

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Macarthur Legal Centre

The longer I am in the sector, the greater my appreciation of the value of our links to the community. Macarthur Legal Centre's tag line is supporting our community. But like all CLCs, we are also supported by our community.

Our support comes from Governments, State and Federal, our community partners, volunteers and staff who make our work possible.

Many organisations do fabulous work. We are one such organisation that supports its local community. Despite our ups and downs, we continue to do fantastic work supporting our community and, in turn, being supported by it. Those links to our community – close knit now over decades – they set community legal centres and Macarthur Legal Centre apart.

Robert Pelletier

Executive Officer

1

Chair's Report

This annual report highlights Macarthur Legal Centre's wonderful achievements, in FY 2019.

2

Executive Officer

Macarthur Legal Centre's tagline is supporting our community but like all CLCs, we are supported by our community.

3

Legal Report

Our legal team provides free information, referrals, advice and assistance to some of the most disadvantaged members of our community.

4

MWDVCAS Report

MWDVCAS is part of a network of 29 community-based Court Advocacy Services in NSW. Helping female victims of domestic and family violence.

5

SWSTAAS Report

SWSTAAS is one of 15 generalist tenancy services providing free, independent information, advice and advocacy to tenants in NSW.

6

Finance Report

Funding in the CLC sector is an ongoing dilemma, but at MLC we strive to be accountable, transparent and efficient.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair of the MLC Board

Peta Andersson

It is my privilege to present the Chairperson's Report for 2018-19. It's difficult, however, to add much to the report by Robert Pelletier, our trusty Executive Officer, which has provided a comprehensive summary of the year that's been.

MLC is fortunate to have Board members with great leadership capability, which is vital during this era of change and a landscape of uncertainty. The past year has seen a focus on promotion of an effective, productive and respectful organisational culture where the Code of Conduct has become more than a piece of paper. Team members have been encouraged to bring it to life through practice and everyday behaviours. Significant resources have also been devoted to securing financial resources, through tender writing and continuing efforts to maintain funding. Infrastructure development has also been a focus - for example, moving the tenancy team to the new 'Annex'.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all Board members including Nevine Youssef (Secretary), Adam Quinn (Treasurer), and Alison Croall for their ongoing dedication and contributions. We welcomed a new Board member, Dani Napton, who brings a wealth of leadership knowledge and experience.

I would like to extend special thanks and appreciation to Julie Deane (Vice-Chair) and Sana Al-Ahmar who, after providing substantial contributions to MLC, chose to stand down at the 2019 AGM. Sana has provided valuable contributions throughout the past 3 ½ years - especially offering us a multicultural lens. She will be missed, and we wish her all the best in future endeavours.

It humbles me to acknowledge that Julie Deane ends a term of twenty plus years on the MLC Board. She is an inspiration and has supported my transition into the role of Chairperson. Board members Nevine Youssef and Adam Quinn have continued to provide reliable and unwavering support as members of the Accreditation Sub-Committee, working to ensure Quality Improvement Plan targets are met and goals are realised.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to sincerely 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 ongoing professionalism and commitment.

The Board is grateful to our people - MLC staff, students and volunteers. You are the lifeblood of the Centre. May 2020 bring stability, new opportunities and capacity to continue providing high quality Legal, Tenancy and Domestic Violence services to vulnerable, disadvantaged and often traumatised clients who have complex needs.



NAIDOC Week - MLC Children's Colouring Competition Entries

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Executive Officer

Robert Pelletier

I acknowledge that we live and work on the land of the Tharawal people. I pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Our links with the community

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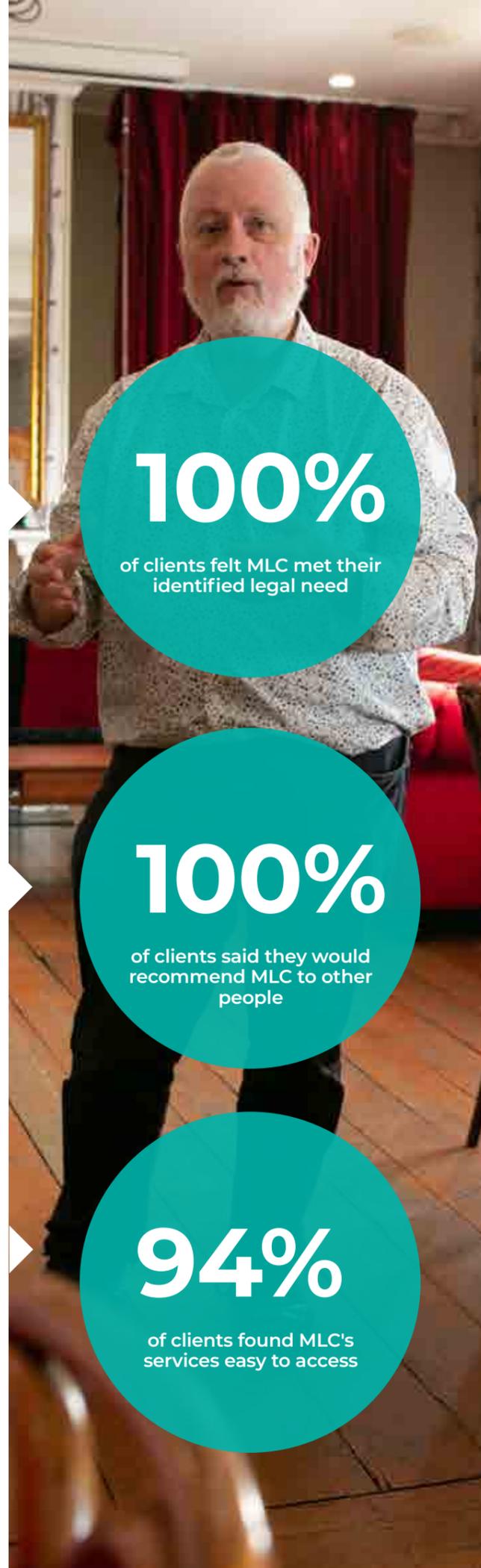
Our community - what sets us apart

Many organisations do fabulous work. We are one such organisation that supports its local community. Despite our ups and downs, we continue to do fantastic work supporting our community and, in turn, being supported by it. Those links to our community – close knit now over decades – they set community legal centres and Macarthur Legal Centre apart.

Our partner services

Then there are our partner organisations who refer clients to us, who host our outreaches, who provide services to us and to whom we refer clients. It is a pleasure and an honour to build up relationships with these organisations who are doing wonderful work in their own right.

We conducted our annual legal team client survey in May/June 2019. 52 clients, who received advice/assistance in the month of May 2019, were interviewed by phone. The results speak for themselves.



100%

of clients felt MLC met their identified legal need

100%

of clients said they would recommend MLC to other people

94%

of clients found MLC's services easy to access

Our Supporters

Government

I am grateful to live in a country where State and Federal Governments and all mainstream political parties agree that access to justice and organisations such as ours should be funded, that Governments have a key role to play in ending domestic violence and where tenancy advice and advocacy services are also funded by Government.

The Centre recognises and is grateful for this funding. We have excellent relationships with the members of Parliament who represent our catchment areas. We are grateful for their advocacy on our behalf and, ultimately, on behalf of our clients.

Governments have not required us to sing for our supper...yet. But we have been required to submit tenders to secure our place in the sun. In this financial year, we submitted tenders to continue to auspice MWDVCAS and for the legal work we do.

Tendering is a huge investment of time and money for small organisations like us. Having said that, I am pleased to say that our funding for the MWDVCAS was extended for another year to 30 June 2020. Our legal tender was also successful. We secured additional funding to support our many outreaches. Unfortunately, the legal funding expires on 30 June 2020. We are not sure what will happen then. A further complication is that the Federal Government is still negotiating its contribution to our funding with State and Territory Governments. Our funding for the SWSTAAS has been rolled over for another three years, which is an excellent result.

Volunteers

Students with a passion for social justice work on our front desk, answer our phones, take instructions and support our solicitors. I have seen so many students grow while they are with us and then leave to flourish in their careers. We are grateful to all our students for the work they do and the passion and enthusiasm they bring to our work.

Thanks to our volunteer lawyers. They come to our advice sessions, provide telephone and face-to-face advice, and take referrals from us. Their generosity never ceases to amaze me. Some have been with us for years. It takes real generosity, after a long working day, to find the energy to come to the Centre and work for a few more hours every week or every month.



100%

of clients felt MLC listened to their problems

100%

of clients felt MLC helped them understand & manage their legal problem

100%

of clients would return to MLC, if needed



OUR BOARD

The work of our Board is not glamorous. They read emails from me, spreadsheets and reports that are flung at them at the last moment. Somehow, together, these wonderful people find the time to provide wisdom and the bigger picture that keeps us sane and focused.

I have seen the pain that a broken relationship between a board and management can cause in not for profit organisations. Our success, such as it is, is in no small part

down to these amazing people. So, who are they? They are members of our community who want to give back, in some way, for all that they have received. Fortunately, they chose to do that as members of our Board.

Thanks to our Chair, Peta Andersson. She has provided unstinting support for me and the Centre. It is a great comfort to me that the Centre attracts Board members of Peta's calibre. In her busy life, she finds time to lead the Board,

help with some of our HR needs, be on our accreditation committee and also to discuss life with me between board meetings. I thank two of our directors who are standing down at this AGM.

First, Sana Al-Ahmar. Sana was appointed to our Board in May 2016. She has been with us for three and a half years – providing governance, not for profit and multicultural expertise. Sana has given the Board and the Centre outstanding service. I am very grateful for that.

Julie Deane has been a member of the Board for at least twenty years. She was Chair of the Board when I commenced my work at the Centre in November 2013. 2013 was a year of turmoil for the Centre.

Somehow, Julie held it together during a very challenging time. Julie provided outstanding supervision for me when I came on board. Julie stood down as Chair at the 2016 AGM but remained on the Board as Deputy Chair.

I recently asked Julie why she stayed on the Board so long and had stuck with it in some of our more troubling times. She replied that, despite all the troubles of the Centre, it continues to be a vital part of the community and does excellent work.

Julie, you are a vital part of our community at Macarthur Legal Centre. As a Board member and as a leader of our organisation, you have always done excellent work. There are some people in life who

are guiding stars. For me, Julie is one such person. Thank you.

I should also note that, not content with working so hard for the Centre herself, Julie enlisted her husband, John, to provide us with invaluable technical support from time to time. Thanks to John as well.

Our staff

Then there are the staff members. It takes a special kind of madness to work in an underfunded, underpaid, overworked environment such as ours.

I tell everyone who will listen that our staff members are my heroes. I admire their commitment to

working with clients who could not get help elsewhere. Our staff somehow preserve hope for our clients, often when our clients and those nearest and dearest to them have given up. That is a great gift.

We cannot help everyone, but sometimes, we do little things that matter a lot - like writing a will; advising a victim on

appropriate restraining orders and the importance of reporting breaches, or arguing for a tenant who is about to be unlawfully evicted from their home. These small things can make an amazing difference to the lives of our clients. I am so grateful to all our staff members.

Every year, I acknowledge and thank the staff who left us. In FY 2019, the following staff members finished their employment at MLC:

Stevie-Lea Hoffmannbeck (Legal)
 Renee Dibley (Legal)
 Rebecca Yeomans (MWDVCAS)
 Samantha Alexander (ALAP)
 Tatiana Motta (SWSTAAS)
 Thanks to each of these staff

members who were part of our team. We wish them all the best in their new endeavours.

Our management team

The Centre's management team, Christina Pirina, Tanya Whitehouse, Vala Olaaiga and Carina Southern, is simply the best. I appreciate their hard work

and intelligence. I appreciate their sense of humour. Occasionally, they manage to make me look good which is a substantial achievement bordering on the miraculous. They are respected by their teams and by the sectors in which they work. They have made MLC an outstanding success.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

We leased some new additional space from our landlord at the back of Campbelltown Mall. We have dubbed that space the Annex. We fitted it out and moved our Tenancy Team into it in September 2018. Both the Legal team and Tenancy team were able to breathe again as they were no longer living in sardine like intimacy on the ground floor of the Centre. The move was a surprisingly big job, but the end result has been great for both teams – they can now breathe – and for the Centre.

We continued to celebrate our 30th anniversary by acquiring some artworks from our local community to adorn the Centre. We acquired two works from Amy Trindall and one from Shareen Clayton. Both of these artists are local artists. We acquired a work from Betty Mbitjana. The beauty of these works will, I hope, continue to inspire our troops long after the glow of the 30th anniversary has faded.

Accreditation continues to challenge the Centre. I have had great support from the Board's Accreditation Sub-Committee and from Christina and Carina. I should also thank CLC NSW our peak body. CLC NSW has been, shall I say, understanding. The urgent has a habit of displacing the vital and I am always playing catch up in this space.

I also acknowledge the support we have received from Stephen Pauley of HR Focus who has come to my aid. Just like the cavalry, this mighty consultant, steams into our watering hole, the local coffee shop, to get me out of accreditation fixes from time to time. Speaking of the cavalry, our IT consultants, Autonomous IT, continue to distinguish themselves. Our system works, and we have plans to complete the migration of our data to SharePoint in the new financial year. Thanks to Annie and the team for their hard work making this possible.

The best thing we did for morale this year was a Centre wide decluttering session in December 2018. We hired a skip or two and just got rid of junk. The staff faced the day with apprehension. But, as it turned out, it was the best team building activity we have done in a while. That morale boosting gem will have to go into the calendar again for next year. I was very relieved that we ended the day able to move around the Centre again and no workers' comp claims!

Another brilliant thing we did for morale was our participation in the annual Naidoc Touch Footy competition! The mighty Cassowaries, led by the magnificent Stephen Karanfilovski as captain, donned the football gear to join in this fabulous annual festival of the boot. We distinguished ourselves, as usual, and came at or close to last, as usual. On'yer Cassowaries!

The trifecta of morale boosters was the birth of Christina's beautiful bub, Eva, on 9 January 2019 - weighing 3.4kg and 53cm long. Because Christina does not have enough to do, she also became a member of NCAT. We congratulate her on the birth of her wonderful daughter and her appointment to the Tribunal.

Chris took three months maternity leave and Melissa Jozwiak, Stephen Karanfilovski and finally Barbara Simpson took turns as Acting Principal Solicitor in her absence. We thank them for the contribution each of them made to the practice and the Centre in Chris' absence.



OUR CHALLENGES

The challenges ahead are many. We have to get funding for our caseworkers in MWDVCAS. We provide specialist support for people with a multicultural background, those who have a disability and the young who are victims of domestic and family violence. The Macarthur region, tragically, has one of the highest incidents of domestic related assaults in NSW. Our caseworkers provide immediate support that is tailored to the needs of these groups.

We need to work on making our premises a safe place to work. That will mean biting the bullet on some physical changes to our Centre, so that it is more appropriate to the changing and challenging nature of our work.

I want to work on the soft skills of our work. These include:

- Embedding our code of conduct deeper into our behaviour so that our staff members are absolutely confident that their colleagues have their back.
- Increasing my professionalism and that of the Centre generally.
- Developing our staff by increasing their skills in their professional areas.
- Ensuring that our Centre is culturally safe for all who seek our services.

I am also keen that the Centre plays a key in the sectors in which it operates. We are represented on the Board of CLC NSW and Tanya continues to chair the Board of Women's Safety NSW, the peak body of WDVCSs across NSW. We are part of a much larger community and we should play a role in supporting our sector to be the best it can be.



4743

specialty targeted referrals were made by our solicitors

443

new cases were opened by our solicitors

541

legal cases were finalised and closed

2948

'Information' services, provided to people contacting our service

1393

legal advice sessions were delivered by our solicitors

429

legal cases remained open from our previous reporting period

Our Legal Team

MLC is part of a network of community legal centres, funded by state and federal governments, 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.

Outreach

We believe legal services should be accessible to all members of our community. In FY2019, we offered legal advice and assistance at 14 outreach clinics, across the Macarthur region, stretching as far as Bowral and Goulburn.

Our Outreach Services

Our face-to-face outreach 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); Community Links Wellbeing (Bowral); Pathways (Goulburn); Campbelltown Hospital; and the Family Relationship Centre (Campbelltown). We constantly adjust our outreach services, to ensure we are meeting unmet legal need in our community.

52% of advices were delivered in person

45% by telephone

3% by email

Results for FY 2019

LEGAL REPORT

Principal Solicitor

Christina Pirina

MLC is committed to holistic, client-focused service delivery. To achieve this, we partner with internal and external service providers to ensure our clients achieve the best outcomes possible.

Family Relationship Centre Partnership

We currently partner with the Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) at Macarthur Square, Fairfield, Liverpool 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 advised/represented by solicitors from community legal centres, is aimed at redressing power imbalances and resolving entrenched conflicts, with the aim to developing safe parenting arrangements and helping parents avoid unnecessary court action. In FY2019, our solicitors provided advice to 68 FRC clients and participated in 29 legally assisted mediations.

CALA Pilot

This year we've been working closely with Bankstown FRC, and SWSLC, to pilot a culturally appropriate legally assisted (CALA) mediation program. 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, forced marriage, domestic and family violence and men's behaviour change. We've also worked closely with our partners to develop new, culturally-tailored, models of practice. During the reporting period we provided advice to 35 CALA clients and assisted in 13 legally assisted mediations.

Our Volunteers

The generous support of our volunteers boosts our capacity to 'support our community'. In FY2019, we had 16 dedicated student volunteers, and 10 volunteer solicitors (who provided advice during our weekly onsite advice sessions). A special thank you to senior solicitor, Melissa Jozwiak, for all her hard work coordinating our volunteers.

ALAP

Our dedicated Aboriginal Legal Assistance Program worker, Samantha Alexander, resigned in early 2019. We have not recruited a new ALAP worker, as we no longer have dedicated Public Purpose Fund (PPF) funding for this program. MLC is, however, committed to providing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people living in our region, through a range of partnerships and service activities. For example, we run a legal outreach service at Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation in Airds (alternate Thursdays), and we are committed to continuing our ALAP program by:

1. Prioritising Aboriginal clients who seek advice, support and assistance at MLC.
2. Promoting our services, with Aboriginal-themed materials and resources.
3. Attending relevant Aboriginal inter-agencies, and consultations, in our region.
4. Keeping informed of matters arising in local Aboriginal networks.
5. Delivering targeted outreach activities in partnership with Aboriginal organisations.
6. Liaising with local Aboriginal people/organisations/workers in regard to unmet legal need in the community and how best to deliver and promote services.
7. Establishing reliable networks of specialist workers for warm referral purposes.
8. Actively participating in local community events to help promote our services (for example: NAIDOC Week activities, Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week).
9. Providing staff with cultural training.
10. Maintaining good relationships with community elders.

Care Partner Program

During FY2019, MLC was funded to deliver specialised care and protection services, one day per week, as part of the 'Care Partner' program supported by Legal Aid NSW. As part of this program, our solicitors provided advice to 46 clients; made 71 referrals; opened 15 new cases; continued to assist 19 pre-existing clients; and finalised 24 cases. Clients included parents, family members and carers. Clients in this group were predominantly women (78%), with 30% identifying as Aboriginal. 9.5% of clients self-reported having a disability; 33% reported family violence issues and 5% reported CALD backgrounds. Our client work included early intervention advice and advocacy for parents and carers (to help prevent removal); advice and assistance around adoption and guardianship issues; and assistance with contact and restoration matters (where children had already been removed from their parents). We also delivered talks to community groups and workers to help promote our service. This program has now been de-funded but we will continue to assist this client group - especially in cases where conflicts arise with Legal Aid or when clients with high merit cases are not eligible for Legal Aid (due to means testing) but are unable to self-represent or afford private legal services.

Volunteer Students

Aaron Lal (Day volunteer)
Adam Jacobs (Advice)
Aishwarya Chand (PLT)
Amelia Hagley (Advice)
Anthony Bryne (Advice)
Ben O'Sullivan (Advice)
Brandon Bayeh (Advice)
Brianna Ellul (Day/advice)
Justina Hanna (Advice)
Liesel De Castro (Day/advice)
Mary Daher (Advice)
Melanie Tisma (Advice)
Nancy Harb (Advice)
Sandeep Dhillon (Day/advice)
Sean Mabin (Advice)
Zia Khan (PLT student)

Volunteer Solicitors

Allyce Silm (Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancers)
Greg McCauley
Joanna Knight (Marsdens)
Kaisha Gambell (Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancers)
Keiran Khan (JPM Legal)
Kelly Stanford (Standfords Solicitors and Conveyancers)
Patrick Duffy (Duffy Law Group)
Rebecca Watts (Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancers)
Renee Dibley
Sarah Kermode (Duffy Law Group)

We could not do the work we do, without the generous assistance of our volunteers.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community legal education

Our team is committed to being part of the community we service. In FY2019, we delivered 29 community legal education (CLEs) workshops and otherwise participated in over 200 non-casework activities/projects, including: regular attendance at 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 to a group of students at Campbelltown Performing Arts High School, and provided ongoing supervision for student mediators. 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, and our 'Legal Matters' collaboration with Camden/Narellan libraries.

Law reform

We continue to participate in law reform activities relating to systemic legal problems being experienced by people in our community. For example, in 2018 we made submissions in response to the NSW Parliamentary Committee on Law and Safety's inquiry into the adequacy of youth diversionary programs. In our submissions, we asked government to consider the establishment of a specialist youth court for young people from Māori and Pacific Islander backgrounds (a population group which is over-represented in the youth justice system). We strongly believe that a program offering more individualised and culturally sensitive interventions would be an effective way of dealing with youth offending in this community group.

During the reporting period, senior solicitor Barbara Simpson has been an active participant in the NSW Law Society Elder Law Issues Committee, employing her extensive experience in this area of law, and a unique CLC perspective, to help inform Law Society policy positions.

We also prepared submissions in response to the Commonwealth family law system enquiry, with a focus on the need for easily accessible and holistic legal support services; fair and transparent legal processes; and appropriate safeguards for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.



CASE STUDY

Supporting our community means helping those most in need, and providing targeted advice and assistance that can empower clients to advocate for themselves...

Ken lives in a caravan with no running water or electricity. His only source of income is casual manual work, which is intermittent and poor paying. He has no assets of value and lives from pay to pay. He owns a truck, which he uses for work, but does not have third party property damage insurance. Ken was involved in a motor vehicle accident where he hit a Mercedes that swerved in front of his truck. There was little damage to his truck, but a significant amount of damage to the Mercedes. The owner of the Mercedes made a claim through their insurer, claiming that Ken was 'at fault'.

The other party's insurer wrote to Ken, repeatedly, asking for a response in regard to the circumstances of the accident. Ken found this correspondence overwhelming and ignored it. Finally, the insurer lodged a Statement of Claim in the NSW Local Court for a debt of \$12,000, related to the damage caused in the accident. Ken came to us just before he was due to file his 'Defence' to the insurer's claim. Ken explained that he was not actually at fault in the accident, and that the other party had swerved in front of his vehicle unexpectedly. MLC drafted Ken's 'Defence' for court and helped him prepare for the hearing. Ken self-represented at the hearing, and the insurer's claim was dismissed - the court finding that the other party was, in fact, at fault. Had it not been for MLC's assistance, Ken would have been stuck with a legally enforceable debt for which he was not responsible, with related financial hardship.

CASEWORK & ADVICE STATISTICS



CCAS

Supporting at risk youth

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. The 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 a 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; and

Referral to welfare services such as drug and alcohol programs, counselling, and accommodation.

This year we helped 862 young people with matters listed before the Campbelltown Children's Court. 70% of the young people assisted were males, 30% female and at least 25% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We also assisted 568 parents/carers.

Our CCAS worker can spend anywhere from a few minutes to many hours with an individual, depending on the young person's needs. It is important to note that the CCAS program benefits enormously from the reliable and effective assistance of youth workers and volunteers. For example, workers from Youth Off the Streets (YoTS) offer invaluable support in a variety of ways: transporting young people to and from court; communicating in a culturally sensitive manner with families who accompany children to court; engaging young people in culturally relevant programs and providing general casework assistance.

In 2019 the NSW Department of Education appointed an Education Court Liaison Officer, Nicole Forsyth, to attend Campbelltown Children's Court on Criminal List Days (Mondays). Nicole's work helps justice-involved youth re-engage in education and is an important part of holistic service delivery. We thank all the people who made this role possible.

Our CCAS worker, Laura Sutton, also worked on the following youth and community focused activities:

- Coordination of court support services at Campbelltown Children's Court each Monday.
- Coordination of volunteer assistants at the CCAS counter. Laura continues to work with two Māori elders and one senior youth worker from Youth off the Streets (YoTS) who attend to provide culturally-informed support to Pacific Islander youth appearing before the court and act as a source for warm referrals to YoTS programs.
- Coordination with youth workers from the YoTS Aboriginal Services team to support Aboriginal youth and take referrals for community-based cultural programs and mentoring.
- Promoted awareness of MLC services in the community via participation in local youth-focused working groups and inter-agencies and committees.
- Participated in monthly Youth Justice Coalition meetings.
- Participated in broader, youth-focused, CLCNSW activities.
- Liased with local Police regarding local youth as 'victims of crime' as well as offenders.

DV LIST

Supporting victims of domestic violence

We run a weekly 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). Clients are seen by female solicitors, with specialised knowledge in domestic violence, family law and care and protection. Where ongoing casework is involved we often work collaboratively with MWDVCAS workers to achieve the best possible legal and social outcomes for our clients.

HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP

Our Health Justice Partnership (HJP) is an integrated, patient-centred service model that addresses complex, multifaceted legal and non-legal patient concerns through effective referral pathways to meet the immediate socio-legal health needs of patients. MLC solicitors are now based at Campbelltown Hospital every Friday and provide free and confidential legal advice, assistance, support and referrals to inpatients and outpatients. Solicitors also attend Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals (CCH) on an ad-hoc basis during the week, as needed. The model encapsulates the WHO definition of Health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" – enabling social well-being via access to constructive legal support services. As part of this program we work collaboratively and seamlessly with hospital staff (particularly social workers), to deliver holistic solutions to clients and their families.

Our 12-month review of this pilot project (conducted in March 2019) indicates that 73% of clients were assisted with elder law and end-of-life planning issues (wills, enduring powers of attorney, enduring guardianship, advanced care directives etc.). The remainder were assisted with a mixture of family law, family violence, estate administration, superannuation and other issues. 74% of clients required assistance with more than one legal issue. 76% of clients had incomes under \$30,000, with 56% suffering from terminal illness. 60% of clients assisted (all of whom had identified legal needs) said they would not have sought legal assistance elsewhere, had it not been for our free service.

Here's an example of the typical feedback we see from HJP clients:

"Meeting Andrei and Milka has given us peace of mind about legal matters that were worrying us, and it is greatly appreciated. We are so amazed and happy at the friendly and convenient way in which Andrei and Milka have assisted us. Thank you for coming to Palliative Care as my partner would not have been able to attend the office".

The end-of-life work done by our solicitors brings peace of mind to individual clients, and also helps prevent future legal battles, by ensuring that clients have legally-binding documentation in place that clearly embodies their wishes.

Effectively targeting priority groups...



THANK YOU

Acknowledgements

A special thank you to our staff solicitors, for their unwavering passion for social justice and dedication to professional service delivery, notably – Barbara Simpson, Stephen Karanfilovski, Robyn Roelandts, Melissa Jozwiak, Andrei Stepanov and Milka Bundalo. I'd also like to thank our support team, including Danielle Archer (office administrator), Phillipa Magro (paralegal), and administrative assistant Stevie-Lea (who left us for a new role in the public service, in early 2019). In mid 2019 we said farewell to senior solicitor, Robyn Roelandts. I wish Robyn all the best in her new endeavours, and sincerely thank her for her years of enthusiastic service to MLC and our clients. More generally, I'd like to personally acknowledge the support of Robert, Vala, Tanya, MLC's Board of Management and staff across the Centre - who work with us on a daily basis to make justice a reality for all members of our community.

The Year Ahead

We have lots of great initiatives planned for the year ahead - including finalising the new edition of the Debtors' Guide to the Local Courts of NSW; new partnerships, outreaches 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.

Grants and Donation

In addition to State and Federal Government funding, MLC also relies on income from grants, and charitable donations, to help support our community. In early 2019 we received a grant under the Australian Government's Families and Communities - Volunteer Grants Program. These funds enabled us to support the efforts of our volunteers by purchasing office equipment for student and solicitor volunteers.

A Client's Thank You

To end this report, a letter from the family of a former client...

Dear Barbara

Thank you so much as I know it's been a long haul. We are very grateful for your sacrifices, your time and dedication to our mother Helen. You have honoured her all the way through her end of life journey and we, Eddie and I, appreciate everything you have done for her and in turn us.

We are hoping for no more contact or repercussions from all that's been put in place since mum began legally putting her wishes in order...

Thank you for your kind and encouraging words, hoping to meet with you in the near future to put our legal wills etc. in order. Take care beautiful lady, keep doing what you do best, changing people's lives and granting them

MWDVCAS REPORT

Coordinator

Tanya Whitehouse

Overview

MWDVCAS is part of a network of 29 community-based Court Advocacy Services in NSW. Legal Aid NSW administers all funds for WDVCS'. MWDVCAS covers Campbelltown, Camden and Picton Courts, with workers attending on 'ADVO List Days', and other days for hearings, to support female victims. MWDVCAS also provide clients with appropriate referrals and information relating to their Domestic and/or Family Violence matter; advocate for clients; network with the local community service providers on issues around Domestic and Family Violence; offer training to community workers; and ensure women have access to appropriate support outside of the justice system. Our MWDVCAS is unique because it is only one of two WDVCS' in NSW that have funding for case management/ casework.

Since March 2019 we have had 13 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 Focused Caseworker – Nadia Graham; Generalist Caseworkers – Lisa Stark & Rachel Weir (who became the Disability Focused Caseworker in April 2019); Disability Focused Caseworker – Rebecca Yeomans (resigned in March 2019); 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 Local Coordination Point (LCP) within MWDVCAS is going very well and successfully deals with a high volume of referrals. The Safety Action Meetings (SAM) 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, Dept. of Education, Health, SHLV, Corrections, LSS, Housing, Tharawal, Uniting and advocates from other NGO's.

Community and Interagency Support

The fantastic work done by MWDVCAS is never done as an individual service. MWDVCAS wants to sincerely acknowledge the following services for their ongoing support of this service. Without these services we could not do our job as well as we do:

Macarthur Legal Centre, Narellan/ Campbelltown Police, Campbelltown/ Camden & Picton Courts, Nanette Reuben, Ngoc Le, Brenda Duchon, Louise Coorey, Leonie Miller, Benevolent Society Centre for Women's Health, Staying Home Leaving Violence, WILMA Women's Health Centre, Community Links Wollondilly, DVAS, 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 and Wollondilly Council.

Staff at MWDVCAS are involved in many different interagency networks, including Domestic Violence Committees at Campbelltown and Camden, multicultural interagency, youth interagency, Aboriginal interagency and the Youth Focused Caseworker is also a panel member of the Youth Subsidy assessment committee. Our Aboriginal Specialist Worker – Julie - is also supported by an Intake and Referral Officer – Shaylyn - to continue running the Sista Girl Yarnz Group. This Group is still currently unfunded, however continues to run.



MWDVCAS STATISTICS

Family, domestic and sexual violence is a major health and welfare issue. It occurs across all ages, socio-economic and demographic groups but mainly affects women and children.

Our own statistics confirm that our workload continues to increase. We believe this is due to many factors including – professional support work by the MWDVCAS team, direct referrals from Police through the Local Coordination Point (LCP), effective referral pathways with other service providers, funding for case management and a continued focus on effectively supporting women.

↑9.3%

We assisted a total of **2665 clients** in FY 2019, this is an increase of 9.3% from the previous year.

↑15.3%

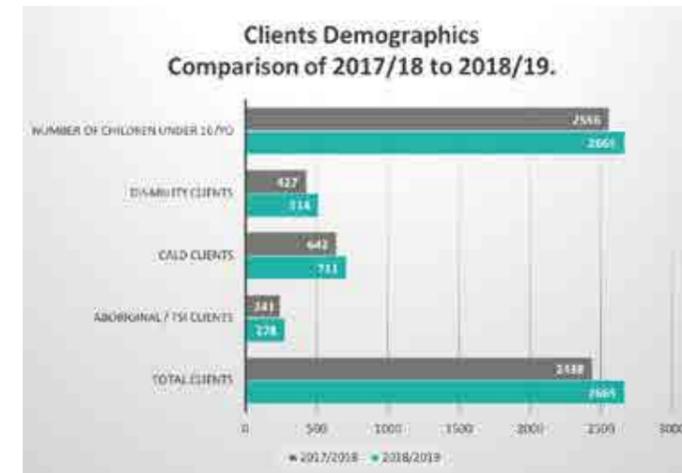
278 of our clients were Aboriginal women. This is an increase of 15.3% from the previous year.

↑10.7%

711 of our clients were culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD). This is an increase of 10.7% from the previous year.

↑20.3%

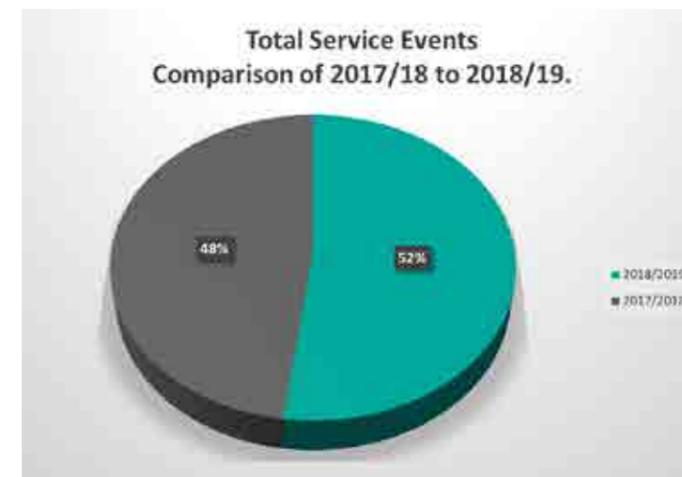
514 of our clients reported having a disability. This is a 20.3% increase from the previous year.



Many of the women assisted by our service have young children.

Their safety is also a priority. **In total, 2665 'children' were assisted by our service in FY 2019.**

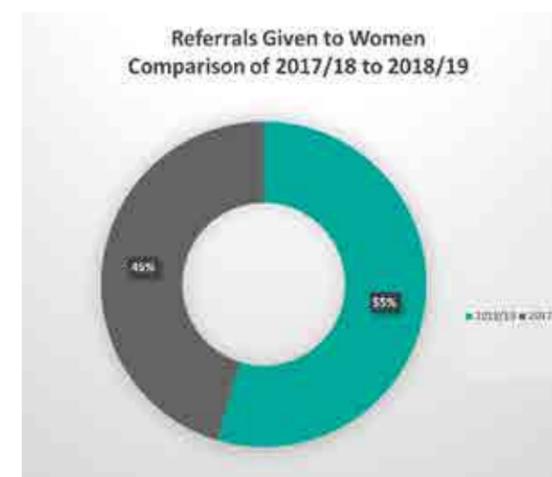
This is an increase of 4.2% from the previous year.



Our team provided clients with 27,880 separate service events in FY 2019.

This is an **increase of 8.9%** from the previous year.

An average of 536 service events/week.



Our team made 61,930 targeted referrals for vulnerable women in FY 2019.

This is an **increase of 20.7%** from the previous year.

An average of 1,190 referrals/week.

This clearly demonstrates the need to work collaboratively with other services to ensure women are properly supported.

CASE STUDY A

Multicultural Worker

Our client is a Pacific Islander, with two young children, and was referred to our service by police (via our Local Coordination Point – LCP). Police had applied for an ADVO on her behalf and also charged the perpetrator with several offences. The client initially had problems with her tenancy and was referred to MLC's tenancy team (SWSTAAS) for advice and assistance in regard to having her name removed from the lease.

Our client also had income support issues (due to Visa restrictions), so our multicultural caseworker advocated for special benefits through Centrelink. Our client disclosed a long history of Domestic Violence including verbal, emotional, social isolation from family and friends, ongoing threats of deportation, financial and physical abuse. On some occasions she was forced to leave the home with her children and sleep in the car.

Our client was referred to 'Immigrant Women's Speakout', for Visa assistance, and given vouchers for Coles (so she could buy food for her family). In October 2018, the perpetrator pleaded guilty to all offences, and was issued with a Final ADVO. The defendant was also issued with a Conditional Release Order so our caseworker liaised with the local high school in relation to the client's children's welfare.

In November 2018, we helped our client with a Victims Services claim for financial assistance (expense reimbursement). In June 2019, Victim's Services assessed her claim and approved payment of just over \$7,000. Our client was grateful that she was able to receive reimbursement for domestic violence related expenses, and happy with the quick processing of her claims.

Our client has now also obtained permanent residency which was an ongoing issue of concern for her. She was also very happy to receive so much support and to have a worker who could speak her language. She now has a clear understanding of the law and issues around domestic violence and has become a strong advocate for herself and her children.



CASE STUDY B

Disability Worker

Our client is 26 years old, has a moderate intellectual disability, and lives with her mother and two young children. We had previously assisted her with regard to violence from the same perpetrator. Furthermore, the perpetrator (and his extended family), were already well-known to local service providers and posed a substantial risk to our client and her 3-year-old child (who she shared with the perpetrator).

Our client was originally referred to our service on the 22 November 2017 by NSW Police. The matter went to court in early 2018 and continued until August 2018. During this time, we received four new referrals from NSW Police (for incidents reported by our client). One of these incidents was a breach of the Interim Order and the defendant pleaded guilty in May 2018. He was not convicted and given a Section 10 Bond. Between August 2018 and April 2019, we received a further six referrals from NSW Police. Our client understood that she needed to show protective behaviours with respect to her children, and was reporting to police accordingly.

Our client required significant support from our disability specialist caseworker, with regard to effective engagement with other support services. This included FACS, family law solicitors, the Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) and disability support services. In short, there had been a breakdown of communication between our client and services supporting her, and she felt that she did not have a voice or a clear understanding of what was required from her (specifically, around the push (from FaCS) for our client to keep the 3-year-old safe from the perpetrator/father whilst also providing contact). Our Disability Caseworker facilitated case conferences with all services - to ensure that all services were connected, communicating and working together to provide our client with clear guidance and support.

There have been no new referrals from police, since April 2019, and our client now has a better understanding of child safety issues and how to navigate her relationships with other service providers. There is supervised, safe, contact for the child and our client is engaging well with other services. This achieved, she is no longer an active client of our service.

This particular case study highlights the need for a Disability Focused caseworker to help clients with complex needs navigate both the justice and child protection systems. Without the strong advocacy of this caseworker, our client may still be struggling to understand her child protection responsibilities. She now feels like she has been heard and has a voice.

Women with disabilities are 40% more likely to experience intimate partner violence - especially severe - than women without disabilities.



TENANCY

Our Tenancy Team has also had a **VERY** busy year...

- Timely action to prevent homelessness in 40 recorded cases, by successfully defending landlord termination applications.
- Preventing forced evictions by the sheriff, in 20 cases, where termination orders had been made, thereby helping tenants retain tenancies and avoiding homelessness and/or rough sleeping.
- Representation in 12 NCAT matters where landlord claims were ultimately dismissed or withdrawn by the landlord.
- In 20 cases we helped tenants successfully reduce rental related debt.

SWSTAAS REPORT

Coordinator

Vala Ola'aiga

We faced various challenges in 2019 and learned a series of lessons in resilience, both as individuals and as a group. We relocated offices, were understaffed for a significant time, and waited anxiously for news about our funding. In addition to this, there appears to be an ever-increasing need and demand for tenancy services, rising socio-economic disadvantage and growing unmet mental health needs in our particular community. Despite this, we continue to deliver quality services and remain committed to 'supporting our community'.

Partnerships

The strong partnerships we have developed with other community service providers has been key to our strength. Some of our most important partnerships are highlighted below.

Miller Hub: We run a regular outreach service at Miller Hub, which is as in demand today, as it was when we started it. We also use their facilities to see clients for face-to-face appointments when they are not otherwise able to attend our office in Campbelltown. This partnership helps make our service more accessible to people in Miller and surrounds.

The Nagle Centre: We trialed a new outreach service at the Nagle Centre during the reporting period.

This Centre provides support to some of the most vulnerable people in our community, providing crisis support for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. Unfortunately, we had to suspend this service (due to SWSTAAS staff shortages) at the end of the financial year. We plan to reassess this partnership, and client needs, in the future.

NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT): We continue to provide advice and advocacy to tenants at NCAT registries on group list days. This is important work because our assistance is often the only intervention/support tenants receive before facing harsh (and often unfair) tenancy termination applications before the Tribunal. Our assistance can often help tenants save tenancies and reduce risk of homelessness.

TAAP Network: We have participated in many advocacy and lobbying activities, organized by TAAP, for tenancy law reform. For example, TAAP's lobbying activities have brought about very important changes for women and families experiencing domestic violence. Another big win is that rental laws, reform agendas, and stories increasingly form part of public conversations. The Tenants Unions NSW, and TAAP Network, are at the forefront of this work. We would not be able to navigate the public space or make advances in favour of social justice, without the support of this incredible network.

WE FACED
VARIOUS
CHALLENGES
IN 2019 AND
LEARNED
LESSONS IN
RESILIENCE





ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

In FY 2019, our tenancy team provided **2203 sessions** of advice to tenants. These sessions were delivered over the phone, via email, face to face and through representation at NCAT conciliations and hearings.

New Advices

We **opened 1190 new cases**, and **continued work on 375 cases** carried forward from the previous year.

A total of **1227 cases were active during this period**, with the main matter types being:

- 28% Terminations
- 25% Repairs/maintenance
- 24% Rents and other charges
- 22% Bond/compensation claims
- 11% Tribunal/jurisdiction issues

Closed Cases

We resolved and **closed a total of 1073 cases**. The outcomes we have achieved for clients demonstrate how we are actively supporting our community.

Outcomes Achieved for Tenants:

- 89% Improved understanding laws
- 58% Provided resource materials
- 42% Targeted warm/cold referrals
- 32% Resolved presenting problem
- 7% Negotiated with landlord
- 6.9% 'Other' positive client outcome

Thank You...

To the team: Douglas Lee, Naomi Hare and Ashmita Rao. What a year and what a team! Your hard work has not gone unnoticed. I, for one, am very grateful for the work you do. Thank you for sticking around and learning big lessons this year.

"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." Famous last words from this time last year, yet here we are! Grateful to be able to say that with our funding secured, for another three years, we can get on with the business of kicking goals in service of the community (and get help for the phones roster).

To the TAAP Network, our "brains trust" and the Tenants Union NSW for always having our back.

To the community, not-for-profit organisations, community organisations and groups who have helped us through this year.

To Macarthur Legal Centre Board, Management team and staff, for your support and encouragement. This year would have been much harder without you all.

We appreciate you all.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Year 2018-19

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2019

| | 2019 | 2018 |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Revenue | 2,972,321 | 2,908,643 |
| Depreciation Expense | (39,088) | (34,543) |
| Employee Benefits Expense | (2,464,586) | (2,294,666) |
| Other Expenses From Ordinary Activities | (433,225) | (465,714) |
| Surplus/(Deficit) before income tax | 35,422 | 113,720 |
| Income Tax Expense | - | - |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year | 35,422 | 113,720 |
| Other comprehensive income after income tax | - | - |
| Total other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax | - | - |
| Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year | 35,422 | 113,720 |
| Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to members of the entity | 35,422 | 113,720 |

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2019

| | 2019 | 2018 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES | | |
| Receipts of grants | 3,180,114 | 3,068,730 |
| Payments to suppliers and employees | (3,199,213) | (2,857,717) |
| Interest received | 21,980 | 22,893 |
| Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities | 2,881 | 233,906 |
| CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES | | |
| Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment | - | - |
| Payment for property, plant and equipment | (63,031) | (12,358) |
| Net cash provided by/(used) in investing activities | (63,031) | (12,358) |
| Net increase/(decrease) in cash held | (60,150) | 221,548 |
| Cash at the beginning of the year | 1,681,896 | 1,460,348 |
| Cash at the End of the Year | 1,621,746 | 1,681,896 |

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2019

| | 2019 | 2018 |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 1,621,746 | 1,681,896 |
| Trade and other receivables | 34,593 | 4,754 |
| Other current assets | 11,999 | 10,704 |
| Total Current Assets | 1,668,338 | 1,697,354 |
| NON-CURRENT ASSETS | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | 99,128 | 75,185 |
| Total Non-Current Assets | 99,128 | 75,185 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | 1,767,466 | 1,772,539 |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | |
| Trade and other payables | 455,487 | 603,076 |
| Provisions | 325,201 | 271,202 |
| Total Current Liabilities | 780,688 | 874,278 |
| NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES | | |
| Provisions | 91,111 | 38,016 |
| Total Non-Current Liabilities | 91,111 | 38,016 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | 871,799 | 912,294 |
| Net Assets | 895,667 | 860,245 |
| Represented by | | |
| EQUITY | | |
| Retained surplus | 895,667 | 860,245 |
| Total Equity | 895,667 | 860,245 |

Statement of Changes in Equity for the year ended 30 June 2019

| | Retained Surplus | Total Equity |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Balance as at 1 July 2017 | 746,525 | 746,525 |
| Surplus attributable to members | 113,720 | 113,720 |
| Other comprehensive income | - | - |
| Balance as at 30 June 2018 | 860,245 | 860,245 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) attributable to members | 35,422 | 35,422 |
| Other comprehensive income | - | - |
| Balance as at 30 June 2019 | 895,667 | 895,667 |



MACATHUR LEGAL CENTRE

Annual Report 2019