Annual Report

21-22



































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Welcome to our **Annual** Report 2023

Two words summarise last year for Macarthur Legal Centre (MLC): "relentless" and "resilience". The challenges we faced were relentless. The COVID-19 pandemic including loss of life and livelihoods. We have gone through extended lockdowns and floods.

During this, MLC continued to live out its mission: serving our community. We found new ways of helping people through dysfunction, violence and housing problems. We migrated our paper files to the cloud. We saw less people face to face. Our outreaches closed. Court and Tribunal attendance in person stopped for months. But the phone lines kept ringing. We put on additional lines to ensure all calls got through. Demand for our services increased.

We adapted. We provided online advice. We invested in technology to enable us to work remotely. We set up offices in our homes. Decision making was fast and effective - putting the safety of our staff, volunteers and clients first. Services continued to be provided. Our MLC community demonstrated its resilience.

One event summarises all that is best in the community legal centre sector and Macarthur Legal Centre. On 28 February, the worst floods in Lismore's history hit. A second devastating flood overwhelmed Lismore three weeks later. The office of Northern Rivers CLC, based in Lismore, was flooded. Many of its workers' homes were flooded. CLCs across NSW offered their services to support this community.

Peta Andersson

MLC Chairperson

Chairperson's Report Peta Andersson

MLC took over Northern Rivers CLC's phone line and provided online advice to this community until Northern Rivers was able to resume some of its normal services. This sense of solidarity - of being part of a diverse, inclusive, supportive community where all people can access their legal rights - is a hard-wired part of Macarthur Legal Centre. Resilience.

So now is the time to recognise those achievements, express the Board's appreciation for all that has been achieved in the past twelve months under relentless pressure. First, thanks to the staff and volunteers who make up the Centre, the Board expresses its appreciation for your continued service delivery under relentless pressure. Working from home, adapting to new technology, isolated and under pressure to meet increasing demand, they never dropped the ball.

Somehow, in these chaotic times, Christina managed to complete the renovation of the ground floor of the Centre in the first half of 2022. The ground floor is much safer for workers and clients, more effective for client service and looks great. The legal team continued to find new ways of reaching out to clients who could no longer access the Centre or our outreaches due to lockdowns and other Covid related measures.

The Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service could not attend Court for much of this period or, if they did so, it was on a very limited basis. Still, under Tanya's leadership, they managed to work with more clients facing more complex

South West Sydney Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service headed by Vala, received additional Covid funding which enabled them to employ an additional Tenant Advocate - and just in time! This program has been run off its feet as the Sydney rents Thanks to the managers of these teams - Christina, Tanya and Vala. They supported and led their teams under the most trying circumstances. They put the welfare of their team members first and ensured that client services were maintained.

Thanks also to Carina, our Financial Administrator, who works with Adam, our Treasurer, and Robert, our Executive Officer, to ensure we stay in the black. Thanks to Robert. He continues to provide effective leadership to Macarthur Legal Centre. The Board expresses its gratitude to all members of the management team. I also need to acknowledge the contribution of my fellow Board members. All members of the Board are volunteers and come from diverse backgrounds to offer their expertise and experience to Macarthur Legal Centre. Thanks to Dani, Adam, Nevine, Tina, Alison and Bree. Their generosity and collective wisdom have been invaluable in steering the Centre through this challenging year.

Finally, thanks to the Federal and State Governments that continue to fund our Centre. We could not do any of our work without this support. Government support increased during the last twelve months in the form of one-off grants to enable us to meet the increased demand caused by the disruption caused by the waves of Covid infections. We are grateful for this support. My hope is that they will realise that the trauma our community has endured merits continued and indeed, increased support for Macarthur Legal Centre in the years to come.

The relentless challenges of the last twelve months have brought out the best and sometimes the worst in our community. Macarthur Legal Centre's community has demonstrated amazing resilience in the face of these challenges. That bodes well for the year to come.

Executive Officer's Report Robert Pelletier

Acknowledgement

We work on the land of the Tharawal nation. We pay our respects to their elders past, present, and emerging.

Resilience

We have lived with Covid for more than two years. It has caused much suffering. It has also uncovered wells of resilience.

We have been locked down, let free, masked and unmasked, not allowed to be with friends and family at peak family moments. We have missed births and deaths, funerals and weddings, celebrations of significant birthdays and welcoming new members to our families.

We have witnessed the heartbreak of repeat flooding in Lismore and closer to home. The rivers that circle the land of the Gadigal people - the Hawkesbury to the North, the Nepean that lazily borders the Blue Mountains and the Western plains of Sydney and the magnificent Georges River in our own catchment, in the land of the Tharawal nation, have flooded twice and caused loss of life, loss of income and peace of mind and brought devastation to many people.

On the other side of FY2022, our community is exhausted. Is it any wonder that FY2022 has seen:

- domestic violence become more complex.
- tenants being squeezed out of the rental market.
- our people lose their jobs, their shelter, and their wellbeing.
- our staff and volunteers drown in demand for their services?

We seem to be going through post-pandemic stress disorder as a community. And yet, we have survived.

Thanks

Somehow, the staff and volunteers who make up Macarthur Legal Centre have kept going. They have demonstrated commitment, intelligence and care for each other. The statistics for all three programs show that demand for our services has surged. I thank them for all that they do and have kept doing through all this change.

Thanks to my mighty managers, Christina, Carina, Vala and Tanya. I appreciate the leadership and solidarity they provide. Christina has, in addition to her leadership of the legal team, taken on the accreditation portfolio. Carina has kept us on the financial straight and narrow. Vala has done outstanding work leading her team through the pandemic and Tanya has been

I also want to thank our committee members headed by our Chair, Peta Andersson. Peta's extensive experience in the sector has made her an ideal Chair. Dani Napton, our Deputy Chair, has gone above and beyond, especially in the areas of risk management and strategic direction. Adam Quinn, our Treasurer, has guided our financial fortunes with skill and judgement. Nevine Youssef, our longest serving Committee Member, is also our Secretary. She has demonstrated her commitment to the wellbeing of the Macarthur community over many years. Thanks to the General Members of the Committee, Alison Croall, Tina Taylor and Bree Weatherburn. Our committee members ensure we are solvent. They make sure we are doing what we are funded to do, and they ensure we are going in a sensible direction. They are volunteers who make our work possible and sustainable.



Office Renovations

The Ground Floor of our Centre has been a problem since we opened our Queen Street premises in 2010. Our fit-out was not designed with security in mind. Some of our clients come to our Centre angry and frustrated. Sometimes that anger is aimed at our staff.

Why? Because they happen to be there and/or sometimes they have to say 'no'.

We have been searching for a workable and affordable design that ensures our staff is safe in our heritage building since shortly after I came to the Centre. Thanks to Christina for designing the new fit out and managing the building works.

We chose the worst possible time to begin - just after the imposition of a lockdown on South West Sydney including Campbelltown. I optimistically said to staff that the renovations would start on 15 July and take three weeks to a month. Well, that is the timeline the builders gave me!

After much frustration (that is part of any building project), we have a wonderful ground floor that is a pleasure to work in. The renovations were finished by the end of November 2021.

Given the chaos of Covid, this was a good result.





BEFORE AND AFTER











































Flooding in our region and beyond

The Wilson River at Lismore burst its levee in late February 2022. Lismore's CBD and much of the low-lying residential area was flooded - for the second time in 12 months. Northern Rivers CLC reached out for help after it was flooded. The CLC sector lead by CLCNSW responded generously.

Macarthur Legal Centre took over Northern Rivers Legal Centre's phone line, answered calls for them and provided advice for them for the first few weeks until they were able to take over again. Total respect to the team at Northern Rivers who continued providing services under the most adverse circumstances.

I was blown away by many CLCs who rang me to see how they could help. That experience made me proud to be part of this crazy sector and to be part of Macarthur Legal Centre in particular.

Thanks to the Legal team who did their own work and fielded Lismore's phone enquiries at that desperate time.

We experienced flooding in our own catchment. Mittagong, Camden and Picton experienced flooding twice in this financial year when the Nepean and the Georges Rivers spilled their banks. While they did not experience anything like the scale of devastation that Lismore sustained, it brought the fragility of these times very close to home.

Impact of the pandemic Coping with change

I record the following history because, as I write this just a few months after the events, I find it difficult to believe what we went through.

On 23 June 2021, we closed the Centre to the public and required all staff to wear masks while working. My emails to staff from that time imposed stricter and stricter guidelines, as the Delta wave took hold and Campbelltown was designated a local government area of concern. The NSW Government imposed strict lockdown requirements on our region and much of Western Sydney.

The management team followed Government recommendations and consulted with the staff and with the sector to keep our staff, volunteers and clients safe. From time to time, we closed the Centre to everyone to reduce the risk of infection. By the end of July, a maximum of four staff at a time were allowed back into the Centre and only one person at a time in the Annex.

We introduced daily Covid cleaning measures of our work areas. QR codes were placed at the entrance of our Centre and the Annex and everyone, including staff, had to scan as they entered or left the buildings. We rostered attendance at the Centre. We provided extended Covid leave for those who tested positive or who were required to isolate because they were a close contact. At that time, the isolation period was 14 days.

For a time, we stopped all Court attendances. This was not an easy decision. We knew that some clients and potential clients might slip through the cracks without us being at Court. As the vaccines became available, we encouraged staff to get vaccinated and provided leave for them to do so.

From mid-September, the community was starting to emerge from lockdowns. The Premier warned about infection rates going through the roof as we emerged from lockdown and we started planning for a safe return to working back at the Centre and the Annex, attending court and network meetings, the gradual reopening of our outreaches and face-to-face meetings

The worsening pandemic raised the question of whether we should require our staff to be fully vaccinated. Vaccine mandates were hotly contested in the community. Most of our sector required staff and volunteers to be fully vaccinated before they returned to work. This was a challenging time for many staff members. I am grateful that we got through this period.

By late September 2021, we returned to work in the courts on a limited basis, and Laura Sutton, our CCAS worker, had returned to her regular duties at Campbelltown Children's Court. When we met with clients at the Centre, we wore full protective equipment. It is hard to believe that for a short time, those were the extreme lengths we went to.

We planned to reopen the Centre to the public in January 2022, when the Omicron wave of the pandemic hit. By then most of the staff members had contracted Covid - some more than once.

By winter of 2022, there was a significant increase in coughs, colds and flu. We had been protected from some of these bugs because of the closure of our international borders during the height of the pandemic.

Somehow, we managed to provide uninterrupted service delivery to our clients during this period.



Comings & Goings

We welcomed the following staff members to the Centre:

23 August 2021 - Janine Stark, WDVCAS, specialist worker 6 October 2021 - **Jodie Reeder**, WDVCAS, generalist caseworker 15 November 2021 - **Joyda Zinck**, SWSTAAS, Tenant Advocate 11 May 2022 - Theresa Olaaiga, SWSTAAS, Administrative worker

The staff below left us in FY2022. I am grateful to all of them for the contribution they made to the wellbeing of our clients and the Centre:

9 July 2021 - Nadia Graham, WDVCAS, Youth Focussed Worker 10 August 2021 - Qasim Assiz, SWSTAAS, Tenant Advocate. 30 September 2021 - Ghazal Atayan, SWSTAAS, Tenant Advoca-

Celebrations

We also celebrated some amazing anniversaries of service:

Five years

Naomi Hare - SWSTAAS, Tenant Advocate, 1 August 2021 Melinda Perry - MWDVCAS, Receptionist, 13 February 2022

Ten Years

Phillipa Magro - Legal, paralegal, 28 November 2021

We celebrated the marriage of our wonderful solicitor, Milka to her husband Ricky on 5 March 2022. We wish Milka and Ricky every joy for their life together.

We celebrated the birth of Karolina, the fourth daughter of Stephen and Rachel Karanfilovski on 28 March 2022. Our best wishes go to Stephen, Rachel, Kleopatra, Gabrijela and Aleksandra on this joyous event.



Funding

We are grateful for our Federal and State Government. They provide us with the recurrent funding that keeps the doors open. They have also provided us with one-off grants that have been designed to see us through the surge in demand caused by the pandemic and to upgrade our IT infrastructure. We thank Legal Aid's WDVCAP unit and the CLC Program unit who manage our DV and legal funding respectively. We also thank NSW Fair Trading, who oversees our tenancy funding.

IT/Communications

We updated key parts of our IT infrastructure:

- We installed improved cabling and wireless capability in the
- We went from desktop computers to laptops to enable us to work remotely.
- We installed an AV connection with Campbelltown Court so that our clients can give evidence in a supportive en vironment at the Centre.
- We tidied up the cabling spaghetti on our rack.
- We increased the capacity of our phone system to ensure we did not miss calls.

Also in 2021, our WDVCAS moved to paperless files. This move was made necessary by the pandemic. Legal and SWSTAAS had already migrated to paperless files so WDVCAS' move completed the migration. We also moved our archiving to the cloud. Volumes of paper have been scanned and the Centre gradually became clutter free (this is a journey; we are not there yet!). Thanks to CLCNSW, we had an audit done on the security of our system. As a result, we improved the security settings of our network and devices. The most obvious aspect of the improvements for the user was the adoption of multi-factor authentication to access our system. Thanks to the NSW Government. It made funds available to much of the not-for-profit sector to enable most of this upgrade to take place.

Looking Forward

Like Jane Austen, I am full of astonishment and admiration for the people I work with. To the staff, volunteers and the committee members of Macarthur Legal Centre you have my undying admiration and gratitude. Your resilience, commitment, and intelligence in FY2022 have been an inspiration.

Now, for FY 2023, can I have a serving of normal for Christmas please?

Legal Team Report Christina Pirina

Principal Solicitor

Introduction

MLC is part of a network of community legal centres primarily funded by the Community Legal Centres Program (CLCP) administered by Legal Aid NSW to provide free legal advice, referrals, and assistance to residents of our catchment. Our services now cover the local government areas of Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly, Wingecarribee, Goulburn-Malwaree, Yass Valley and the Upper Lachlan Shire. 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. We thank our key funders, state and federal, including Legal Aid NSW CLCP unit, for helping us support our community.

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.

COVID-19 and impacts on our practice

The legal team continued to meet client demand for services, despite ongoing COVID-19 issues in the broader community. During lockdowns, we worked remotely and delivered services via telephone and AVL. We re-commenced face-to-face work in early 2022 and are slowly working towards re-establishing inperson outreach work throughout our catchment (to ensure we can support the most vulnerable members of our community).

COVID-19 and Legal Services

COVID-19 related legal work peaked in August 2021, with Greater Sydney residents subjected to ongoing lockdowns. As restrictions eased, so did COVID-19 matters, with no COVID-19 related legal matters presenting by June 2022.

July 2021	3%
August 2021	10%
September 2021	9.7%
October 2021	4.4%
November 2021	9%
December 2021	3.6%
January 2022	3.2%
February 2022	1.7%
March 2022	1.8%
April 2022	1.6%
May 2022	0.5%
June 2022	0%

Main COVID-19 matter types related to employment (vaccination mandates), consumer contracts (issues with refunds/cancellations etc.) and family law (parenting arrangements impacted by restrictions etc.).

Dedicated Covid-19 Funding

In FY 20-21 we obtained a one-off COVID-19 grant, administered by Legal Aid NSW, to assist with the increased demand for services caused by COVID-19 issues in the community. We began implementation of this grant in December 2020 and were able to extend services until April 2022. This grant allowed us to employ a senior solicitor, Nicole Kennedy, on a part-time basis, to assist with increased caseload. Between December 2020 and 31 March 2022, this grant allowed MLC to deliver **511** advices, **78** legal tasks and 33 cases. Of these, 64% of advices, 51% of tasks and 42% of cases were delivered to clients experiencing or at risk of family/domestic violence.

Our Services

In FY 21-22 we provided 'information' to **2745** people, made **7293** referrals and our solicitors conducted **2033** legal advice sessions. 53 advice sessions (2.6%) were delivered 'face-to-face', and 1975 (97%) via telephone/AVL (with 5 via email). COVID-19 restrictions, accounting for the high proportion of cases delivered via telephone.

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Our solicitors opened 227 new cases during the year, as well as providing ongoing casework in 279 long-term matters. In total, we finalised 138 cases during the year. We also completed 505 legal tasks (one-off assistance, in addition to preliminary legal advice, such as preparing client documents, providing clients with additional assistance after advice sessions and so on). Our clients presented with a broad range of matter types, with family law and wills and estates being our most common areas of practice.

Services by Main Matter Type

Legal Matter Type	Advice	Cases	Taskwork
Family Law	37%	23.5%	52%
Wills & Estates	9.2%	45.2%	6.9%
Credit & Debt	7.4%	7.7%	4.5%
Employment	6.7%	0.8%	2.4%
ADVO matters	4.9%	3.7%	9.7%
Victim Support	4.5%	8.2%	7.9%
Neighbourhood Issues	2.1%	0.5%	1%
Consumer	6.3%	2.4%	4.5%
Care & Protection	1.4%	0.3%	1%
Traffic & offences	4.7%	2.8%	1.6%
Misc. Civil Matters	1.8%	4.9%	8.5%

Priority Groups

We continue to effectively target our services at the most vulnerable people in our community, with most clients meeting criteria for at least one priority group...

Services to Priority Clients

Priority Group	Clients	Advice	Casework	Taskwork
Women	59.27%	63.81%	69.63%	70.63%
Domestic violence	34%	26.4%	13.21%	39.89%
Aboriginal	7.81%	7.8%	16.98%	8.32%
Financial stress	84.74%	86.29%	89.29%	92.59%
Young people (24)	7.92%	8.2%	4.71%	7.38 %
Older people (65+)	13.66%	12.69%	28.3%	10.4%
Disability	12.05%	11.18%	20.75%	14.56%
CALD	27.29%	1.13%	0.94%	30.43%
Homeless	3.11%	3.58%	3.62%	3.94%

Law Reform

We worked on **8** main law reform projects in the reporting period.
Activities included, assisting with submissions for the Federal Inquiry into Housing Affordability, participation in Camden Youth Interagency Activities, and ongoing advocacy in relation to youth homelessness issues in our service catchment.

Volunteers

The uncertainty of COVID-19, and related restrictions on movement and work arrangements, have resulted in changes to our workflows and processes which have, in turn, impacted our ability to continue our regular volunteer program. We did, however, have the wonderful assistance of volunteer, Jean Hibbert, throughout the financial year (attending once per week, to provide invaluable administrative and paralegal support to one of our solicitors).

Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP)

Our ALAP worker, Christie Lewin Webb, continues to work closely with our CCAS worker, Laura Sutton, to provide culturally tailored information, referrals, and support to at risk Aboriginal youth. Christie continues to build networks with other local Aboriginal workers/organisations, to assist in this work and to build knowledge of MLC services within the community. See our CCAS report, for more detailed information.

Outreach

In FY 21-22 we assisted **285** clients who were referred directly by outreach partners. Some of these services were delivered faceto-face (when COVID-19 restrictions allowed) and the remainder were delivered via telephone/AVL, following warm referrals from our outreach partner services. More generally, 269 of our clients lived in regional areas of our catchment.

We believe legal services should be accessible to all members of our community. We currently partner with 16 outreach partners throughout our catchment to deliver advice on a weekly, fortnightly, or monthly basis. We were able to re-open most outreaches in early 2022 and continued to provide telephone/ AVL services where partner services had not yet re-opened to the public. In FY 21-22 we partnered with the following services, to provide outreach 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); and (our newest outreach) Warragamba Silverdale Neighbourhood Centre (Silverdale); and Pop-In (Bowral).

Health Justice Partnership (HJP)

Our Health Justice Partnership (HJP) is an integrated, patientcentred 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. In FY 21-22 we assisted 43 hospital referred clients, with a range of legal matters, generally providing both legal advice and ongoing assistance. We delivered these services via telephone/ AVL during the reporting period, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Matter types included preparation of wills, enduring power of attorney and enduring guardianship documents, estate administration, NCAT guardianship/financial management applications, assistance with Centrelink issues, insurance and superannuation claims, elder abuse etc. We also participate in broader network activities coordinated by Health Justice Australia, to share our practice experience and improve our own service delivery.

Working with Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence **Court Assistance Service (MWDCAS)**

We accept ongoing warm referrals from our Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (MWDVCAS). MWDVCAS clients are generally serviced by our female solicitors, who have significant knowledge and experience of family law, victim support, and domestic violence related issues. Where indicated, our solicitors work collaboratively with MWDVCAS staff to support clients in a holistic manner. Between April and July 2022, solicitor Nicole Kennedy has been providing targeted support to MWDVCAS clients, with surplus DCJ Social Sector Support Funding (SSSF) that we have been able to apply to her position. We also thank our MWDVCAS service for their funding

Community Engagement, 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 achieve the best outcomes possible. Where possible, we have remained engaged with community interagency activities. We have found, however, that COVID issues have impacted frequency and/or actual occurrence of many local interagency activities, as remote working, staff turnover and service closures have impacted regular networking activities.

Community Engagement

We are committed to being part of the community we service. In FY 2021-22 we delivered **13** community legal education (CLEs) workshops, developed 19 CLE resources, and otherwise participated in over 161 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 range of community groups in the Macarthur region. We have continued our successful 'Let's Talk Legal' series, in collaboration with Campbelltown Library, which delivers an annual series of targeted, plain language legal education talks to community members at local libraries. This year we ran a mixture of online and in person talks, tailored to audience groups (and factoring in COVID restrictions that applied at given times).

Outreach.

Engagement.

Partnerships.

Supporting our Community.

Family Relationship Centre Partnership

In FY 21-22 we assisted **83** clients referred to us by our Family Relationship Centre (FRC) partners.

We continue to work with partner FRCs to offer legal advice and representation in legally assisted mediations (LAMs). In LAMs, both parties are represented by a CLC solicitor. We currently partner with Southwest Sydney Legal Centre, Marrickville Legal Centre, Inner City Legal Centre and Western Sydney Community Legal to deliver this collaborative mediation work (with Catholic Care FRCs at Bankstown and Liverpool and Uniting FRCs at Campbelltown, Fairfield, and Wollongong).

Children's Court Assistance Scheme

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

Our CCAS coordinator, Laura Sutton, works closely with Christie Lewin Webb, our Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP) worker. Together, Laura and Christie greet young people and their families or support workers as soon as they arrive at court. They provide information about the court process, help young people complete their legal aid forms and facilitate communication between court staff and the young people. The CCAS also assesses the social needs of the young people and, where needed, makes referrals to an appropriate service. For example, if a young person is homeless, the CCAS can help them access crisis accommodation. The CCAS works alongside the Education Court Liaison Officer (ECLO), Bobby-Ann Trindall. The ECLO plays a critical role in the Children's Court. She works with the young person and their family or carer to develop a plan to get the young person back to school. If they have left school, she works to link them into TAFE or other employment services.

As with all community service providers, the CCAS was affected due to the COVID-19 lockdowns. Adaptations had to be made to the way we worked. The CCAS program halted in person court attendance in July, August and September of 2021. Throughout the lockdown period, however, the CCAS remained willing and able to connect with and assist justice-involved young people, and also take referrals from the Youth Action Meetings (YAMS) to support young people deemed at risk of harm or exploitation.

For example, during the 2021 lockdown, the CCAS provided social and welfare supports to a COVID-19 positive 16-year-old girl who was directed to isolate in Special Health Accommodation 50 kilometres from her home in Campbelltown, after health authorities determined that her living arrangements made it impossible for her to self-isolate at home. The CCAS also supported a 17-year-old girl who was referred through the YAMS during the lockdown. The young person had been placed by Housing NSW in a hotel room when she became homeless due to domestic violence and family breakdown. The girl remained in temporary accommodation for over four weeks at the hotel whilst waiting for a place to become available in a youth refuge. The CCAS supported the young person by making COVID-safe in person visits to check on her welfare, providing her with school supplies, food, clothing and phone data (which she needed to do her HSC

assignments as the hotel providing temporary accommodation had insufficient Wi-Fi).

The CCAS resumed attending court in person in October 2021. The number of young people coming to court, however, was significantly lower than before, as many of the young people were excused if legally represented. That change in Children's Court operations, combined with the earlier lockdown, is reflected in the data for the reporting period. This year the CCAS helped **475** young people with matters listed before the Campbelltown Children's Court. 82% of the young people we assisted were males, 18% female and at least 25% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Our CCAS worker provided discrete (one-off) non-legal casework assistance to **34** young people and ongoing non-legal casework assistance to 24 young people.

Throughout the reporting period the CCAS also:

- Liaised regularly with community police and justice officials including the Youth Action Meetings (YAMS) coordinator, Campbelltown PCYC police officers, Youth Liaison Officers, Multicultural Community Liaison Officers, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, and DCJ-Justice case workers;
- Promoted and raised awareness of MLC services in the community via participation in local youth-focused working groups and inter-agencies, including meetings of the Julia Reserve Steering Committee, Macarthur Youth Services Network interagency, Camden Youth Network interagency, Liverpool Youth Workers interagency and the Youth Homelessness and Community Matters working group;
- Participated in monthly Youth Action Meetings (YAMS), a multi-agency program in the Campbelltown PAC focusing on the safety of young people as well as crime prevention;
- Commenced work on an advocacy campaign to bring a youth refuge to the Macarthur region which would provide crisis accommodation to 16 and 17 year old youth in our community experiencing homelessness as there is currently no service
- Delivered community legal education including a talk about legal issues affecting young people to a group of refugees and new arrivals working with Focus Connect;
- Together with the ECLO, YAM Coordinator and PCYC Police, hosted a group of Pasifika young men at the Pacific Tests rugby games in Campbelltown in June 2022 as a way of building relationships and positive interactions between community youth and police.



PCYC ACTIVITIES

We believe in holistic approaches to facilitating the wellbeing of the young people we support.

Total

Young People **Assisted**



CCAS HELPERS Our CCAS coordinator works with various community workers to provide wraparound support for vulnerable young



MACQUARIE FIELDS **COMMUNITY HELPERS** Our CCAS coordinator, Laura Sutton, with local community helpers.



PACIFIC TESTS RUGBY EVENT We are actively engaged with the community we support.

Thanks

people.

The CCAS could not operate effectively without the ongoing support of other individuals and organisations. In particular, the CCAS Coordinator would like to thank Christina Pirina and Robert Pelletier for supporting the CCAS and the adaptations that were made to the service during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The CCAS is also particularly grateful for the assistance provided this year by Macarthur WDVCAS, the YAMS coordinator, Campbelltown PCYC and the Department of Education and Training.



Total CLIENT/COMMUNITY **SERVICES**

14,099

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to our staff solicitors, for their unwavering dedication to community legal practice, notably – Barbara Simpson, Stephen Karanfilovski, Melissa Jozwiak, Andrei Stepanov, Milka Bundalo, Greg McCauley and Nicole Kennedy. I'd also like to thank our trusty support team, including Danielle Archer (office administrator), Phillipa Magro (paralegal), and volunteer, Jean Hibbert, they are an invaluable part of the team, and we would (literally) grind to a halt without them to keep things running smoothly. I'd also like to acknowledge Laura Sutton's relentless commitment to youth justice and homelessness issues and the contributions made by our ALAP worker, Christie Lewin Webb. Finally, I'd like to acknowledge MLC's Board for their ongoing support and the MLC management team for their good humour, guidance, and day-to-day assistance in all matters weird and wonderful – Robert, Tanya, Vala and Carina – THANK YOU!

CLIENT FEEDBACK...

I am writing this email in appreciation of the excellent customer service I received on the morning of Friday, 11 February 2022 through Macarthur Legal Centre.

Not only was your receptionist professional and courteous, but the response I received to my request was very quick and thorough. I received a call back within an hour!

I would like to thank Greg McCauley personally for providing me targeted advice on my legal matter. He is knowledgeable and personable. He answered all my questions professionally, thoroughly and in a way that I can understand. I felt as if he genuinely wanted to assist me and made me feel comfortable discussing the legal issue.

I thank him for taking the time to talk with me and I sincerely appreciate the time he spent reviewing my request prior to the call. His advice was very helpful and gave me a new perspective on the situation. I will definitely use your service again in the future and would highly recommend to my friends and family.

SOME MORE CLIENT FEEDBACK...

I would like to inform you of the great news that I received from QBE insurance. They have sent me an email informing me that they decided to waive all the money that I owed them (\$23,447.32) and I want to thank you for all your help and time, I truly appreciate it. I wish you great health and have a wonderful afternoon. Many thanks,

Mary

THE YEAR AHEAD

Life is increasingly challenging with inflation, housing and cost of living pressures, and extreme weather events impacting record numbers of people. We anticipate a correlated increase in unmet legal need, for the near future, and will guidance and support to those most in

Domestic Violence Team Report Tanya Whitehouse (Coordinator)

Overview

Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (MWDVCAS) is part of a network of 27 community-based Court Advocacy Services in NSW. Legal Aid NSW administers funds for all the WDVCAS'. Macarthur WDVCAS covers Campbelltown, Camden and Picton Courts and workers attend on the ADVO List Day and other days for hearings to support clients. Camden Court listings were suspended during the reporting period with all matters transferred to Campbelltown Court.

MWDVCAS workers give appropriate referrals and information regarding Domestic and/or Family Violence matters, advocate for clients, network with 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 WDVCAS is unique in that it is only one of two WDVCAS' in NSW that have funding for case management/casework.

There are 13 staff employed with MWDVCAS including the Manager – Tanya Whitehouse, Assistant Manager/Multicultural Focus Worker – Sesilia Large; Aboriginal Focus Workers – Julie Hoffmannbeck and Shaylyn Schumacher; SAM Coordinator – Kelly Standaloft; Youth Focussed Caseworker – Mayra Lindao; Generalist Caseworker – Jodie Reeder; Disability Focussed Caseworker – Lisa Stark; LGBTQI+ Focus Worker (started in June '22) – Rebecca Furey; Domestic & Family Violence Specialist Workers – Rebecca Furey, Shaylyn Schumacher, Joanne Walker, Janine Stark and Larissa Memery; Administration Worker – Melinda Perry and part-time Data Entry Worker Jeannae Parker.

TOTAL NON-CASEWORK SERVICES:

20,193



MWDVCAS

Engaging with Our Community

Covid-19

Covid-19 has continued to impact our service provision, with restrictions on staff attending the office and court, court backlogs, and some service partners still working remotely. Special recognition and thanks to all MWDVCAS staff for their continued advocacy, strength, and tenacity in such troubling times. Special thanks to our collaborative stakeholders who have continued to support referred clients. It should also be acknowledged that our Safety Action Meeting (SAM) stakeholders have continued to show their commitment to referred clients and are happily back to face-to-face, since early 2022.

On a hugely positive note, it was very welcoming news to hear (in May 2022) that the NSW Government is going to continue the caseworker funding for MWDVCAS and roll it out to all WDVCAS' state-wide. After many years of lobbying for the benefits of casework for WDVCAS clients, it was a relief to see the Government listen. MWDVCAS caseworkers were ecstatic to know that their jobs were finally safe and funded longer term.

Community and Interagency Support

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

Macarthur Legal Centre, Narellan/Campbelltown Police, Campbelltown & Picton Courts, Benevolent Society Centre for Women's Health, Staying Home Leaving Violence, WILMA Women's Health Centre, Community Links Wellbeing, BaptistCare, Macarthur Family & Youth Services NABU team, Tharawal Aboriginal Health Service, FACS Housing, FACS Child Protection, Focus Connect, Macarthur Disability Services, Jackie Burns, Uniting, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, Legal Aid Campbelltown Office, St Vincent de Paul Case Management, Macarthur Gateway, Big Yellow Umbrella, Camden Council, Campbelltown Council, Wollondilly Council and all of those support services helping us with donations, food hampers and other Covid related supports.

Special thank you to the Magistrates, Paul West (Registrar), Alanna Kill (Deputy Registrar) and staff at Campbelltown Court for their commitment and support when Camden Court matters moved to Campbelltown Court. This was a significant change, on several levels, and the transition was positive for MWDVCAS.

Staff at MWDVCAS are involved in many different interagency activities, including Domestic Violence Committees at Campbelltown and Camden, multicultural interagency, Youth Interagency and Aboriginal Interagency. Our Youth Focused Caseworker is also a panel member of the Youth Subsidy assessment commit-

MWDVCAS thanks the Solicitors who support our clients at Campbelltown Court every week. We also acknowledge the MLC legal team, for supporting our referred clients with related legal

KEY CASE MANAGEMENT' STATISTICS

Client Case Management Services Provided.

5735

Client Contacts (on average 110 per week).

\$114k

Financial Assistance given to clients via case management

Statistics FY 21-22

Case Management Services

MWDVCAS provided case management to **203** clients (with **327** children included with this client group).

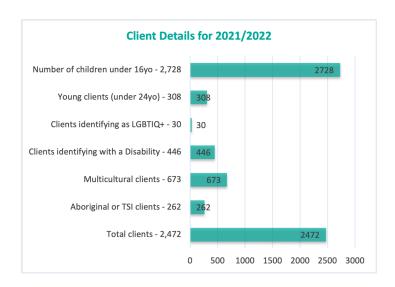
We had **5735** contacts with the clients – an average of **110** contacts/week.

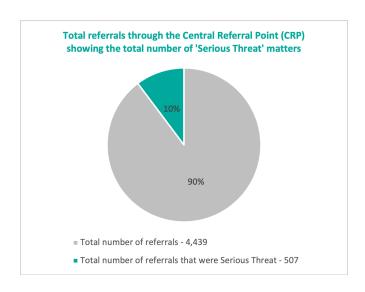
Total amount of financial assistance given through case management was **\$114,617**.

Other Services

Total service events for women who were not case managed was **20,193** – an average of **388**/week (this includes anything done for/with clients and is additional to contacts with case managed clients).

Total of referral information provided and/or referrals made for all clients was **29,469** – an average of **567**/week.









Case Study

Alyssa (not her real name) was referred to our service, as she was living in a family violence home environment. Alyssa was 16 years of age and living with her mother, stepfather, and siblings. Alyssa wanted to explore housing options, as she did not want to continue to live with her mother due to the ongoing violence being perpetrated by her stepfather towards her. Alyssa's stepfather monitored her access to the inside of the family home in terms of what food she ate, how long she would be allowed to shower, access to household amenities and whether she was allowed to interact with other family members in the home. Alyssa was made to sleep in the garage, which had become flooded due to heavy rain. This meant Alyssa's belongings had been damaged by water, including her mattress. Alyssa did not have family members she could live with, as the family had lost contact with them. This is not unusual in a Domestic Violence relationship in which her Mum appeared to be dealing with. Alyssa's school had been providing support and raised concerns, regarding her safety at home, to service providers. Alyssa made disclosures to the school regarding the way her stepfather had been treating her at home. Due to concerns for Alyssa's safety, the school made a referral to the local Youth Action Meeting (YAM) during which a referral to our service was suggested.

We contacted Alyssa, and she stated that she wanted to re-locate to a safe home environment. Alyssa attended school and worked in our local area and wanted to stay in the area as her support networks were located here. MWDVCAS explored different options with Alyssa regarding her housing options. Alyssa received limited accommodation support through Link2Home. Her age was an issue and most refuge support was out of the area and away from her support network. While Alyssa accessed Temporary Accommodation (TA), there was support from her school to provide transport to and from school. There was also a leniency on Alyssa's work at school, due to the circumstances. Alyssa continued to work part time while she accessed TA. All services working with Alyssa advocated to DCJ (Child Protection and Housing) to support Alyssa by extending her TA until she could be approved for 'Rent Choice Youth' and obtain a private rental.

Alyssa was supported by our service to apply for Rent Choice Youth which was approved. There were concerns raised about her ability to get a rental property, due to her age. Alyssa was proactive in looking and applying for rental properties. Alyssa was supported by the YAM Coordinator to view and obtain a property in an area near services, school and work. MWDVCAS supported Alyssa with vouchers from GIVIT, utilizing brokerage from Rent Choice Youth and referral to other services who would help with furnishing her home. An application was also made to Victim Services for the Immediate Needs Support Payment (\$5000) which was approved. This allowed Alyssa to purchase clothing and security upgrades for her home. Alyssa also had security cameras installed in her home. She is still living in the same property.

Alyssa has been granted a scholarship which will provide her with some financial assistance to purchase equipment for school. Alyssa continues to engage with services. MWDVCAS has and still is working very closely with Laura Sutton from the Children's Court Assistance Scheme Coordinator – another service provided by Macarthur Legal Centre. Laura has had significant involvement with this young woman as well. Both parties continue to support her. This young woman is getting exceptional professional support from two services based at Macarthur Legal Centre. The collaborative working relationships with several stakeholders has ensured that Alyssa has received as much support as possible. Given her age and vulnerability, this support was integral to her safety.

Number of contacts: 68 Number of hours: 37 hrs Brokerage: \$8,147.00

Tenancy Team Report Vala Ola'aiga (Coordinator)

Supporting Our Community in 2022

There are still moments of evolution and growth even in settled matters. We entered 2022 with some very pivotal feedback, which led to growth in the way we operate as a service. The changes have not affected the efficiency of service provision, in supporting communities within our South West Sydney catchment, but did improve reporting to our funding body, in a way that better accounts for all the work being carried out on the ground. In 2022 we also went through a tender process for our core funding.

The team has been resilient and steadfast through the pivotal operational changes in the year. We faced potential job loss (due to funding uncertainty), while fighting off tenant homelessness and egregious practices in the rental industry impacting our clients. All these external pressures demand more of the team's energy, but their commitment to the overarching mission of the whole Centre (to support our community), is very evident in the way they continue to dig.

Partnerships

We are indebted to all our partners for their support throughout the year. We could not have remained determined and solid without the support of the services we work in partnership with - not only from within MLC, but all other social agencies that we work with to provide vulnerable clients with support. Some of the most important partnerships of the year are highlighted below.

Miller Hub: Even though we have had very minimal in person connection this year, we remain in contact with each other to support our mutual clients and prop each other up amid our shared challenges through Covid restrictions.

NCAT: We maintained a considerable NCAT roster this year, with most hearings online (in person NCAT hearings re-opened in September 2022). We acknowledge the registry staff who facilitate communications with NCAT with ease and enable our ongoing work with tenant parties appearing before the Tribunal.

Tenants Union NSW and the TAAP Network: This year we faced

challenges from Covid restrictions to the TAAP Funding tender process and everything in between. The capacity and ability of the Network to openly discuss the challenges and opportunities arising is an invaluable resource that we could not be more grateful to have access to.

MLC Services (Legal and MWDVCAS): We are grateful for the client focus of the Centre, and reciprocal client referral pathways, which allow clients to access a range of social support services. We are fortunate to have this support within the Centre.

Tenancy Advice and Advocacy in Numbers

For the purposes of this report, we are reporting on numbers from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

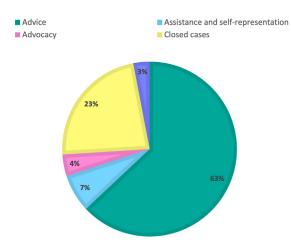
Session Delivery Medium

In the reporting period, we provided 5197 sessions of advice to tenants over the phone, electronic mail, face-to-face appointments, and via representation in NCAT. This is a 48% increase from the previous year.

Active Cases and New Advice

We opened 1390 cases of new advice in addition to the 57 cases carried forward from the previous year. A total of 1447 cases were active during the reporting period with the top 5 activities

SERVICES BY SESSION TYPE



Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Statistics FY 21-22

Our main matter types have remained consistent through the year, but there appears to be growing need for assistance with a range of tenancy issues. We also acknowledge that our resources are limited and that there is still unmet need in our community for tenancy assistance services...

Termination boasts a hefty **505** active cases which makes it the most active case area (**36%** of the active caseload), followed by:

- Repairs and Maintenance/Alterations (29% of active cases)
- Rents and Other Charges (20.3% of active cases)
- Bond and Compensation claims (19.8% of active cases)
- Tribunal and Jurisdiction (11% of active cases)
- Access, Privacy and Landlord Complaints (10.5% of active cases) and
- Social Housing matters (10.2% of active cases).

Our main matter types have remained consistent through the year, but there appears to be growing need for assistance with a range of tenancy issues. We also acknowledge that our resources are limited and that there is still unmet need in our community for tenancy assistance services.

Closed Cases

We resolved and closed a total of 1379 cases.

Below is a table showing the top 3 Outcomes achieved for the community we supported during this reporting period.

Tenant Outcomes

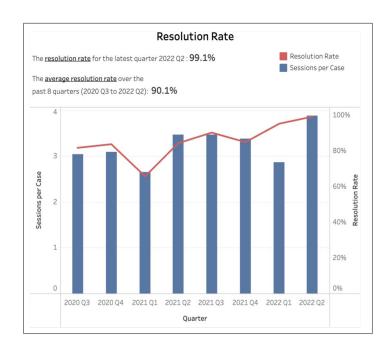
Tenant(s) Outcomes Achieved (Percentage):

Improved Understanding of Tenancy Law 93%
Presenting Issue Resolved 84%
Referred (both warm and cold) 80%

These figures are a consistent indication of the ongoing work that we do to support the South West Sydney renting community who access our service. It also highlights the importance of having a support network and being able to establish referral pathways for clients.

Service Outcomes

Our reports to NSW Fair Trading are submitted quarterly. This year, the Tenants Union helpfully pulled comparators from previous reports and shared them with us. Below is a table showing positive outcomes achieved by the Service (Resolution Rate) measured against complexity of matters (Sessions per case).



Good News Stories Case Studies

House 1

Sinamon (not her real name) contacted our service in December of 2021. She reported many urgent repairs to the landlord, however the landlord failed to carry out any of the repairs.

SWSTAAS initially assisted the tenant with drafting a repairs letter, however this was unsuccessful. An NCAT application was lodged seeking orders for repairs, termination without penalty to the tenant, and compensation for damaged goods, and breach of peace, comfort and privacy.

We helped put together the evidence bundle and prepared Sinamon for the hearing. She was capable of self-representing with our guidance.

At the group list hearing, the member made orders that the tenant was to withhold rent payments until further order.

At the final contested hearing, Sinamon was awarded all the rent payments that had been withheld, to the amount of \$5000, as compensation for the landlord's breach of the agreement. Furthermore, the residential tenancy agreement was terminated immediately without penalty to Sinamon and the entire bond was to be returned to her.

Excellent result for Sinamon!...

House 2

Sinamon moved into a new premises in February 2022 and signed a 6-month lease agreement. On entering the premises, the tenant noticed and reported repairs required at the premises. As the tenant had "complained" about the outstanding repairs on multiple occasions, the landlord refused to enter into a new fixed term agreement and provided a no-grounds notice of termination. Sinamon did not wish to pursue a retaliatory notice of termination. At the time of vacating, there was a period of heavy rain which had caused flooding to the shed and backyard. Most of NSW was affected by these floods in February. This was reported to the landlord and the tenant explained that she was

unable to mow the lawns during this period. The tenant asked if she could come back once the rain had stopped to mow the lawns. Further to this, the tenant organised a council clean-up, but this wouldn't take place until after vacating either. Evidence of this was provided to the agent. Sinamon attended the premises 3 days after vacating to mow the lawns, however access was

On vacating, the landlord made a claim against the bond for disposal of belongings due to "illegal dumping" \$400, mowing of lawns and weeding \$380, cleaning \$770, water \$76 and pest spray \$160.

We are currently representing the tenant at NCAT which has been set down for formal hearing. A partial agreement has been made as the tenant has agreed to the pest spray and water charges. The remaining items are to be determined.

Sinamon is very grateful that a service like ours exists. Without our assistance, it would have been easier to roll over and move on. She is very thankful for Naomi's work and the team's continued support through two rental properties.

Thank You

To the team: Douglas Lee, Joyda Zinck, Theresa Olaaiga, Naomi Hare and Ashmita Rao. What a year we have journeyed through. Thank you for being a steady team! Your hard work has not gone unnoticed. Thank you for sticking with the pivots and persisting through the challenging changes and learning big lessons this year. "Douglas, Naomi and Ash, we will work together towards kicking more goals in the next 12 months - maybe hire another person to help us too." We now have Joyda and Theresa who have helped us tremendously with advice, advocacy and administration support we have needed for so long. 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 groups which have helped us through this year. To Macarthur Legal Centre Board, Management team and staff, thank you for your support and encouragement of our service.

Finance Report

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from grants	3,807,268	3,640,949
Receipts from other income	61,705	125,903
Payments to suppliers and employees	(3,180,483)	(3,745,755)
Interest received	6,012	10,060
Interest paid	(9,552)	(15,303)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	684,950	15,854
CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment	100	2,300
Payment for property, plant and equipment	(196,277)	(110,266)
Net cash provided by/(used) in investing activities	(196,177)	(107,966)
CASH FLOW FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Payments to reduce lease liabilities	(118,819)	(111,797)
Net cash provided by/(used) in financing activities	(118,819)	(111,797)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held	369,954	(203,909)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	2,317,842	2,521,751
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	2,687,796	2,317,842

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income (ended 30 June 2022)

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Revenue from continuing operations	3,461,153	3,309,954
Other Income	60,285	118,160
Total Revenue and Other Income	3,521,438	3,428,114
Depreciation and Amortisation Expense	(186,623)	(169,746)
Interest Paid	(9,552)	(15,303)
Employee Benefits Expense	(2,781,475)	(2,720,999)
Information Technology	(65,225)	(69,808)
Program Expenses	(28,407)	(36,111)
Other Expenses	(282,791)	(210,861)
Total Expenditure	(3,354,073)	(3,222,828)
Surplus before income tax	167,365	205,286
Income Tax Expense		-
Net Surplus for the year	167,365	205,286
Other comprehensive income after income tax		-
Total other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	<u> </u>	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	167,365	205,286

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,687,796	2,317,842
Trade and other receivables	6,396	8,450
Other current assets	25,412	19,021
Total Current Assets	2,719,604	2,345,313
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	263,725	135,130
Right of use assets	118,943	237,884
Total Non-Current Assets	382,668	373,014
TOTAL ASSETS	3,102,272	2,718,327
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	843,478	595,525
Lease liabilities	126,210	128,371
Employee provisions	468,427	441,478
Total Current Liabilities	1,438,115	1,165,374
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liabilities	-	116,658
Employee provisions	233,742	173,245
Total Non-Current Liabilities	233,742	289,903
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,671,857	1,455,277
Net Assets	1,430,415	1,263,050
EQUITY		
Retained surplus	1,430,415	1,263,050
Total Equity	1,430,415	1,263,050

Statement of Changes in Equity for year ended 30 June 2022

	Retained	Total
	Surplus (\$)	Equity (\$)
Balance as at 1 July 2020	1,057,764	1,057,764
Surplus for the year	205,286	205,286
Other comprehensive income	<u>-</u>	
Balance as at 30 June 2021	1,263,050	1,263,050
Surplus for the year	167,365	167,365
Other comprehensive income	<u>-</u>	-
Balance as at 30 June 2022	1,430,415	1,430,415

Prepared by Carina Southern (Finance Officer)



THANK YOU

We would like to thank our funders and supporters, government, individual and corporate. You make supporting our community a reality.

Contact

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