

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018

MACARTHUR LEGAL CENTRE



MACARTHUR  
Legal Centre

*Supporting our community*



# ANNUAL REPORT 2018

SUPPORTING OUR  
COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1987

Macarthur Legal Centre (MLC) is part of a network of community legal centres that provide free legal advice, referrals and assistance to people living in the Macarthur region of NSW, extending to Goulburn

# 2018

**Macarthur Legal Centre**

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## OUR SERVICES

We currently auspice the South West Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service (SWSTAAS) and the Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (MWDVCAS), as well as a Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS) and an Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP).

We are thankful to our state and federal funding bodies, sponsors and donors, as well as to the solicitors, students and community members who freely give their time and expertise to assist us in our work.

We acknowledge the Dharawal People, as the traditional owners of the land we work on, and pay our respects to their elders past and present.

# WELCOME

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

### OUR PEOPLE ARE THE KEY

Incredibly, it's time to present another Annual Report! When I reflect upon the past year, the words stressful, challenging and resilient come to mind. 30 years strong and despite significant challenges in a context of funding uncertainty, Macarthur Legal Centre (MLC) continues to play a key role in the Macarthur region, providing a range of integrated high-quality human services and promoting justice that is equitable and accessible for all. Our people are the key – they empower clients, support positive outcomes, invite new possibilities and offer capability.

In August 2017, MLC successfully achieved re-accreditation for the next three years under the National Accreditation Scheme for Community Legal Centres. On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge and thank Robert Pelletier (Executive Officer) and his management team, Christina Pirina (Principal Solicitor), Carina Southern (Financial Administrator), Tanya Whitehouse (Coordinator, MWDVCAS and LCP) and Vala Ola'aiga (Coordinator, SWSTAAS) for their substantial efforts throughout this process. In addition, Board members Nevine Youssef and Adam Quinn supported me in the Accreditation Sub-Committee, supporting effective policy development and approval to enhance the work performed by Robert and his team. A truly collaborative effort with a fantastic outcome!



**Strategic Planning Day  
June 2018**

In November 2017 we celebrated a momentous achievement – MLC’s 30th Anniversary. This event was well attended by people from all sectors and periods in time, including former staff, Board members, politicians and members of the legal fraternity. The success of this event confirmed that MLC remains highly regarded, well respected and valued, both locally and across the NSW CLC sector. It was also a testament to the quality and value of stakeholder relationships developed and maintained over time to support the work we do. We rely on these partnerships (such as the Health Justice Partnership with Campbelltown Hospital and outreach collaborations) to access vulnerable, isolated people.

Our Legal, Tenancy and Domestic Violence services provide professional and effective support to vulnerable, disadvantaged and often traumatised clients who have complex needs. This work is challenging, demanding and risky. As part of our commitment to continuous quality improvement, and in accordance with the new Quality Improvement Plan, we have invested in developing policies, procedures and making changes to improve the environmental, physical and psychological safety for our people (staff, volunteers, students, members of the public and clients). This has included:

- Promoting a workplace culture consistent with MLC core values and the new Code of Conduct.

- Developing risk management mechanisms.
- Creating a conflict of interest register.
- Updating the MLC Constitution in accordance with the Quality Improvement Plan.
- Reviewing risks, controls and response following critical incidents.
- Promoting self-care and encouraging staff to access supervision to reduce risks of vicarious trauma and burn out.
- Analysing and addressing premises needs.

A sincere thanks goes to our people - MLC staff, students and volunteers. Without you, MLC couldn’t achieve all that it does. So, from the Board, thank you sincerely. I extend my appreciation to Board members Julie Deane (Vice-Chair), Nevine Youssef (Secretary), Adam Quinn (Treasurer), Alison Croall and Sana Al-Ahmar for their commitment, capability and leadership. I feel privileged to be the Chair of the MLC Board which comprises such a diverse range of skills, knowledge and perspectives, which strengthens the governance and strategic leadership of the organisation. I am excited and hopeful about the future, reassured by the resilience, strength and capability of our people to embrace new challenges and opportunities with optimism.

**PETA ANDERSSON**  
**Chair of the Board**

*I am excited and hopeful about the future, reassured by the resilience, strength and capacity of our people*

*I feel privileged to be chair of the MLC Board, which comprises such a diverse range of skills and knowledge*



# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

**ROBERT PELLETIER**  
MLC Executive Officer

**WE ARE THE  
RESULT OF  
OUR HARD  
WORK.**

**PASSION FOR  
WHAT WE DO.**

**LOVE FOR  
WHAT WE  
STAND FOR.**

## WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away someone thought it was a blessing to live in interesting times. It has taken me five years but, I have, at last, woken up to a fundamental truth of a not for profit's' world. We always live in interesting times!

We had much to celebrate in 2017-2018. But could we have some boring times...please?

## 30th ANNIVERSARY

**First, to the celebrations' side of the ledger. The biggest line item was our 30th Anniversary Awards Night and celebration held at Wests' Leagues Club on 3 November 2017.**

The last thirty years has seen the Macarthur region grow from a semi-rural outpost on the South West fringe of Sydney to an exploding population centre.

In 1987, a Fantasy of young, idealistic lawyers ("fantasy" being the collective noun for a group of idealistic social justice type lawyers) decided that the citizens of Campbelltown needed access to justice. The Council provided the Fantasy with a cottage in Broughton Street next to the Railway Station and the Police Station. Campbelltown Legal Centre was born. Since 1987, the Fantasy were joined by tenancy champions, South West Sydney Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service, and DV heroes, Macarthur Women's Domestic



**NAIDOC Week Flag Raising  
MLC staff and Greg Warren MP**

Violence Court Advocacy Service and Macarthur Legal Centre (as Campbelltown Legal Centre became) took its present shape.

Our 30th anniversary was an opportunity to celebrate the courage and madness of our founders and those who have come after them in the various services that Macarthur Legal Centre has auspiced. We were graced by the presence of current and former staff members, volunteers, MLC Board members, partner services, guests of honour, and some of our founders - Kim McCausland, Bruce McCausland, Justice Anthony Payne, Professor Simon Rice, Julia Hall and Bernie Shipp.

The night began with an Acknowledgement of Country, delivered by Aunty Joyce, acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land, the Tharawal people, and paying respects to Elders past and present. Chief Justice Tom Bathurst QC, Magistrate Graham Blewitt and Greg Warren MP presented awards to staff members and our partners. The Premier of New South Wales was represented by David Clarke MLC. Paul Lynch MP, Shadow Attorney General and Anne Stanley MP were present. We had a cameo appearance from Mark Dreyfus QC, MP, Federal Shadow Attorney General, and Tanya Plibersek MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who sent a wonderful video congratulating the MLC community on what we have achieved.

Our former Principal Solicitor, Prue Gregory, gave an inspiring talk about how she came to work at the Centre and her vision of bringing

our services to where they are needed – hence our huge number of outreaches across the region.

This evening was made possible by some fabulous sponsorship by corporate partners. It was a magical evening. The venue, Wests Leagues Club, was beautifully decorated. We could let our hair down, put our knees up and pat ourselves on the back.

Behind the magic, there were wonder workers casting spells. Melissa Jozwiak was our master magician ably assisted by Melissa Coveney and Laura Sutton. Thanks for the fundraising, the planning and the hours of hard work these three put into the night. There were many, many others, such as Christina with her design work, who contributed in a mighty way.

In fact, there were thirty years of volunteers, lawyers, caseworkers, administrators and managers who have made our continued existence possible and who made that night fabulous.



# CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

1987 - 2017





30th Anniversary Awards Night  
Our volunteers and Justice Anthony Payne

***'Macarthur Legal Centre is so much more than the sum of its parts. But to each of the parts, I say thank you for all you have done for us. Speaking for myself, it is an honour to be part of this amazing world...'***

## OTHER POSITIVES

### **Our 'Let's Talk Legal' partnership with Campbelltown Library shared the 2017 LIAC Centre of Excellent award.**

LIAC, the NSW State Library's Legal Information Access Centre, presents this award to a library who works with another service (in this case, us) to increase awareness of LIAC's services and access to justice generally. This partnership provides community legal education talks at libraries throughout the Macarthur catchment on a wide range of legal issues and has been an outstanding success.

In fact, this program has been such a success that we are now working with Camden and Narellan Libraries on a very similar project called 'Legal Matters'.

At the Law & Justice Foundation Awards night, when the LIAC award was presented, Julie Deane was also a nominee for the Community Legal Centre Volunteer

Award. Julie has made an outstanding contribution to the governance of MLC through her membership and leadership of our Board over so many years. The Centre nominated Julie to thank her for this sustained contribution to our Centre and the Macarthur community.

On 18 August 2017, we were advised by CLCNSW, our State peak body, that our accreditation under the National Accreditation Scheme for Community Legal Centres had been renewed. There has been much swearing emerging from my office as I have drafted and reviewed endless policies and procedures. They now sparkle with efficiency and professionalism. I am very grateful to my managers, especially Christina and Carina, and our Board's accreditation sub-committee, Peta, Adam and Nevine, for the hard work they put in to this process. While accreditation is an onerous process for a lean organisation, it has raised our professionalism and given us a suite of robust policies to guide our work.

## WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE SECTOR'S EFFORTS TO OBTAIN MORE CERTAINTY OVER FUNDING

# OUR FUNDING

### LACK OF CLARITY

**The lack of clarity about our funding and the lack of adequate funding make difficult, stressful work, so much harder than it needs to be.**

It has been challenging to map out a strategic direction for the Centre with so much uncertainty about our finances. Core parts of our funding are subject to annual renewal. Lack of clarity means that staff live with the threat of redundancy and the Centre cannot plan its future beyond annual funding horizons.

This year, we have been splitting at the seams in our Centre. A lot of management time has gone into finding a new home for the Centre. However, while we do not know what our funding will be in twelve months' time, we have to continue to work in over-crowded and potentially unsafe premises. MLC resolved to take additional space from our landlord at Campbelltown Mall to help with the overcrowding. We can only take that lease until March 2019 because of the uncertainty about our funding.



**Robert and the legal team meeting with Tim Leach (Executive Director)**

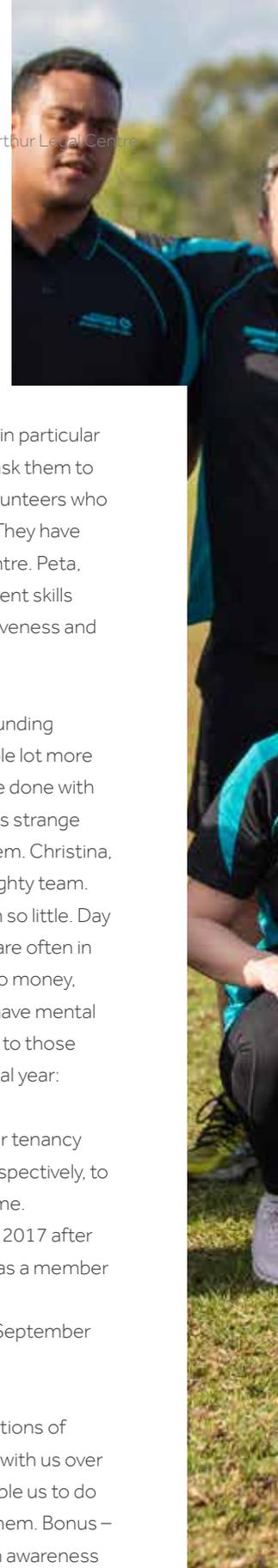
Thanks to the members of the Board and, in particular to our chair, Peta Andersson. Every time I ask them to do something, I am aware that they are volunteers who actually have a life apart from the Centre. They have been unstinting in their support of the Centre. Peta, Nevine, Adam, Alison and Sana bring different skills and connections to the table. Their cohesiveness and wisdom set the tone for the Centre.

A good executive officer survives by surrounding himself or herself by people who are a whole lot more intelligent than they are. That is what I have done with the managers of MLC. They are, in my son's strange language, lit. I am so grateful to each of them. Christina, Vala, Tanya and Carina continue to be a mighty team. The staff also continue to do so much with so little. Day in and day out, they work with clients who are often in extremely dysfunctional situations, have no money, live in insecure housing and, all too often, have mental health issues. I want to express our thanks to those members of staff who left us in this financial year:

- James Keech and Nicole Kennedy left our tenancy team in December 2017 and May 2018, respectively, to take employment a whole lot closer to home.
- Melisa Coveney left our legal team in late 2017 after many years in both our tenancy team and as a member of our legal practice.
- Michelle Buckley, who left MWDVCAS in September 2017.

And then there are the volunteers. Generations of students, lawyers and others have worked with us over the thirty years of our existence. They enable us to do so much more than we could do without them. Bonus – a new generation of lawyers is trained up in awareness of the complex issues faced by the disadvantaged and are skilled up to address them.

Macarthur Legal Centre is so much more than the sum of its parts. But to each of the parts, I say thank you for all you have done for us. Speaking for myself, it is an honour to be part of this amazing world.



# PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR'S REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

**MLC is part of a network of community legal centres, funded by state and federal governments and the NSW Public Purpose Fund, to provide free legal advice, referrals and assistance to residents of the Macarthur region of NSW, extending to Goulburn and Bowral.**

We also deliver community legal education, to increase awareness of legal issues, and use our coalface experience to help inform constructive legal and policy reforms.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to ensure that professional legal services are accessible to all members of our community, regardless of social or economic background. We see our clients as individuals and we constantly strive to deliver our services in innovative, collaborative and holistic ways. We provide free legal information, advice and referrals to all residents in our region, and targeted casework assistance for disadvantaged clients.

## OUR SERVICES

This year we provided 'information' to 2962 people, made 3783 referrals and our solicitors conducted 1218 legal advice sessions. About 55% of these were delivered 'face-to-face' and 45% were via telephone (with 2 via email). Our solicitors opened 467 new cases during the year, as well as providing ongoing casework to 443 long-term, and return clients. In total, we assisted 1426 clients with legal advice and casework services. Our solicitors provide advice onsite, during our Tuesday and Thursday advice sessions, and we also provide face-to-face advice at a variety of outreach locations in our catchment area.

## PRIORITY GROUPS

We target our services at the most vulnerable people in our community, and the effectiveness of our approach is positively reflected in our statistics for the year.

PRIORITY GROUP	CLIENTS (%)	CASES (%)
Women	66%	NA
Victims of DV	21%	23%
Aboriginal clients	9%	17%
Financial disadvantage	90%	97%
Young people (under 24)	8%	10%
Older people (over 65)	18%	19%
Disability	9%	14%

# OUTREACH

**We believe legal services should be accessible to all members of our community. We currently offer legal advice and assistance at 16 outreach clinics across the Macarthur region, stretching as far as Bowral and Goulburn.**

These services run either monthly, fortnightly or weekly, and are regularly reviewed to ensure we effectively target areas of unmet legal need in the community. We currently partner with the following services, to provide free legal assistance: Tallowood Community Centre (Ambarvale); Break the Cycle (Macquarie Fields); Benevolent Society (Campbelltown); Burnside (Campbelltown); Nagle Centre (Campbelltown); Community Links Wellbeing (Tahmoor); Claymore Community Centre (Claymore); Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation (Airds); Youth Off the Streets (Macquarie Fields); Big Yellow Umbrella (Narellan); AB Central (Airds); Community Links Wellbeing (Bowral); Tharawal Land Council (Couridjah); Pathways (Goulburn); Campbelltown Hospital; and the Family Relationship Centre (Campbelltown).

## HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP (HJP)

In early 2018 we started our new HJP with Campbelltown Hospital. Our HJP solicitors are at the hospital each Friday morning (9:00am-1:00pm), to help patients with their legal issues. We also see clients on an ad hoc basis, throughout the week, in cases of urgency. Our 6-month review of this

project indicates that 67% of clients were assisted with elder law and end of life planning issues (wills, enduring powers of attorney, enduring guardianship, advanced care directives and end of life planning), with the remainder requiring assistance with family law (10%) and civil law issues (23%). 68% of clients who accessed the service said that they would not have otherwise accessed legal advice. We see this as a significant achievement in meeting otherwise unmet legal need.

## NEW OUTREACHES

In 2018 we opened a new legal advice outreach at Youth Off the Streets (Macquarie Fields), to complement our youth outreach work at the Centre. This service is available to students, and Macquarie Fields community members, and is currently being broadly promoted through service providers and community members.

We have also established a new legal information and referral service at the Nagle Centre. The Nagle Centre, run by St Vincent De Paul, is a crisis support service for people experiencing homelessness and serious disadvantage. Our Aboriginal Legal Assistance Program (ALAP) worker, Samantha Alexander, is available for drop-in clients each Wednesday morning (9:00am-1:00pm). Where non-legal issues are present she provides information and referrals and where legal, tenancy and/or domestic/family violence issues are present she makes warm referrals back to MLC. We believe this service is a great way to link highly vulnerable clients with legal, tenancy and DV support.

### Here's how one client summed up their thoughts of our HJP service:

*'I would just like to note that the solicitors that were here at Campbelltown Hospital, Andrei Stepanov and Melissa Jozwiak, were extremely helpful and courteous. They made doing my will easy and not stressful. Everything was explained to me, and they have put my mind at ease (knowing that everything is taken care of). Lastly, I would like to say how professional and caring they were. Thanking you for your time TH'.*

# COLLABORATION

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

**MLC is committed to holistic, client-focused service delivery. To achieve this, we partner with internal and external service providers to ensure our clients receive all round service.**

### FAMILY RELATIONSHIP CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS

We currently partner with the Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) at Macarthur Square, Fairfield, and Bankstown to provide legal advice, referrals and assistance/representation to clients accessing FRC services. Generally, South West Sydney Legal Centre (SWSLC) will provide similar advice to the other party in each matter. This model, whereby both parties are represented by solicitors from community legal centres, is aimed at redressing power imbalances and resolving entrenched conflicts, with the aim of developing safe parenting arrangements and helping parents avoid negative court action. This year our solicitors, provided advice to 72 FRC clients and participated in 30 legally assisted mediations.

### CALA PILOT

This year we've been working closely with Bankstown FRC, and SWSLC, to deliver a new 18-month culturally appropriate legally assisted (CALA) mediation pilot. This program is an innovative initiative funded by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department. As part of this program, our solicitors have participated in training in cultural understanding, child inclusive practice, child protection, domestic/family violence and men's behaviour change. We've also worked closely with our partners to develop new, culturally-tailored, models of practice.

## CARE PARTNER PROGRAM

MLC is currently funded to deliver specialised care and protection services, two days per week, as part of the Care Partner program supported by Legal Aid NSW. This year, our care solicitors provided advice to 81 clients – with ongoing casework in 60 of these matters. Clients included parents, grandparents and carers. Clients in this group were predominantly single women 70%, with 41% identifying as Aboriginal. 17% of clients self-reported having a disability and 14% were from the CALD community. We delivered talks to community groups and workers, to help promote our service, and our client work included early intervention advice and advocacy for parents (to help prevent removal); assistance with negotiation of parental responsibility contracts and safety plans; advice and assistance around adoption and guardianship issues; representation assistance in NSW Children's Court proceedings; and assistance with contact and restoration matters (where children were already in the care of the Minister).

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LIST DAY

This year we established a new domestic violence list, to provide in-house legal advice and assistance to clients of our Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (MWDVCAS). MWDVCAS workers pre-book appointments for their clients each Thursday morning (9:30am-1:00pm). All clients are seen by female solicitors, with specialized knowledge in domestic violence, family law and care and protection. Casework is often coordinated with MWDVCAS staff to ensure holistic service delivery.



## CASE STUDY

Joe was at fault in a motor vehicle accident, but the car he was driving did not have third party property insurance. Joe works in a factory, supports a family and owns a modest home (with a mortgage). The other driver obtained a hire car while his car was being repaired. The car was hired for over 30 days, at an exorbitant daily rate, and our client was ultimately served with a hire car bill of \$14,000 (i.e. in addition to car damage repair costs).

Despite being employed, our client did not have capacity to repay this debt and faced severe adverse consequences, such as bankruptcy and losing his home. Senior Solicitor, Stephen Karanfilovski, was able to negotiate a settlement figure of \$1500 in this matter, based on unreasonable hire fees and severe financial hardship, and we're still assisting the car-repair cost aspect of this matter.

**100 %**

of clients found it easy to access MLC services

**100 %**

of clients felt MLC listened to their problems

**100 %**

of clients felt MLC helped them understand & deal with their legal problem

**100 %**

of clients said they knew where to go, if they had a problem in the future

**100 %**

of clients with special needs felt MLC appropriately catered to their needs

**100 %**

of clients said they would recommend MLC to other people

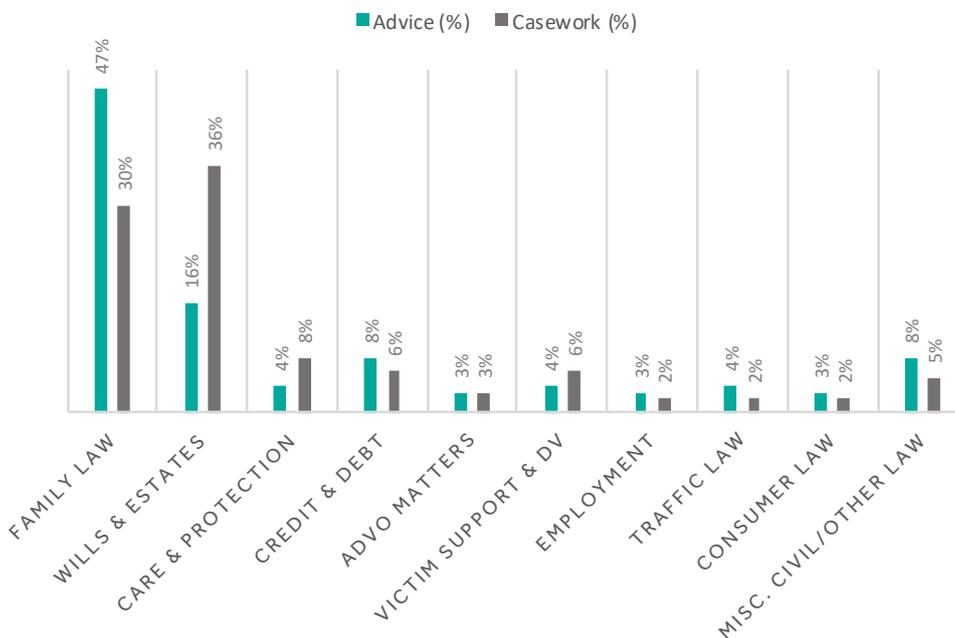
**CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2018**

We conducted our annual client survey in May/June 2018. 37 clients who received advice/casework in the month of May 2018 were surveyed by telephone.

## MAIN AREAS OF PRACTICE

Family law continues to be one of our main areas of practice, with many of our clients experiencing related domestic and family violence issues. We also continue to do plenty of work with older clients and otherwise deal with a varied mix of everyday legal issues.

### MAIN LAW TYPES



### PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP

We continue our successful partnership with law firm, Seyfarth Shaw, whose solicitors provide telephone advice to MLC clients with employment law issues. This relationship greatly boosts our capacity to provide timely, professional advice to our clients, and we are extremely thankful to all participating solicitors.



# WE ARE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

**Our team is committed to being part of the community we service. We delivered 38 community legal education (CLEs) workshops and otherwise participated in 301 non-casework activities/projects**

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our team is committed to being part of the community we service. We delivered 38 community legal education (CLEs) workshops and otherwise participated in 301 non-casework activities/projects, including: regular attendance at 14 local and state-wide interagencies, participation in CLC sector activities, attendance at local events and expos, law reform activities, meetings with key stakeholders, attendance at networking events etc. Our CLEs were delivered to a wide range of community groups in the Macarthur region, with audiences ranging from children and young people, to vulnerable parents and senior's groups. The topics we covered included bullying, healthy relationships, domestic violence, family law, child protection, child support, elder law, employment,

credit and debt, discrimination, mental health and carers issues. We developed and delivered peer mediation training and supervision to a group of students at Campbelltown Performing Arts High School. In addition, we have continued our successful 'Let's Talk Legal' seminar series, in collaboration with Campbelltown Library, which delivers a yearly series of targeted, plain language legal education talks to community members at local libraries. We've also started a new tailored talk series, 'Legal Matters', in collaboration with Camden/ Narellan libraries.

During **NAIDOC Week**, staff from across the Centre participated in events throughout our catchment area. A highlight of NAIDOC Week celebrations was the MLC Cassowaries playing a touch football competition with other local service providers.

## LAW REFORM

We continue to participate in law reform activities, which relate to systemic legal problems being experienced by people in our community. For example, we met with our local state and federal politicians to discuss domestic violence and victims support issues; we wrote to federal members, in relation to a proposed welfare bill; in early 2018 we made submissions in response to the NSW Parliamentary Committee on Law and Safety's inquiry into the adequacy of youth diversionary programs; we endorsed various submissions prepared by peak bodies; and we made submissions to our regional law society in relation to the need for a new Macarthur Justice Precinct. Our staff were also involved in a range of committees working to redress systemic injustice in legal areas.



# CHILDREN'S COURT ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Our CCAS program creates a supportive point of engagement for children and young people, allowing CCAS workers to identify and respond effectively to welfare and social needs. The scheme also supports the family, carers, friends and other support people who accompany the young person at court. The support that the CCAS provides to young people and/or their families includes:

- Information about court processes and outcomes.
- Social support on the day at court.
- Referral to welfare services such as drug and alcohol programs, counselling, and accommodation.

This year we helped 898 young people with matters listed before the Campbelltown Children's Court, which is a 30% increase from the previous year. 73% of the young people assisted were males, 27% female and at least 28% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We also assisted 368 parents/carers. During the year, the CCAS received invaluable assistance from two Māori elders and one senior youth worker from Youth off the Streets (YOTS). These individuals regularly attended court to provide culturally-informed support to Pacific Islander youth and acted as a source for warm referrals to YOTS programs. Our CCAS worker, Laura Sutton, also worked on the following youth and community focused activities:

- Regular meetings with the manager of YOTS/Koch Centre for Youth and Family to develop collaborative ways of assisting young people, especially those engaging with the juvenile justice system.
- Participated in a range of youth interagencies, committees and working groups (Youth Justice Coalition, Care and Crime Working Group, Youth Homelessness and Community Matters, Macarthur Youth Services Network).



MLC runs the Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS), at Campbelltown Children's Court. The CCAS program provides support to young people facing court for criminal matters and apprehended violence orders.

- Made submissions in response to the NSW Parliamentary Committee on Law and Safety's inquiry into the adequacy of youth diversionary programs
- Promoted MLC at local school events
- Delivered a range of legal education talks to students and youth services/workers (cyber-bullying, domestic violence, the Children's Court Assistance Scheme, legal issues and young people etc).
- With Christina Pirina, prepared and delivered peer mediation training to over 30 students from Campbelltown Performing Arts High School, to help them manage disputes between younger students.
- Delivered *ad hoc* youth education/outreach services to young people at YOTS youth groups at the Koch Centre in Macquarie Fields.
- Provided one-on-one referral and casework services to 'at risk' youth/families, engaged in Children's Court proceedings (assisting with Centrelink, employment and accommodation support etc.)
- Attended and assisted in Macquarie Fields Street BBQs, in collaboration with other youth-focused service providers
- Attended community events for Naidoc Week, Harmony Day, Youth Homelessness Week and Reconciliation Day.

## ABORIGINAL LEGAL ACCESS PROGRAM (ALAP)

Our ALAP worker, Samantha Alexander, has been working hard to make legal services more accessible to Aboriginal community members. This year Sam attended a variety of Aboriginal Community inter-agencies and networking events; helped us organize and deliver NAIDOC week activities; assisted with intake/casework at our Aboriginal Medical Corporation (Tharawal) outreach and ran our legal information and referral outreach at the Nagle Centre. Sam has also provided support and casework to Aboriginal clients facing challenges within the criminal justice system. This included accepting urgent referrals from Aboriginal elders, being a support person during police interviews and at court appearances, preparing client references, and helping police negotiate safe arrests (where clients had existing warrants). Sam has close ties to local Aboriginal elders and community members and great working relationship with local police.

### OUR VOLUNTEERS

We are greatly indebted to our student and solicitor volunteers for their assistance during weekly advice sessions. We have 13 dedicated student volunteers who assisted with advice sessions and as day placement students. Our volunteer solicitors provide legal advice during these sessions, alongside staff solicitors. The generous support of our volunteers significantly increases our capacity to provide advice services.

We also acknowledge the enthusiastic assistance of our daytime volunteers, and students participating in formal practical legal training (PLT) placements. A special commendation to senior solicitor, Melissa Jozwiak, for all her hard work on volunteer recruitment, induction, training and supervision.

### 2017-18 Volunteer Students

- Aaron Lal (Advice sessions)
- Adam Jacobs (Advice/day)
- Aishwarya Chand (Advice/day)
- Amelia Hagley (Advice sessions)
- Ashmita Rao (Advice sessions)
- Brianna Ellul (Advice/day)
- Emily Lucas (Advice sessions)
- Justina Hanna (Advice/day)
- Liezel De Castro (Advice/day)
- Nancy Harb (Advice sessions)
- Tashfia Tasnim (Advice sessions)
- Tiarnne Brown (Day student)
- Zia Khan (Advice sessions)

### 2017-18 Volunteer Solicitors

- Allyce Silm (Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancers)
- Brittany Short (Ex-Marsdens)
- Catherine McCarthy
- Greg McCauley
- Ismaeel Julius (Ex-Duffy Law Group)
- Joanna Knight (Marsdens Law Group)
- Kaisha Gambell (Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancers)
- Kelly Stanford (Stanfords Solicitors and Conveyancers)
- Patrick Duffy (Duffy Law Group)
- Rebecca Watts (Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancers)
- Renee Dibley

- Sarah Kermode (Duffy Law Group)
- Steven Cosgrove

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to our staff solicitors, for their relentless passion and dedication, notably – Barbara Simpson, Stephen Karanfilovski, Robyn Roelandts, Melissa Jozwiak, Melisa Coveney (who left us for new adventures in late 2017) and a warm welcome to our new graduate solicitors Andrei Stepanov and Milka Bundalo. I'd also like to thank our support team, including Danielle Archer (our ever-reliable office administrator), Phillipa Magro (steadfast paralegal support worker), and Stevie-Lea (our meticulous admin support worker).

### THE YEAR AHEAD

We have lots of great initiatives planned for 2019 - including finalising the new edition of the Debtors' Guide to the Local Courts of NSW; new partnerships and projects; new community legal education seminars; and practice-informed law reform projects. As ever, we will strive to make access to professional legal services a reality for all members of our community – especially the most disadvantaged. We sincerely thank all those who have supported us this year, and look forward to working with you all in the year ahead.



**CHRISTINA PIRINA**  
MLC Principal Solicitor



# MWDVCAS REPORT

**The Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (MWDVCAS) is part of a network of 29 community based court advocacy services in NSW.**

## OVERVIEW

Legal Aid NSW funds all WDVCS'. Macarthur WDVCS covers Campbelltown, Camden and Picton Courts, and workers attend on the ADVO List Day and other days for hearings to support clients. MWDVCAS also gives appropriate referrals and information relating to their domestic and/or family violence matter, advocates for clients, networks with the local community service providers on issues around domestic and family violence, offers training to community workers and ensures women have access to appropriate support outside of the justice system. The Macarthur WDVCS is very fortunate in that it is only one of two WDVCS' in NSW funded to provide case management/casework.

There are 14 staff employed with MWDVCAS including, Coordinator – Tanya Whitehouse, Assistant Coordinator/Multicultural Specialist Worker – Sesilia Large, Aboriginal Specialist Worker – Julie Hoffmannbeck, SAM Coordinator – Kelly Standaloft, Youth Focussed Caseworker – Nadia Graham,

Generalist Caseworkers – Lisa Stark & Rachel Cubis, Disability Focused Caseworker – Rebecca Yeomans, Administration Worker – Melinda Perry, Intake & Referral Officers – Shaylyn Schumacher, Rebecca Whitehouse, Joanne Walker and Amanda Weigand and part time Data Entry Worker – Michaela Whitehouse.

The implementation of the Local Coordination Point (LCP) within MWDVCAS resulted in a significant change in our work. The majority of referrals received came directly from police and new databases were introduced to electronically manage and monitor referrals. This commenced in February 2017 and the team have adapted very well to the workload. The Safety Action Meetings (SAMs) have been very positive and outcomes have been amazing for clients. In relation to the SAM meetings I would particularly like to acknowledge all participants from Police, FACS, Department of Education, Health, Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV), Corrective Services, Local Support Service (LSS) – men's support for male victims, Housing, Tharawal, Uniting and advocates from other NGO's.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The fantastic work done by MWDVCAS is never done as an individual service. MWDVCAS wants to sincerely acknowledge the ongoing support of the following services and individuals.

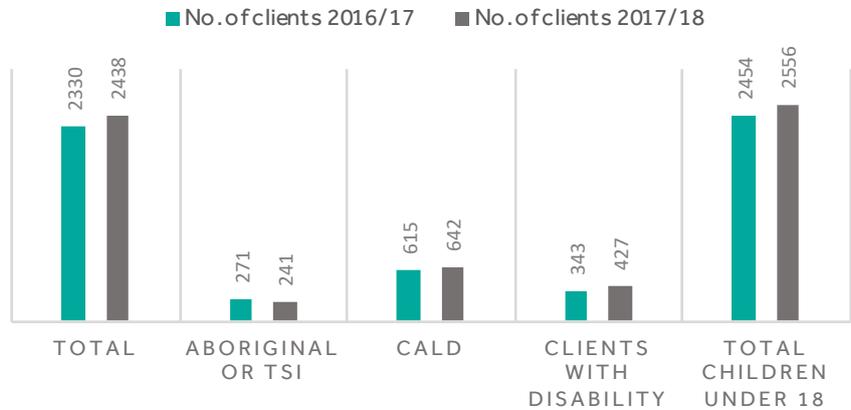
Without their support we could not do our job as well as we do: Macarthur Legal Centre, SWSTAAS, Narellan/Campbelltown Police, Campbelltown/Camden & Picton Courts, Nanette Reuben, Ngoc Le, Brenda Duchen, Uzma Abbas, Karen Peters, Benevolent Society Centre for Women's Health, Staying Home Leaving Violence, WILMA Women's Health Centre, Community Links Wollondilly, Chisholm Program, BaptistCare, Macarthur Family & Youth Services, Tharawal Aboriginal Health Service, FACS Housing, Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative Inc., Macarthur Disability Services, Jackie Burns, Uniting, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, Turning Point, Legal Aid Campbelltown Office, St Vincent de Paul Case Management, Macarthur Gateway, Camden Council, Campbelltown Council, Wollondilly Council and Shining Star Foundation.



**TANYA WHITEHOUSE**  
MWDVCAS Coordinator

Staff at MWDVCAS are involved in many different interagency supports including Domestic Violence Committees at Campbelltown and Camden, multicultural interagency, youth interagency, Aboriginal interagency and drug and alcohol network. Our Youth Focused Caseworker is a panel member of the Youth Subsidy assessment committee. The team's Aboriginal Specialist Worker, Julie, is supported by an Intake and Referral Officer, Shaylyn, to facilitate the Sista Girl Yarnz Group, which meets weekly during school terms. Although the Sista Girl Yarnz Group currently is unfunded, it continues to run.

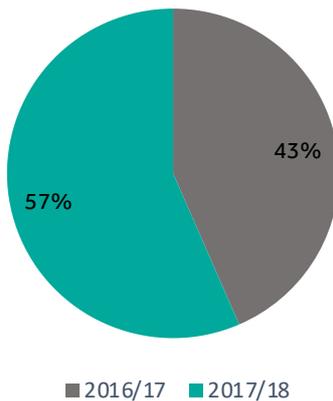
## COMPARISON OF CLIENTS FROM 2016/17 TO 2017/18



### STATISTICS

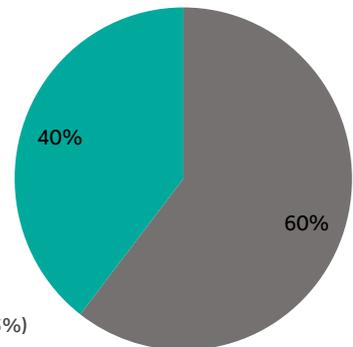
Statistics show an increase in the use of our services over the last year. This is due to many factors, including professional support work by the whole MWDVCAS team, direct referrals from police through the Local Coordination Point (LCP), effective referral pathways with other service providers and a continued focus on supporting women as effectively as possible.

### Comparison of Service Events



25,592 service events for 2017/18 (increase of 30%)  
 Average of 492 service events per week.  
 Service events include referrals, court support, calls, letters etc.

### Comparison of Referrals



Total referrals for 2017/18: 51,307 (increase of 48.5%)  
 Average of 986 referrals per week.  
 Significant increase in referrals for the past year.





# CASE STUDIES

## CASE STUDY A (GENERALIST CASEWORKER)

MWDVCAS met with a client at Camden Court. She was seeking an ADVO after some years of DV. Court was quite distressing and confronting for the client, however, she did engage. While doing the intake the client disclosed some significant issues around sexual assault that involved her children on many levels – this placed another level of complexity to her matter. After several court dates, the matter was finalised with an ADVO and conviction.

Later, the client relocated to another suburb and was actively supported by Start Safely for subsidised rent. She had made the choice to home school her children due to their level of trauma. At some point the ex-partner was seen driving past her house – he was then charged and convicted for a breach, and the ADVO was extended for another 12 months.

During this period the client was able to access a SafeTCard Duress Alarm through Victims Services. This improved her confidence to go out publicly and allowed the children to attend after school activities as well.

Once the client seemed to be able to deal with more trauma, she was referred to Macarthur Legal Centre to address claims to be lodged through Victims Services. This application took a considerable amount of time and meetings as there were multiple claims including the DV claims, financial assistance for immediate needs and financial assistance for economic loss. Some claims were successful, however, the claim for economic loss (loss of earnings) was denied. The solicitor at Macarthur Legal Centre prepared a comprehensive appeal to this matter. Many months later the outcome was that the client’s children all received payment through Victims Services for the domestic violence and sexual assault and the client was also allocated \$60,000 for loss of income.

Although this process took a considerable amount of time and a lot of work from the Centre’s solicitor, the outcome is that the client now has a solid financial backup to assist her with the day-to-day living expenses and she may even get to have a holiday.

## Case Study 2 (Disability Focused Caseworker)

Roberta is a 27-year-old woman with an intellectual disability. She first came to speak to a caseworker after she had tried to complain to police about the sexual abuse she was suffering from a man who was living in her house. The police had told her there was nothing they could do and sent her to the court to apply for a private AVO. The court then referred her to us. Roberta disclosed that she was living in a Housing property, and that an old man called Fred had moved in and had been physically, verbally and sexually abusing her for the last three years. She said that she didn't know this man when he moved in and hadn't met him before, he just showed up at her door and let himself in. Roberta presented with marks and bruising on her arms and legs, and also a mark on her breast which she said Fred did by pinching her. Her story was sometimes muddled and her timelines could be confusing, but there was no doubt that she was being abused by this person. It was just a matter of taking the time to go through it with her.

After speaking with the caseworker, Roberta agreed that she would make a statement to police, as she wanted this man to move out of her house. Her conversation with the caseworker confirmed that she had not revealed all the abuse to police and had essentially (initially) just asked them to 'make him leave'. The Disability Focused Caseworker called FACS Housing to enquire if they knew that Fred was living in the property. They advised the worker that he was listed as an additional tenant on the lease, and was paying his share of the rent. The Housing worker told the caseworker he was listed as an old family friend on the paperwork. It was Fred's hand writing on the forms, however, Roberta had signed it. The caseworker explained to FACS Housing that it was entirely possible that she had been coerced into signing the paperwork, or had signed it without knowing what it was.

Two weeks later, Roberta told the caseworker that Fred was still in her flat and she wanted him to leave. The caseworker told Roberta that Housing said Fred had been added to the lease and asked if she knew him through her family. Roberta said again that she didn't know who he was. She told the caseworker she had tried to tell Housing that she wanted Fred to move out and that he was hurting her. With Roberta's consent the caseworker called Housing and spoke to her worker's team leader. The caseworker reinforced that she had serious concerns for Roberta's safety and provided a letter of support to Housing requesting they

provide Roberta with temporary accommodation as she felt too unsafe to return to the flat while Fred was there. Housing agreed to provide some temporary accommodation while Robert worked with Police. MWDVCAS received an LCP referral as Roberta had attended the station on the weekend. Police listed the incident as bullying/harassment/intimidation but did not take any further action. The caseworker called the DVLO to find out what had happened and was advised that Roberta had attended the station desk but that she hadn't made a statement, and that they weren't sure that anything was going on. The caseworker advised the DVLO that she would be accompanying Roberta to make a statement.

Housing worked with Roberta to complete the paperwork necessary to have Fred removed from the flat. Housing then advised Fred that he was being removed from the tenancy and provided him with temporary accommodation. The caseworker accompanied Roberta to Campbelltown Police and she was interviewed. With the information provided, police were able to figure out that Fred had lived in Roberta's flat prior to her, with his wife. Once his relationship broke down Housing moved them out of the flat and the tenancy was given to Roberta. Once she had moved in, Fred made his way back to the flat and moved himself in against Roberta's wishes. After taking Roberta's statement, police served an AVO on Fred, and also charged him with common assault. Roberta made disclosure about the sexual assaults, so police referred the case to detectives. The ADVO matter appeared at Campbelltown Local Court, where the caseworker supported Roberta. The ADVO was finalized and Fred was given a section 10 bond for 18 months for the common assault charge.

The caseworker continued to work with Roberta to get her ready to make a statement to detectives. She has been liaising with a detective from Campbelltown Police, and hopefully Roberta will feel ready to speak to him regarding the sexual assault. The most positive thing to come out of this is Roberta being able to tell her story, and to be listened to and believed. She had been trying for months, if not years, to tell someone what was happening, but due to her intellectual disability, she was unable to communicate exactly what she meant. She was also easy to dismiss, as it was often hard for her to explain herself properly. This is a common issue for women with intellectual disabilities, as they are such a vulnerable group. This case study is a great example of the importance of disability focused work and advocacy within the domestic violence space.



# SWSTAAS REPORT

**South West Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service ('SWSTAAS'), is a service of Macarthur Legal Centre Inc. Our tenancy team provides advice and advocacy to tenants who live in the Local Government Areas of Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly.**

## BIG CHANGES

Big changes occurred during the reporting year, particularly in regard to staff and our service delivery partnerships. Despite the challenges inherent in making significant change, we maintained our vision and team spirit. Our persistence paid off and we achieved great results for the individual tenants and tenant groups we assisted, as well as with front-line workers and the community in general.

## STAFFING

James Keech, who worked as a junior advocate with us, accepted a tenant advocate position in Northern Area Tenants Service, finishing in December 2017. During his time with us, James significantly developed his skills and confidence. In fact, his work earned him two important awards - a well-deserved acknowledgment by the Tenant's Advice and Advocacy Network (TAAP) of James' ability and dedication to his work. James' departure changed the team dynamic, and experience levels, and led to some new challenges in the middle of the reporting period. Nicole Kennedy accepted the Coordinator position with Inner City TAAS in Redfern Legal Centre, towards the end of the reporting period. Nicole has been a hard-working, passionate advocate in the team. She was the pioneer and main force behind our Appeal Panel practice for the past two years. We are sad to have lost her from our team, however, we are excited for her growth and advancement in her new role. She is an absolute asset to the sector.

## PARTNERSHIPS

We have paused our outreach with CatholicCare in both Liverpool and Fairfield until further notice. We have also reviewed our pilot partnership with Ambarvale Hub and decided to close it. We remain in contact with these organisations and have a cross-referral pathway for mutual access for clients. In light of these changes, we will be considering new outreach opportunities in the new financial year.

## ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

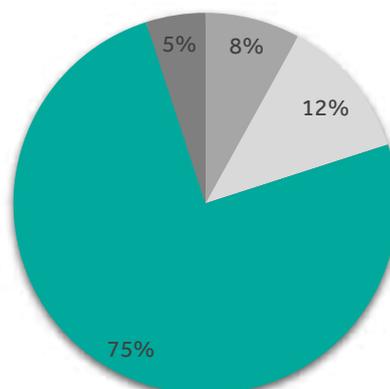
From 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, we provided 1736 sessions of advice to tenants over the phone, via electronic mail, and face-to-face. This also included representation in conciliations and formal hearings at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Tribunal).



**VALA OLA'AIGA**  
SWSTAAS Coordinator

*'We believe  
**EVERYONE** has a  
right to safe and  
secure housing'.*

## Advice by Delivery Mode



■ Email ■ Face-to-face ■ Phone ■ Representation

# SERVICE DELIVERY

## OPEN CASES

During the reporting period, we opened 815 cases in addition to the 565 cases carried forward from the previous year. 919 cases were active during this period, with the top five activities involving the matters set forth below (note: some cases involved more than one matter type).

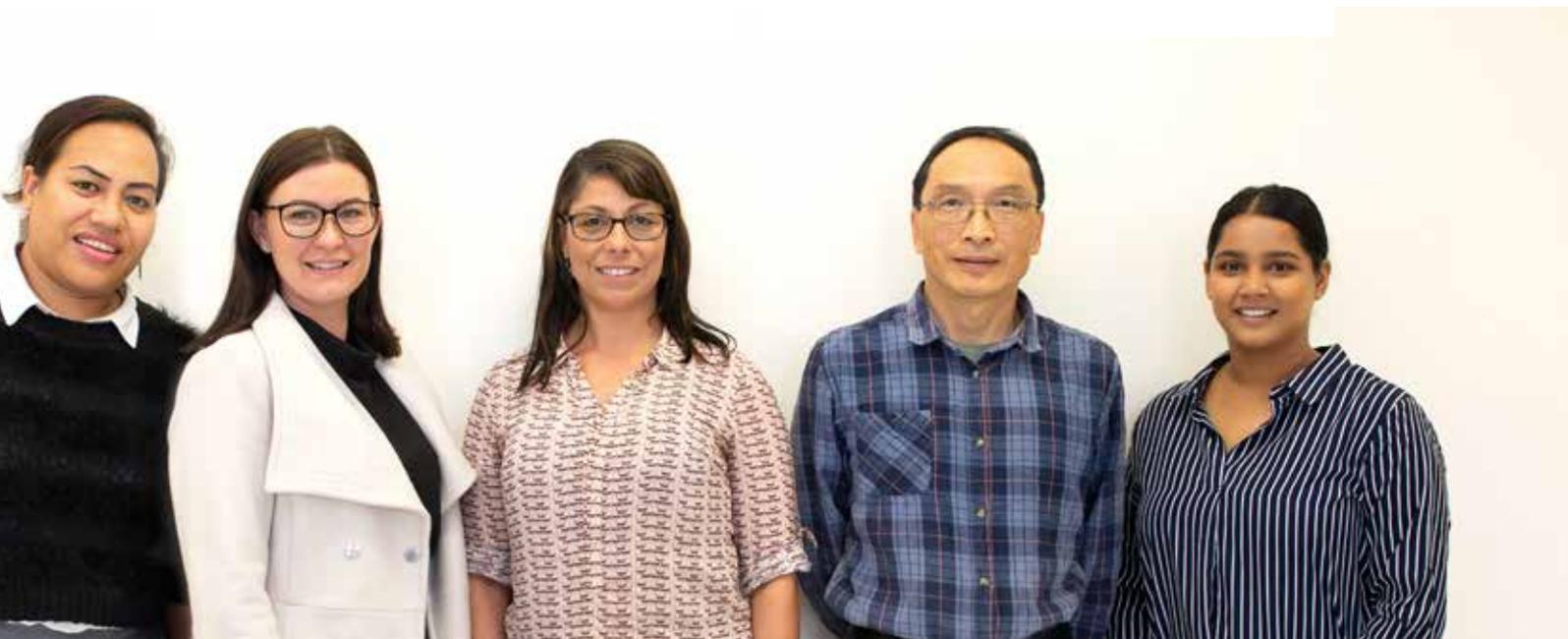
- i. Termination (31%)
- ii. Rents and Other Charges (30%)
- iii. Bond and Compensation (25%)
- iv. Repairs & Maintenance/Alt. (23%)
- v. Tribunal and Jurisdiction (19%)

## CLOSED CASES

We resolved and closed a total of 1012 cases, with a total of 373 cases remaining open at the end of the reporting period. The table below shows the top five outcomes achieved for clients.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED	No.
Provided with information	955
Tribunal – information and/or advice	798
Advice/assistance in negotiation with landlord/real estate agent	797
Referral	549
Tribunal – provided written information	397

These figures indicate the large volume of work that we do to support the South West Sydney renting community who access our service.



# GOOD NEWS STORY



Naomi and Nicole were attending a separate hearing at the Tribunal when they came across Susan. A community housing provider (CHP) tenant, Susan, had received a section 91 termination due to her property being raided by police in October 2017. The raid resulted in the arrest of her son and her son-in-law, and her daughter being charged with a proceeds of crime offence. During the police investigation, the tenant was never questioned or charged in relation to any matter.

It quickly became clear that Susan had very minimal understanding of the raid and termination she was facing. She had limited English language skills and seemed to have limited understanding of the severity of the matter, even when a translator was used. This was the main reason the Tribunal Member had asked us to help Susan.

We quickly put together an application for a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) to be appointed, due to our concerns about Susan's capacity and her inability to provide instructions and/or understand anything we said. The application was successful, and the matter was referred to the Attorney General's office for the appointment of a GAL. Separately, the CHP lodged a second termination application, based on rent arrears of over \$6000 and unpaid water usage. These rent arrears were due to the tenant being charged market rent from January 2018, as she could not prove where her son and son-in-law were living after the raid. Susan did not know where they were, or if they had been incarcerated, so she was unable to provide any documentation to the CHP.

## Rent Arrears Matter

With the GAL appointed, and able to give substitute instructions in the 'best interests' of the client, we able to supply the CHP with the required documents and have her rent reviewed. This resulted in Susan having the backdated rent subsidy applied and \$10,800 being credited to her rent account. Due to this, the tenant became \$4400 in credit and the CHP withdrew this application from the Tribunal.

## Termination due to illegal use of the premises

After lengthy negotiations, the CHP agreed not to pursue the section 91 termination and Susan was offered relocation to a one-bedroom property for seniors (she is a sole person living alone). Susan agreed to the terms and has since relocated to the new property where she is living happily.

# 2018

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**SWSTAAS is committed to engaging with the community we service and to continuous service improvement**

### OUTREACHES

Our outreach with the Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (MWDVCAS), in the safe rooms at Campbelltown Local Court on ADVO Tuesdays, continues. As part of this project, tenancy workers Nicole Kennedy and Naomi Hare completed seconded worker training to help them assist as professional support workers for women and children experiencing domestic violence issues.

Miller Hub grows from strength to strength in popularity. We are aware that we have not even begun to scratch the surface of the multiple layers of inter-generational socio-economic disadvantage that we know is prevalent in the area. Our presence is becoming better known, however, and people are finding their way to the Hub to access our assistance. Miller Hub team have been an absolute dream to work with.

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION

We continue to support our community by way of information sessions directed at service providers and community education sessions specifically designed for a target group of tenants. We conducted a total of 15 community education sessions during this reporting period.

### TRAINING

Through the busy times, we still focus on upskilling and improving ourselves. There has been more in-house training created for specific areas of need. More often than not we are time poor, so peer support and on-the-spot training has proven very successful again. Staff have attended 'Dealing with difficult clients' and 'mental health' training throughout the year, which has been helpful in managing more complex clients. As mentioned earlier, some team members also completed the official WDVCS seconded-worker training earlier

this year (to help them deliver services in a trauma-informed way).

### THANK YOU

To the team - Douglas Lee, Nicole Kennedy, James Keech, Naomi Hare and Ashmita Rao - what a year! All the best to James and Nicole in your new roles. You should all be very proud of your hard work and achievements. Douglas, Naomi and Ash, we will work together towards kicking more goals in the next 12 months – and maybe hire another person to help us too.

***To the TAAP Network brains trust and the Tenants Union NSW for always having our back. To the community, not-for-profit organisations, community organisations and community groups which have helped us through this year. To Macarthur Legal Centre and Board, as well as the separate services within the Centre, thank you.***

# FINANCIAL REPORT 2018

## STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2018

	2018 \$	2017 \$
Revenue	2,908,643	2,401,117
Depreciation Expense	(34,543)	(30,215)
Employee Benefits Expense	(2,294,666)	(1,961,060)
Other Expenses From Ordinary Activities	(465,714)	(363,131)
<b>Surplus/Deficit) before income tax</b>	<b>113,720</b>	<b>46,711</b>
Income Tax Expense	-	-
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>113,720</b>	<b>46,711</b>
Other comprehensive income after income tax	-	-
<b>Total other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year</b>	<b>113,720</b>	<b>46,711</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to members</b>	<b>113,720</b>	<b>46,711</b>

## CASHFLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2018 \$	2017 \$
<b>CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Receipts of grants	3,068,730	2,568,992
Payments to suppliers and employees	(2,857,717)	(2,443,033)
Interest received	22,893	23,884
<b>Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities</b>	<b>233,906</b>	<b>149,843</b>
<b>CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment	-	636
Payment for property, plant and equipment	(12,358)	(63,772)
<b>Net cash provided by/(used) in investing activities</b>	<b>(12,358)</b>	<b>(63,136)</b>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	221,548	86,707
Cash at the beginning of the year	1,460,348	1,373,641
<b>Cash at the End of the Year</b>	<b>1,681,896</b>	<b>1,460,348</b>

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2018

	2018 \$	2017 \$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,681,896	1,460,348
Trade and other receivables	4,754	12,879
Other current assets	10,704	6,350
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>1,697,354</b>	<b>1,479,577</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	75,185	97,370
Total Non-Current Assets	75,185	97,370
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>1,772,539</b>	<b>1,576,947</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade and other payables	603,076	552,079
Provisions	271,202	228,848
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>874,278</b>	<b>780,927</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Provisions	38,016	49,495
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>	<b>38,016</b>	<b>49,495</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>912,294</b>	<b>830,422</b>
Net Assets	860,245	746,525
<b>Represented by</b>		
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Retained surplus	860,245	746,525
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>860,245</b>	<b>746,525</b>

## STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2018

	Retained Surplus \$	Total Equity \$
<b>Balance as at 1 July 2016</b>	<b>699,814</b>	<b>699,814</b>
Surplus attributable to members	46,711	46,711
Other comprehensive income	-	-
<b>Balance as at 30 June 2017</b>	<b>746,525</b>	<b>746,525</b>
Surplus/(Deficit) attributable to members	113,720	113,720
Other comprehensive income	-	-
<b>Balance as at 30 June 2018</b>	<b>860,245</b>	<b>860,245</b>

