-the-spot legal advice and strengthen community connections. We've established relationships with local First Nations organisations such as Babana Men's Group and Tribal Warrior and look forward to conducting outreach with them. We continued our outreach at Mudgin-Gal Women's Place, supporting Aboriginal women and families.



Camilla Pandolfini and Catherine Hewett at the Coota Girls Sorry Day Event.



Yarn bombing outside Redfern Town Hall to celebrate NAIDOC week.



Amelia Klein at Yabun.

# Our Staff

## 2023-2024

### Alexis Goodstone

Principal Solicitor

### Alison Mackey

Solicitor | Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service

### Amelia Klein

Solicitor | Credit, Debt & Consumer Law

### Ashleigh Bridge

First Nations Engagement Worker | First Nations Justice

### Camilla Pandolfini

Chief Executive Officer

### Cate Hewett

Chief Operations Officer

### Catherine Liebel

Solicitor | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Danielle Tweedale

Client Intake Supervisor

### Emily Perrins

Legal Assistant

### Gail Brennan

Solicitor | First Nations Justice

### Gayatri Nair

Policy and Capacity Building Officer | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Grace Cameron-Lee

Solicitor | Police Powers and Administrative Law

### Henrietta McRae

Financial Counsellor | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Jadyn Bryant-Smith

Client Intake Supervisor

### Jasmine Opdam

Supervising Solicitor | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Jemima Gaunt

Senior Social Worker | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Jillian Scahill

Senior Financial Counsellor | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### John Mewburn

Solicitor | Inner Sydney Tenancy Advice & Advocacy Service

### Josh Raj

Solicitor | Police Accountability

### Kevin Nobrega

Legal Assistant

### Laura Bianchi

Managing Solicitor | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Lauren Gillin

Media and Communications Manager

### Lauren Howlett

Solicitor | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Leanne O'Reilly

Solicitor & Tenants' Advocate | Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service

### Liz Parsons

Client Intake Supervisor, Legal Assistant

### Lucy Nadj

Solicitor | Health Justice Partnership (HJP) | Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

### Maria Monastiriotis

Solicitor & Accredited Family Law Specialist | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Melanie King

Legal Support Officer | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Ned Cooke

Team Leader | Inner Sydney Tenancy Advice & Advocacy Service (ISTAAS)

### Nick Manning

Community Engagement and Education Officer | Intake Manager

### Phill Byrne

Operations and IT Support Officer

### Rebecca Campbell

Solicitor | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Rashini Fernando

Senior Solicitor | Health Justice Partnership (HJP) | Sydney Dental Hospital

### Sam Lee

Supervising Solicitor | Police Powers and Administrative Law

### Sarah McLenaghan

Client Intake Supervisor



### Sean Stimson

Senior Solicitor | International Student Legal Service NSW

### Seri Feldman-Gubbay

Solicitor | Employment Law | Employment Rights Legal Service

### Sharmilla Bargon

Senior Solicitor | Employment Law | Coordinator | Employment Rights Legal Service

### Tara Stone

Social Worker | Financial Abuse Service NSW

### Tobias Elliott-Orr

First Nations Solicitor | First Nations Justice

### Wendy Wang

Administration Assistant



# Our Board of Directors



## Kerry O'Brien (Chair)

Kerry is a proud Koori lawyer. Kerry is a Senior Legal Counsel – Employment & Privacy at QBE. Kerry is a specialist in workplace law across disputes, investigations and advisory work and Australian privacy regulation.

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 and McCullough Robertson. Kerry was first appointed to the Board in 2018 and was appointed Chair of the Board in 2020.



## 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 an independent research consultant with 25 years of experience providing research consulting services to drive organisational growth and help 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 a retired solicitor, based on the far south coast of NSW where she volunteers with a local women's and domestic violence service. She ran RLC's employment and discrimination law practice before going to Hanoi as a volunteer legal advisor for a women's organisation. She was chair of CLCNSW and has worked at many other CLCs in NSW. Apart from her CLC fixation, Linda has worked for human rights organisations in Australia, Cambodia and the UK and was previously a legal academic and journalist.



## Ben Lipschitz

Ben Lipschitz is 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 Board of Directors (Continued)



### Laura Lombardo

Laura is a special counsel in Gilbert + Tobin's Pro Bono group and an experienced litigator specialising in anti-discrimination, human rights and administrative and public law. Laura has represented clients in State and Federal jurisdictions, including in the High Court of Australia, in Royal Commissions and in coronial inquiries. Laura also works with not-for-profit organisations on projects that build organisational capacity and address unmet legal need in the community. Laura was previously the Principal Solicitor of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), a community legal centre specialising in test case litigation and policy advocacy, and has also worked as a lawyer at the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and in the commercial litigation group of a global top-tier law firm. Laura is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and previously sat on the Board of the Welfare Rights Centre (NSW) (2016-2023). Laura has a Bachelor of Media and Bachelor of Laws with Honours.



### Emma Maple-Brown

Emma is a corporate lawyer with over 20 years' experience working with and supporting a diverse range of pro bono clients including not for profit entities, charities, social enterprises, and vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals. Emma has worked at Justice Connect where she was Head of Access Programs and also at the University of New South Wales where she was the Director of the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous, Professor Megan Davis. Prior to this, she led and managed the Australian Pro Bono practice of Herbert Smith Freehills, a leading global commercial law firm. Emma has significant expertise and experience in corporate governance, access to justice, working with First Nations clients, fundraising and philanthropy. She currently serves as a Non-Executive Director on the boards of Gidget Foundation Australia, Red Room Poetry and the King's School and is company secretary for The Centre for Public Integrity. Emma has a BA (Hons)/LLB (Hons) from the University of Sydney and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



### Gemma McKinnon

Gemma McKinnon (LLB, BA) is a Barkindji woman from Wilcannia in far western NSW. Gemma is the Principal Solicitor – Closing the Gap at the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT. Gemma has a background in legal practice, research, and law reform focusing on public law, social housing, and Aboriginal community engagement. Gemma has a wealth of experience working in Community Legal Centres, including as a tenant advocate at RLC. Gemma is the co-host of Blaksiders on 2Ser community radio.

## 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

The Employment Rights Legal Service (ERLS) is a collaboration between the Inner City Legal Centre, Kingsford Legal Centre, and Redfern Legal Centre, and the Respect@Work Sexual Harassment Practice is funded through the Community Legal Services Program (CLSP), which provides Commonwealth and NSW Government funding administered by Legal Aid NSW

The Health Justice Partnership is funded through the Community Legal Services Program (CLSP), which provides Commonwealth and NSW Government funding administered by Legal Aid NSW

NSW Fair Trading funds the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service

Study NSW funds the International Student Legal Service NSW

The Financial Abuse Service NSW is funded by the NSW Government through the Community Legal Centres Program administered by Legal Aid NSW. The service is a proud partner of CommBank Next Chapter and is also supported by the Financial Counselling Foundation. Ecstra Foundation provide a grant for policy, law reform and capacity-building work

City of Sydney provides RLC with premises at Redfern Town Hall

## Grants and donations

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

The University of NSW fund the Police Powers clinical subject at RLC

The University of Sydney Law School funds Social Justice clinical placements, whereby RLC provides high quality experiential learning for law students

UTS funds students to undertake a placement through their Legal Internship Program

Microsoft provided discounted software

A bequest, distribution from a trust, and donations have enabled us to continue our First Nations Justice Practice

Many individuals and supporter organisations provided generous donations, including Ashurst, Barry Nielsson, Colin Biggers & Paisley, and Telstra

Clayton Utz Foundation provided a grant for new audio-visual screens

Amex funds development and improvement of our volunteer training materials

# Partnerships

Redfern Legal Centre is highly appreciative of the assistance and partnership of the firms and individual lawyers who support Redfern Legal Centre to provide trauma-informed and responsive legal assistance. The invaluable time, skill and expertise of our volunteer lawyers contributes to our free legal information, advice and casework as well as our law reform, policy and advocacy.

Pro bono and volunteer contributions expand our impact and achieve access to justice for people facing discrimination, exploitation and abuse. We could not meet the incredible demand for legal assistance without the invaluable assistance of the firms and individual lawyers who work with us.

Each and every contribution assists to create positive change for the communities we work with.



Ashurst



CLAYTON UTZ



DENTONS



KING & WOOD MALLESONS  
金杜律师事务所



LANDER & ROGERS

MAKINSON d'APICE  
LAWYERS



Watts McCray  
LAWYERS



# Our volunteers

**174**  
volunteers  
(intake)

**109**  
volunteer  
lawyers

**32**  
students,  
PLTs and  
interns

Our  
volunteers  
speak  
**32**  
languages

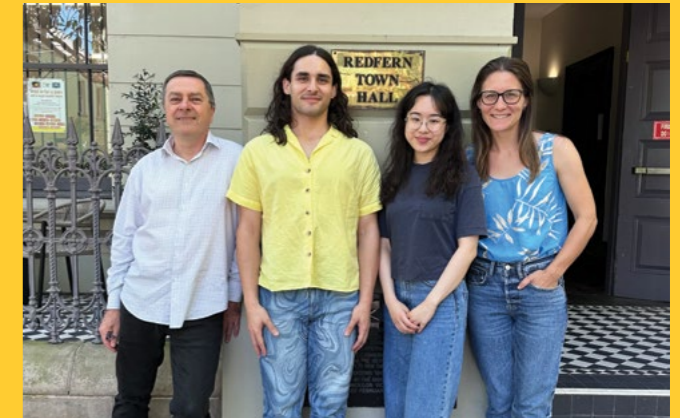
Our intake  
volunteers  
contributed  
**18,000**  
hours

Volunteer  
lawyers  
contributed  
**7019**  
hours of  
pro bono  
assistance

Students,  
practical  
legal training  
placements  
and interns  
contributed  
**4196**  
hours



Kerry O'Brien, Seri Feldman-Gubbay and Josh Raj at the Volunteer thank-you party.



RLC volunteers celebrate International Volunteer Day.



RLC staff with volunteers.

## Our volunteers (Continued)

### Volunteer lawyers and students

Aggie Pennington	Bronte Owens	Ella Alexander	Joshua Hetzel	Nicole Juric	Simon Moran
Aiden Khamis	Camille McCredie	Ella Greedy	Julia Rowland	Nuhulan Ahmed	Skye Owen
Aishwarya Aishwarya	Camilla Clemente	Ena Kennedy Yoshitani	Kartikey Sudiv Tripathi	Olivia Tan	Sophie Leaver
Akshara Abimanju	Carolina Arricobene	Eimear O'Sullivan	Kate Deans	Peta Zoubakin	Smriti Srivastava
Alessandro Sobral	Carla Rank	Fereshtah Yosufi	Kate Edwards	Peter Anderson	Sodany Tong
Alison Elliott	Cathie Day	Gabrielle Piesiewicz	Kate Houghton	Peter Kim	Stuart Neil
Amelia Cameron	Chanelle Sleiman	Georgia Francis	Kaitlin Maher	Philippa (Pip) Howse	Sunita Lal
Amelia Spratt	Chelsea Cheng	Georgia Koutzoumis	Kora Iansa	Preetha Varadharajan	Susan (Yi Fang) Ou Yang
Annelise Nguyen	Cheryl Chua	George Pasas	Keanna Lau	Rachel Bonic	Susan Cooper
Anna Kedves	Clarissa Mirarchi	George Stribling	Lauren Judge	Rachel Duong	Susan Winfield
Anna Sumsky	Claire Seremetis	Giselle Loo	Lauren Parnaby	Rebecca Dodd	Tazin Saiyed
Ann Yang	Christine Chen	Guy Lewis	Lameah Nayeem	Rebecca McLeod	Tess Fernan
Annie Zhang	Craig Emery	Gwyneth Anggadajaja	Lachlan Pickering	Regina Shen	Thuy Pham
Antonia Berg	David Hillard	Hai-Van Nguyen	Lia Kingston	Richard Xu-Austen	Timothy Fikh
Antonia Odegbaro	Daniel Richards	Hamid Pourahmary	Liz Parsons	Renz Hernandez	Timothy Hyman
Archer Kirk	Daniel Watts	Hannah Chen	Liz Stanaway	Rhonda Hanks	Tina Huang
Ashleigh Bridge	Darren Lim	Hannah Shaw	Lizzie Shaw	Rhiannon Noble	Tooba Moosani
Asha Beatty	Donna Tan	Helen Yan	Lok Lo Choy	Roshan Sidhu	Tram Tran
Amy Papandreas	Dusan Stevic	Hiba Hameed	Lucy Cowlshaw	Ruby Hunt	Veronica Ziino
Amy Sciffer	Edwina Wang	Ikbol Rishi	Madeline White	Ruby Martin	Venetia Yau
Andrew Banks (Coordinator)	Eileen Tjhia	Ingrid Shieh	Maria Andreou	Ruth Fesseha	William Cesta
Andrew Thai	Elizabeth Myers	Imogen Rose	Maria Toma	Ryan Ho	William Zhong
Angela Chen	Emma McGee	Isaac Douglas	Marcus Vethecan	Samantha Jack	Weijing Peng
Anjali Aiyer	Emma Page	Isabel Muscatello	Meagan Murrell	Samira Friis	Wesley Reynolds
Ava Hill-Demonchaux	Emily Kliman	Jackson Phillips	Mehak Verma	Sarah Morton-Ramwell	Yi Peng
Ben Carmichael	Emily Perrins	Jaime Bell	Michael Baker	Sarah Salib	Ying Zi Shang
Bob Liang	Eugenia Munoz	Jane Medcalf	Milan Mahdavi	Sarah Walsh	Yasmin Titheradge
Bradley Cagauan	Eugene Fedoseev	Jessica Flood	Monique Goyen	Sahana Subramanian	Zita Rush
Brian Familiar	Eryn Leddy-Rebecchi	Joanna Wang	Natalia Di Stefano	Selina Ngo	Zhuohang Cui
Bryan Do	Elise Fordham	Jonathan Taylor	Nathan Kennedy (partner)	Shreya Marchino	
	Elise Gooley	Josh Raj	Nathan Zhang	Simon Mee	

### Barristers

We thank the following Barristers for their assistance:

Adam Guy  
Damien Payard  
Dev Bhutani  
Dilan Mahendra  
Emmanuel Kerkyasharian  
Justin Pen  
Natasha Case  
Kate Richardson  
Stephen Puttick  
Tim Smartt



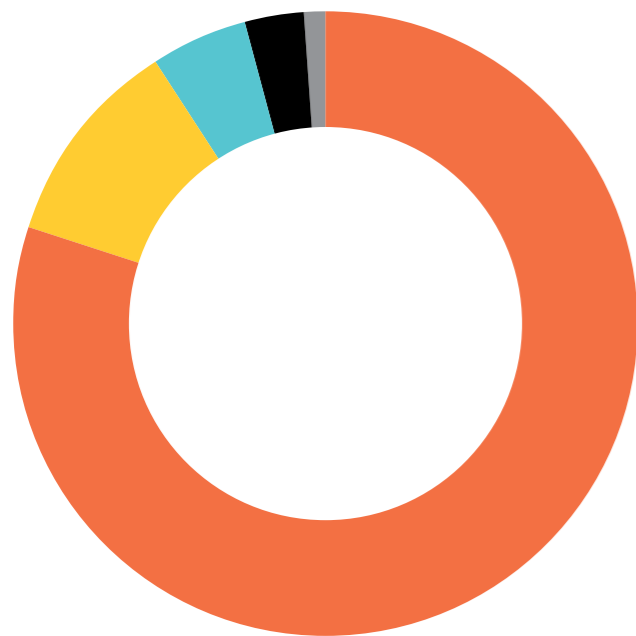
# Financials

## Income

Redfern Legal Centre's financial position is sound. The consolidated financial result for 2023-24 was a surplus of \$19,909. This result comprised an operating surplus of \$93,448 which added to RLC's retained earnings, and a deficit of \$73,539 on our First Nations Justice Practice which is funded by a special reserve. Our total income was \$4,795,772.80. Redfern Legal Centre has reserves of approximately \$1,300,000. We continue to receive generous in-kind support from our pro bono partners and other funders and supporters. This is an extract of our audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2024. For a full version visit [www.rlc.org.au/annual-reports](http://www.rlc.org.au/annual-reports)

### Funding Sources 2023-24

Government Funding	\$3,863,101
Philanthropic and Corporate	\$538,060
Donations	\$224,111
Contract fees and Consultancy	\$131,825
Other Income	\$38,676
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,795,773</b>

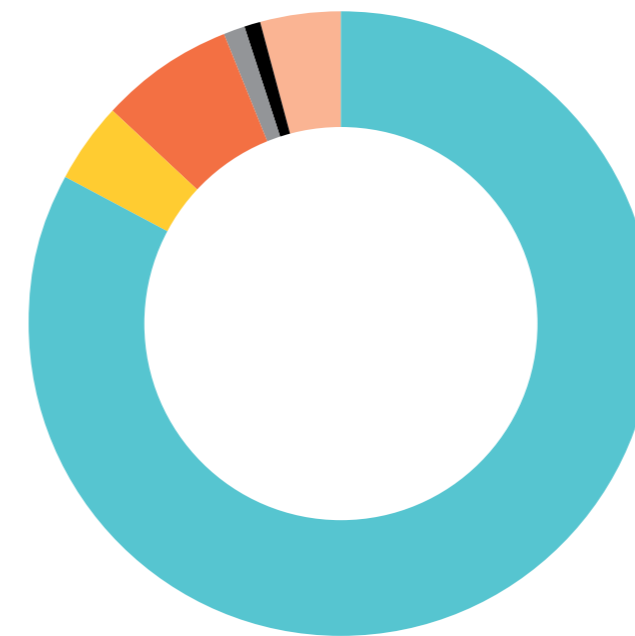


- Government funding: 80%
- Philanthropic and Corporate funding: 11%
- Donations: 5%
- Contract fees and consultancy: 3%
- Other income: 1%

## Expenditure

### Program Costs 2023-24

Program Costs	2023-24
Employees	\$3,985,265
Expert services	\$180,884
Occupancy, depreciation and amortisation	\$286,989
Staff training and memberships	\$47,062
Insurance	\$33,185
Administration	\$218,339
Other	\$24,140
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,775,864</b>



- Employees: 83%
- Expert services: 4%
- Occupancy, depreciation and amortisation: 6%
- Staff training and memberships: 1%
- Insurance: 1%
- Administration: 5%

# Donate to support our work

**Help Redfern Legal Centre provide crucial free legal assistance to those in crisis.**

With your support, we empower the community and drive change through free legal information, advice and representation, community legal education, policy and law reform.

Every year we help thousands of people in crisis – facing eviction, unfair debts, or wrongful termination.

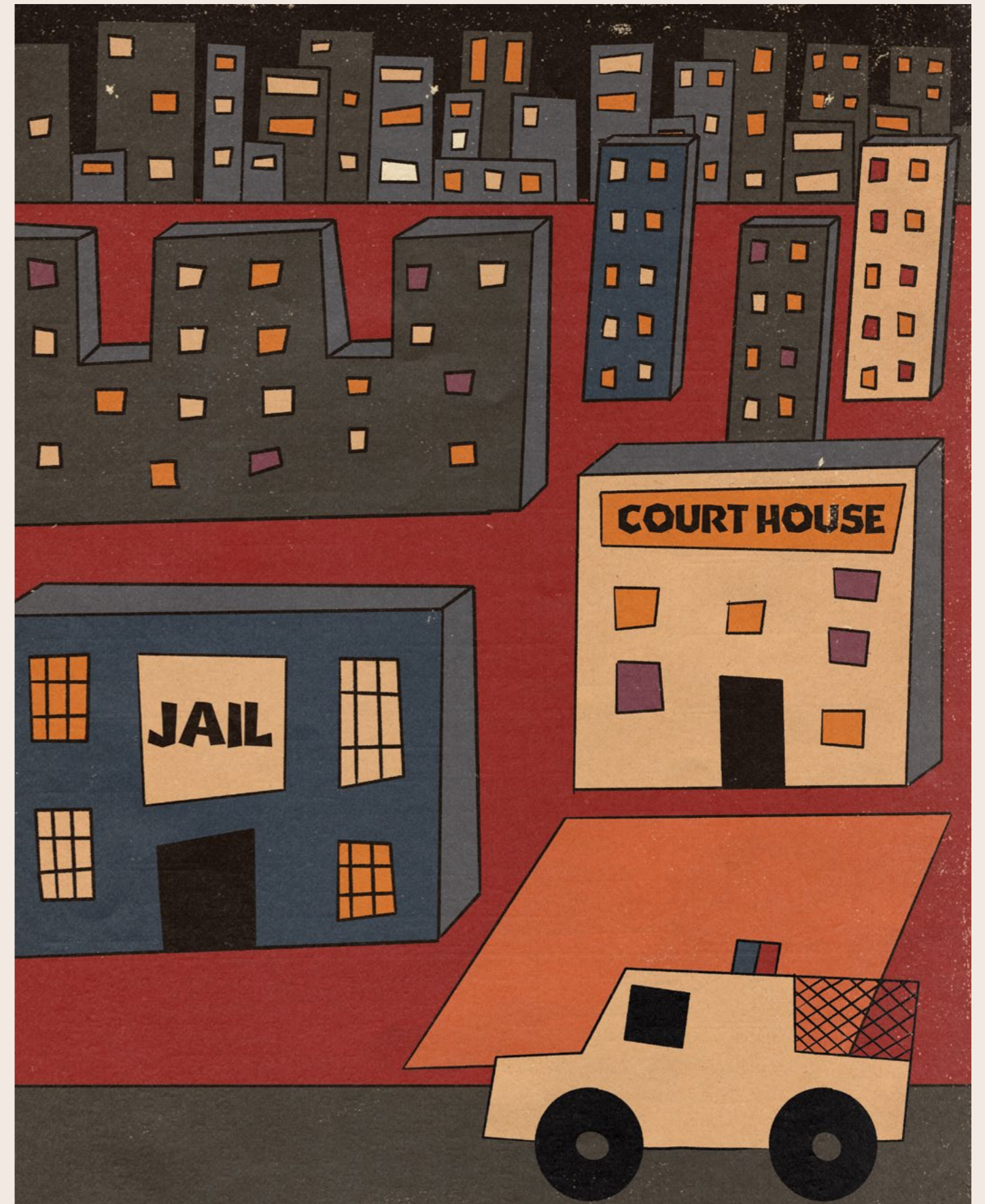


Please donate online at  
▶ [rlc.org.au/donate](https://rlc.org.au/donate)

Donations of \$2 and over  
are tax deductible.

**You have the power to change lives. Together, we can ensure access to justice for those experiencing disadvantage, helping them overcome crises and empowering them to fight for their rights.**

Thank you for your continued support for the clients and communities we work with.





**Redfern  
Legal  
Centre**

73 Pitt Street, Redfern NSW 2016

Phone: (02) 9698 7277

[info@rlc.org.au](mailto:info@rlc.org.au)

[www.rlc.org.au](http://www.rlc.org.au)