

Proudly Supporting the
Macarthur Community

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



MACARTHUR
Legal Centre

Supporting our community



WELCOME

Founded in 1987, Macarthur Legal Centre ('MLC') is part of a network of community legal centres that provides free legal advice, referrals and assistance to people living in the Macarthur region of NSW.

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

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

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

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Our Board of Directors,
freely give of their time
and expertise to help us help
our community.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Welcome to the 2014 – 2015 Chairperson's report. Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report, and celebrating the achievements of Macarthur Legal Centre ('MLC') over the past year. Every year brings new adventures and excitement, and this year is no exception.

This year MLC took time out to review and refresh our strategic direction and goals. This process gave us an opportunity to reflect on our past achievements and strengths, to identify areas for improvement and to plan for the future. The Macarthur region is expected to undergo continued population growth, associated with new land releases recently announced by the NSW Government. It is anticipated that the additional population growth will also increase demand for our services. Being able to manage increased demand, in a framework of finite resources and shrinking funding base, will be a challenge for our Centre. We are, however, committed to engaging in continued planning - drawing on our depth of experience; maintaining a focus on good governance and financial management; identifying and implementing efficiencies; ensuring we look after our staff and supporting strong leadership. Our strengths lie in our staff and our strong connection to the community we serve. We will continue to ensure that we maintain our profile, by continuing to deliver existing services and developing new partnerships to help strategically address community need.

We continue to build on our reputation in providing legal assistance to vulnerable and disadvantaged people living in Macarthur. We are committed to expanding our outreach legal advice services, to increase our presence and improve access to a diversity of community members and locations within the region. Our legal work also continues to provide us with insights into legal education needs and law reform work. Christina Pirina and the Legal Team have worked hard to ensure the achievement of client outcomes according to need, with a focus on empowerment being at the centre

of all work. Our work in supporting women who have experienced domestic violence is very highly regarded, across the region and beyond. I was honoured to be present when Tanya Whitehouse, co-ordinator of our Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service ('MWDVCAS'), recently won the 2015 Law and Justice Foundation Justice Medal for her longstanding commitment to improving access to justice for women and children who are victims of domestic and family violence. This was fantastic recognition for Tanya, her team and the work they do.

MLC continues to provide ongoing assistance in the area of tenancy rights. Vala Olaaiga, and her team, work tirelessly to ensure clients are provided with the support they require to have tenancy issues addressed promptly. Provision of information about tenancy rights is also an ongoing key area of work that enables people to be more informed about their rights and obligations as a tenant.

The stories in this report highlight the diversity and hard work undertaken by all. None of this would be possible without the positive leadership from our Centre Director, Robert Pelletier and Principal Solicitor, Christina Pirina. I congratulate them and their teams for their hard work and dedication to MLC.

Thank you to our other Board members: Nevine Youssef (Vice Chairperson), Adam Quinn (Treasurer), Cheryl McBride and Alison Croall (Board members). In particular I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special thank you to Cheryl McBride, who has decided not to stand for re-nomination to the Board in 2015-16. Cheryl has been a long-term supporter of MLC and member of the Board since approximately 2002. We are sad to say goodbye to Cheryl, however we wish her well for the future. Her ongoing commitment and guidance has contributed to the good work of MLC over many years.



We are dedicated to supporting our community with a range of innovative and holistic services.

THE YEAR AHEAD

'The coming year will certainly bring new challenges and new opportunities. I am confident that Macarthur Legal Centre is ready to meet whatever the future brings. I thank you all for supporting our work towards equitable and accessible justice for all.'

Julie Deane
Chair of the Board, MLC

The Old Ways

Our Birthday Bash...

On 12 September 2014, we held a lunch at Rydges Hotel, Campbelltown. Billed as the Centre's Birthday Bash, it was an opportunity to raise the Centre's profile and to raise some funds.

This lunch was attended by State and Federal politicians, members of the local legal profession and a large number of academics from Western Sydney University and the Australian Catholic University. Legal Aid, our principal funder, was represented, as was the local press.

In his gracious Welcome to Country, Uncle Ivan emphasizes the importance of the "old ways". He stressed the importance of working with, in and for our community – supporting those who need a helping hand. In our planning sessions in 2014, we identified "supporting our community" as what we do.

Our guest speaker was Peter FitzSimons – author, journalist and retired sportsman. He generously gave up his time to entertain us and to support the work of the Centre.

Thanks to all who attended. We did not raise much money but these events are, nevertheless, a vital part of our community engagement and awareness raising.



Finances

One of our former Financial Administrators, Kathy Lester, provided voluntary assistance to the Centre to enable us to prepare our budget for this financial year. I am very grateful to Kathy for her unstinting support.

On 25 August 2014, the Centre employed Carina Southern as our Financial Administrator. Carina has improved the financial transparency of our finances so that each of the program managers and I are very clear about where the Centre is financially. Funding has been the significant challenge of the year. It was unclear whether the Federal and State Governments would be able to reach an agreement on a new funding agreement for the sector when the last National Partnership Agreement expired in June 2014.

Funding for our work decreased for a number of reasons. Firstly, we were not successful in a tender we submitted for our financial counseling work. The Commonwealth had funded this work. Secondly, our legal team ceased doing paid victim's compensation work when the legislation changed to eliminate the work done by lawyers. Thirdly, a contract we had to provide tenant advice and advocacy services to a consortium of public housing providers came to an end.

Our wages bill continues to increase significantly. Most of our employees are employed under the Social Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award. This award covers many who work in the social welfare sector. These employees have been chronically underpaid for decades. Award rates are now subject to twice annual increases (which have amounted to about 8% per annum) until 2020 to bring payments into line with the rest of the community. These are huge annual increases in our wages bill. Government funding does not adequately cover these increases. This has added to the complexity of planning for the future of the Centre.

In February, our accountant, Carina Southern, and our Treasurer, Adam Quinn, worked through our accounts and concluded that the Centre was facing a very significant loss without any changes to our expenses. Adjusting to this new reality has been painful. We achieved cost savings in many areas but the largest line item in our expenses is our wages bill. The legal team lost three members of staff, as we cut our costs to ensure the sustainability of the Centre and the legal practice in particular. We lost Susan Su, Stanley Tao and long-term employee, Chris Joyce. We appreciate the work all three did for the Centre.

We have had to impose a tight rein on our spending and to find new and better ways of doing things.

Technology

We continued to work on our IT system. We installed a new server, programmed back up to the cloud and began work on gradually replacing our aging fleet of apple computers. We have installed a wireless system to increase the flexibility of what we do. Our staff has remote access to our system – that means they can work from home or from the many outreaches throughout Macarthur and South West Sydney.

Crunch IT, our IT consultant, has done a brilliant job designing our new system. Annie Swanton and David Colville in particular have respected the constraints of our budget and taken the time to understand what we do. Our system is now light years ahead of where it was at the beginning of the financial year. I also need to express my thanks to one of our volunteer students, Andrew Hack, whose IT expertise has been incredibly helpful in getting to the best result possible within the constraints of our budget. We have fast and reliable access to the internet.

The renewal and proper maintenance of our system is now built into budget. I am confident that our IT will increasingly serve what we do going forward.

New Branding

We gave the Centre a new look and feel this financial year. We adopted a new logo and tag line “supporting our community”. We also did extensive work on our website and intranet. We placed new signage on the front and side of the Centre.

Community

Holistic solutions to our clients' needs

We continue to develop our community relationships. We work closely with Western Sydney University and Australian Catholic University – providing Domestic Violence training and clinics in social justice and community law issues for these organisations.

We aspire to provide holistic solutions to our clients' needs. Because the Centre auspices a number of services, we are able to consider our client's issues in a broader context. So, for example, a client may present to our Domestic Violence team. They identify the client has family law and tenancy needs – we are able to do much of the work in house which saves the client time and angst.

However, we cannot be all things to all our clients. That means that we have to work closely with other services that provide complimentary services. We value these relationships and we are grateful to all Government and non-Government services who refer clients to us and to whom we in turn refer clients. We continue to look at developing these relationships and to think of innovative ways of supporting our community better with our colleagues in other services.

We seek feedback from our clients. Every year we conduct client satisfaction surveys to identify what we do well and where there is room for improvement. Overwhelmingly, the feedback is very encouraging. We value the insights that our clients have given us as we continue to make our work more responsive to their needs.

We also receive funding from the New South Wales Public Purpose Fund. Most of this funding comes through Legal Aid and the Department of Fair Trading. I express our thanks to the Federal and New South Wales Government and the Trustees of the Public Purpose Fund.

THE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

We are committed to quality service delivery and continuous improvement of our services.



OUR COMMITMENT TO BEST PRACTICE

Work Health and Safety

- Our WHS committee met regularly. I am grateful to Rita Houbert for her work in chairing these meetings.
- We conducted training sessions for all staff in dealing with aggressive clients - unfortunately this is an ongoing issue with the work we do.
- We also obtained new fire training for our fire wardens.
- Thanks to all the committee members for ensuring that we meet our WHS obligations.
- The Board takes a very active interest in our WHS compliance and a report is presented at each meeting.

NACLC Accreditation

- We continue to work on updating and developing our policies. This work requires generous slabs of time to think through policies. The challenge is to aspire to best practice, within the constraints of our limited budget. Working on policies is a never-ending job - like painting the Harbour Bridge - once you get to one end you have to start again.
- We value our NACLC accreditation. For us it is a work in progress - documenting how we should do things so that we do not have to re-invent the wheel every time we do a task, and having standards against which we can measure our performance.
- We've found that improving our policies, has improved staff confidence.

Volunteers

- Volunteers are indispensable to our work. Every year, university students provide tireless support answering phones, fielding initial enquiries, conducting research and supporting the work of paid staff. CLCs have played a significant role in training generations of law students in Australia, since Redfern opened its doors 40 years ago.
- We are grateful to the professional relationships we have developed with members of the local legal community. They support us by manning our weekly advice sessions, and taking referrals when we are unable to assist. We never cease to be amazed by their generosity and commitment to justice for all.

The Board

- Our Board members are volunteers.
- They provide oversight and strategic direction to the Centre.
- Their experience, insight and generosity have steered the Centre through some tricky waters in recent years. All of them have served the people of the Macarthur region for many years.
- We appreciate their unstinting support of our work.
- We would like to pay special tribute to Julie Deane, the Chair of our Board. Her care of the Centre, her sharp intelligence and leadership of the Board have been exemplary.
- As Director, I am also grateful for her care and oversight of my role at the Centre.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Federal Government plans to reduce funding to Community Legal Centres by 25% from 1 July 2017. It is hard to plan a future for our work against this huge hit. How can we enter into any long-term plans when up to a quarter of the funding for the core work of our Centre will disappear?

However, plan we must. The alternative is to run blind into the storm.

On 29 October 2014, we had a major planning day at Wests Leagues Club. All available staff members attended. Julie Deane, Adam Quinn and Cheryl McBride attended from our board. We engaged a consultant, Duncan Honoré-Morris, to conduct our planning day. Duncan brought a wealth of experience in management of a not for profit organisation, as an accountant and as an academic to the facilitation of our planning day.

The following were the top phrases that identified what we do and what we aspire to:

1. Professional, accountable and diverse service, reflecting best practice with a culture of continuous improvement - a 'model centre'
2. Empower people - encourage client autonomy and be seen as an 'enabler' of people
3. Financially secure, with options for alternate funding
4. Working together as a centre, with a holistic co-joint approach and no real segregation
5. Meet individual client need, with a 'client-centred' approach
6. Respect in the community
7. Advocates for human rights, etc.
8. Early intervention and prevention
9. Educating clients and ourselves
10. First choice when considering 'I need help'

We want the best for our clients. We identified our task as empowering our clients so they can make choices that reflect their aspirations. That takes time, patience and respect for the dignity of our clients. To enable us to provide that level of service, we need to improve how we do things. That involves being prepared to set aside time to reflect on what we do, learn from others in the community sector and in the broader community and plan for the future. But we also need financial security so we can plan with confidence.

We identified "supporting our community" as the phrase that brought all of this together. Brenda Coan, in a moment of inspiration, came up with that phrase and it immediately fit what we had been struggling to express.

Supporting our community applies to our work in the Macarthur region and South West Sydney. It also applies to our work in supporting each other. All too often, carers forget to care for themselves in their desire to serve the community. Burn out is a major occupational hazard in all jobs but carers are particularly prone to it. We are particularly mindful of that in our strategic and WHS planning.

Robert Pelletier
Director, MLC

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.

Our Centre

Our solicitors deliver community legal education to community groups and service providers, with the aim of increasing awareness and preventing entrenched legal problems. We also use our casework experience to help identify systemic legal problems, and advocate for legal and policy changes to help the whole community.

Our Legal Services

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

This year we provided 'information' and basic referrals to 3080 people who contacted our centre and our solicitors conducted 1805 legal advice sessions - 31% (561) of these were 'face-to-face' and the remainder were via telephone. Our solicitors opened 516 new cases during the reporting period, as well as managing ongoing matters.

Outreach and Partnerships

We believe it's important to be part of our community, and that legal services should be accessible to all members of our community. Our solicitors offer legal advice at 15 outreach clinics across the Macarthur region - with services running monthly, fortnightly or weekly, depending on need. This year 11% of our advices were provided at outreach locations.

Community dynamics are ever changing, so we constantly monitor and adjust our service locations to best meet unmet legal need. This year we've opened four new outreach services, located at: AB Central (Airds), Burnside (Campbelltown); Wingecarribee Family Support Service (Bowral); Tharawal Land Council (Couridjah). We also continue to offer services at the following centres - Tallowood Community Centre (Ambarvale); Break the Cycle (Macquarie Fields); Benevolent Society (women only service, Campbelltown); Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative (Campbelltown); Wollondilly Community Links (Tahmoor); Claymore Neighbourhood Centre (Claymore); Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation (Airds); Traxside Youth Services (Campbelltown); Youth Off the Streets (Macquarie Fields); and Camden Community Connections (Narellan).

We currently partner with the Macarthur Family Relationship Centre (FRC) to provide weekly onsite advice sessions, for clients experiencing separation. As part of our broader FRC service we also provide telephone advice, referrals and assistance to clients accessing the FRCs at Bankstown and Fairfield. We provide representation in 'legally assisted mediations', which run at each of the three centres. This model, whereby both parties are represented by solicitors from community legal centres, is aimed at redressing power imbalances and resolving entrenched conflicts. This year our solicitors provided 109 advices to FRC clients, and participated in 33 legally assisted mediations.

Community Legal Education

Our solicitors conducted 54 community legal education workshops during the year. These were delivered to a wide range of community groups in the Macarthur region, with audiences ranging from children and young people, to school principals and seniors groups. The topics included bullying, healthy relationships, domestic violence, family law, child support, elder law issues, employment, credit and debt.

LEGAL TEAM





SERVICES AND CLIENTS



ADVICE



CASES



OUR CLIENTS

We provide free legal advice to all residents and service providers in the Macarthur region.	Family law is our main area of casework, and many of our clients are subjected to domestic and family violence.	Our casework services are targeted at the most vulnerable and disadvantaged clients in our community.
53% Family Law	46% Family Law*	21% Self-report disability
13% Civil Law	24% Elder Law	36% CALD
9% Elder Law	17% Civil Law	6% Identified as ATSI
8% Credit and Debt	7% Vicrim's Support	83% Incomes less than \$30,000
6% Employment	6% Credit and Debt	69% Women**
6% Traffic matters	*Many clients are ineligible for Legal Aid grants, due to casual employment, but are practically unable to afford solicitors.	**Many of these women were victims of domestic and family violence.

**"GREAT SERVICE,
WAS VERY GRATEFUL."**

CLIENT SATISFACTION REPORT 2015



MACARTHUR
Legal Centre
Supporting our community

EACH YEAR MLC CONDUCTS
A CLIENT SURVEY BY PHONE/EMAIL
HERE ARE SOME OF
THE RESULTS...

02 4628 2042

**"I KNOW WHERE TO
COME IF I NEED YOU
AGAIN"**

100% OF CLIENTS FELT THAT STAFF
TREATED THEM WELL.

96% OF CLIENTS SAID THEY WOULD
REFER OTHERS TO OUR SERVICE.

**"EVERYTHING WAS
SORTED OUT OVER
THE PHONE"**

79% OF CLIENTS FELT THEY
UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION/
ADVICE WELL

WE ARE DEDICATED TO MAKING LEGAL
SERVICES AND INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE
TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.



We are committed to providing our clients with professional legal services, which are tailored to their needs and circumstances. There are many clients who are not eligible for Legal Aid, but also can't afford private legal services. Often clients are able to self-represent in court matters, with a little help and guidance from our solicitors – this is what Mary had to say about our family law services:

"I am extremely grateful for the service I have received from Macarthur Legal Centre this year. Through a very stressful time, I received empathy and was treated with the utmost respect. I was made aware of other supports in relation to domestic violence, child support and government compensation; which has and will continue to assist my son and I to make positive steps forward in our lives. I feel the affidavit the solicitor produced was very supportive of my case and contained all the details I had provided. I cannot thank this service enough for the wonderful communication and all the support and hard work. Thank you Macarthur Legal Centre".

LAW REFORM

We continue to participate in law reform activities, which relate to systemic legal problems being experienced by people in our community. We also continue to participate in law reform activities conducted by the NSW CLC sector more broadly, with our solicitors actively involved in a range of NSWCLC committees. Our main law reform focus this year has been in the area of family law and care and protection. We prepared submissions for the Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into out of home care and these were referenced in the committee's final report, which was published in August 2015.

ALAP PROGRAM

Our ALAP program aims to improve access to legal services for Aboriginal clients. This year we have broadened our outreach services to the local Aboriginal community; participated in a range of NAIDOC week events; and commenced an Aboriginal Legal Assistance program aimed at helping Aboriginal parents/carers with complex family, care and related issues.

CCAS PROGRAM

MLC runs the Children's Court Assistance Scheme, at Campbelltown Children's Court. This year we provided assistance to 734 young people with matters listed before the Court – this included information, referrals, transport and casework assistance. 74% of the young people assisted were male,

74% of the young people assisted were male, 26% female and at least 14% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. A special thanks to our outgoing ALAP/CCAS worker, Megan Hughes, and the volunteers who've assisted with the program throughout the year.

PILOT PROGRAMS

At MLC we are committed to continuous improvement of our services and innovation aimed at redressing unmet legal need. This year we participated in a range of pilot programs, both funded and not, to help better support our community. We partnered with NSW Legal Aid Early Intervention Unit, to provide legal advice and support to parents encountering the care system. In the first half of 2015, we provided casework assistance to 25 parents/carers. We participated in a NSW Legal Aid pilot, which provided for one-off legal representation in family law conferences, where one party was legally aided and the other had a low income (being otherwise unable to afford a private representative).

We also commenced a mediation pilot, in collaboration with Campbelltown Children's Court, aimed at providing mediation services for young defendants in AVO matters before the Children's Court, with a view to amicable resolution of the issues that led to the AVO and ultimate dismissal of the Application.

The Year Ahead

We have a lot of exciting projects planned for the new financial year. We hope to develop new justice-health partnerships; and a court assistance outreach (to assist vulnerable clients dealing with matters before the Local Court).

We are particularly committed to further improving our work and partnerships with our local Aboriginal community.

We also plan to complete a fourth edition of the Debtor's Guide to the Local Courts in NSW (thanks to the generous support of the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW).

Christina Pirina
Principal Solicitor, MLC

Our Volunteers

We are indebted to our student and solicitor volunteers, for their assistance during our weekly advice sessions. We have about 14 student volunteers who attend advice sessions on a monthly basis - to answer phones, take instructions and brief solicitors.

We also have 13 regular solicitor volunteers who provide legal advice and referrals. The generous support of our volunteers significantly increases our capacity to provide advice services. We also acknowledge the dedicated day-to-day assistance of our daytime volunteers and students participating in practical legal training placements, including - James Suptut, Andrew Hack, Jessica Reardon, Andrei Stepanov, Louis Banh, Zia Zhan, and Greg McCauley.

Special Thanks

A big thanks to our dedicated staff solicitors - Barbara Simpson, Stephen Karanfilovski, Melissa Jozwiak, Robyn Roelandts and Melisa Coveney.

I also recognise and appreciate the hard work of all the solicitors who've left MLC this year, including Susan Su, Stanley Tao, Christopher Joyce and Sunayna Baig (who continues to offer ongoing volunteer assistance). I'd also like to acknowledge the efforts of our support team, including Phillipa Magro (our ever-reliable paralegal) and Danielle Archer (our wonderful new administrative officer).

We have recently established a new pro bono partnership with Seyfarth Shaw – an employment law firm who are assisting our clients by providing specialist legal advice to clients with employment law matters. Their assistance is greatly appreciated.

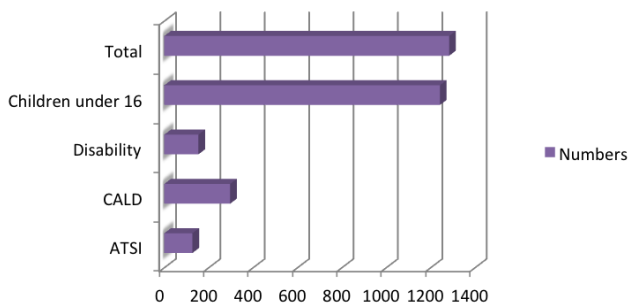


MWDVCAS TEAM

Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service

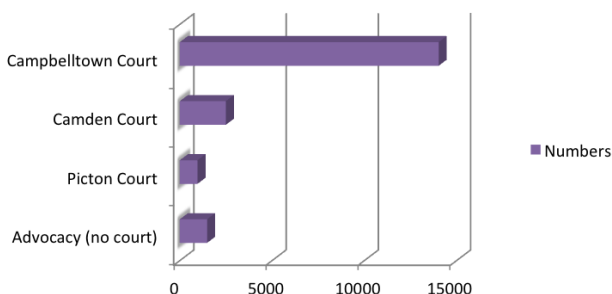
MWDVCAS is part of a network of 28 community based Court Advocacy Services in NSW. Legal Aid NSW fund all WDVCS'. MWDVCAS covers Campbelltown, Camden and Picton Court – workers attend on the ADVO List Day and other days for hearings to support clients. MWDVCAS also give appropriate referrals and information 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.

MWDVCAS CLIENTS 2014/15



We have a total of 1284 clients in 2014-15. We saw a 9.89% increase in ATSI clients, a 25.8% increase in CALD clients and a 12.4% increase in women with disabilities.

SERVICE EVENTS 2014/15



A service event is anything done for the client - including (but not limited to) support at Court, referrals to appropriate services, advocacy, support letters, phone calls and representation at Court. Total service events for 2014/15 period: 18974 - an increase of 46% (on average 364 events/week).

Our Team

There are 8 staff employed with MWDVCAS including the Coordinator – Tanya Whitehouse, Assistant Coordinator/Multi-cultural Specialist Worker – Sesilia Large, Aboriginal Specialist Worker – Brenda Coan, Intake Worker – Kelly Standaloft, Youth Focussed Caseworker – Amanda Weigand, 2 Generalist Caseworkers – Lisa Stark and Joanne Walker and an Administration Worker.

Statistics

Service events have continued to increase over the past year, which is a positive indication that women are aware of support services and that services are referring to MWDVCAS. While the client load has increased MWDVCAS acknowledge that collaborative partnerships developed over the years ensure that clients have access to support over the long term.



Tanya Whitehouse
Coordinator, MWDVCAS



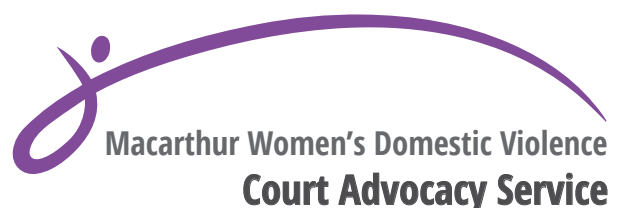
MWDVCAS WORKS CLOSELY WITH A NUMBER OF AGENCIES & SERVICES IN THE MACARTHUR REGION...

We acknowledge the support
and collaborative working
relationships with the
following organisations...

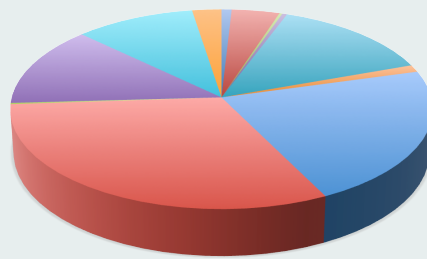
Macarthur Legal Centre,
Narellan/Campbelltown
and Macquarie Fields
Police, Campbelltown/
Camden and Picton Court
staff, Nanette Reuben,
Veronica Love, Nazira
Sowaid, Benevolent Society
Centre for Women's Health,
Staying Home Leaving
Violence, WILMA Women's
Health Centre, Community
Links Wollondilly, Chisholm
Program, Macarthur
Family and Youth Service,
Tharawal Aboriginal
Health Service, Housing
NSW, Macarthur Diversity
Services Initiative Inc.,
Macarthur Disability
Services, Brand New
Day, BCS Lifecare, Jackie
Burns, Major Cheryl Hall,
Legal Aid Campbelltown
Office, SWS Family Referral
Service, Vinchez Refuge,

Staff at MWDVCAS
regularly attend the
local Domestic Violence
Committees, relevant
community interagency
meetings, represent
at several Reference
Groups and the Aboriginal
Specialist Worker still
facilitates the Sista
Girl Yarnz Group each
week of school terms.

The Coordinator remains
the Chair of the peak for
all WDVCS' – WDVCS
NSW Inc. and is in
her fourth term.



MWDVCAS
MADE 24580
REFERRALS IN
2014/15 - AN
INCREASE OF
13.5%



- A&TSI Services
- Accommodation
- Service CALD
- Service Centrelink
- Counselling/Welfare
- Service FACS incl.
- Reports Made Legal
- Local Court
- Other
- WDVCAS
- Police
- Referral Information
- Victims of Crime

CASE STUDY



Our client was a grandmother who was experiencing significant issues with her grandchildren. She had been the primary carer of the children, since they were very young. However the children had developed drug and alcohol problems and had become abusive. There was a long history of unreported verbal abuse and an escalation to physical abuse. Our client had stopped going to see her doctor about the physical injuries, as she was too embarrassed. She was also suffering from anxiety and depression as a result of the family violence she was experiencing.

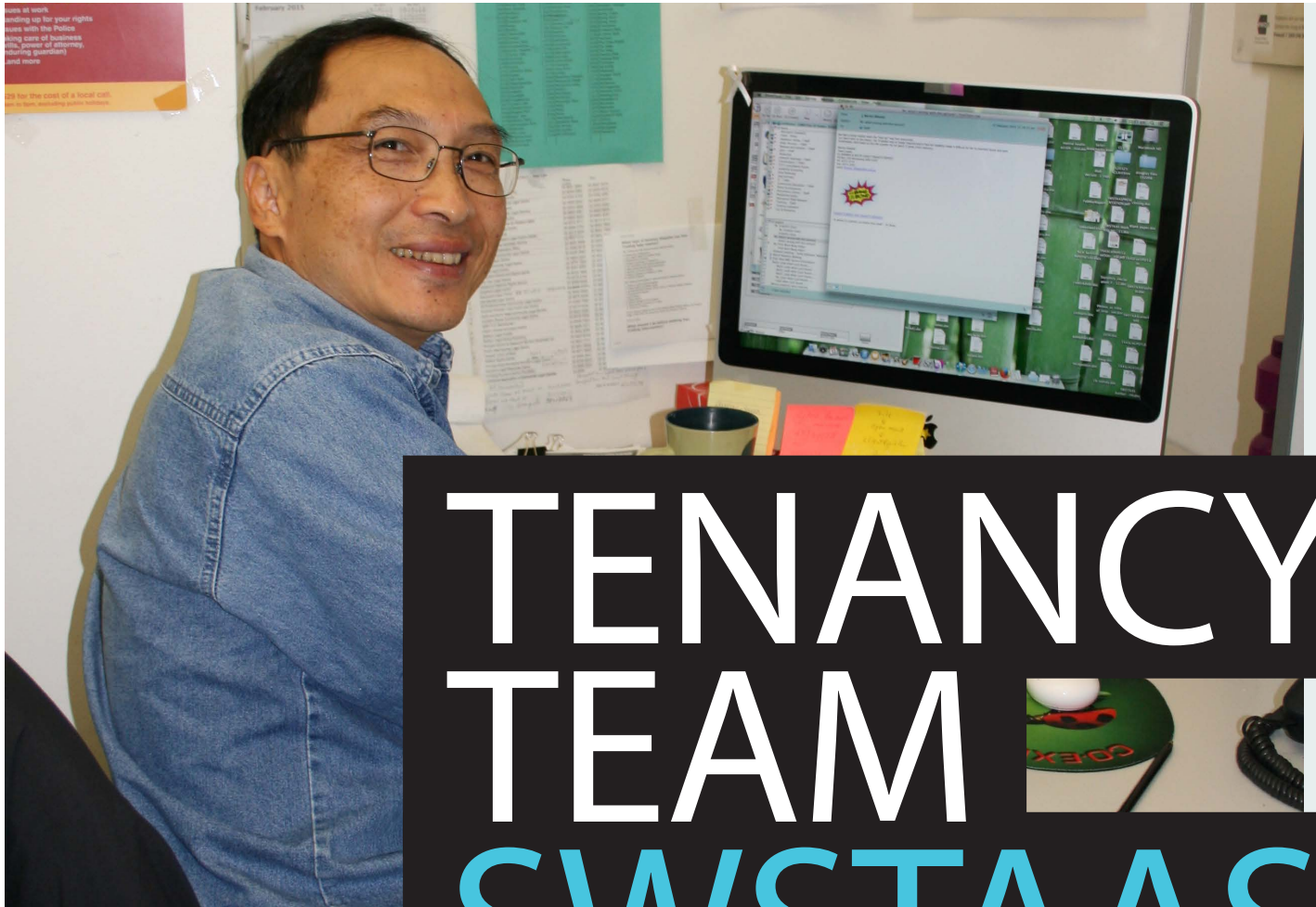
Referrals and Assistance

Our client was able to access the following services, with the assistance of one of our caseworkers:

- Counselling through Victim's Services
- Referral to Staying Home Leaving Violence – resulting in locks being changed and ongoing support
- Information provided on other supports – WILMA Women's Health Centre
- Support at Court for both matters – including at hearing
- Application to Victim's Services for Financial Assistance and the installation of security cameras by a security firm.
- Application done for Recognition Payment through Victim's Services - still pending assessment/approval.

Outcomes

The client was able to get a Final ADVO against her grandchildren and in one matter the defendant was convicted and fined. The client now feels much safer with the ADVO and security cameras being installed. She knows where she can go for support and is comfortable with the workers she has engaged with.



TENANCY TEAM SWSTAAS

It has been another big year at South West Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service...

We've had staffing changes and significant movement within and out of the team, which has seen our team reduced significantly by equivalent of one FTE, from February until well beyond the end of this financial year.

The determination of the remaining team during this time has been without doubt. It's been difficult but we have worked tirelessly to support the community we work in.

In-Depth Casework and Ongoing Support

Our casework continues to be complex and challenging. We have always tried to help our tenants with their core tenancy matters and make appropriate referrals so that other complex areas are dealt with appropriately either in-house or further in other community or government services.

Other cases require working together with senior more specialist legal knowledge and resources from the Tenancy network or Tenants Union NSW. Such an example of this collaboration saw us approaching the Tenants Union for assistance with supporting the Badgerys Creek community during the strenuous termination process that the Federal government engaged.

CASE STUDY BADGERY'S CREEK PT.1

We letter dropped to most of Badgerys Creek and got the word out of our collaborated assistance. We conducted follow-up letter drop and conversations with people to gauge interest.

Following these actions, we were contacted by some of the residents who were helpless when the federal government served court documents for them to appear before the (NSW) Federal Circuit Court. We also organised and attended community meetings with the residents who were interested in the advocacy options we, and eventually the Tenants Union, offered.

The difficulty in this matter was in the instrument and the difficulties associated with any jurisdiction higher than NCAT where most termination matters are dealt with. In the end, only 1 client stayed the duration of the matter with the Tenants Union and received a relatively favourable decision, as opposed to the proposal from the federal government. For our service, this was great task that we undertook for about 9 months.

Back-Up Advice

As well as these direct client services, we also provide back-up advice or take direct referrals from community support workers, government and non-government workers or from our tenancy network or the Tenants Union NSW.

Community Education Activities

In this year, we provided 40 separate incidents of community education on tenants' rights and obligations to the community directly or with other frontline workers in the community.

NAIDOC Week 2014

NAIDOC 2014 was a particularly colourful community event with more involved participation of Macarthur Legal Centre at ceremonies and events like the touch footy gala and information stalls at different locations in the week. The touch footy entry of the MLC Cassowaries and the MLC ATSI themed bake-off were highlights of what was a spectacular week.

Homeless Hub

Homeless Hub is another community event that we continue to support and will always be a part of as the Macarthur Legal Centre contingency.

Phones	Face-to-Face	Outreach Services
1060 new clients contacted by phone	431 new clients seen face-to face (including onsite, NCAT and outreach locations)	3 hours outreach at Liverpool CatholicCare, each fortnight.
16 hours of telephone advice per week**	2.5 hours of drop-in face-to-face advice offered each Friday	2.5 hours outreach at Fairfield Catholic Care each fortnight.
** We run our telephone advice lines Mon, Tues, Wed, Friday (9am-1pm)	Ad-hoc face-to-face appointments onsite, by arrangement with staff	7 hours of duty advocacy at Liverpool NCAT fortnightly.

GOOD NEWS STORY...



My name is Rhonda Rumble, I arrived at the offices of the Tenants Advice Service in a very sorry state, for many months I had been endeavouring to get Housing NSW to attend to the mould in my unit. The mould had affected my health considerably.

I felt that there was nowhere to turn and no one that would listen, if they did listen they were unable to accomplish an outcome that was helpful.

When I arrived at your office I was greeted with a friendly smile and welcoming attitude, this allowed me to have confidence in the process that your staff started. The support I received was not only from the staff member assigned to my case but other staff in the office, for example if my caseworker was not available another person would step up and help, advise and assist me so that at no stage did I feel on my own.

Ben who was my caseworker went beyond his responsibility to me to ensure that I knew and had everything that I required for the tenancy hearing.

The outcome of your help has seen me relocated to a new unit which is well above the standard of the unit in which I was living. I was also compensated for most of the financial expenses that I had incurred during this time.

The result of this is that my health has improved; I am now back doing my volunteer work, caring for my grandchildren and most of all smiling again.

I would like to express my gratitude to your staff for all their time and help.

THANKYOU

We are grateful to all the non-government and government services in the community and working for community that we have worked with in the past year for your partnership and collaboration. We look forward to your continued support in the coming year.

We are grateful to our MLC family: from all the teams, to our financial administrator and the ever-encouraging Director and ultimately to the MLC Board. Thank you.

All of the great work we have done would not have been possible without the team: Douglas Lee, Ben Connor, Anthony Watt-Bright, Livia Lu and Nicole Kennedy. We are also grateful to Melisa Coveney for 4-something fantastic years of service and to Jess Reardon for helping us in difficult times. Both have left us this year to pursue their respective legal careers.

Thank you all for supporting our community.

Vala Ola'aiga
Coordinator, SWSTAAS



FINANCIAL REPORT

For the year ended 30 June 2015



STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

INCOME/EXPENSE	2014 \$	2015 \$
Revenue	2,116,912	2,086,539
Depreciation	(25,136)	(30,647)
Employee benefits expense	(1,741,602)	(1,661,497)
Other expenses from ordinary activities	(561,292)	(479,650)
Surplus/(deficit) before income tax	(211,118)	(85,255)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(211,118)	(85,255)
Other comprehensive income after income tax	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year net of tax	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	(211,118)	(85,255)
Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to members of the entity	(211,118)	(85,255)



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS/LIABILITIES	2014 \$	2015 \$
Total current assets	1,430,076	1,086,196
Non-current assets	37,971	49,600
TOTAL (ASSETS)	1,468,047	1,135,796
Total current liabilities	674,643	433,413
Total non-current liabilities	54,421	48,665
TOTAL (LIABILITIES)	729,074	482,078
TOTAL	738,973	653,718



STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

CHANGES IN EQUITY	RETAINED SURPLUS \$	TOTAL EQUITY \$
Balance as at 1 July 2013	950,091	950,091
Surplus/deficit attributable to members	(211,118)	(211,118)
Balance as at 30 June 2014	738,973	738,973
Surplus/deficit attributable to members	(85,255)	(85,255)
Balance as at 30 June 2015	653,817	653,817

MLC STAFF WOULD LIKE TO OFFER A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS...

Student Volunteers

Andrei Stepanov (Day)

Andrew Hack (Day/PLT)

Louis Bahn (Day/PLT)

Ashleigh Best

Aydin Genc

Christina Alkhamisi

James Suptut (Day/PLT)

Jeevan Saggu

Kieran Khan

Samuel Lavery

Tamara Woods

Wilson Huang

Zia Khan

Solicitor Volunteers

Abdur Rehman

Ali Mokhtar

Gavin Webb

Joanna Knight

Kevin Zoutendijk

Krystle Wolthers

Patrick Duffy

Pinar Elve

Steven Cosgrove

Primary Funding Bodies

Legal Aid NSW

Commonwealth Attorney
General's Department

Fair Trading NSW

Pro Bono Partners

Seyfarth Shaw

Private Sponsors

West Leagues Club Leumeah



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