



Redfern
Legal Centre

Annual Report
2019–2020

Redfern Legal Centre 2019–2020: Supporting communities through crisis

It has been a year of unprecedented challenges. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've had to innovate quickly, changing the way we work to keep pace with demand.

Our 2019–2020 Annual Report outlines our impact and areas of focus for the year. We also look to the future with a robust set of Strategic Goals for 2020–2025.

Times of great crisis bring communities together, and this has certainly been the case this year. We will continue to work together through crisis, supporting communities in need.



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

Cover: *Justice For All* (detail) by Sharon Smith, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 90 cm x 61 cm.

Artwork commissioned for Redfern Legal Centre with funding support from City of Sydney.

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

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

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

— Sharon Smith, Wiradjuri artist.

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Welcome from our Chair

This year has been an unprecedented one for the Centre and our community. We, like everyone, were forced to work through the impact of the pandemic. While our physical doors were closed for the first time in a long time, our virtual arms remained wide open. Our ever resilient and adaptable staff and volunteers serviced clients by phone, email and the now omnipresent videoconferencing facilities. We were grateful to have the technology to ensure that the most vulnerable were able to be reached during this difficult time.



Amy Munro, Chair

To add to the change experienced by the Centre, very soon, I will resign as Chair and from the Board. I will hand the baton over to Kerry O'Brien, a clever and committed Koori lawyer, who will be supported by a diligent and diverse Board, with a tremendous skill set and enormous experience. You are in safe hands.

I would like to thank each and every member of the Board and staff for their support during my time as Chair. The Centre exudes an infectious "can do" energy, which is the result of the intellect, compassion and dedication that is brought to every task. The results the Centre is able to achieve with the resources to hand are incredible and are to be lauded.

Thank you too to our volunteers, partners and stakeholders. You are all part of the fabric of the Centre – that now more than ever, is not something bedded in bricks and mortar, but a place in our hearts, heads and bones.

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to play a part in the journey of Redfern Legal Centre and look forward to seeing what comes next.

Amy Munro, Chair

Welcome from our CEO

It has been a year of unprecedented challenges. In the first quarter of 2020, thousands of NSW residents were affected by bushfires and extreme weather events, and just as people began to pick up the pieces, COVID-19 struck. It is people already experiencing significant disadvantage that bear the brunt of such crises, and we have witnessed significant increases in hardship and inequity among the communities we serve this year.



Joanna Shulman, CEO

However, in the face of increasing workloads in ever more difficult conditions, Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) has risen to the challenge. During COVID-19, our team had to innovate quickly, changing the way we work to keep pace with increased demand while working remotely.

Times of great crisis bring communities together, and this has certainly been the case this year. The level of support RLC has received from our partners, donors and volunteers has been inspiring. Thank you for your partnership, which allows us to increase our impact and serve our communities in these difficult times. We anticipate that the demand for our services will only increase over the next 6 to 12 months as COVID-19 relief measures are phased out and the moratorium on rental evictions is lifted – making your support even more crucial.

Every year I am moved by the dedication and resilience of our staff, but this year, every member of our team has worked harder than ever, and in tougher circumstances, to achieve incredible outcomes for our clients and communities. To each of you, thank you. RLC would not be the amazing place it is without you.

The incredible outcomes achieved by our staff, volunteers and partners are covered at length in this report, but I want to highlight a few of them here.

As the global health pandemic continued to unfold, RLC called for law reform to prevent communities already experiencing vulnerability from being further left behind. We led and partnered on initiatives to call for increased government support to renters, international students, people on low incomes and migrant workers. We ran workshops to build the capacity of these



The *My Legal Mate* (MLM) app for international students in NSW was created by RLC with support from Study NSW, City of Sydney and the Fair Work Ombudsman. MLM was launched on campus at Macquarie University in October 2019. Image courtesy Macquarie University.

communities amid the unfolding humanitarian crisis, as we worked to address unprecedented levels of legal need. To further support the international student community, the NSW Government and City of Sydney generously provided free access to our *My Legal Mate* App to thousands of international students across NSW.

This year also saw the formation of new partnerships to deliver legal support to previously underserved groups. The support of Commonwealth Bank, PwC Australia, American Express, Ashurst, and King & Wood Mallesons, along with Ecstra Foundation allowed us to launch and grow a new statewide service for people experiencing financial abuse in intimate partner relationships. We also launched the new statewide Migrant Employment Legal Service in partnership with Marrickville Legal Centre, Inner City Legal Centre and Kingsford Legal Centre.

On top of all these significant achievements, this year, RLC staff and Board have been engaged in an intensive strategic planning process. We engaged Social Ventures Australia, and received support from Laurel Draffen of Community Legal Centres NSW and Nexus Consulting, to lead a series of planning discussions across all areas of our organisation, allowing us to develop a robust outcomes framework underpinned by a Theory of Change and strategic plan. We started this approach by dreaming big, envisioning a perfect world and then working backwards, drilling down on activities to address specific areas of community need, partners to collaborate with to plug gaps in the system, and tangible short and long-term outcomes of our work that are the building blocks of greater systemic change.

By stepping through a series of micro- and macro-logic models, this work articulates our commitment to innovation and service enhancement, sets out key areas of measurement to ensure the effectiveness of our approaches, and our dedication to keeping communities at the heart of everything we do.

Finally, this year we are also farewelling the Chair of our Board, Amy Munro, who has served RLC for almost 20 years. Amy started at RLC as a volunteer in 2002, moving on to become a Tenants Advocate with the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service and the Project Manager of the Share Housing Survival Guide. Amy was elected to the Board in 2010 and became Chair of the Board in 2012.

Amy's deep compassion for our community and the care which she brings to every decision has resulted in the centre going from strength to strength under her leadership. She will be greatly missed. We are delighted to see another highly skilled RLC Board Member, Kerry O'Brien, stepping up to take Amy's place. Big shoes to fill, but this is a role we know Kerry will fulfil with significant dedication and expertise.

Joanna Shulman, CEO



RLC staff, volunteers and pro bono solicitors at the launch of RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW, December 2019.

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

Redfern Legal Centre promotes social justice by:

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

Our values

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

Our 2020–2025 Guiding Principles

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

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

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. Our 2020–2025 Strategic Plan is grounded on the belief that by achieving our goals, we will positively impact the people and communities we work with.

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 staff and volunteers, October 2019.

Our Theory of Change

At Redfern Legal Centre, 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.

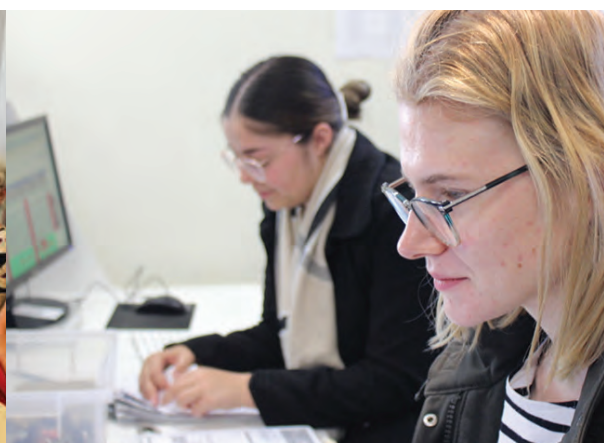


Ultimately this will lead to ...

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



Strategic planning with RLC staff and board.



Volunteer Legal Assistants on RLC's front desk.

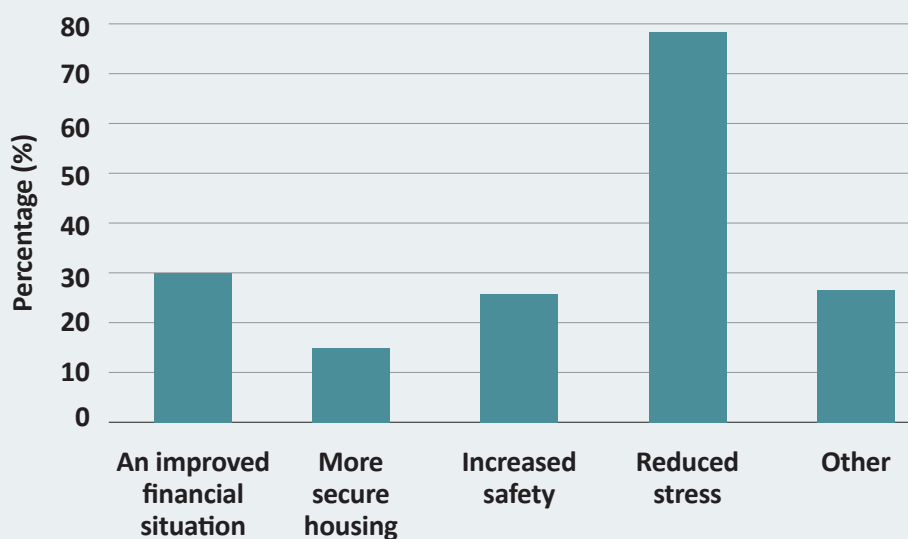
Our Impact 2019–2020

Over the last financial year, RLC has assisted 2,332 people with 5,588 occasions of advice, assistance and representation. In addition, our student volunteers provided 3,815 instances of information and referrals.

Feedback from our annual client survey

- 82% agreed or strongly agreed it was easy to contact our service when they first needed help.
- 95% agreed or strongly agreed they felt listened to.
- 94% agreed or strongly agreed we helped them understand how to deal with their legal problem.
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed they know where to get help if they have a legal problem in the future.
- 50% of respondents said they needed support when using our service for personal, cultural or accessibility reasons and 97% of those clients said we helped them with those specific needs.
- 98% said they would recommend our service to family and friends.

86% of all respondents reported one or more of the following outcomes:



“As per the analysis performed by Community Legal Centres Australia, while COVID has drastically increased legal need, [community legal] centres’ service delivery has been impacted heavily. As well, access to justice became even more difficult, particularly for more marginalised groups.

With this in mind, Redfern Legal Centre should be congratulated for [its] adaptability and resilience through COVID-19. For RLC to not only maintain, but increase the number of clients seen during this period is an outlier in the community legal sector.”

– Extract from a report prepared by a CLC Australia volunteer working on the CLASS database

WHO WE HELPED

19%

people with disability

23%

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

84%

people experiencing financial disadvantage

30%

main language spoken at home not English

31%

experiencing or at risk of family violence

Examples of ‘other’ included:

- Support and understanding – felt listened to.
- More knowledge regarding workplace arrangement.
- More informed – led to better handling with [real estate] agents which led to a good result.
- I realised I was not going to jail. I believed in myself. I wanted to live for the first time in many months.
- More thorough understanding of the position I am in and my rights/responsibilities.
- My health has improved. Enjoying life for the first time in a long time.
- A clear direction of how to proceed in my legal proceedings which takes into context (as well as providing support) that I have been financially abused.

International Student Legal Service NSW

Top issues:

1. Employment law
2. Tenancy and housing
3. Disputes with universities and schools
4. Visa issues related to other legal issues (such as employment law)
5. Credit, debt and consumer law
6. Motor vehicle accidents
7. Traffic and minor criminal matters

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

71%

reported reduced stress

21%

an improved financial situation



"I can't express my gratitude towards RLC. I would like to thank you sincerely for helping international students, because you people are only ray of hope for students, staying away from family."

Health Justice Partnership

Top issues:

1. Family law, child support and child contact
2. Credit, debt and consumer
3. Child protection
4. Minor criminal matters
5. Domestic violence and apprehended violence orders
6. Tenancy and housing
7. Wills and probate

- We assisted **35 times** in relation to the National Redress Scheme
- We assisted **34 times** in relation to the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

100%

reported reduced stress

94%

an improved financial situation

38%

more secure housing

50%

increased safety

50%

Other



"I am very relieved and happy that everything has gone to plan and I believe our kids wouldn't be home yet if you didn't come into our lives. Thank you so much."

"I lost my identity as a young child being stolen. I lost contact with my mother and father. I lost contact with my brothers and sisters. Until RLC I had no identification. [The HJP solicitor] helped me with everything ... he was patient, sensitive, caring and culturally sensitive ... Thank you."

Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS)

Top issues:

1. Termination of tenancy
2. Advice on going to NCAT
3. Bond and compensation
4. Rent and other charges
5. Social housing issues
6. Repairs
7. Issues in shared housing or boarding houses

■ Total number of clients: **906**

■ Total advice, advocacy and representation: **2,397**

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

81%

reported reduced stress

6%

increased safety

19%

more secure housing

25%

Other

“The service was extremely helpful, clear and concise. It alleviated the stress of attending the NCAT tribunal by simplifying the process and defining exactly what I needed to do to be successful.”

Our impact 2019–2020

968

published articles and media mentions

55

community legal education sessions and public speaking engagements

42

policy consultations

33

roundtables and discussion forums

5,588

occasions of advice, assistance and representation

207

stakeholder engagement activities

Total number of clients

2,332

1

Award

190

community legal education activities

239

law reform activities

42

community legal education resources

22

policy submissions

Assisted

35

times in relation to the National Redress Scheme

Assisted

34

times in relation to the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme

Represented tenants at an NCAT hearing or conciliation

75

times

Assisted

63

tenants at duty advocacy

18

media releases

1

hansard inclusion

9

publications and factsheets

Police and Government Accountability

We provided advice and assistance on police complaints on 418 occasions.

Top issues:

1. Police complaints – stop and searches, including strip searches
2. Police complaints – failure to investigate
3. Police complaints – excessive force
4. Access to information
5. Issues relating to fines
6. Minor criminal law
7. Police complaints – lack of customer assistance

Credit, Debt and Consumer Law

Top issues:

1. Consumer credit
2. Financial/insurance/super complaints
3. Other consumer complaints regarding services
4. Credit and debt management/negotiation
5. Credit and debt owed by client
6. Credit and debt owed to client
7. Credit and debt recovery (court matters)



“Thank you [for] contacting Revenue NSW to resolve the issue. I can’t say how much relief it was when the big burden on me is finally gone.”

Financial Abuse Service NSW

Top issues:

1. Financial Abuse
2. Credit and debt consumer credit
3. Financial/insurance/super complaints
4. Credit and debt management/negotiation
5. Credit and debt owed by client
6. Credit and debt owed to client
7. Credit and debt recovery (court matters)

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

29%

An improved financial situation

86%

Reduced stress

14%

Increased safety

29%

Other



“[Utmost] support from all staff members, emotionally and on the legal financial front as well. Gave me the clarity and direction I needed. Would highly recommend this service.”

Employment Law

Top issues:

1. Underpayment
2. Unfair dismissal
3. Conditions and entitlements
4. General protections
5. Redundancy
6. Stand down
7. Bullying and harassment

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

17%

An improved financial situation

4%

More secure housing

40%

Other

22%

Increased safety

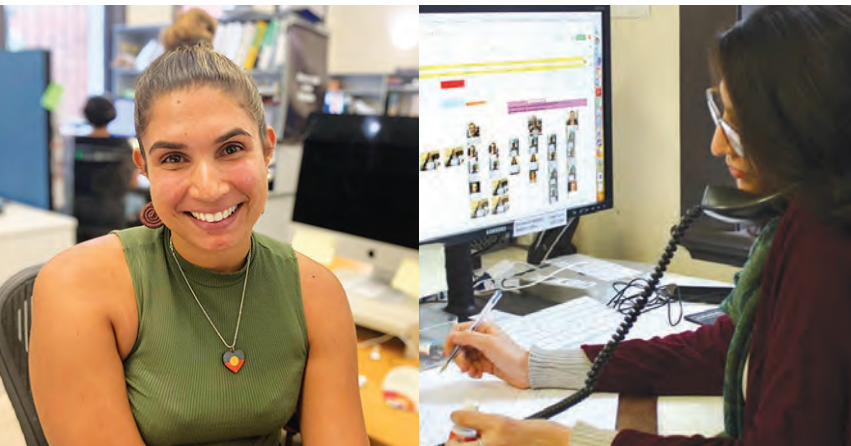
61%

Reduced stress

Our Volunteers

321 volunteers worked with RLC over the 2019–20 financial year, including:

- **115** front desk volunteers
- **82** volunteer solicitors
- **21** clinic students
- **32** secondee/pro bono solicitors
- **105** practical legal trainees and other specialist volunteers



Speak

17

different languages

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Contributed over

20,000 hours

of volunteer time

Our volunteer legal assistants, solicitors and pro bono partnerships provide a commercial value of over

\$3 million

worth of benefit to the Centre each year



Clockwise from top left: One of our longest-serving police accountability volunteers left RLC in November 2019, after five years' service; triaging legal enquiries on front desk; and RLC staff and volunteers taking a stand on Human Rights Day, December 2019.



L–R: A front desk supervisor together with volunteers; and a practical legal trainee with RLC's HJP practice.

Listed on these two pages are the 321 dedicated RLC volunteers who contributed to our story over the last financial year. To each and every individual, our heartfelt thanks.

Aanya Das	Armity Hashkavaei	Cormac Wilde	Friya Mehta	Jessica Pereira
Adrian Craig	Aurhett Barrie	Courtney Robertson	Gayatri Nair	Jessica Yu
Adrian Rook	Baopu He	Craig Emery	Genevieve Couvret	Jevan Griffiths
Aleisha Vinoly	Bella Kosky	Daniel Roff	Genevieve Howe	Jia Yi Lee
Alex White	Ben Day	Darrell Bagang	Georgia Neely	Jing Wang
Alexa Roach	Ben Salon	David Tilley	Georgia Stewart	Jisun Jang
Alexander MacIntyre	Bob Liang	Dean Tyler	Grace Cameron-Lee	Joe Murphy
Alexander Wright	Brett Stone	Denea Bascombe	Guy Williams	Johannah Lowe
Alexis McShane	Brian Chan	Destiny Valencia	Hadeer Sayed	John Bi
Ali French	Bronte McAlpin	Disha Mehta	Hae-Eun Park	Jonathan Chelvam
Ali Zein	Caitlin Tao	Dominic Longhurst	Halil Ozbeyazli	Joseph Murphy
Alice Chong	Callum Christodoulou	Dominic Tran	Hallie Warnock	Joshua Poon
Alina Kaye	Callum Hair	Dominic Wright	Hannah Coleman	Joyce Kennedy
Alison Mackey	Camilla Clemente	Duranka Jayasinghe	Harmanjot Kaur	Julia Lawford
Allegra Peruch	Camilo Pena	Eden Weller	Harris Kershaw	Julian Charters
Allison Rickett	Carla Cristina Massai	Eleanor Wall	Harry Phan	Kaitlyn Oliver
Amelia Harvey	Fedatto	Elena McNiece	Hayley Melville	Kamani Krishnan
Amelia Schubach	Caroline Li	Elijah Lim	Imogen Szumer	Karen Ann De Raya
Amir El-Roubaei	Carolyn Liaw	Elinore Rema	Ingrid Wright	Karlis Draguns
Amrita Saluja	Cassie Botha	Elizabeth Hunt	Irisa Rashid	Kate Bonser
Amy Camenzuli	Cecilia Ngu	Ella Hide	Isaac Ada	Kateryna Shulha
Amy Munro	Celine Nalbandian	Eloise Boughton	Isabella Satz	Kathy Yu
Amy Warren	Charlene Ko	Elyse Methven	Isabelle Alder	Keiran O'Sullivan
Amy Zhao	Charlotte Clark	Emily Capener	Isobelle Waller	Kerry O'Brien
Andrew Martin	Charlotte Smee	Emily Slaytor	Ivan Li	Kila Tong Xu
Angharad Owens-Strauss	Chloe Hamer	Emily Wittig	Jack Dennis	Kirstyn Ho
Anindya Krisna Paul	Chloe Saker	Emma Cronin	Jack Jacobs	Krista MacPherson
Chowdhury	Chris Anderson	Emma Tirabosco	Jaime Lee	Kristina Simic
Anna Glen	Christian Huston	Erin Turner Manners	Jaipartek Singh	Kundai Khuleya
Anna Kedves	Christina White	Esther Matthews	James Scully-Leaf	Kylie O'Reilly
Anna West	Christine Weekes	Faye Gabby Schachter	James Walker	Labdhi Jhatakia
Anthony Chapman	Chu Yin Wong	Ferdous Bahar	Jane Wilburn	Lachlan Wachter
Anthony Hong	Chuyi Wang	Fiona Gayler	Jason O'Neil	Laura Hiatt
Antonina Pilat	Chuyu Xiao	Fiona Katauskas	Jemimah Cooper	Lauren Davies
Anusha Thomas	Claire Wong	Florence Fermanis	Jennifer Hilliar	Lauren Kava
April Barton	Claudia Robinson	Francesca Lilly	Jennifer Tsui	Lauren Stefanou
	Cormac Guthrie	Freya Appleford	Jessica Kim	Leslie Huang



Festive decorations brought in by a client for our front desk volunteers, December 2019; and a volunteer creating a message of thanks to our supporters.

Lily Jones
Lindsay Stevens
Lola Chang
Louisa Henderson
Lu Zhou
Lucy Brown
Lucy Nguyen
Luke Wilson
Lydia Albright-Le Page
Madeleine Stevens
Madeline de Dassel
Maggie Fung
Manasi Kumar
Manny Zhang
Mariham Guirguis
Mark Han
Mary Hawkins
Matilda Vaughan
Matthew Churkovich
Matthew Mewing
Matthew Wallace
Maxine Napret
Maya Gonzalez-Malcolm
Meadhbh Cacciaguidi-Fahy
Megan Caristo
Melissa Jones
Merrilyn Mansfield
Meryem Aydogan
Michael Gibson
Michael Grinbergs
Michael Nguyen
Mindy Kan
Minji Kim
Minoh Arsalah
Molly O'Brien
Monica Bayas Inglis

Monica Tracy
Nabeela Raihan
Nadezna Wilkins
Nadine Mattini
Narita Nagin
Nathan Reidy
Naushin Khan
Nelson He
Nerida Mullally
Nesha Balasubramanian
Nicholas Simpson
Nicola Cooper
Nicole Oates
Nikki Samuel
Nikolas Rowe
Noeline Harendran
Nuzuma Sama
Oliver Creagh
Olivia Irvine
Oscar Monaghan
Patrick Trieu
Paul Ahearn
Paul Hong
Paul Tatarov
Penelope Parker
Penny Parker
Phil Andrews
Philippa Meikle
Philippa Noakes
Phillip Gunther
Polina Churilova
Puneet Sandhu
Quyen Nguyen
Rachael Chadwick
Rachel Yangzhizhe Sun
Rebecca Blumberg
Rebecca Koelmeyer

Remashree Baniya
Renz Hernandez
Romina Reyftmann
Ronya Gilani Sari
Rory McLeod
Rose Short
Ruben Robertson
Sally Knox
Sally Yang
Samantha Titmuss
Sara Virk
Sara Juric
Sara Saleh
Sarah Avery
Sarah McLenaghan
Sarah Morton-Ramwell
Sarah Svehla
Sarita May Preedeesanit
Shannon Sau
Shaun Chng
Shaun Towers
Shirley Tang
Shona Scully
Shuhong (Lisa) Liu
Simon Rice
Simonne Einfeld
Simran Kaur
Sing Hau Yeap
Skye Owen
Skyla Partridge
Sofia Bahas
Soo Young Cho
Sophie Heithersay
Sophie Norrish
Sophie Volk
Stefanie Vogt
Stephanie Blancquart

Stephen Mckenzie
Sue Kang
Susan Winfield
Sylva Dankha
Syvannah Harper
Tamara Sims
Tan Dang
Tanja Gordon
Thalia Park
Tim Capelin
Tim Forrest
Tim Nelves
Tom Wood
Trent Wallace
Vaidehi Mahapatra
Vanja Bulut
Vincent Collins
Vivian Wong
Vy Dao
Wendy Chen
Winston Chu
XilinChen
Yeting Guo
Yi Weiliu
Yuogang Chung
Yvette Theodorou
Zoe Anastassiades
Zoe Behrens
Zoe Papagiannis

Our Team

In 1977, Redfern Legal Centre opened its doors as the first community legal centre in NSW. For over 40 years our team has worked to enhance access to justice and uphold human rights through the provision of holistic and accessible legal support.

Our Centre was founded by a passionate group of legal advocates, academics and volunteers. Their commitment to equity and innovation in the legal system underpins our work to this day.

This year, amid the global health pandemic, our team pivoted rapidly to a new way of working, mobilising additional staff and volunteers to help meet the unprecedented level of legal demand.

Volunteers are integral to everything we do, expanding our impact and our reach.

Under the supervision of RLC staff, passionate law students assist people on the frontline of our service; volunteer and pro bono solicitors provide legal advice; practical legal trainees and specialist volunteers support our daily operations; and our board provides expertise and support to help shape our vision and strategic goals.

Working together, we not only maintain a groundbreaking range of specialist legal services, we achieve change through policy and law reform; build capacity through community legal education; nurture the next generation of lawyers through our volunteer program; and provide an authoritative voice on human rights, equality and justice.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our funders, donors and supporters, who provide the resources we need to maintain RLC's critical services.

The growing demand for free legal help will always outpace our limited funding pool. The support of our extended networks is our best resource in the fight for greater financial sustainability. It is all thanks to the energy and generosity of our entire team that we are able to increase the reach of our programs and achieve new goals.

Our sincere thanks to the law firm partners, universities, corporate partners and student law groups who have supported us this year:

- American Express
- Ashurst
- Clayton Utz
- Colin Biggers & Paisley
- Commonwealth Bank
- DLA Piper



An RLC Tenants' Advocate receives a token of appreciation.

- Fragomen
- Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers
- King & Wood Mallesons
- Lander & Rogers
- McCabe Curwood
- New South Wales Bar Association
- PwC Australia
- Sparke Helmore Lawyers
- Sydney Uni Law Society
- Sydney University Law Revue
- Telstra
- The Hand Up Foundation
- Thomson Reuters
- University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) Law Students' Society
- UNSW Law School
- UTS Law School
- Watts McCray Lawyers
- Wotton + Kearney.

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

Barristers

We thank the following barristers for providing their services to our clients on a pro bono basis: Adrian Maroya, Ingmar Taylor, Marea Wilson and Vanja Bulut.

Partnerships

RLC is highly appreciative of the assistance and partnership of the following firms, each of which is connected to one of our key areas of law.



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 credit and debt 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 Law and Health Justice Partnership Partner

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



Police Accountability Practice Partner

DLA Piper supports RLC's police accountability practice, both financially and through pro bono support. DLA provides solicitors to help staff RLC's Monday 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 assist with RLC's advice clinic for international students, providing advice on a range of legal issues, including credit and debt, consumer and tenancy matters, review of government decisions, victims' compensation applications, access to records and mental health and guardianship.



Advice Clinic and Family Law Partner

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

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.



Advice Clinic Partner

Wotton + Kearney assists with RLC's weekly pro bono advice clinic on a monthly basis, assisting people experiencing disadvantage with a range of legal issues, including credit and debt, consumer and tenancy matters, review of government decisions, victims' compensation applications, access to records and mental health and guardianship.



MMMIGRATION

Migration Advice Partners

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

COVID-19 Partnerships and Support



CLAYTON UTZ

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

Since RLC staff have been working from home and providing services remotely, Colin Biggers & Paisley have also provided invaluable support assisting the intake team, by answering calls and helping to triage clients who cannot access our web enquiry form.

Clayton Utz has also been highly supportive of RLC's international students' service 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. Since we have been providing services remotely, Clayton Utz have also kindly assisted the intake team, by answering calls and helping to triage clients who cannot access our web enquiry form.

Financial Abuse Legal Service supporters

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

RLC Young Professionals Committee

The RLC Young Professionals Committee (YPC) was founded in 2018 as a way for emerging professionals who have completed their volunteer term at RLC to stay involved and support the work of the centre through fundraising and awareness-raising activities. The YPC also works to create opportunities for current RLC volunteers to network with volunteer alumni.

The YPC is a dedicated volunteer team who donates our time and energy, and leverages our combined networks to support RLC. This report provides a summary of our key activities for the 2019–20 year.

Comedy Night

Our comedy night, ‘Truth Justice and the Redfern Way’, held at Giant Dwarf Theatre in March, was once again a huge success. Over 200 people joined us to share big laughs while raising funds to help support the work of RLC.

Now in its third year, this annual comedy gala has become a permanent fixture on RLC’s fundraising calendar. The lineup featured well-known comedy stand ups and fresh local talent, and a great time was had by all as a diverse mix of personalities took to the Giant Dwarf stage.

Putting on this event takes a lot of hard work and energy. The YPC would like to give our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported RLC by coming to the show, and bought raffle tickets and merch to help #KeepJusticeFree.

A massive thank you to Moira Kennedy and the rest of the Giant Dwarf team, and all the amazing performers who had us in stitches: Uncle Brendan, Conchetta Caristo, Matt Okine, Bec Melrose, Benny Egmolesse, AJ Lamarque, Radha La Bia (Shahmen Suku), Brendan Hancock, Michael Hing and Nikki Britton.

A special thank you also to the community businesses who donated fabulous raffle prizes: XSpearFishing, Omafiets, La Grillade, Tudor Hotel, Giant Dwarf and Mickey’s Fruit and Veg. The raffle is a key part of our fundraising efforts and would not be possible without the support of these wonderful businesses.

Blackmores Sydney Running Festival

In September, the YPC once again coordinated RLC’s participation in the Blackmores Sydney Running Festival, an annual marathon suitable for all abilities that takes place in September, with participants fundraising for the charity of their choice.

The YPC managed RLC’s online presence, working with RLC’s communications manager on a range of strategies to attract runners and donors to the event. This year we had a total of 19 people running, with 73 individual donors raising much-needed funds for RLC.

YPC x RLC vollies dinner

In August, the YPC hosted a dinner for current and former RLC volunteers to reconnect, meet and talk about all things RLC and social justice.

It was an amazing night, with current vollies telling the YPC about the latest RLC updates, while the YPC was able to share its perspective about entering the legal profession and how social justice can be a part of life as a junior lawyer. Of course, it was also fun to just reminisce about the most memorable front desk moments!

It was also a wonderful opportunity for the YPC to talk about our role within RLC, and the projects we’ve been working on and are planning for the future. It was also really great to hear people were supportive of what we’ve been doing and want to be involved.

If you’re a past or present RLC volunteer, or just someone looking to be involved and help out, reach out to us at the email below and either Lily or Ivan (our YPC Co-chairs) will be in touch. We are always keen to grow our network of volunteers and supporters!

The year ahead

With the ongoing COVID-19 situation, access to justice is more important than ever and our community needs the law to protect it. The YPC hopes to look for innovative ways to continue making a contribution to RLC to support the vital work it does. We were planning to run a Trivia Night around this time, but with COVID-19 that just hasn’t been possible. However, if this is something you’d like to be involved with, or would be interested to sponsor, please send us an email.

Finally, if you have any questions about the YPC, or ideas for future projects we could be involved in, please don’t hesitate to contact us by sending an email to youngprofessionals@rlc.org.au. We would love to hear from you!

The YPC members for 2019–2020 are:

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



Left to right from top left: RLC staff and volunteers at the comedy night – RLC’s principal solicitor and CEO; RLC’s front desk manager and YPC committee members; Uncle Brendan’s Welcome to Country; RLC’s CEO opens the show; Matt Okine; MC Concetta Caristo; AJ Lamarque; Michael Hing; Radha LaBia (Shahmen Suku); RLC volunteers and staff running for justice in the Blackmores Sydney Running Festival, September 2019.

Credit, Debt and Consumer Law

RLC's Credit, Debt and Consumer Law practice has undergone a number of significant changes this year, including the recruitment of additional volunteers, solicitors and practical legal trainees, expanding our reach and ability to support those most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Throughout the year, we continued to provide advice and advocacy in areas such as consumer credit, banking, insurance, superannuation, debt recovery, and consumer complaints. We also assisted people in navigating the legal system through claims to the Ombudsman services, NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal and Local Court Small Claims Division.

Working for change

The practice has had great success this year progressing some important law reform and policy initiatives.

Reforms to the Fines Act

Together with Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW), the Credit and Debt practice prepared submissions addressing our concerns about proposed changes to the *Fines Act 1996* (NSW), including the disproportionate impact of the electronic service of fines on people experiencing hardship.

As part of this work, we met with NSW Minister for Customer Service, the Hon Victor Dominello, MP, to ensure the concerns and needs of the community were raised.

This consultation contributed to a strong push to have these concerns heard in NSW Parliament, and a number of significant amendments to the Fines Act were achieved. These changes included the ability to

WHAT RLC CLIENTS SAY

"Thank you very much for the help and time you have spent on my case. If you have not helped me for [bank] matter I will be paying my loan til 20 years. You guys are very kind."

"Despite these challenging times (COVID-19), RLC provided prompt and actionable legal advice, and I could clearly understand everything, without feeling the need to be a legal professional myself."

apply for a 50% reduction to a fine for eligible persons in receipt of a government benefit, and a prohibition on the automatic reallocation of funds from overpaid fines towards another outstanding fine, providing relief to those most impacted by crippling fines debt.

Addressing high-pressure selling tactics

The practice provided submissions in support of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC) ban on unsolicited 'cold call' telephone sales of direct life insurance and consumer credit insurance (CCI). The ban was announced in late 2019, and will help bring an end to this type of high-pressure selling which has often deliberately targeted people experiencing disadvantage.

In addition, the practice has been active in a number of consumer and representative forums, such as the Financial Services Council Consumer Code Forum which is overseeing the review of the Life Insurance Code of Practice, and more recently, at the NSW Legal Assistance Forum (NLAF) – Fines and Traffic Law Working Group, on behalf of CLCNSW.

High pressure selling: Kim's story

Kim*, a young single mother who had four children and was receiving a Disability Support Pension, was made homeless after escaping a relationship of domestic violence. After being enticed by unscrupulous online advertising promoting car finance to pensioners, she visited a car dealership to enquire about a cheap second-hand car. Although Kim was not planning on purchasing a car on that day, the sales person took advantage of her vulnerable situation, organising a car loan for over \$20,000.

It was only after Kim came to RLC for help that she was made aware that her loan included a number of add-on insurance products she had not requested, and additional charges equivalent to 75% of the purchase price of the vehicle. RLC submitted a detailed complaint to the lender on Kim's behalf and negotiated a significant waiver of the remaining balance of the loan, while also enabling Kim to retain full ownership of the vehicle.

*Name has been changed

Advice and casework

Bad finance, home loans and short-term credit

The practice achieved significant wins in its casework, focusing on representing clients who have been provided with unsuitable finance such as inappropriate car finance, home loans, and short-term credit.

We have also been working closely with RLC's newly established statewide Financial Abuse Service NSW and RLC's International Student Service NSW, to ensure legal advice and representation services are targeted toward people most affected by financial vulnerability during the COVID-19 crisis.

Education and training

Fines, penalty notices and dispute resolution

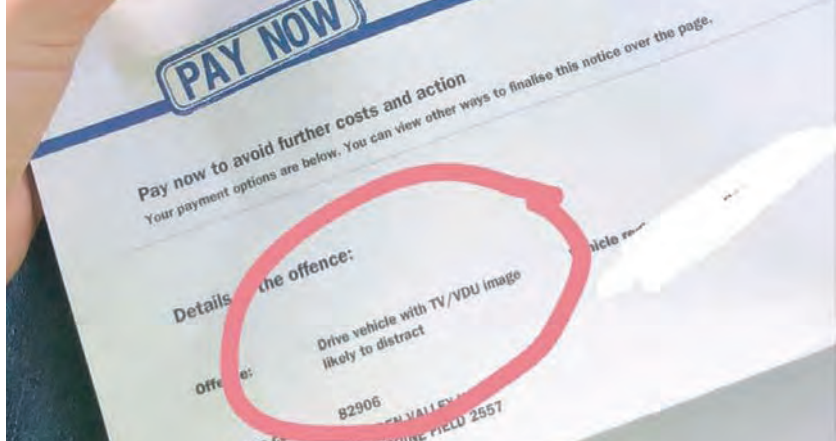
The Credit and Debt practice presented a number of community legal education (CLE) training sessions during this period including a webinar on 'External Dispute Resolution (EDR)' to assist consumers and community workers navigate their way through the various EDR forums including the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA), the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) and the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON).

We also presented a webinar detailing the various options available for people to address their fines and penalty notices, including through Instalments Plans, Waivers and Work Development Orders (WDOs).

Community engagement

Sydney Homeless Connect

In July, the practice represented RLC at the Sydney Homeless Connect Forum, an annual event held at Sydney Town Hall that links people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness with support services.



In Hansard

In 2019, RLC united with Community Legal Centres NSW and Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre to raise concerns about proposed changes to fines laws, such as, the risks associated with the electronic service of fines, which can disproportionately impact people who are already experiencing extreme financial hardship.

In September, Sophie Cotsis MP, Shadow Minister for Better Public Services, thanked CLCs for their valuable work and input during the *Fines Amendment Bill 2019* Second Reading debate in the NSW Parliament.

'Labor has contacted several stakeholders in the community services and legal sectors regarding this bill ... I want to thank very much the community legal centres across NSW ... everyone involved. They do a magnificent job and I want them to know how much we appreciate their work.'

As well as promoting RLC's services to the community, the forum gives RLC an opportunity to provide on-the-spot legal advice, including assisting people with fines matters. This year, we also worked with an officer from the Australian Tax Office (ATO) to help people to locate their lost superannuation.

OUR IMPACT



People are empowered to take control of their finances



People can confidently navigate the legal and financial system



Families and children are more financially secure

People feel less financially stressed



Reduction in homelessness and poverty



Employment Law

In 2019, Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) proudly teamed up with Inner City Legal Centre (ICLC), Kingsford Legal Centre (KLC) and Marrickville Legal Centre (MLC) to form the Migrant Employment Legal Service (MELS).

As part of this work, RLC's Employment Law practice welcomed a new in-house MELS lawyer. Over the year, this role has expanded our capacity to support migrant workers and international students with employment law needs, helping us to meet increased demand during COVID-19.

Working for change

COVID-19 reforms

Unanticipated business losses from the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in rapid job cuts, stand-downs, wage reductions and redundancies. Migrant workers and international students were disproportionately impacted.

In response, RLC's employment and international student practices partnered with MELS, MLC and Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) and other CLCs to call for protections to shield vulnerable migrant workers from the fallout of the evolving crisis by:

- providing visa cancellation relief to protect the visas of those sponsored by their employers, so these workers can find other jobs if stood down, terminated or made redundant.
- extending state and federal government financial support to those on temporary visas.
- extending federal government Fair Entitlement Guarantee eligibility to temporary visa holders, so these workers can access wages and entitlements unpaid due to business insolvency.

We welcomed the NSW Government's introduction of COVID-19 support packages for international students and temporary visa holders in response.

Criminalising wage theft

This year, the federal government sought feedback about ways to stop wage theft. We made submissions to a Senate Committee and also the Attorney General that endorsed proposals for introducing serious sanctions on underpaying employers insofar as such penalties encourage lawful workplace conditions and reduce opportunities to exploit vulnerable workers.

Critically, we raised concerns that criminalisation reforms do not go to the heart of the issue of wage theft: without further structural reform addressing why vulnerable workers and migrants are exploited at work, criminalisation alone will not effectively diminish the culture of wage theft by employers.



RLC engages in community legal outreach as part of the Migrant Employment Legal Service (MELS), a joint initiative of Redfern Legal Centre, Inner City Legal Centre, Kingsford Legal Centre and Marrickville Legal Centre.

Religious freedom

The practice made two submissions and attended a roundtable discussion to provide comments on the federal government's package of legislative reforms on religious freedom.

We raised concerns that the reforms, if enacted, will change the fabric of Australian society and create a power imbalance that favours and amplifies the voices of individuals with religious beliefs and faith-based organisations to the serious detriment of individuals within RLC's client base.

We made recommendations to ensure employers are able to enforce basic standards of civility and maintain safe workplaces for all staff, to allow students to freely express themselves, or to safely explore their beliefs or identities at school, and to ensure that women and minority groups can participate fully and freely in our society.

Advice and casework

COVID-19 demand

Over the past six months, the practice has seen a huge upswing in requests for employment law advice. We are seeing many cases where people have been stood down, dismissed, or ripped off while on JobKeeper and had their wages cut in response to the COVID-19 downturn.

The employment team has designed a work allocation system to advise clients remotely. This has removed a number of inefficiencies, enabling our 20+ employment volunteer lawyers and practical legal trainees to work flexibly and advise or prepare for advices after business hours, or between other work during their normal day.



RLC's MELS employment solicitor discussing workplace rights with international students from the University of Sydney, February 2020.

In our casework, in addition to helping vulnerable workers with unpaid wages, we have focused on issues such as unpaid internships, sponsored employees being forced to pay back wages and visa nomination fees, and more recently, unlawful stand-downs, underpayments and unpaid super exposed in the process of the employer applying to the ATO for JobKeeper.

Education and training

Supporting culturally and linguistically diverse workers

Throughout the year, we worked with MELS to deliver community legal education (CLE) sessions to migrant workers, international students and caseworkers. This

included holding a number of CLEs at various TAFE campuses in NSW.

More recently, MELS delivered a webinar with Legal Aid titled: 'Issues for workers from culturally and linguistically diverse communities – from chronic underpayments to COVID-19'. The webinar saw 70 caseworkers from across NSW join to learn what their clients can do in difficult times of redundancy, and stand downs while not having access to JobKeeper.

COVID-19 has unfortunately delayed our plans to hit the road and deliver CLE and legal advice to regional, remote and rural communities. We look forward to doing this in the new year.

COVID-19 wage theft: Dario's story

Around 20 years ago, Dario* moved to Australia from Peru and became an Australian citizen. He has lived and worked as a full-time store worker for a boutique retail company ever since. Dario sought help from RLC after being temporarily stood down by his employer during COVID-19. When attempting to access his superannuation funds early, Dario discovered that his employer had not paid him any super or made any tax deductions on his behalf.

Dario received little-to-no income during this time and owed a substantial debt to the ATO. RLC discovered Dario had been badly underpaid for years: a flat rate of \$15.00 per hour and insufficient annual leave and long service leave. RLC helped Dario calculate all the entitlements owed to him and advised him of the amount he could claim that fell within the six-year statutory limitation period on underpayments.

We sent Dario's employer a letter of demand, which bore a quick turnaround for negotiations and settlement. Dario's employer agreed to pay him a sum of \$55,000 and allowed him to keep his job with the correct rate of pay. Dario was very pleased with the outcome and was referred to another service for assistance with his overdue tax.

*Name has been changed



RLC's employment solicitor discussing findings of the joint community legal centre (CLC) report, '#MeToo: Legal Responses to Sexual Harassment at Work', National Community Legal Centres Conference, Queensland, August 2019. The session was co-presented with Kingsford Legal Centre, JobWatch and Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins, who commended CLCs for their significant contribution to the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces.

RLC in the media

International student Andres tried to access his super but realised it had never been paid

Catalina Florez, *SBS World News*, 29 June 2020

For two years, Andres worked at a cafe and bookshop owned by the same businessman. But when COVID-19 hit, he lost his job and turned to the only form of assistance allowed by the federal government for temporary visa holders; early access to his superannuation. But Andres discovered the \$3,500 he was owed had never been paid by his boss.

'I would like to get my money back, but beyond that, I want this not to happen to anyone else because I know how it feels and I know if a student is in a vulnerable situation and he has worked for that money and that money was ripped off, it feels really bad,' he said.

It is not an isolated incident. Sharmilla Bargon from the Redfern Legal Centre says they have seen an increase in international students seeking their help around unpaid superannuation. 'We see that there's absolutely widescale exploitation of employees in this way. It's really common that if a business is struggling that superannuation will be one of the first payments that they stop making,' she said.

Normally, international students can only access their superannuation once they permanently leave the country, at which point it's usually too late to reclaim unpaid payments. But even for those who have tried, Ms Bargon says, 'it's a long and difficult path and we have had varied success with it'. Ms Bargon says that RLC's *My Legal Mate* app for international students has seen a 'dramatic increase in people making enquiries about tenancy and employment law' this year.

Full article available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/international-student-andres-tried-to-access-his-super-but-realised-it-had-never-been-paid>

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

International Student Legal Service NSW

RLC's International Student Legal Service NSW (ISLS) is the only independent specialist legal service available to the 266,000 international students enrolled to study in NSW (onshore and offshore).

Funded by Study NSW and the Fair Work Ombudsman, and supported by City of Sydney (CoS), ISLS provides free legal advice, advocacy and casework relating to the complex socio-legal problems that impact international students, alongside law reform and education work.

Advice and casework

COVID-19 crisis

During COVID-19, ISLS has seen increasing numbers of international students facing financial crisis, evictions and accommodation disputes, health issues, education provider disputes, homelessness, visa problems and psychological trauma.

We are also seeing rising numbers of enquiries regarding homelessness, deferment of studies, and the potential collapse of education providers. In addition, our clients are seeking urgent assistance regarding food security, and relief.

In response, ISLS employed a new solicitor in June, with funding support from the NSW Government. We also welcomed the assistance of Colin, Biggers & Paisley, whose pro bono solicitors provided additional telephone advice to RLC clients, increasing our efficiency by enabling us to handle more appointments simultaneously.

Issues with education providers

Because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, many international students are commencing or continuing studies with Australian education providers from overseas. ISLS has seen a rise in disputes with education providers during this period. Common issues include disputes regarding deferment of studies, failure of the education provider to provide online learning to an industry standard, and the collapse of the education provider.

As a result, many international students are also experiencing urgent visa issues, requiring the extension of expired visas, or visas about to expire, often at short notice. With the demand for visa advice outstripping available appointment slots, ISLS's dedicated volunteer migration agents kindly stepped in to fill the breach, devoting more of their time to meet this increased area of legal need.



An ISLS practical legal trainee prepares a feast for her volunteer colleagues on her final advice night.

Working for change

ISLS plays a lead role in addressing exploitative practices affecting international students. This year, we continued to push for change surrounding endemic levels of non-payment and underpayment of wages, working closely with RLC's Employment Law practice. We also collaborated with RLC's tenancy team to address targeted accommodation exploitation.

Crisis support payments

ISLS wrote to federal government Ministers regarding the lack of financial support packages for international students during COVID-19. Unlike their domestic counterparts, international students have no access to Youth Allowance, Austudy or AbStudy, all of which also include the coronavirus supplement.

Fair Entitlement Guarantee (FEG)

Another major concern for ISLS and RLC's Employment practice is the inability of international student and other migrant workers to access the federal government's Fair Entitlement Guarantee (FEG) scheme, which enables workers to access wages and other entitlements earned for hours worked prior to a business' insolvency.

ISLS has been calling for law reform in this area alongside RLC's Employment practice and the Migrant Employment Legal Service (MELS). This includes engaging with Federal Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon Christian Porter, MP.

Overseas student health cover

After identifying concerns of numerous international students surrounding the availability of pre- and post-natal care to international students as provided by their compulsory health insurance (Overseas Student Health Cover), ISLS engaged with NSW Health, City of Sydney and other key stakeholders to investigate the recent legislative and policy changes impacting international students in Australia.

Three roundtable discussions have taken place, with more to follow. A specific focus of these discussions has been Australia's possible breaches of and non-compliance to international law in maintaining this approach. Importantly, RLC's Health Justice Partnership referred numerous clients to ISLS, who are particularly impacted by these recent changes.

Of significant concern is the limited amount of hard data available, the unwillingness of health insurers and government to engage in this matter, and what appears to be a significant proportion of the international student population who are unable to access reproductive health care due to these changes, causing significant health and wellbeing concerns for those in need.

Purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA)

Purpose-built student housing provided by universities and other student accommodation providers remained a key area of ISLS' focus over the last year.

PBSA housing providers are able to 'opt-out' of the Residential Tenancies Act, which can create a unique set of problems within contract law. As a result, the practice is assisting a growing number of international students seeking remedies for unjust contracts.

In addition, outstanding accommodation fees are able to be characterised as education debt. This can have serious flow-on effects for many international students, preventing enrolment progression and affecting students' visa status.

ISLS has partnered with RLC's Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS), CoS and engaged with state and federal government, and other key stakeholders including the Student Accommodation Association to achieve change.

Substantial progress has been made to provide PBSAs with a Standard Form Agreement that provides tenants with better protections than currently offered.

Stranded during COVID-19: Sarah's story

Sarah*, an international student in studying NSW, was about to commence a new course of studies when COVID-19 struck. Like so many others, Sarah was stood down from her job as a result of the pandemic. As she was not eligible for government assistance, Sarah decided to put her studies on hold and return home.

Sarah found that airfares were suddenly far more expensive due to COVID-19, and she had to use the last of her savings to book a flight. Her flight was rescheduled twice, only to be ultimately cancelled, with the airline refusing to refund the cost of the airfare. Having already arranged with her landlord to vacate her property before booking her flight home, this last-minute cancellation left Sarah without a place to live.

When Sarah approached ISLS for help, she was stranded in Australia, homeless, unemployed and financially destitute. As she had withdrawn from her studies, Sarah was also placed on a bridging visa. While she was grateful to be able to remain legally in Australia, this visa type precluded her from accessing many COVID-19 relief packages.

Due to high demand for crisis accommodation and her visa type, Sarah had been couch-surfing and was in desperate need of accommodation. ISLS helped Sarah with a short-term accommodation solution, while we worked on looking for longer-term solutions to help her. RLC's Credit and Debt practice provided Sarah with advice and commenced engagement with the airline in an attempt to recover the airfare. ISLS' pro bono partner provided visa advice, and Sarah was able to regain her international student visa and re-enrol in a course of studies. This then allowed ISLS to have Sarah placed on the early access list for the NSW Government COVID-19 crisis accommodation scheme for international students.

Sarah was accepted into the scheme and her accommodation is now secure for a number of months, while she gets back on her feet. Sarah continues to access food hampers from the food bank, Oz Harvest. Moving forward, ISLS will remain engaged with Sarah supporting her with her other legal needs.

Sarah's story illustrates the precarious situation that many international students are in as a result of COVID-19, and highlights the importance of collaborative service delivery to overcome these issues.

* Name has been changed



My Legal Mate (MLM) user testing, October 2019. MLM provides legal information to international students using over 3,000 multi-language videos.

Crisis accommodation for international students

ISLS is pleased to have been an integral part of developing the NSW Government initiative to provide free crisis accommodation to international students. This program has now placed over 3,000 individuals and family into secure accommodation for up to five months. ISLS remains significantly involved in the program.

Resources and publications

My Legal Mate

In October, ISLS launched its innovative legal assistance app, *My Legal Mate* (MLM) on campus at Macquarie University.

Created by RLC, with support from CoS, Study NSW and Fair Work Ombudsman, MLM uses interactive video to provide individualised legal assistance to international students in seven languages.

The agility of MLM as an information source was highlighted during COVID-19, when the content was updated with a section on legal issues relevant to international students during the pandemic, including employment law and tenancy advice.

As part of a collaborative approach to protect international students during COVID-19, ISLS received funding from Study NSW and CoS to provide 72,500 free MLM licenses to the international student community in New South Wales and CoS local government areas, respectively.

Education and training

Education and training remain a core component of ISLS' work. Across the year, we attended numerous external events and decision-making forums, including stakeholder advisory groups, orientation events, and student association events.

University of Technology (UTS) student clinic

Now in its fourth year, ISLS' UTS student clinic remains highly valued, with letters of appreciation from UTS's Dean of Law acknowledging the significant learning opportunities it provides. To maintain the momentum of this popular clinic in the age of COVID-19, ISLS took the course online, enabling students to participate in learning activities remotely.

Many students who have taken part in this clinic have remained engaged with ISLS, or with similar organisations, and continue to assist those most marginalised in society.



RLC's international student solicitor launching *My Legal Mate* at Macquarie University, October 2019.

RLC in the media

International students in NSW are being given access to free legal advice

Nick Barker, *SBS News*, 5 December 2019.

A new app is offering international students information about their legal rights when it comes to employment, housing, education and sexual assault. Rudrapriya Ravichandran is a 26-year-old international student from Sri Lanka, studying a Master of Commerce. She has been using the *My Legal Mate* app and said it has “supported our transition ... and better enhanced our learning journey in Australia.” ...

NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Trade John Barilaro told SBS News the app was an Australian-first. ‘For the 264,000 international students currently studying NSW, this is another step in making the experience as rewarding and as safe as possible,’ he said. ‘*My Legal Mate* gives international students 24-hour access to legal advice – something which has never been offered before.’

Full article available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/international-students-in-nsw-are-being-given-access-to-free-legal-advice>

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



Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (ISTAAS)

The ISTAAS team supports tenants in Inner Sydney through the provision of legal advice, advocacy and resources, as well as representation in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) Appeal Panel and the NSW Supreme Court.

Throughout the year, we also engaged in targeted policy and law reform work and continued to educate on tenancy law through our community legal education (CLE) program. ISTAAS is a collaborative service and works closely with all the practice areas of RLC.

Working for change

Greater protections for renters during COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic escalated and people started losing their livelihoods, it became clear that there would be a wave of evictions unless the NSW Government put protections in place.

ISTAAS was part of a coordinated statewide and nationwide effort by peak tenants' rights, housing and homelessness organisations to advocate for strong and meaningful protections for tenants during the pandemic.

In March, RLC and ISTAAS also signed a joint statement calling for 'No Evictions in a Health Crisis', accompanied by a petition with over 12,000 signatures. Soon after this was delivered, the federal government announced a raft of COVID-19 relief measures for renters, and a moratorium on evictions came into force in NSW on 15 April. This was a welcome move, but in our view the changes did not go far enough.

ISTAAS wrote to key members of the government, the opposition and the cross-bench to demand stronger protections for renters. We worked closely with the Independent Member for Sydney, Mr Alex Greenwich MP, and advocated with other key decision makers for legislative amendments, clearer information and better guidelines.

We also addressed the shortfalls of the moratorium in local media. Among other things, we highlighted the need for adequate protections against 'no grounds' evictions and for less onerous break lease provisions.

This concerted reform effort contributed to further changes enacted in mid-May 2020, including an early termination option for renters affected by COVID-19.

WHAT RLC CLIENTS SAY

"Thank you for your wonderful support. I have my life back."

"They saved me completely and I appreciate them so much."

"... a strong working team that works with clients until the end."

Advice and casework

Homelessness prevention

The primary focus of ISTAAS is the prevention of homelessness through the provision of advice, advocacy and representation to tenants facing eviction. During the 2019–20 financial year ISTAAS provided 439 tenants with advice relating to the termination of their tenancies (both public and private).

Notably this year, ISTAAS represented a client on a successful appeal to the NSW Supreme Court, which overturned the termination of her tenancy and saved her from imminent homelessness.

Social housing repairs

In 2019, much of our systemic casework focused on social housing repairs. This work keeps housing providers accountable for the condition and quality of housing they provide and highlights the failings of maintenance systems. In collaboration with our pro bono partner King & Wood Mallesons, we are developing a set of tools to support advocates and support workers running social housing repairs matters in NCAT.

Supporting renters during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a big spike in demand for our service. ISTAAS continues to hear from many people in desperate situations: people who can't pay rent, whose landlords won't negotiate or let them leave their tenancies early without paying penalties; students in share houses left with an unmanageable share of rent because housemates have lost work and moved out; international students with unstable housing who had lost their income; people from overseas who are ineligible for government support; and people who were already struggling financially before COVID-19.

The eviction moratorium and other amendments provided protection for some renters, but also created a lot of complexity and uncertainty.



A volunteer advocate staffing the phones in our tenants' advice clinic; and accolades for a tenancy volunteer at the Margaret Jones Warrior Awards, December 2019.

Education and training

Reforms to the *Residential Tenancies Act*

2019–20 saw significant changes to tenancy laws in NSW and this guided our community legal education program. In late 2019, ISTAAS delivered a webinar about the new domestic violence provisions of the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

Throughout 2020, the legislative response to COVID-19 was staggered, complicated and affected the rights of a huge number of renters facing hardship. To help people navigate these quickly changing rules, solicitors from ISTAAS presented some short videos outlining changes to tenancy laws and giving tips on negotiating rent with landlords.

Support for Waterloo residents

With funding support from City of Sydney, we continued to operate the Waterloo Tenants' Advice Service in anticipation of the proposed redevelopment of the Waterloo public housing estate.

Towards the end of 2019, we participated in the pilot of the 'Waterloo Community Outreach', a weekly drop-in outreach on the Waterloo estate staffed by community and government support services. This successful initiative was continued in 2020, until social distancing requirements meant it had to be put on hold. Throughout the year, we continued to engage with the Waterloo community, attending community events and participating in the Waterloo Redevelopment Group and Groundswell Action Group.

Bob's story

Bob* was stood down from his job in hospitality due to COVID-19 shutdowns. He was worried he wouldn't be able to keep paying his rent, so told his real estate agent about the change in his circumstances and asked for a rent reduction until he could get back on his feet.

Bob's real estate agent told Bob that his landlord would not agree to reduce the rent and that he would need to pay on time. Bob reiterated that he was unable to pay the whole rent on time because he had no income. He quickly fell into rental arrears. Within a few weeks, Bob was issued with a 90-day 'no grounds' termination notice. Even though he was impacted by COVID-19, the eviction moratorium did not protect him against that type of notice. ISTAAS assisted Bob by drafting a Tribunal application to dispute the termination notice.

Still, as with so many other COVID-19 impacted tenants, the uncertainty around the outcome and the risk of massive arrears accruing in the meantime meant that Bob had no choice but to try to find somewhere cheaper to live. Bob's story echoes the experience of so many other renters in NSW who are unable to negotiate with their landlord during COVID-19, and demonstrates the detrimental impact of no-grounds evictions. This situation is putting many people at risk of homelessness.

*Name has been changed

RLC in the media

Tenancy defenders win reprieve

Wendy Bacon, *City Hub*, 22 April 2020.

Last week the NSW Government announced a number of measures that are supposed to assist tenants and landlords. They include increased funding for the provision of tenancy support and \$220 million for land tax relief on condition that it is passed onto tenants who have lost 25% or more of their income due to COVID-19.

Redfern Legal Centre's Ned Cooke said the idea is that: 'Landlords and tenants will be able to negotiate around the shortfall in rent, but we know that there is a major imbalance in bargaining power between landlords and tenants ... On top of that, there is a perception out there that landlords should expect to eventually get all of their rent back from their tenants. But a landlord negotiating in good faith should be offering a partial rent reduction or waiver, not just a deferral of the payment.'

Guidelines need to be published making it clear what is expected of both landlords and tenants during the negotiation process,' Mr Cooke said. 'Prolonging the process only increases debt, potentially for both parties. Many tenants are concerned about mounting debt – even if they are protected from being evicted now, they are looking at owing significant money to their landlords in the future. That would be really scary, especially if they have no idea if or when their income will be back to normal. Ultimately landlords can expect a longer-term financial benefit by working to keep good tenants in premises for the long term.'

He advises tenants to try to pay some rent even if they cannot reach an agreement with the landlord. The Tribunal may look negatively on tenants who have made no payments.

Full article available at: <https://cityhubsydney.com.au/2020/04/tenancy-defenders-win-reprieve/>

OUR IMPACT



Housing issues are resolved

Renters are less stressed



Renters have increased capacity to self-advocate

Homelessness is prevented



More people can access secure housing and reasonable living conditions

Police and Government Accountability

RLC's Police Accountability practice is the only specialised statewide legal service in NSW providing free legal advice, representation and education on police powers and the complaints system. We work to ensure policing practice is accountable through casework, policy, advocacy and strategic litigation.

Working for change

This year, the practice advocated for a number of reforms to policy and practice to improve police accountability and transparency. In particular, we focused on making policing more transparent by using freedom of information laws to seek access to NSW Police operating procedures and guidelines. We successfully obtained and released various NSW Police guidelines, including guidelines on the use of body worn video, personal searches and drug detection dogs.

Preventing unlawful strip searches

We continued to advocate for legislative, policy and procedural reform to the law that governs the use of strip searches by NSW Police as part of our Safe and Sound campaign. Initiated in December 2018, the campaign has maintained a leading role in raising awareness about the harms caused by the overuse of potentially unlawful police strip searches in NSW.

In 2019, the practice commissioned a report from UNSW Law academics Dr Michael Grewcock and Dr Vicki Sentas, highlighting the overuse of strip searches in NSW and the lack of clear and rigorous legal guidance.

In May 2020, the practice announced a joint investigation with law firm Slater and Gordon into potential class actions against NSW Police for unlawful strip searches.

Improving access to information

The practice has developed a number of new letter templates and factsheets to assist with the advice process and to improve access to information about the law and complaints process in NSW.

We have also been working with RLC's Credit and Debt practice to identify problems and areas of potential reform within the NSW fines system, especially with regard to the impact fines have on vulnerable communities. In June, RLC announced a statewide advice service to assist people who have received COVID-19 fines.



In May, RLC joined forces with Slater and Gordon Lawyers to launch a class actions investigation into unlawful police strip searches in NSW.

Advice and casework

Strip searches

This year, the practice lodged a number of complaints with NSW Police regarding alleged unlawful strip searches. One of these cases, which has been reported in the media, concerned a young woman who was strip searched at a music festival.

The woman was required by police to take off all of her clothing on the basis of suspicion for minor drug possession. Only a few months before, she had been subjected to a sexual assault. Nothing was found during the search and she has been left traumatised by the experience. RLC lodged a complaint with NSW Police about her treatment and the illegality of the search.

Mobile phone searches

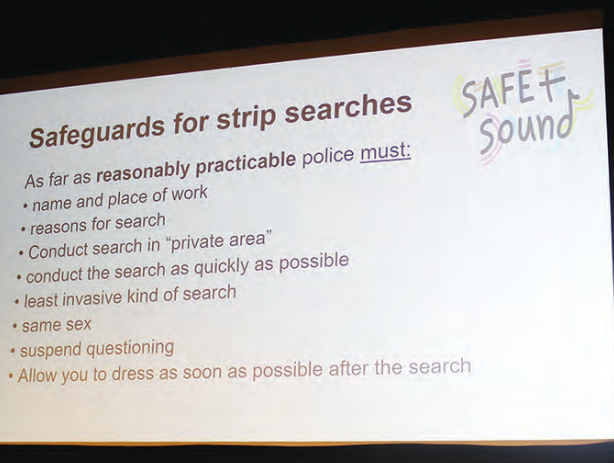
We have continued working towards a test case seeking to confirm whether police have the power to search mobile phones and delete mobile phone content. The matter is still in the early litigation stages, but we have been working with Senior Counsel and DLA Piper to prepare this case for future legal action.

Random breath testing (RBT)

We are concerned about the growing misuse of the RBT power for extraneous criminal investigation. One of our clients was pulled over by police ostensibly for the purposes of an RBT but after returning a negative reading her vehicle was searched.

During the complaint investigation, we became aware of information that suggested that the police officers had intended to conduct a search of the vehicle prior to the RBT stop and that they may have used the RBT power to stop the vehicle and then conduct a search for 'defects'.

Although the incident was not fully investigated by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) due to specific aspects of the case, the LECC indicated that they would be raising their concerns with NSW Police about the use of the RBT power.



L–R: RLC’s police accountability solicitor delivers a presentation on strip search law at the Economics and Business Educators NSW 2019 Legal Update Conference, October 2019; and a festival attendee shares her story at the *Rethinking Strip Searches in NSW* report launch, August 2019.

Education and training

Strip searches and the law

Throughout the year, RLC held a number of training sessions about strip search law in NSW, including at the Parliament of NSW, University of Sydney Law School, UTS Faculty of Law, Economics and Business Educators NSW 2019 Legal Update Conference, Glebe Youth Service, Legalwise Conference Centre and to other groups in the legal and community sector. The practice also provides in-house training to Central Coast Community Legal Centre about police powers and young people and presented at the Community Legal Centres NSW Quarterlies about ‘Police and Accountability’ strategies.

Community and government engagement

This year, the practice held two roundtables with community and legal sector stakeholders on strip

search law reform, consulted with the NSW Auditor General regarding an audit of the use of technology by police and met with the Director of Investigations from the LECC to discuss concerns with complaints process.

RLC also met with a number of parliamentarians about strip search law in NSW including Jodi McKay, MP (Leader of the Opposition), Paul Lynch, MP (Shadow Attorney General), NSW Opposition Attorney General, the Hon John Graham, MLC (Shadow Minister for Music and the Night Time Economy), Lynda Voltz, MP (Shadow Minister for Police and Counter Terrorism), David Harris, MP (Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty), Jihad Dib, MP (Shadow Minister for Youth), Jo Haylen, MP (Member for Summer Hill), Cate Faehrmann, MLC, and Jenny Leong, MP (Member for Newtown).



Becca shares her story with the media, May 2020.

Becca’s story

In 2017, Becca was strip-searched at a music festival when she was 22 years old. She experienced lasting trauma as a result. As she stood with her friends waiting to enter the festival, two NSW Police officers were walking up and down the line with a sniffer dog. As they walked past Becca, the dog sat down next to her. The officers told Becca they suspected she was carrying an illegal substance and asked her to consent to a search. A male police officer handed Becca over to a female officer to be searched and said: ‘Go easy on her, I don’t think she’s got anything on her.’

Becca was led into a police transit van to be searched. The windshield had been left uncovered and she could see three male police officers standing just outside. The female officer asked Becca to lift up her top. Becca told the officer that she wasn’t wearing a bra. The officer followed Becca’s gaze around to the male officers outside and said, ‘Just do it quickly’. The officer asked Becca if she was on her period, and when she said yes, told her: ‘We still have to do this.’ Becca was then directed to drop, squat and cough. The female officer looked underneath her and peered at her tampon.

Becca says her anxiety got much worse the year after she was strip-searched. She says she no longer trusts the police, and felt she had no way of making a complaint about the experience which left her feeling violated.



Rethinking Strip Searches in NSW report launch, August 2019; and Law students studying under the supervision of Dr Vicki Sentas at RLC's UNSW Police Powers Clinic, September 2019.

RLC in the media

NSW police disproportionately target Indigenous people in strip searches

Michael McGowan, *The Guardian*, 16 June 2020

Between 2016 and 2018, NSW Police conducted 1,183 strip searches on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including one 10-year-old and two 11-year-olds, data obtained by Redfern Legal Centre via freedom of information laws reveals.

'Strip search law is the only law in Australia that allows a police officer to order a child as young as 10 to take off all their clothes and stand naked while an adult inspects their body,' Samantha Lee, RLC's police powers solicitor, said. She said the 'humiliating practice' was 'eroding community relations' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and police.

'Strip searches are a harmful and invasive practice that leave people feeling traumatised and distraught, and scared of approaching police when help is needed,' she said. The use of strip searches has been the subject of significant criticism in NSW following a police watchdog investigation which revealed evidence of the widespread misuse of the practice by officers.

Full article available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/16/nsw-police-disproportionately-target-indigenous-people-in-strip-searches>

OUR IMPACT



Increased understanding of police powers and legal rights



People feel better equipped to address police misconduct

Reduced stress and anxiety



Police complaints are resolved



Health Justice Partnership

RLC's Health Justice Partnership (HJP) with Sydney Local Area Health District (SLHD) provides a unique legal access point to vulnerable health consumers, with a priority focus on assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our legal service continues to play an innovative role in the healthcare system, providing holistic support to people who would otherwise not access legal help.

The HJP works in close collaboration with Aboriginal health focused service sites at Sydney Dental Hospital, the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA Hospital), Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern Community Health Centre, Men's Cave, RedLink, and the Women's Cave.

This year, the HJP at the Sydney Dental Hospital provided legal assistance to over 280 individuals and families, 85 per cent of whom were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Legal advice and assistance in this context reduces the impact of the social determinants of health, working to address issues including debts, insecure or unsafe housing, domestic violence and children being removed from families.

Our RPA Hospital HJP continues to provide advice, advocacy and representation to inpatients and outpatients in all areas of the hospital through referrals from the committed social work network. As in previous years, our early legal intervention work with vulnerable women is the cornerstone to our partnership at one of Sydney's busiest maternity public healthcare hubs.

In a survey conducted with the Sydney Dental Hospital, Redlink and the Redfern Community Health Centre, hospital staff reported that after interacting with the team at the HJP, 95% of clients reported increased confidence when engaging with legal services. Almost three-quarters (73%) demonstrated an increase in knowledge about their legal rights and responsibilities, and 91% felt more informed and skilled in dealing with their legal options. Further, clients felt less stressed and anxious (87%), showed increased trust and engagement (92%) with the HJP, and were more confident in dealing with their legal issues (85%).

Working for change

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker

In October, RLC proudly welcomed a dedicated Aboriginal Legal Access Worker to the HJP team. As well as supporting vulnerable clients on the frontline of the HJP, this position plays a pivotal role supporting service

WHAT RLC CLIENTS SAY

"The team have been so incredibly helpful to me, I actually cannot express this in words. When I had given up and thought nothing would help, they really assisted me in getting out of the hole I was in and guiding me onto the right path ..."

"Sensitive, informed, patient, non-judgement and caring ... Our community and future is in good hands."

"Prior to meeting [the HJP solicitor], I thought I had nothing to live for. I was wrong."

"You listen and understand. No judgement."

"... It felt like seeing family. There were no barriers."

access for First Nations people across the organisation, working to ensure that all of RLC's legal services are accessible and culturally safe.

Throughout the year, this work included engaging local Aboriginal artist Sharon Smith from Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative to produce an artwork to welcome people to our centre, holding 'truth-telling' discussions to deepen relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, and presenting at an online forum during National Reconciliation Week.

Advocacy and representation

The practice continues to advocate for improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in government programs such as Victims Services, the National Redress Scheme and the National Reparations Scheme.

This year, our Aboriginal HJP solicitor became a member of the Aboriginal Advisory Group Committee for NSW Community Legal Centres and the Board of NSW Community Legal Centres. This is in addition to being a member of the Sydney Dental Oral Health Steering Committee as part of the Closing the Gap initiative, as well as a member of the Redlink Community Consultation Group on housing. Through these positions, RLC has a strong Aboriginal voice that achieves positive health and legal outcomes for disadvantaged clients.

In August 2019, we attended the Aboriginal Chronic Health Conference and showcased the successes of the HJP model. This led to interest from other stakeholders



RLC's CEO discussing the impact of our HJP at the Aboriginal Chronic Conditions Network Conference, August 2019; and RLC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker with Wiradjuri artist, Sharon Smith.

in establishing partnerships like HJP elsewhere in Australia, as well as requests for training and support from the HJP.

The HJP also presented at a number of other conferences throughout the year and continues to participate in the HJP Outcomes Framework to help build a shared evidence base across Australia to support HJPs.

The HJP team contributed to the consultation process that led to Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) Paper 317 on unsolicited telephone sales and direct life, funeral and consumer credit insurance. In response to our recommendations, ASIC passed legislation banning unsolicited sales of life insurance in January 2020. We also gave input to government in response to the *Family is Culture* report into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People in out-of-home care in NSW.

Advice and casework

Culturally safe, holistic support

Our HJP staff provide culturally-appropriate support in a non-judgmental environment in the form of legal advice, advocacy, referrals and briefs to barristers. This also includes assistance such as drafting letters, completing forms, and liaising with other services on behalf of clients.

Our casework resulted in the return of close to \$1 million to clients this financial year. The majority of this compensation was awarded through the National Redress Scheme and the National Reparations Scheme for stolen generation survivors. A significant

amount was also recovered from banks, particularly of fraudulent transactions as well as the waiving of fines.

Further, the HJP's partnership with RPA Hospital has led to improved outcomes for a number of vulnerable mothers, including the prevention of the removal of 17 children from their mothers.

The practice has also represented clients experiencing vulnerability in criminal matters in the Local Court to achieve favourable outcomes including the dismissal of charges, reduced sentences and ensuring diversionary pathways including the RPA MERIT Drug Program are considered by the Court.

The HJP practice has negotiated with community housing authorities and real estate agents on behalf of clients to rectify dangerous mould in social and private housing has enabled hospitals to discharge patients earlier, and resulted in improved living conditions for clients facing health, legal and financial pressures.

The success of the partnership in building rapport with clients and educating health and allied health professions has led to an increase in case numbers, particularly with regard to credit and debt, National Redress Scheme applications, guardianship cases, victim services and family law.

As word of the culturally appropriate services of the HJP practice has reached the broader Aboriginal community, we have begun to assist more clients from western Sydney and regional NSW. Patients at the Sydney Dental Hospital are now combining their health checks with legal checks in a convenient and culturally appropriate environment.



Left: The HJP Pod Project, delivered with our pro bono partner, DLA Piper, provided intensive legal support to two individuals and identified law reform and advocacy opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (L–R: Workshop facilitator, RLC practical legal trainee and HJP solicitor, July 2019); and L–R: RLC’s communications manager and HJP solicitor, NAIDOC Week, July 2019.

Education and training

Building capacity and cultural competence

The HJP continues to provide education to health and allied health workers from partner facilities, particularly the Sydney Dental Hospital, RedLink, Men’s Cave and Redfern Community Health Centre. This includes training on credit and debt; rights of crime victims; responsible banking and lending; same-day lender loans; Stolen Generations reparations payments; options for institutionally abused victims; wills and guardianship; domestic violence and apprehended violence orders; and housing issues.

As a result of ongoing training and interactions with the HJP, staff at partner organisations report increased capacity to refer clients with legal issues to the HJP team, and more confidence to discuss these issues directly with patients.

The greatest impact of the HJP has been to empower the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community with the knowledge, understanding and trust that there is justice available to them in the legal system.

Through collaboration, education, empathy and cultural sensitivity, the HJP has created a unique environment that allows clients to access holistic legal and personal assistance in a way that recognises their needs.

Anthea’s story: A family reunited

In mid-2019, the RPA Social Work Team Leader contacted the HJP solicitor following an incident at RPA paediatrics involving the visitation of a mother to her one-year-old child. The young mother was behaving erratically, which appeared to be a result of drug and alcohol use.

Anthea, the child’s grandmother, had become the primary carer for the one-year-old and the mother’s two other children through informal care-giving arrangements. Speaking to the social worker at RPA, Anthea expressed concern that the mother was not in a fit state to care for her three children, and was worried the mother would seek to remove the children from her care. The social worker referred Anthea to the HJP solicitor at RPA. The HJP solicitor met with Anthea many times over the course of the following year, providing advice and representation for an urgent parenting application filed in the Federal Circuit Court seeking to convey parental responsibility of three children to the grandmother.

In mid-2020, after a series of Court mentions and an interim hearing, the mother is addressing her substance use and working towards longer-term primary care while the three children remain safely in grandmother’s care. The mother has now moved in with the grandmother, and she and the three children are living together as a cohesive family unit.

The HJP’s partnership with RPA Hospital has led to improved outcomes for a number of vulnerable mothers, including the prevention of the removal of 17 children from their mothers.

Aunty Simone's story: Something to live on

Aunty Simone* is a proud Aboriginal Elder living on the Mid-North Coast of NSW. She is legally blind, lives alone and suffers from several chronic health conditions. While attending the Dalarinji Aboriginal Oral Health Clinic at the Sydney Dental Hospital, she requested to speak to the HJP solicitor in relation to continuously having insufficient funds in her bank account.

Upon reviewing her bank statements, the HJP solicitor noticed that since 2014 deductions had been made for two funeral insurance policies in excess of \$1,600 per annum. Over the past six years, Aunty Simone had been paying for these policies unknowingly and was shocked and in tears.

The HJP solicitor escalated the matter to the insurer's external dispute resolution team. After careful and strategic negotiation, both insurers agreed to credit Aunty Simone's bank account in the amount of \$10,000. This was settled by a deed poll in February 2020.

Aunty Simone also wished to lodge an application to the National Reparation Scheme, however her records from the Department of Communities and Justice and the Royal Blind Society of NSW were incomplete. The HJP team assisted Aunty Simone to draft her appeal submission to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs granted her a reparation payment of \$75,000, as well as a \$7,000 funeral fund and a written apology in relation to her removal.

Aunty Simone's situation is in a profound improvement on last year, when she was unable to buy her medications or pay her utility bills. She is very grateful to the HJP solicitor, RLC and the Sydney Dental Hospital social worker, without whom none of this would have been possible.

*Name has been changed.

OUR IMPACT



Health care consumers experiencing vulnerability are informed about legal rights and options



Health-harming legal issues are addressed



Improved health and wellbeing



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



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

Financial Abuse Service NSW

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

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

Advice and casework

In the last year our team has grown, allowing us to assist more people across NSW. We continue to run two advice clinics each week, as well as undertaking casework for clients experiencing particular vulnerability and test cases to advance the law in this area.



Financial abuse pro bono solicitor training, February 2020.

Addressing financial coercion

The most common issues we advise on stem from loans or accounts obtained fraudulently or through coercion. This year we have identified a new trend in people seeking advice about personal guarantees for company debts and corporations law issues, associated with being made the puppet director of their partner's company. In

Credit coercion: Binsa's Story

Content warning: domestic violence

Binsa* was married in Nepal, and within a year, her new husband relocated the couple to Australia. Binsa's English was limited and she had no family or friends in Australia.

For the next six years, Binsa was subjected to severe and consistent physical, psychological and financial abuse. Binsa's husband refused to give her access to their joint accounts and her personal bank accounts. Binsa was working seven days a week but her entire income was controlled by her husband and she was forced to live off an allowance of \$60 a week.

Her husband coerced her into applying for credit cards in her name because he had a poor credit score. It would have been evident to the bank representatives that Binsa had a very poor grasp of English and a very limited understanding of the credit card application process. Crucial details were left blank on the application forms, including her employment. Despite this, she was approved for a \$19,000 credit card, which was solely used by her husband.

When Binsa was able to safely leave the relationship, she owed \$14,000 on that credit card. Despite never getting any benefit from the credit, she was trying to pay off the debt by herself. When her visa status changed, she lost her work rights in Australia and she was ineligible for Centrelink. She had no income, was homeless, relying on a friend for temporary accommodation and a charity for food and other basic necessities.

Binsa sought help from the Refugee Advice & Casework Service, who referred her to RLC's Financial Abuse Service NSW to assist with the credit card debt. Through investigating the debt, we identified the responsible lending complaint, financial abuse indicators and her extreme financial hardship. We assisted Binsa to engage in the bank's internal dispute resolution process and, as a result, the bank agreed to waive the \$14,000 credit card debt. This has allowed Binsa to start to move forward with her life.

Binsa says: 'Thank you very much for the help and time you have spent on my case. If you have not helped me for [bank] matter I will be paying my loan til 20 years.'

*Name has been changed

addition to the stress of being chased for the debt, this often has tax implications and may restrict the financial abuse survivor from obtaining Centrelink.

The legal service is supported by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, American Express, PWC Australia, Ashurst, King & Wood Mallesons and Commonwealth Government funding administered by Legal Aid NSW under the Community Legal Services Program.

Financial abuse during COVID-19

In times of crisis there is evidence that family and domestic violence increases in frequency and severity. Home may be the safest place to avoid the virus, but it's not a safe place for a person living in an abusive relationship. Some people may experience financial abuse for the first time and for others it may escalate.

During the pandemic, it is easier for signs of financial abuse to be disguised as financial stress, unemployment and housing insecurity. We predict that financial abuse issues arising during the pandemic will continue to present for years after the crisis. Frontline community services are best placed to identify these issues to ensure that victim-survivors get the help they need.

As such, in April, we distributed information about the signs of financial abuse to almost 2,500 people working in community organisations in NSW. We are following this up with training webinars for financial counsellors and community workers in July and September 2020.

Working for change

Improving outcomes for victim-survivors

The expansion of the legal service has allowed us to better identify opportunities to improve outcomes for people who have experienced financial abuse. In the last year, we have had input on a number of important issues, such as:

- Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Communications Alliance Industry Guideline 'Assisting Customers Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence'.

- The Australian Banking Association Every Customer Counts, Better Banking for Vulnerable Customers consultation.
- The ASIC Responsible Lending Project in relation to financial abuse, joint debt and guarantees.
- The Australian Finance Industry Association Code of Practice for Buy Now, Pay Later Providers.

This change-making work is supported by Ecstra Foundation.

Economic Abuse Reference Group NSW

This year, RLC established a NSW chapter of the Economic Abuse Reference Group (EARG) which brings together expert community organisations to present a strong, unified voice to industry and government to improve outcomes for people experiencing financial abuse. We are delighted to have the following organisations involved:

- Domestic Violence NSW
- Financial Counsellors Association of NSW
- Women's Legal Service NSW
- Legal Aid NSW
- Financial Rights Legal Centre
- Walking Together Project, Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre
- Firmer Foundations, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- Centre for Women's Economic Safety.

Based on the success of the original Victorian EARG, our aim is that the EARG NSW will increase the capacity of each organisation to initiate and respond to opportunities for meaningful change on both New South Wales and national issues, and be a central point for industry and government to seek community input to family and domestic violence responses. RLC will continue to coordinate EARG NSW and use our legal service as the evidence base to inform our contributions.



Working Together

Thank you to Ecstra for providing a three-year grant for the policy, law reform and capacity building work of the service. Thank you to our Foundation Supporters, American Express, PwC Australia, Ashurst and King & Wood Mallesons, for providing funds and solicitor time to establish the legal service in 2019. Thank you to our Principal Sponsor, Commonwealth Bank, for providing funds to expand the legal service in 2020. We also acknowledge the valuable contribution of pro bono solicitor time from Telstra and Lander & Rogers.



Clockwise from left: RLC’s financial abuse team leader and CEO; RLC board and staff members; and RLC volunteer and pro bono solicitors at the Financial Abuse Service NSW launch, December 2019.

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

ARTISTS IN THE BLACK

aitb.com.au
aitb@artslaw.com.au



REDFERN
LEGAL CENTRE



Community stall with Arts Law NSW, NAIDOC Week, July 2019.

Community engagement and education

This year, as always, RLC participated in a range of events in our local community. This included holding stalls at community information days such as at Poets Corner in Redfern and Sydney Homeless Connect at Sydney Town Hall, where we talked about the services that RLC provides, and gave on-the-spot legal advice on specific matters.

In July, we held stalls at NAIDOC celebrations at Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service and at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence; we also attended the annual Yabun Festival in Victoria Park on 26 January. Our attendance at these and other events throughout the year provided many opportunities for RLC staff and volunteers to engage with people, and discuss how we can best meet the legal needs of the communities we serve.

Community legal education

Our community worker training program presented four webinars, to a total audience of several hundred people:

- Repairs in social housing and private rentals in NSW
- Fines and penalty notices 1: Challenging the fine
- Domestic Violence and Tenancy
- Fines and penalty notices 2: Instalments, Waivers and WDOs.

We continued to receive strong feedback on the quality of our community education programs throughout the year:

“Very clear and concise, thank you.”

“I was impressed.”

“RLC communicates in a clear and easy to comprehend way – it is a fantastic educational tool.”

“Excellent.”

“Great information presented and good links/resources given.”

In 2020 with the impact of COVID-19 on our communities, RLC waived all fees on our community education program, and surveyed our subscribers to assess their legal education needs.

In response we produced two interview-style videos on the changes to tenancy laws:

- COVID-19: Rent reductions and evictions in NSW during the pandemic
- COVID-19: Negotiating rent with your landlord in NSW.

Each of these videos has been viewed by several hundred people.



Thanks to support from the NSW Government and City of Sydney, thousands of international students in NSW can access RLC's *My Legal Mate* (MLM) app for free. Image: MLM launch, Macquarie University, October 2019. Image courtesy Macquarie University.

Funding

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

- The General Legal Service is funded principally through the Community Legal Services Program, which is administered by Legal Aid NSW and the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department.
- Legal Aid NSW funded the Care Partners service, which assisted parents engaged in Parent Responsibility contracts or Parent Capacity Orders.
- The Migrant Employment Legal Service, a joint project with three other community legal centres, is funded by the NSW Attorney General's Department.
- The Health Justice Partnership is funded by the NSW Attorney-General's Department, with additional support from private foundations.
- NSW Fair Trading funds the Inner Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service.
- Study NSW funds the statewide International Student Legal Service NSW
- The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman funds the International Student Employment Law Service.
- The Limb Family Foundation provided funding to support the Health Justice Partnership
- Development of an interactive app for International Students, *My Legal Mate* was supported jointly by Study NSW, Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, and City of Sydney.
- DLA Piper provided funding to support the Police Accountability practice
- The Financial Abuse Service NSW is supported by Ecstra Foundation, who provided a three-year grant for the policy, law reform and capacity building work. The legal arm of the service is funded by Principal Sponsor Commonwealth Bank, and Foundation Supporters American Express, PwC Australia, Ashurst, King & Wood Mallesons, Commonwealth Government funding administered

by Legal Aid NSW under the Community Legal Services Program.

- City of Sydney provided a grant to support tenants in Waterloo who will be affected by redevelopment of the area
- City of Sydney provides RLC with premises at Redfern Town Hall.

Grants and donations

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

- Thomson Reuters Australia supported the Lawyers' Practice Manual and our Annual Report
- University of NSW continued to support course modules on Police Powers
- University of Sydney Law School funded Social Justice clinical placements, whereby RLC provides high quality Experiential Learning for law students.
- City of Sydney provided funding for commissioning of First Nations artwork to be displayed at RLC
- Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science provided assistance towards fitout of additional RLC premises
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice provided funding under the Community Building Partnership towards fitout and IT upgrades at RLC premises
- City of Sydney and the NSW Government provided grants to enable free access to the international student app, *My Legal Mate*.
- RLC Young Professionals Committee organised fundraising activities
- Many supporters provided generous donations
- Microsoft provided discounted software.

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.



Amy Munro (Chair)

Amy Munro is a barrister practising from Eleven Wentworth in Sydney. She has a wide-ranging commercial and public law practice. Prior to being called to the Bar, Amy was a Senior Associate in the Dispute Resolution Group at Mallesons. Amy began her association with RLC as a volunteer in 2002, moving on to become a Tenant Advocate with the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service and the Project Manager of the Share Housing Survival Guide. Amy was elected to the Board in 2010 and continues to act as a volunteer with the Centre.



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 General Counsel and Company Secretary of Spark Infrastructure, an S&P/ASX 100 specialist infrastructure fund and Australia's leading owner of essential service infrastructure. Alexandra holds a Masters of Law and Management and is a member of the Association of Corporate Counsel GC100, Global Leaders in Law, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Governance Institute of Australia.



Craig Young

Craig Young is the Australian Managing Director of Engine, a global marketing services group offering consulting services in customer and employee experience, digital transformation and digital advertising services. Craig has 25 years of experience providing research consulting services to support the development of communications campaigns and policy and service delivery in relation to public health and Indigenous affairs. Since 2013, he has been a board member of AMSRO (Association of Market and Social Research Organisations), Australia's industry association for data and research companies, and has been President and board chair of AMSRO since 2017.



Linda Tucker

Linda Tucker is a solicitor and regional legal services coordinator at Shoalcoast Legal Centre. 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.



Kerry O'Brien

Kerry is a proud Wiradjuri man and lawyer. Kerry is a senior associate in the Employer Relations and Safety team at McCullough Robertson. Kerry has experience in both advisory work and litigation, with expertise in employment law, discrimination law and work health and safety. Kerry 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.



Ben Lipschitz

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



Gregory Masters

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



Kylie O'Reilly (Board Observer)

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

Our Staff 2019–2020

Permanent and Fixed Term Staff

Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice & Advocacy Service (ISTAAS)

– Tenancy and Housing Team

Amanda Brooker	Tenants' Advocate
Ned Cooke	Tenants' Advocate
Kimberley Mackenzie	Tenants' Advocate
Nicole Kennedy	Coordinator
Alison Mackey	Tenants' Advocate

General Legal Team

Brian Attard	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Sharmilla Bargon	Employment Solicitor
Luke Carr	Care Partners/Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
David Hofierka	Credit and Debt Solicitor
Samantha Lee	Police Powers and Administrative Solicitor
Alexis Goodstone	Principal Solicitor
Sophie Parker	Police Powers and Administrative Solicitor
Sean Stimson	International Student Legal Service NSW Solicitor
Maureen Randall	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Access Worker
Regina Featherstone	Migrant Employment Legal Service Solicitor
Zoe Papagiannis	International Student Legal Service NSW Solicitor

Financial Abuse Team

Laura Bianchi	Financial Abuse Team Leader
Destiny Valencia	Legal Support Officer
Gayatri Nair	Policy Officer
Jasmine Opdam	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

Casual Staff 2019–2020

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

Jevan Griffiths	Tenants' Advisor
Elizabeth Hunt	Tenants' Advisor
Tom McDonald	Tenants' Advisor

General Legal Team

Umeya Chaudhuri	Solicitor
Vy Dao	Solicitor

Administration, Support and Management

Laila Ali	Supervisor, Day Information Service
Ferdous Bahar	Supervisor, Day Information Service
Rebecca Koelmeyer	Data entry assistant
Alexandra Roach	Project Officer
Shona Scully	Supervisor, Day Information Service
Amy Zhao	Supervisor, Day Information Service
Denea Bascombe	Supervisor, Day Information Service
Hayley Melville	Communications Assistant
Lindsay Stevens	Supervisor, Day Information Service

Consultants

Systemnet	IT support
Social Ventures Australia	Strategic planning
Practera	International student app (<i>My Legal Mate</i>)

Awards and Recognition



Her Excellency the Hon Margaret Beazley AO QC, Sean Stimson, RLC international student solicitor, and Anouschka Inglis, Strategy Advisor, City of Sydney at the awards ceremony, Government House NSW, October 2019. Photo: Anna Zhu, courtesy Study NSW.

***Your Body, Your Choice* honoured at 2019 NSW International Students Awards**

Your Body, Your Choice, a groundbreaking sexual assault resource for international students, was honoured with an award at the 2019 NSW International Student Awards. RLC partnered with City of Sydney and Study NSW to produce the multi-language factsheet in late 2018.

Your Body, Your Choice was acknowledged in the NSW International Student Community Engagement Awards, which recognise outstanding contributions of organisations supporting international students across the categories of Education Providers, and Business and Community.

Available in 11 languages, *Your Body, Your Choice* contains information to support students who have experienced sexual assault, including key messages specifically tailored to international students.

The resource highlights various avenues international students can take to seek support for sexual assault safely and confidentially. A key message of the resource is that sexual assault is a crime which students should not be afraid to report.

Hosted by Study NSW, the NSW International Student Awards are an annual event celebrating international students' contributions to NSW society and the benefits of international education to the broader NSW community. The awards were presented by the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC.

The award provides important recognition from Government about the critical need to support all students who have experienced sexual assault.



The Margaret Jones Warrior Awards recognises outstanding achievements in volunteering and pays tribute to the hard work of all RLC volunteers, Redfern, December 2019.

The Margaret Jones Warrior Awards

In December, RLC held the inaugural Margaret Jones Warrior Awards, an awards ceremony that celebrates volunteer achievements and honours the memory of one of RLC's longest-serving volunteers.

The ceremony recognised a selection of individuals from RLC's various volunteer categories whose efforts exemplify Margaret's spirit and passion for volunteering, her dedication to championing the needs of marginalised people and communities, and her tenacious commitment to elevating the work of RLC and other social justice causes in the public sphere.

A number of awards were given out recognising qualities such as dedication to RLC (through length of tenure) and the achievements of volunteers who have worked across the organisation in a variety of roles. The awards also acknowledged the dedication of the entire RLC Board.

The ceremony culminated with a special 'Spirit of Margaret' Award.

Volunteer Solicitor – Long Service Award

A time-based award that recognises current evening solicitors who have volunteered with RLC for more than eight years.

- Christine Weekes
- Jia Yi Lee
- Michael Gibson
- Michael Windsor
- Patrick Trieu
- Stefanie Vogt
- Tim Capelin

Practical Legal Trainee (PLT) Award

A time-based award that recognises students who completed their PLT by December 2019 as well as acknowledging outstanding achievements over-and-above the standard PLT role.

- Alexa Roach
- Nadezna Wilkins
- Dominic Wright
- Elle Triantafillou
- Halil Ozbeyazli
- Olivia Irvine

Specialist Volunteer Award

Acknowledgment for work on specific projects.

- Ben Salon
- Chitra Rangarajan
- Kerry O'Brien
- Lauren Davies
- Lauren Stefanou
- Shirley Yeung
- Sing Hau Yeap
- Olivia Irvine

Spirit of Margaret Award

A special award that acknowledges outstanding passion and achievements. This award recognises the efforts of an individual who has gone 'above and beyond' in leveraging the power of volunteering to elevate RLC's work, our people, and the communities we serve, in the spirit of Margaret Jones.

- Ferdous Bahar

Directors' Declaration

Redfern Legal Centre

ABN: 31 001 442 039

The directors of the company declare that:

1. The financial statements and notes, as set out on pages 9–23, are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*; and
 - (a) comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013*; and
 - (b) give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2020 and performance for the year ended on that date of the company.
2. In the directors' opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.
3. Pursuant to Schedule 1, Section 7(3) of the *Charitable Fundraising Regulations 2008*:
 - (a) the Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of income and expenditure of the company for the year ended 30 June 2020 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 2020 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 2020; and
 - (d) the internal controls exercised by the company are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received and applied by the company from any fundraising appeals.

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



Director: _____

Amy Munro

Dated this 3rd day of November 2020



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REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE
ABN: 31 001 442 039

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

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Redfern Legal Centre, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020, 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 2020 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

Basis for Opinion

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

Adelaide Brisbane Melbourne Newcastle Perth Sydney

- 25 -

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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 2020 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.



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

- 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 2020;

(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) there are reasonable grounds to believe the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

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

Mark Godlewski
Partner

4 November 2020

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

PITCHER PARTNERS
Sydney

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2020

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
Revenue		3,628,234	2,816,998
Less: expenses			
Salary, wages and on-costs		(2,366,679)	(2,440,830)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	5	(26,777)	(24,651)
Occupancy expense		(326,287)	(187,288)
Repairs and maintenance expense		(28,268)	(8,853)
Advertising expense – Program Related		(7,174)	(5,236)
Consultancy – Program Related		(35,560)	(21,327)
IT Support		(58,430)	(28,963)
Telephone		(30,119)	(21,879)
Travel & accommodation		(17,333)	(16,673)
Printing and stationery		(9,118)	(16,723)
Fundraising and venue costs		(4,284)	(4,656)
Website		(40,746)	—
Other expenses		(196,658)	(191,502)
		<u>(3,147,433)</u>	<u>(2,968,581)</u>
Surplus/(deficit) before income tax expense		480,801	(151,583)
Other comprehensive income for the year		<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>
Total comprehensive income		<u>480,801</u>	<u>(151,583)</u>

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020

	Note	2020	2019
		\$	\$
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	7	1,110,723	563,082
Receivables	8	198,842	26,179
Other financial assets	9	1,000,000	700,000
Other assets	12	47,597	22,526
Total current assets		<u>2,357,162</u>	<u>1,311,787</u>
Non-current assets			
Lease assets	11	420,118	—
Property, plant and equipment	10	50,012	29,538
Total non-current assets		<u>470,130</u>	<u>29,538</u>
Total assets		<u>2,827,292</u>	<u>1,341,325</u>
Current liabilities			
Payables	13	1,116,139	674,347
Lease liabilities	11	167,298	—
Provisions	14	313,319	225,911
Total current liabilities		<u>1,596,756</u>	<u>900,258</u>
Non-current liabilities			
Lease liabilities	11	276,459	—
Provisions	14	100,405	68,196
Total non-current liabilities		<u>376,864</u>	<u>68,196</u>
Total liabilities		<u>1,973,620</u>	<u>968,454</u>
Net assets		<u>853,672</u>	<u>372,871</u>
Equity			
Retained surplus	15	853,672	372,871
Total equity		<u>853,672</u>	<u>372,871</u>

Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 30 June 2020

	Retained surplus
	\$
Balance as at 1 July 2018	524,454
Surplus (deficit) for the year	(151,583)
Total comprehensive income for the year	(151,583)
Balance as at 30 June 2019	372,871
Balance as at 1 July 2019	372,871
Surplus (deficit) for the year	480,801
Total comprehensive income for the year	480,801
Balance as at 30 June 2020	853,672

Statement of cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2020

	Note	2020	2019
		\$	\$
Cash flow from operating activities			
Receipts from funding agreements and grants and sources		4,069,321	2,568,989
Payments to suppliers and employees		(3,082,433)	(3,436,291)
Interest received		24,403	33,375
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities		<u>1,011,291</u>	<u>(833,927)</u>
Cash flow from investing activities			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		96	8,833
Payment for property, plant and equipment		(47,346)	(18,057)
Payment for investments		(300,000)	—
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		<u>(347,250)</u>	<u>(9,224)</u>
Cash flow from financing activities			
Principal portion of lease payments		(116,400)	—
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		<u>(116,400)</u>	<u>—</u>
Reconciliation of cash			
Cash at beginning of the financial year		563,082	1,406,233
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held		547,641	(843,151)
Cash at end of financial year		<u>1,110,723</u>	<u>563,082</u>



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- Volunteer with us: www.rlc.org.au/jobs-volunteers

Donate to support our work

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

Donate online at:

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



Redfern Legal Centre

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