

CANBERRA
COMMUNITY
LAW

Annual Report 2019–20



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Acknowledgment of Land



Canberra Community Law acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work in the ACT and surrounding region and pay our respects to the Ngunnawal elders past, present and future for they hold the stories, traditions and the cultures of their people.

We are grateful that we share this land and express our sorrow for the costs of this sharing to Australia's First Peoples. We will continue to acknowledge the legacy of our history and strive in our goals to empower our community through social justice.

We hope that our efforts will contribute to a realisation of equity, justice and partnership with traditional custodians of this land.



Artwork Acknowledgement

We acknowledge Wiradjuri artist Leanne Pope for the use of her artwork 'Fresh Life After Rain' 2017 for our identifier, marketing and promotional materials.

The original artwork is located at the offices of Canberra Community Law.

Introduction

Canberra Community Law (CCL) is an independent community legal service. We provide flexible and accessible legal services free of charge to people facing financial and other barriers.

Our organisation has been part of the Canberra community for almost 35 years. During this time we have responded to the changing and increasing legal needs of people in the ACT with trauma-informed and culturally responsive legal services.

We work in collaboration with government, social and legal services both locally and across Australia to realise our vision of a just and empowered community.

We offer innovative programs, communication, education, and systemic advocacy. Our targeted support empowers both our clients and the broader community to live a better quality of life.

CCL's Services

Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program

Provides legal services in housing, Centrelink and race discrimination law to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT through a human rights framework.

Disability Discrimination Law

Provides legal services to people who have been discriminated against because of disability in relation to employment, education, access to premises, provision of goods, services, facilities, accommodation, Commonwealth laws and programs and requests for information.

Housing Law

Provides legal services to people having problems with Housing ACT. Matters include – difficulties applying for public housing, repairs and maintenance, rental arrears, priority housing applications/transfers, evictions and housing debts. The service also assists community housing tenants, occupants and marginalised renters who are on low incomes and/or hold an Australian Health Care Card.

The service also provides a Duty Lawyer Service at the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) for the Thursday public housing list.

Socio-Legal Practice Clinic

The SLP Clinic combines legal advice, assistance and representation with intensive social work support to maximise the prospect of a successful outcome. Our SLP Clinic can not accept direct referrals. Our legal advisers or lawyers need to make the referral to the clinic.

Street Law

Compliments our Housing Law service by acting as a key legal contact for those working in the homelessness sector and is designed to reach people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who would not otherwise access legal services. Street Law operates on an outreach model and provides a generalist legal service. Matters can include traffic fines, minor criminal law charges, employment law, debts, consumer issues and a wide range of civil law matters.

Night Time Legal Advice Service

Provides information, referral services or one-off legal advice in most areas of law including fines and other traffic infringements, minor criminal law offences, family law, employment law, debts, complaints, and consumer issues.

COVID-19 Initiatives

In 2020, we launched a COVID-19 General Law clinic and the Canberra COVID-19 Legal Help website in response to the increased demand for COVID-19 related legal assistance.

Filling a Critical Need and Addressing Disadvantage

CCL provides these services to address disadvantage in the community and in pursuance of creating a just and empowered community. Our services are targeted to people on low incomes who face significant disadvantage.

Our legal team collaborates with our dedicated social worker to offer intensive support to people who have multiple barriers to resolving their legal issues. These barriers include insecure accommodation, historical or current experiences of family violence or being socially isolated. CCL takes an early intervention approach where possible but also works with clients in times of crisis.

As well as helping individuals through legal services we run community legal education projects and advocate for better laws and policies.

National Accreditation Scheme



CCL is accredited under the Community Legal Centre's Australia Accreditation Scheme. The National Accreditation Scheme is an industry-based certification process that provides a quality assurance process that gives funding bodies, community legal centres and clients'

confidence that community legal centres are operating according to good practice and industry standards. The National Accreditation Scheme promotes a culture of ongoing continuous quality improvement.

Funding Sources

During the reporting period, CCL received funding from the Commonwealth Government under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance services and from the ACT Government through the Community Services Directorate and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

CCL also acknowledges funds received through the Statutory Interest Grants Program administered by the ACT Law Society and philanthropic funding received from the Snow Foundation, Clayton Utz Foundation and Maddocks Foundation.

CCL also received funding from the Australian National University to operate our Community Law Clinical Program known as CLED.

During the 2019–2020 financial year, we also received grants from Capital Giving, Hands Across Canberra and the Chief Minister's Charitable Fund for our Women in Prison Legal Empowerment Sessions (WIPLES) program. Thank you also to the Australian Institute of Administrative Law for a grant for our Homeward Bound -Social Security and Homelessness research project.

We also acknowledge and thank Stronger Communities for a grant to purchase a projector and laptop. We also thank the Southern Cross Club for a grant to purchase much needed library books.

CCL's Vision, Mission and Values

First Nations: We value and respect the unique role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have as traditional owners of the lands we live and work. We are committed to the promotion and participation of an environment that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to lead and share in decisions affecting them and their community.

Our Vision: A just and empowered community.

Our Mission: To lead change towards a just and empowered community through legal services, education and law reform activities.

Our Values:

- Flexible, client focused services.
- High quality, professional and ethical practice.
- Social justice and human rights.
- Innovation and creativity.
- Solutions-focus.
- Robust, evidence-based advocacy.
- Inclusivity and equality.
- Empowerment and self-determination.
- Collaboration and engagement.
- Sustainability.

CCL's Client Work at a Glance for 2019–2020

CCL's Work Snapshot

- Total number of clients assisted — 859
- Information/referrals — 781
- Legal advices (one off) — 1179
- Duty Lawyer services — 80
- Legal Task Assistance services — 547
- Cases (ongoing) — 274

The People we helped

Gender — Male 39% Female 60.3% Other <1%

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander — 16%

People with disability — 60%

Experiencing or at risk of homelessness — 68%

Culturally and linguistically diverse background — 13%

Disclosed experiencing domestic or family violence* — 39%

Experiencing financial disadvantage — 93%

*These self-disclosures under-report clients affected.

Hours of Operation and Location

CCL is located in the ACT Community Legal Centre Hub on Level 1, 21 Barry Drive (corner of Watson Street) Turner.

CCL's work hours are from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Our Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS) operates on Tuesday evenings from 6pm to 8pm and our COVID-19 General Law Clinic is currently operating on Thursday evenings from 6pm to 8pm (except December and January).

CCL's Board of Directors 2019–2020

Daniel Stewart, Chairperson

Genevieve Bolton, Director/Secretary

Anya Aidman, Director

John Alati, Director

Helen Fisher, Director

Dr Laura Hilly, Director

David Howard, Director

Amanda Ryan, Director

Dr Margot Harker, Director

CCL's Staff

John Alati, Street Law, NTLAS and COVID-19 General Law Clinic Supervising Solicitor

Michelle Barclay, Street Law Solicitor

Genevieve Bolton, Executive Director/Principal Solicitor

Stephanie Booker, Street Law Program Manager/Solicitor (from January 2020)

Rosemary Budavari, Senior Solicitor, Disability Discrimination Law (until November 2019)

Farzana Choudhury, Senior Street Law Solicitor and A/Street Law Program Manager (until October 2019), Senior Solicitor, Disability Discrimination Law (from October 2019)

Rachael Clark, Office Manager (until September 2019), Social Security and Tenancy Service Solicitor (from September 2019)

Robert Cook, Locum Office Manager (from March 2020)

Clyde Cosentino, Special Projects Officer (February to April 2020), Senior Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy Service (from April 2020)

Anusha Goonetilleke, Social Security and Tenancy Program Manager/Solicitor (returned from parental leave from January 2020)

Naomi Gould, Senior Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy Service

Edith Graham, Finance Manager

Georgia Graham, Locum Office Manager (from March 2020)

Parastou Hatami, Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Supervising Solicitor/Program Manager

Sarah Hein, Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy Service (unpaid leave from October 2019)

Rebecca Irvine, Social Worker (from March 2020)

Sarah Johnston, Social Worker (until January 2020)

Heather McAulay Street Law Program Manager (resigned February 2020)

Alexandra Palk, Senior Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy Service

Erin Rikus, Street Law Solicitor

Jessica Spargo, Office Manager

Emma Towney, Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program Solicitor

Sophie Trevitt, Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy Service (from August 2019)



CCL Morning Tea, July 2019

Chairperson's Report

It has been a most extraordinary year. In my last report, I pointed to the challenges ahead of responding to the Tenants Advice Service being released to tender, and the renegotiation of the National Partnership Agreement. These, while indeed challenging, were quickly overtaken with the demands placed on the Centre and its clients by the summer bushfires, only to be followed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I can only admire the incredible resilience of the staff of the Centre in the face of these circumstances. Personal challenges of working from home and looking after family during the lockdown were coupled with significant changes to the operations of the Centre. Outreach services had to be reconfigured, ways of receiving and meeting with clients changed, legal practice meetings moved on-line. There is still a long way to go before things return to normal, whatever that might mean now. Through it all, staff have been able to maintain their enthusiasm and effectiveness, finding ways to keep up those important personal connections with each other. Special thanks to those supervising staff who worked so hard to continually check in with others and help maintain the support and collegiality throughout the Centre.

Somehow, through it all, the staff of Canberra Community Law were also able to respond to the dramatic increase in people needing our support across the Centre's programs. In part that has been assisted by new funds that has seen the income of the Centre increase by about a third. I would like to particularly thank the ACT Government, the Commonwealth Government, Clayton Utz Foundation, Maddocks Foundation, Snow Foundation, Southern Cross Club for their continued support, and to Hands Across Canberra, Chief Minister's Charitable Fund, the Ecstra Foundation, the Australian Institute of Administrative Law and Capital Giving for their new grants. Thanks also to the Commonwealth Bank and Giraffe for their donations.

The ability of the Centre to respond to these funding opportunities reflects, in my view, the strong reputation the Centre has within the community and the history of the Centre in the development and successful delivery of innovative programs. Unfortunately, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for the Centre's services, are going to be felt for a long time to come. The Centre will again be looking to the generous support of its funders to be able to provide the level of service required.

Thank you also to my fellow Board members for your advice and assistance through this last year. We have embraced virtual meetings with good humour, and I thank you for your patience. Thanks, in particular to Helen Dalley-Fisher for accepting the role of Deputy Chair and filling in for me during the second half of the year. Finally, as always, thank you to Genevieve Bolton, Executive Director/Principal Solicitor, for her incredible role in steering the Centre through the last year, much of it necessarily from afar. I hope that you, and all the staff of the Centre, will have the chance soon to pause and reflect on this most extraordinary year, and take pride in the way the Centre has responded.

Daniel Stewart

Chair



Executive Director/Principal Solicitor's Report

It has been a year like no other as we have responded to the challenges of the Tenants Advice Service being released to tender, the introduction of a new National Legal Assistance Partnership agreement, the summer bushfires, hail storms and the health pandemic. Amidst all of this we also managed to complete our strategic planning process resulting in the adoption of a new Strategic Plan covering the period 2020–2024. The Centre's strategic plan acknowledges the unique role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have as the traditional owners of the land on which we work and live. It also embodies the Centre's commitment to the promotion and participation of an environment that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lead and share in decisions affecting them and their community.

Responding to COVID-19

It has now been ten years since I have led Canberra Community Law, having first joined the Centre as Supervising Solicitor in 2003. The Centre's capacity to adapt, innovate and respond to community need has always been strong but nowhere more evident than in the extraordinary work of all Centre staff during this remarkable year. Services were reconfigured and expanded, rapid changes were made to Centre's systems and processes to accommodate remote working arrangements and we finally transitioned from a paper system to an electronic system. Many thanks to Farzana Choudhury and Jessica Spargo for all their hard work updating our admin systems and processes and thank you to all staff for embracing and adapting to these changes in short order.

With funding from the Snow Foundation and towards the end of the reporting period from the Ecstra Foundation, the Centre was able to quickly respond to the scale, complexity and rapid pace of Government measures being taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the development of a COVID Legal Help website to provide a one stop site for COVID-19 related community legal education materials. The first stage of the COVID Legal Help website launched in May 2020 was completed in record time. Under the second stage of development we were able to expand the website's accessibility features and partner with the Legal Aid Commission ACT, Economic Justice Australia, the Women's Legal Centre, Care Financial Counselling Service and the Consumer Law Centre to provide a rich array of resources including videos, short animations, explainers etc. We have continued to update and maintain the website throughout the pandemic. Whilst the COVID Legal Help website has certainly been a team effort I would like to particularly acknowledge Stephanie Booker for her visionary leadership of this project.

During the reporting period, we also rolled out a series of Facebook Live Q and A sessions on hot legal topics related

to the pandemic, being the first free legal service in the ACT to trial this platform for the delivery of community legal education to the broader ACT community. Well done Sophie Trevitt for leading the way!

In response to COVID-19 related legal need we also expanded our Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS) to include a Thursday Evening COVID-19 Legal Clinic. With funding from the ACT Government and the Clayton Utz Foundation and the generous support of our pro bono partners we have been able to continue to run the additional evening clinic throughout 2020. Demand for the COVID-19 Legal Clinic remains strong and we hope to continue to run it as needed through 2021. Thanks to John Alati for steering this work and flying solo during the temporary suspension of our volunteer program whilst we transitioned the clinics to a remote service delivery model.

As in previous years, we have continued to provide targeted legal services to help people prevent and manage their legal problems and empower both our clients and the broader community to live a better quality of life. The additional funding noted in the Chair's Report has been vital in assisting us to respond to increases in people seeking our assistance and the increased complexity in legal issues arising from the pandemic. Unfortunately, the economic and social impacts of the pandemic and ongoing need for our services will be with us for many years to come. Additional funding assistance will be needed beyond next financial year to enable the Centre to continue to respond to the effects of the pandemic. Our clients' stories spread throughout the report demonstrate the depth and complexity of the work undertaken by the Centre during the year.

More Achievements and Highlights

We celebrated 10 years of Street Law providing legal assistance to the most vulnerable Canberrans with a virtual birthday party. We thank the former Attorney General Gordon Ramsay and Minister Rattenbury for their generous remarks at the event. Huge thanks to Michelle Barclay for re-imagining and co-ordinating the event when it became evident that it was not going to be possible to continue our original event plans due to COVID-19.

Thank you to Capital Giving and through Hands Across Canberra, the Chief Minister's Charitable Fund for funding our Women in Prison Legal Empowerment sessions during the year. WIPLES is a unique mix of a trauma informed information session and legal clinic to women at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). Under Michelle Barclay's excellent leadership the project has collaborated across legal, community and government sectors to deliver services. Thank you to Women's Centre for Health Matters, ACT

Corrective Services, Legal Aid ACT, Women's Legal Centre, Consumer Law Centre, Care Financial Counselling Service and McKenna Taylor for your support of this project.

We continued to work on implementing our Reconciliation Action Plans and Disability Action Plans. In December 2019, the Centre was awarded the Chief Minister's Inclusion Award in Excellence in Championing Human Rights and Equity Category in recognition of the Centre's work in promoting social inclusion through the delivery of trauma-informed and culturally responsive legal services.

Staff Farewells

We farewelled Rosemary Budavari in December 2019 after 5 years of service with the Centre and acknowledged her significant contribution including leading the Centre's work in enhancing the accessibility of our office and services. Heather McAulay and Sarah Johnston also resigned during the year to take up other opportunities. Thank you both for all your hard work. Particular thanks to Heather, for her long service with the Centre and her invaluable contributions to many aspects of the Centre's work most recently in her role as Street Law's Program Manager.

Law Reform and Policy Initiatives

With a grant from the Australian Institute of Administrative Law (ACT Chapter) we partnered with Economic Justice Australia (formerly the National Social Security Rights Network) to undertake a major research report examining the intersection between homelessness, public housing and Centrelink. *Homeward Bound – Social Security and Homelessness* examined the experience of 567 Canberra Community Law clients in the ACT navigating Centrelink, public housing and homelessness. The report was released publicly and briefings were provided to the Department of Social Security, Department of Human Services and Housing ACT. The report also attracted local and national media coverage highlighting the severe shortage of public housing in the ACT and that low rates of Social Security payments were forcing people to live below the poverty line and leaving them at risk of homelessness. The economic consequences of the pandemic have further highlighted the importance of the report's recommendations being implemented. Thank you to Sophie Trevitt for undertaking this project and her subsequent advocacy in highlighting the report's findings and recommendations.

In addition to the *Homeward Bound* research project, the Centre was also engaged in a range of policy work including the reforms to the Residential Tenancies legislation, reforms informed by Healthy Prisons review, roundtables on housing

justice issues and proposals to expand the ACT Human Rights Act just to name a few pieces of work.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

This is just a snapshot of the extraordinary work that the Centre has undertaken in this difficult year. My heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues Parastou, Bec, Alex, Sarah, Erin, Jess, Emma, Sophie, John, Michelle, Steph, Farzana, Rachael, Robert, Clyde, Anusha, Naomi, Edith and Georgia and our fabulous volunteer librarian, Cesira. Thank you all for your unwavering commitment to advancing the human rights of our clients in the face of endless demand and insufficient resources. It is a privilege to lead a team of wonderful people who are deeply committed to addressing injustice and supporting each other in the work that we do each day.

A very special thanks to our pro bono partners and all our volunteer lawyers and students for working with us to transition to remote service delivery. Thank you for your patience, enthusiasm, energy, and support of the Centre during this difficult time. We are very appreciative of the generous level of pro bono support we receive from the ACT legal community making it possible for us to assist many more people than otherwise would be the case.

Canberra Community Law's Board provides important governance and strategic oversight over the Centre's operations. The important role that the Board provides in guiding and overseeing the Centre's activities has been particularly highlighted this year as it has deliberated over some challenging and difficult matters. Thank you to all Board Members for your wisdom, guidance and commitment to the Centre over many years. Special thanks to the Board Chair, Daniel Stewart and Vice Chair, Helen Dalley-Fisher for their work on the Board's Audit and Finance subcommittee and the additional assistance they have provided in between Board meetings this year.

Genevieve Bolton, OAM

Executive Director/Principal Solicitor



Sector Engagement

CCL continues to work with other community legal centres, government agencies, the private profession, and other services to ensure that our resources are targeted to best meet legal needs and avoid duplication.

During the 2019–2020 year we participated in the following forums and meetings:

- ACT Legal Assistance Forum (ACTLAF)
- ACTLAF Community Legal Education Working Group
- ACTLAF Service Planning Working Group
- ACTLAF Care and Protection Working Group
- ACT Law Society Access to Justice and Human Rights Committee
- ACT Law Society Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group
- ACT Law Society Council
- Joint Pathways Forum
- Economic Justice Australia (Chair)
- Who's New on the Street Meetings
- Community Legal Centre's Australia, Human Rights Network (Co-Chair)
- Community Legal Centre's Australia, Disability Rights Network
- Red Cross Interagency Meeting
- Community Legal Centre's Australia Professional Indemnity Insurance Network
- ACT Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Round Table on mental health and homelessness
- Biannual Meetings with Department of Human Services and Department of Social Services
- Youth Homelessness Housing Forum
- Homelessness Connect Organising Committee meeting
- ACT Community Legal Centres meeting
- ACT Government Rough Sleepers Working Group
- ACT Women's Summit
- Community Legal Centres Australia Advisory Council
- Ministerial Roundtable on Women in Prison
- ACT Council of Social Service Justice Reform Group Meeting
- Quarterly meetings with Housing ACT
- Charter of Human Rights Advisory Committee



Genevieve Bolton (middle) presenting at Community Legal Centres Australia conference with Professional Indemnity Insurance Network colleagues.



Erin Rikus and Farzana Choudhury attending Homelessness Connect Event

Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program

Thank you to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council for gifting us the name **Dhurrawang** for our Aboriginal Human Rights Program. Dhurrawang means 'light'. When gifting us this name, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council said; *"UNEC sends Ngunnawal Blessing, we wish your Program much success in spreading 'Dhurrawang' through your Aboriginal Human Rights Program"*.

We also thank Wiradjuri artist Leanne Pope for the creating the beautiful artwork as identifier for our program. The artwork is called **"Fresh Life After Rain"** it tells the story of the Yellow Crested Black Cockatoo; *"Often you will hear the Black and Yellow Crested cockatoo call and fly over the cityscapes of Canberra just before it rains. The green gum leaves and gum nuts represent new life that blossoms around our City after the rain. Our Spiritual Ancestors dance with rain drops nourishing the country"*.

This beautiful painting adorns the CCL reception area.

Dhurrawang is grateful for the support we have received from the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work. This support strengthens Dhurrawang solicitors and our resolve to empower our community through social justice.

During the 2019–2020 financial year we continued our work to advise and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in disputes relating to their housing, social security and in race discrimination complaints. Our work highlights the fact that the struggle for equality and self-determination remains real and ongoing in all aspects of life for First Nations people.

We will continue to stand with First Nations people in identifying injustice and taking this fight on at various levels, including through direct representation, education and through law reform. We thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples in the ACT and surrounding regions for trusting our service to assist you in our areas of expertise and in informing our law reform work.

We pay respect to the organisations we worked with throughout this year including : Mulleun Mura Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Access to Justice Program ,Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation — to progress the interests of our clients and assist First Nations people to access justice through a human rights and culturally informed framework.



Emma Towney, Pip Daniel (Mulleun Mura), Parastou Hatami, Leah House (Mulleun Mura)

Our Clients and COVID-19

COVID-19 emerged as a serious issue during this period and the lockdown measures associated with its containment had significant ramifications for our clients. Many of our clients who were couch surfing during this time were unable to maintain their arrangements due to the concerns around quarantine and protection of high-risk groups such as the elderly and pregnant women. Some who were experiencing family violence found that the lockdown measures meant that they were now at home full time with the perpetrator of violence.

Children suffered the impact of homelessness and family violence acutely due to the closure of schools and the requirements to self-isolate, as they were unable to spend their days at school away from these issues. The negative impact on the education of children from families with financial barriers, experiencing homelessness and family violence, was particularly prevalent in our client group as access to online facilities were limited and capacity to engage in online learning impacted by homelessness and the requirement to navigate family violence.

Applications for Housing that were categorised as High Needs quickly rose to priority in these circumstances. We worked effectively with Housing ACT to progress these cases and safely house families impacted by these issues. However, many families continue to experience homelessness despite progressing onto the priority housing list due to the lack of available properties.

Our Staff

In this financial year Emma Towney continued in her role as full time solicitor taking on increasingly complex litigation and leadership roles including as chair of the ACT Law Society Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice subcommittee and chair of the CCL Reconciliation Action Plan Committee.

Parastou Hatami continued in her role as full time Supervising Solicitor and Program Manager for Dhurrawang.

During March – June 2020 during the mandated period of self-isolation, Dhurrawang worked remotely utilising phone and internet communication to continue our services and reach out to clients experiencing complex and urgent issues.

In October 2020 (outside of the reporting period) Rachelle Kelly joined Dhurrawang as a paralegal. Rachelle is a proud Barkindji Wiimpatja Noongu (woman) who has lived and worked on Ngunnawal Country most of her life. Rachelle is working full time, raising kids and studying law. She has joined us from the public service and hit the ground running on the

Social Security and Tenancy advice line and with Dhurrawang. We're excited to have her on board.

Students

During this financial year Dhurrawang supervised Australian National University CLED students Monica Dalton, Sarah Lim and Morgan Crompton-Smith in casework with our clients and provided tutorials to all CCL CLED students on Human Rights Lawyering and in relation to the issues pertaining to Dhurrawang clients and the communities we serve. We also attended ANU Prison Literacy Course in September 2019 to speak to students about our work and to assist them in formulating research topics that would best serve the community.

We were pleased to support former CLED student Sonny Scott to publish his paper *An Argument for the Establishment of an Overcrowding Policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in ACT Public Housing* in the July 2019 edition of Parity Magazine (National Magazine on Homelessness) and former CLED student Maxine Viertman to publish her paper *Making Human Rights Claims – The case for establishing a direct complaints mechanism* in the Spring 2019 edition of Ethos (ACT Law Society magazine). These papers were not only published but used as launching pads for seeking law reform (outlined below).

Law Reform & Community Development

Following from our work last year and the publication of our paper on *Exiting Prison into Homelessness* we participated in reforms informed by the Healthy Prisons review and became part of an ongoing roundtable on reforms to the women's prison. We also participated in a round table on justice housing and provided feedback to the Justice Minister on Housing First principles particularly for First Nations people.

Our research and participation in these forums helped to develop our proposal for an outreach service to the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) whereby we would assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners with advice and representation in our areas of expertise with view of referring mainstream client to other appropriate services.

Following from our work last year on writing papers and writing to Housing ACT on issues pertaining to overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, we met with Housing ACT in September 2019 to discuss our proposal for a housing policy to address overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households. We also wrote to the ACT Attorney General and to the ACT Justice Minister inviting

a discussion on the expansion of the ACT Human Rights Act following the paper that was prepared and published by our CLED student on this issue. The Attorney General responded positively to our proposal.

Casework

During this year we assisted 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in providing 114 advices and 104 legal tasks and we carried 50 representation cases.

A number of our clients were incarcerated throughout the course of their matter. Most of our clients came to us after being referred by a friend or relative, highlighting the importance of referrals through word of mouth.

Most of our clients sought assistance in relation to a dispute with Housing ACT or in connection with seeking access to housing while homeless. Our Race Discrimination practice continued to develop with referrals coming from the community and ACT government agencies. We had a successful outcome in a race discrimination complaint pertaining to the retail group at ACT Human Rights Commission through conciliation. We also had a successful outcome in relation to a race vilification complaint against ACT Corrections at the ACAT through consent orders.

During this period an important ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) decision in a tenancy matter was handed down after strategic litigation run by Dhurrawang in previous financial year. The matter ran over three days before

two senior members and the ACAT indicated that this decision would form the basis for future decisions on issues pertaining to HACT eviction proceedings as they relate to incarcerated tenants and no-cause termination applications. The decision was made in our client's favour maintaining his tenancy with the ACAT stating that the discretion provided to the ACAT in the RTA enables them to consider all relevant information in reaching a decision in no-cause termination applications. This decision has far reaching implications for all tenants subject to no-cause termination proceedings.

Committees

Emma and Parastou sit on the ACT Law Society Access to Justice and Human Rights Committee and facilitated the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subcommittee. Emma is the chair of this subcommittee and during the reporting period we worked with the ACT Law Society to develop a stand-alone committee with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We provided advice to the ACT Law Society president on a number of important issues including the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program and the Warrumbul Court, raising the age of criminal responsibility and review mechanisms in child protection cases.

Emma was also a member of CLC Australia's Human Rights Network and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Network.

Canberra Community Law Inclusion | Participation | Self-Determination



Dhurrawang Solicitors – Rachelle Kelly, Parastou Hatami and Emma Towney

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Report

During the 2019–2020 financial year the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group worked hard to finalise CCL's second RAP — Innovate RAP. This RAP concentrates on implementing reconciliation in the workplace and is designed to outline actions that work towards CCL's vision of reconciliation. Whilst work was done on finalising this RAP, the RAP Working Group continued monitoring the progress on Action Items in the Reflect RAP.

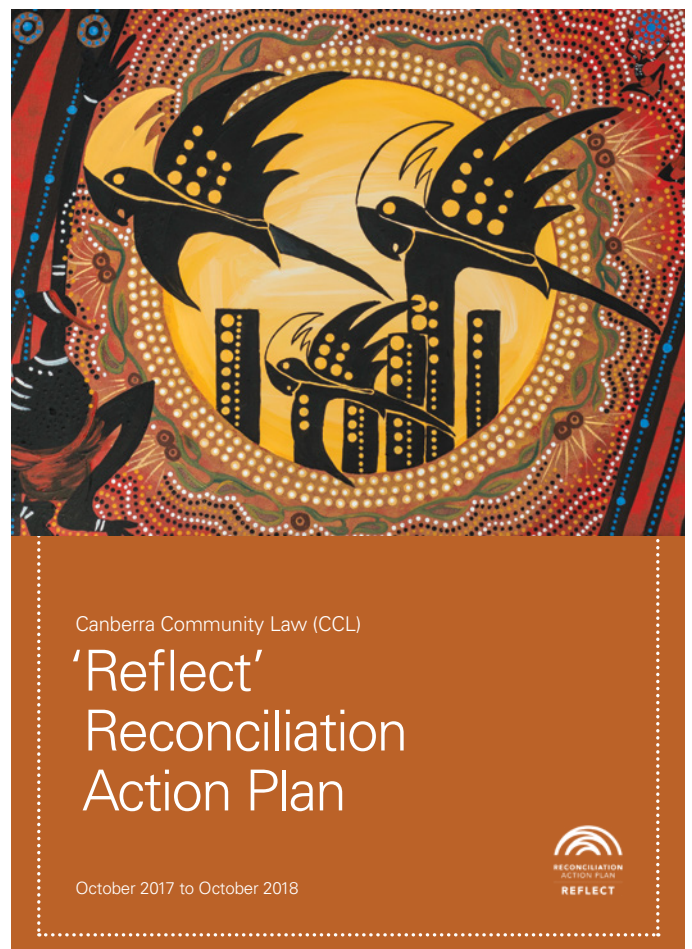
During the year the RAP working group showed multiple internal film screenings on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. These film screenings were well attended by staff and invites were extended and accepted by stakeholders including staff from Women's Legal Centre, the President of the ACT Law Society and the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner.

As part of NAIDOC week 2019, CCL staff and some family members attended an Indigenous Plant Use Walk at the Australian National Botanic Gardens where staff learnt about how Indigenous People used plants for food and medicine, to make tools and weapons and for ceremonial practice.

There was some movement in membership within the RAP Working Group with Emma Towney taking over as chair, the departure of Rosemary Budavari and Heather McAulay from CCL and the welcoming of Executive Director/Principal Solicitor, Genevieve Bolton to the group.

Emma Towney

Chair, Reconciliation Action Plan working group



Disability Discrimination Law

Staff

Disability Discrimination Law (DDL) had some staffing changes this financial year:

- Farzana Choudhury moved from the Street Law Senior Solicitor position to the DDL Senior Solicitor position in October 2019
- Rosemary Budavari left Canberra Community Law in November 2019 after more than five years -service as the DDL Senior Solicitor.

DDL would like to thank Rosemary for her wonderful contributions during her time with DDL. Rosemary continues to be missed by staff and the many clients who she assisted during her time with CCL.

Client Work

DDL provided assistance to 69 clients in the 2019–2020 financial year.

DDL provided the following assistance in relation to disability discrimination and related issues:

- 119 advices;
- 96 legal tasks; and
- 32 representation services.

The three major areas for client legal assistance were service provision, employment and education.



Farzana Choudhury, Disability Discrimination Law Senior Solicitor.

The casework included disability discrimination complaints, health services complaints and a sexual harassment complaint. Several of these complaints settled with the payment of monetary compensation, changes to policies and procedures, provision of reasonable adjustments, including housing modifications for the client and the provision of disability discrimination training for staff of relevant businesses and agencies.

Some casework involved direct negotiation with service providers and educational institutions, which resulted in the provision of reasonable adjustments and changes in policies and procedures to support people with disabilities accessing services.

Case Study: Malini's Story

Malini (not her real name) has bipolar disorder and relies on an assistance animal that alleviates the affects of her disability.

Malini was involved in a number of incidents when travelling interstate, including but not limited to:

- refusal of access to a hotel because she had an assistance animal (resulting in Malini needing to travel by taxi to find suitable alternative accommodation); and
- incident where her assistance animal being removed from her while at a hospital.

DDL lodged disability discrimination claims on Malini's behalf and advocated for Malini through the Australian Human Rights Commission. The hotel incident was settled with a statement of regret, an agreement to display an 'assistance animals welcome here' sign and a compensation payment. The hospital incident was also settled, and Malini received compensation in that matter. Both matters were resolved without proceeding to conciliation.

Stakeholder Engagement and Community Legal Education

DDL participated in the Community Law Clinical Program (CLEP) and provided supervision and training to ANU law students. DDL also delivered tutorials on Discrimination Law as part of the program.

DDL was active in engaging with stakeholders, in particular, organisations that work with people with disabilities. DDL was also involved in stakeholder engagement nationally through the Community Legal Centre's Australia Disability

Rights Network and the National Human Rights Network, and locally through the ACT Law Society Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

DDL delivered community education to organisations that work with people with disability such as the ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS), and Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre at Calvary Hospital. DDL also delivered a community legal education seminar to women in prison as part of Street Law's Women in Prison Legal Empowerment Sessions (WIPLES).



Rosemary Budavari and Farzana Choudhury at the People with Disabilities ACT Morning Tea and cartoon exhibit, October 2019

Disability Action Plan Report

CCL's third Disability Action Plan (DAP) has the following objectives:

1. To increase awareness at CCL of the needs of people with a disability.
2. To improve accessibility to CCL's services.
3. To increase participation opportunities for people with disability and provide reasonable adjustments.
4. To increase consultation with and participation by people with disability in CCL's strategic direction and management.
5. To respond to invitations to participate in relevant ACT and Commonwealth policy and legislative reviews affecting people with disability.
6. To promote awareness of and evaluate the DAP.

Some of the actions taken under the DAP in 2019–2020 included:

1. Providing information in CCL Induction materials for staff and volunteers about how to seek information about disabilities and required adjustments respectfully from people with disability, how to communicate effectively with people with disability and how to provide reasonable adjustments and carer-friendly arrangements for staff and volunteers.
2. Reviewing CCL's website and improving its compliance with the international WCAG 2.0 accessibility standard.
3. Providing training to staff on working with clients with borderline personality disorder and also Autism and promoting other external training opportunities for staff on access inclusion (including training provided by Rebus Theatre and Scope Australia).

4. Providing training to women in prison on disability discrimination.
5. Attending a consultation on the National Construction Code and accessibility standards.
6. Compiling a list of suppliers that support people with disability, and sourcing catering from an organisation that provides employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

CCL is also a member of the ACT Government's Disability Justice Reference Group and participated in its Identification, Screening and Assessment project which was undertaken during the period January to March 2020.

CCL was awarded the Chief Minister's Inclusion Award in the Excellence in Championing Human Rights and Equality Category which was presented on 5 December 2019. The Award acknowledged CCL's work with people with disability across all its programs, including DDL and CCL's demonstrated commitment to inclusion through undertaking a building accessibility audit, making our website more accessible, introducing service brochures in Easy English and appointing a person with a disability to the CCL Board. CCL was also recognised for embedding a social worker into our legal practice model through the Socio-Legal Practice Clinic, installing a hearing loop for our conference room and implementing three disability action plans since 2015.

CCL looks forward to continuing to work with people with disability to further improve its services during the period of the third DAP to July 2022.



Canberra Community Law and Clayton Utz at the 2019 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards. December 2019.

Social Security and Tenancy Service

Our Social Security and Tenancy Service (SS&T) encompasses our Housing and Social Security Law services.

General Overview

The SS&T service assisted 516 clients provided 682 advices, 80 duty lawyer services and performed 278 legal tasks in relation to public housing, tenancy and social security legal issues. The SS&T service worked on 163 cases during the reporting period.

Common issues on the SS&T advice line included:

- Priority Housing applications/transfers;
- Housing ACT rental rebate issues;
- Housing ACT repair issues;
- Eviction matters;
- Centrelink payment inquiries;
- Rejection of Disability Support Pension claims; and
- Centrelink debts (including Robodebts).

As reported last year, there continues to be a severe shortage of public housing in the ACT which has significantly worsened as a result of the pandemic. People across the board are waiting much longer waiting times for priority housing. Lack of culturally appropriate housing, disability modified properties, lack of available five- or six-bedroom houses and lack of suitable housing to accommodate pets continues to be of significant concern to CCL.

CCL welcomed a range of specific COVID-19 Housing and Centrelink measures including the moratorium on evictions, temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements and temporary suspension of debt raising and recovery activities. However, CCL remains concerned that the winding back of these measures is premature and will result in a surge in demand for our services in the next financial year.

We thank Ashurst for partnering with us to run the Advice Line Pilot in the first half of the year seconding two solicitors every Friday to do a half day shift each. They provided invaluable assisting writing up interview notes, drafting correspondence and making follow up calls. We look forward to this pilot project starting again in 2020. Thank you also to Philip Finlay a long-term volunteer. We welcomed Adrian Power who commenced volunteering with the SS&T service during the year.

The SS&T service would like to record its appreciation to Sarah Hein who went on leave in October 2019 and has subsequently resigned from the Centre. Sarah worked on the Social Security and Tenancy advice line for several years.

She brought a friendly and professional approach to her work. Despite the high volume of calls she dealt with day in and day out, she was always committed to providing the most comprehensive service she could to advice line clients within the resource constraints of the role and often went above and beyond what could reasonably be expected of her.

Case Study 1: Nassim's Story

Nassim (not his real name) was referred to us by Companion House for assistance to review Centrelink's decision to reject his claim for Newstart Allowance due to a compensation preclusion period. CCL accepted the referral and agreed to represent Nassim before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT — 1st level).

Nassim had fled his country of origin and had been granted refugee status. He had been forced to leave his wife and children behind. He had been from an ethnic minority in his country of origin and due to a combination of discrimination and a childhood of extreme poverty he had never been to school and had never learnt to read or write.

Nassim had received a compensation payment for a work-related accident which had caused serious injuries. Much of the money received in compensation had been spent on unexpected expenses supporting his closest family members in his country of origin.

Together with Companion House, we worked with Nassim to understand his story and collect evidence to support his appeal. This included medical evidence from his country of origin, country information collaborating his instructions and letters from treating health professionals and community organisations who had been worked with Nassim who were aware of this situation and its impact on him. CCL also referred Nassim to a financial counselling service who undertook an examination of his financial situation and financial literacy skills and provided a letter in support of his appeal.

We put together a detailed submission arguing that the preclusion period ought to be waived on the basis of Nassim's extreme financial hardship and general personal circumstances. We represented Nassim at the hearing and also provided additional post hearing submissions after undertaking a forensic analysis of his bank account statements and other financial records.

The AAT accepted our submissions and agreed to set aside Nassim's compensation preclusion period.

Community Legal Education

During the report period, the SS&T service delivered the following community legal education activities:

- ANU St Vincent de Paul Society Panel on Homelessness
- Women in Prison Legal Empowerment sessions — Centrelink law
- Panel presentation to ACHRA Officers Conference — Do we need a Federal Human Rights Act?
- Training for Legal Aid “Law for Non Lawyers” — Centrelink
- ANU O-Week presentation — Centrelink issues for students
- Instagram Social Security presentation
- Facebook Centrelink debts presentation
- Facebook JobSeeker v JobKeeper presentation
- Facebook General Centrelink update presentation
- Ainslie Arts and Gorman House Centrelink and the Arts presentation
- CCL and Women’s Legal Centre facebook live Q & A on JobSeeker, JobKeeper and your rights during COVID-19
- Guest Lecture to ANU CRIM3005 — impact of housing and homelessness in the criminal justice system
- CCL and Legal Aid ACT Facebook live Q and A on public housing and private tenancy
- Remote Legal Practice Management Tips and Tricks — co-presented with Catherine Eagle, Principal Solicitor, Welfare Rights and Advocacy Service

The SS&T service also participated in the Community Law Clinical Program ran in partnership with ANU and provided supervision and training to the ANU Law Students.

Policy Work

Our major piece of policy work this year was the research project undertaken in partnership with Economic Justice Australia. The *Homeward Bound — Social Security and Homelessness* examined the experience of 567 clients navigating Centrelink, public housing and homelessness. Meetings were held with the Department of Social Services, Department of Human Services and Housing ACT to discuss the findings and recommendations of the report. The research also attracted national and local media coverage. Thank you to the Australian Institute of Administrative Law (ACT Chapter) for a grant that made this project possible. The research report has also informed other pieces of work undertaken by both Canberra Community and Law and Economic Justice Australia highlighting the impacts of low Centrelink payment rates and the increased risk of homelessness.

We were also actively engaged in a series of meetings, forums and discussions around reforms to the Residential Tenancies legislation. As COVID-19 hit we strongly advocated for a moratorium on evictions to cover all evictions. We were successful in obtaining a commitment from Housing ACT that they would pause most evictions. Unfortunately, we have continued to see eviction action being taken by community housing providers during the pandemic.

ACAT Duty Lawyer Service

Overview

Now in its fifth year of operation, the ACAT Duty Lawyer Service continues to operate every Thursday providing legal advice and representation to people facing eviction from their Housing ACT or community housing properties.

Up until COVID-19, the service operated out of a designated office at ACAT assisting tenants to defend themselves against eviction by providing specialist legal advice about ACAT procedures, applicable ACT law and practice advice about what is needed to put the tenant in the best possible position to save their tenancy.

The ACAT Duty Lawyer appears before the Tribunal with the tenant to request adjournments and when required, acts as the tenant’s legal representative in ongoing proceedings.

During COVID-19, the ACAT Duty Lawyer service has operated as a telephone service. The Centre has worked with ACAT to ensure that tenants appearing before the Tribunal are aware of and can access the service if needed. During the 2019/2020 financial year, the ACAT Duty Lawyer provided 80 services. The service is often the difference between a person being able to stay in their home and not being evicted into homelessness.

The following case studies capture the important work of the ACAT Duty Lawyer Service.

Case Study 2: Vicki's Story

A community housing was seeking to evict Vicki (not her real name) on the basis of rent arrears. Vicki was an Aboriginal woman with young children with no alternative housing options. Although proceedings were brought prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hearing of the matter was scheduled after the eviction. Vicki requested our assistance on a duty basis. We successfully argued that the moratorium applied to her situation because she was receiving JobSeeker payments. The eviction proceedings were adjourned to a date after the expiry of the moratorium.

Case Study 3: Rodney's Story

Rodney (not his real name), a community housing tenant, was referred to us for assistance on a duty basis after being evicted and locked out of the room he had lived in for 10 years while in a mental health unit. The hospital had nowhere to discharge Rodney to because he was now homeless. We acted on an urgent basis through our ACAT Duty Lawyer service to advise and assist Rodney to apply for a stay on further action to remove his belongings from his home and to seek orders restoring his occupancy. We then opened a case for Rodney and successfully negotiated with the community housing provider for him to return to his home without the need for further legal proceedings.

Socio-Legal Practice Clinic

Program Overview

CCL's Socio-Legal Practice Clinic (SLP Clinic) provides integrated legal and social work services to people who have multiple and complex barriers to resolving their legal matter. It primarily addresses homelessness especially for women and children affected by family violence and people with a disability. It helps with other legal problems including social security and disability discrimination.

Following a preliminary assessment of whether the SLP Clinic may help a client, a lawyer and a social worker jointly address interrelated legal and social issues.

We thank Clayton Utz, the Snow Foundation and the ACT Government for its ongoing support of the SLP Clinic.

Our Work in 2019/2020

During the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, the SLP Clinic:

- Helped 20 clients
- Provided 40 discrete social worker support services; and
- Worked on 50 cases and closed 34 cases.

In addition, the SLP Clinic provided 34 well targeted referrals to community supports for clients to obtain:

- Specialist help and support for family and domestic violence issues;
- Medical and mental health assistance;
- Assistance with obtaining employment;
- Counselling and support for difficult personal and family issues;
- Practical help and support, for example, food parcels, home help services; and
- Help with financial and budget issues.

These referrals have assisted vulnerable individuals and families to get help with their situation, engage with community supports and obtain the assistance they need to improve their lives.

Case Study 4: Alice's Story

Alice (not her real name) was on Newstart Allowance and having her Centrelink payments repeatedly suspended for failure to meet her mutual obligation requirements. She has a severe intellectual disability as a result of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. One of CCL's Dhurrawang lawyers worked with the SLP Clinic social worker to assist Alice to apply and obtain National Disability Insurance (NDIS) payments. The lawyer and social worker worked collaboratively to obtain the necessary evidence to have Alice assessed for Disability Support Pension (DSP) through a cognitive test carried out by the Department of Human Service. Alice was found to have a very low IQ after the test was administered by an Occupational Psychologist and automatically qualified for DSP. She was granted DSP with back pay.



Rebecca Irvine, SLP Clinic Social Worker receiving flowers and chocolates from a client

Street Law

Program Overview

Street Law provides free legal outreach services to individuals who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. It works on an outreach model: Street Law lawyers attend places where people experiencing homelessness are already accessing support services such as refuges or food pantries. Street Law also provides community legal education and undertakes law and policy reform activities.

Year in Review

With the COVID-19 pandemic interrupting legal service delivery across the Centre and with our outreach partners, the 2019–20 financial year has seen challenges to the provision of outreach service delivery. During the financial year Street Law adjusted its services as best it could, given changes in outreach delivery for all of our partners. In the meantime, Street Law prepared for its 10 year birthday celebrations, hoping to share “10 cakes for 10 years” with legal services, outreaches and community organisations that have worked with Street Law over the years. Street Law were able to organise three of these events prior to the COVID-19 lockdowns with generous cake donations from the Cheesecake Shop in Philip, at Legal Aid ACT, the Early Morning Centre and St John’s Food Pantry. The event, in July this year, was a success with over 50 attendees celebrating the Street Law birthday remotely. We adjusted our Community Legal Education (CLE) sessions to online delivery and supported the development of Canberra Community Law’s Canberra COVID Legal Help website, in addition to supporting the Centre deliver innovative CLE sessions over facebook live.

Street Law’s WIPLES program went from strength to strength, with our WIPLES solicitor, Michelle Barclay, delivering the program in conjunction with a number of other free legal services in the ACT. The WIPLES program aims to empower women in prison with legal knowledge as well as to assist them to address any legal issues that may present barriers to community re-integration upon release.

Outreaches

Street Law provides outreach services at locations where clients who are experiencing homelessness may already be accessing services. This is done to make it easier for homeless clients to access legal services. In 2019–20, Street Law provided regular outreach services at the following locations:

- Early Morning Centre
- Helping Hand Food Pantry (ceased August 2019)
- St John’s Care

- Woden Youth Centre
- Junction Youth Service
- AMC (WIPLES).

Street Law also provided outreach services to other organisations on an ad hoc basis where clients or service providers requested that we attend alternative locations. The closure of offices and outreaches as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary pause of outreaches, and then an adjustment to online outreaches.

Staff

Street Law had a few staffing changes in the 2019–20 year:

- John Alati continued as Supervising Solicitor;
- Heather McAulay returned from parental leave and left the Street Law after 10 years in November 2019;
- Farzana Choudhury worked as Street Law Solicitor, was seconded to the role of Program Manager/Solicitor to fill the Program Manager position while Heather McAulay was on parental leave, and then left the Street Law team to run the Disability Discrimination practice in January 2020;
- Michelle Barclay continued on as a Street Law Solicitor;
- Erin Rikus continued in the Street Law team; and
- Stephanie Booker joined the Street Law team in March 2020 as Program Manager, replacing Heather McAuley.

Pro Bono Support — Secondees and Volunteers

Street Law continued to receive amazing support from the ACT legal community. In 2019–20, Street Law received over 270 hours of pro bono support in the form of secondments.

This financial year our secondees were:

- Nicholas Wilson from Australian Government Solicitor; and
- Isla Tobin and Georgia Fennell from Clayton Utz.

Street Law is also enthusiastically supported by many student volunteers who give up a day of their time each week to come and work with us. We would like to thank all our secondees and volunteers who provide invaluable support to Street Law’s operations.

Our 2019–2020 volunteers were:

- Luca Sdraulig
- Afif Haque
- Jingling Zhan
- Mason Britton.

Client work

In 2019–2020 Street Law assisted 118 clients. We provided 112 one-off legal advices and 76 legal tasks assistance services, opened 21 cases and finalised 9 cases. We continue to assist clients in relation to a wide range of legal issues, including housing, social security, consumer law, credit and debt matters, employment, minor criminal matters, obtaining identification documents, and other general civil law matters.

Community Legal Education

Street Law once again delivered its sessions on legal topics relevant to our client group and community workers. These included:

- How to Spot a Legal Issue;
- Writing support letters;
- Homelessness issues; and
- Diversity and Crime: Equality in the Criminal Justice System.

Through our WIPLES (Women in Prison Legal Empowerment Series), we partnered with a number of other free legal services in the ACT to co-present community legal education sessions on the following topics:

- Employment and Conviction;
- Care and Protection (with Women's Legal Centre);
- Bail and Parole (with Legal Aid ACT);
- Centrelink;
- Family violence/protection orders (with Legal Aid ACT and Women's Centre for Health Matters);
- Family Law (with Women's Legal Centre);
- Discrimination (with our Disability Discrimination and Dhurrawang teams); and
- Fines.

Street Law participated in two "Bring Your Bill" events in collaboration with ActewAGL/Care Financial Counselling Service and a number of radio interviews, Caroline Chisholm Fair Day and a Community Walk with the Australian Federal Police. Street Law also partnered with Legal Aid ACT to present sessions in their 'Law for Non-Lawyers' training series.

Finally, Street Law provided 'Working with Vulnerable Clients' training to private sector lawyers to support them to undertake pro bono work.

Law Reform

Street Law engaged in several law reform activities in the 2019–20 financial year including:

- Drafting submissions in response to JACS' consultation paper on Occupancy Agreement Reforms;
- Drafting submissions in relation to the Litter Amendment Bill and the Planning and Development (Controlled Activities) Bill;
- Providing input into the Homeward Bound report on Social Security and Homelessness, produced by Canberra Community Law in partnership with the National Social Security Rights Network;
- Letters to all ACT Members of the Legislative Assembly asking them to support the #Raise the Rate campaign;
- Submissions to the Commonwealth Inquiry into Homelessness; and
- Joint submissions to the Commonwealth Inquiry into Homelessness with other homeless persons legal centres around Australia.



Street Law How to Spot a Legal Issue Training Session

Community Engagement — Meetings and Events

Street Law continued to engage with the community sector in order to raise awareness of our service and remain abreast of developments in the sector. In 2018–19, Street Law attended the following meetings and events:

- ABC Radio interviews
- ACT Council of Social Services — Justice Reform Group meetings
- ACT Legal Assistance Forum, including the:
 - Community Legal Education Working Group; and
 - Service Planning Working Group.
- ACT Law Society Diversity and Inclusion meetings
- Joint Pathways forums;
- Who's new on the Streets? Meetings
- Homeless Connect Organising Committee meetings;
- International Tenant's Day Organising Committee meetings and events
- National Association of Community Legal Centre's Annual Conference
- Youth Coalition Housing and Homelessness forums;
- National Association of Community Legal Centres Human Rights Network meeting
- Community Connections meeting
- Women's Health Week at AMC
- Australian Human Rights commission Consultation — Human Rights Conversation
- PwD ACT Morning Tea/Cartoon Exhibition Launch for Mental Health Week
- ACT Women's Summit
- Disability Rights Network Teleconference re Disability Royal Commission
- Hands Across Canberra Fundraising lunch
- Community Legal Centre's Australia Human Rights meeting
- ACT Government's Rough Sleepers Working Group
- ACTCOSS and ACT Shelter (COVID-19) meetings
- AMC Women's Reference Group
- Meeting with other homeless people's legal services around Australia.

Case Study 1: Andrea's Story

Andrea (not her real name) was a woman in her early fifties who was sharing a one-bedroom unit with her mother after being released from prison, having been evicted on 26 weeks' notice from her public housing property whilst incarcerated. Prior to her incarceration, Andrea had resided in the one public housing home for over twenty years.

Andrea was in receipt of the Disability Support Pension (DSP). She had a range of complex health conditions and the relationship with her elderly parent was strained by having to live in very close quarters. On the basis that she was effectively couch-surfing without any legal right to remain in this living arrangement, Street Law considered Andrea to be a person experiencing homelessness.

Andrea self-referred to Street Law concerned about the size of her tenant responsible maintenance (TRM) debt.

Street Law obtained records from Housing ACT under the Freedom of Information legislation. We provided advice to Andrea about the tenant responsible maintenance charges and wrote to Housing ACT requesting that a number of items charged to her account be reviewed. All the charges we sought review of were set aside by Housing ACT and over \$1600 was removed from her tenant responsible maintenance debt. We assisted her to enter into an agreement regarding the repayment of the remaining charges removing any barrier to Andrea being allocated a property. Andrea is now on the Priority Housing list awaiting an allocation.

Case Study 2: Laura's Story

Street Law engaged with Laura (not her real name) during an outreach at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) as part of the Women In Prison Legal Empowerment Sessions (WIPLES). Laura has severe mental health issues (bipolar disorder, schizoaffective disorder and depression) and a history of domestic violence and drug use. Prior to incarceration she had a debt with an energy provider for her gas and electricity. She asked Street Law for help to find out how much her debt is and whether there was anything that could be done to help reduce her debt.

Assistance from Street Law

Street Law contacted the energy provider to determine the amount of the debt, and then advised Laura of this debt amount and any options available to her to reduce this debt (e.g. hardship policy and debt waiver). Street Law then drafted and reviewed a debt waiver request with Laura and submitted it to the energy provider.

Street Law successfully had the debt waived in full — total amount of \$2752.79. Having this debt waived has freed Laura from an additional financial hurdle upon her release and provides her with the opportunity to focus on her re-entry into the community.



Farzana Choudhury and Heather McAulay, representing Street Law at a community event with Chief Minister Barr

Night Time Legal Advice Service and COVID-19 Legal Clinic

The Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS) provides advice and referrals to the Canberra community in most areas of law and operates on Tuesday nights for two hours. We have now expanded the service to include a Thursday night COVID-19 Legal Clinic as part of NTLAS.

This reporting year has been a milestone for NTLAS. When our office closed due to COVID-19 we had to re-think our important drop-in service. By late March, for safety reasons, we reluctantly suspended our volunteer program, without really knowing how we were going to proceed.

We could not work face to face and had to implement a remote delivery model. For a while John Alati, our supervising solicitor, conducted NTLAS alone but as the volume and complexity of enquiries increased dramatically with COVID-19 it became apparent that this would not be sustainable.

Seeing the need for increased capacity delivery, we began to develop the concept of a Thursday evening COVID-19 Legal Clinic to increase our ability to service the needs of our clients.

As the idea crystallised, we reached out to our pro-bono partners (giving them just two weeks' notice!) and they enthusiastically embraced the concept and have provided support to us on Thursday nights for the duration of the clinic. We could not run the COVID-19 clinic without them. The firms and individuals involved have demonstrated a great generosity of spirit in providing support to us and our clients.

Eventually, we re-instated a small team of Tuesday volunteers to trial our new remote service delivery on Tuesday nights as well. Likewise, our Tuesday night service could not run without the volunteer legal practitioners from private and government practice who give of their time so generously.

Currently we run on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The COVID-19 clinic initially began on a trial basis for approximately 3 months, but we were able to secure funding to continue it to the end of 2020. We hope to continue it as needed through 2021.

Our service delivery model has had to adapt in COVID-19 related times. Our volunteers work remotely and now mostly work alone, where they used to work in pairs, taking instructions from clients and providing advice after conferring with the supervising solicitor and conducting any necessary research.

Not only did the volume of enquiries we received increase greatly, but the complexity of matters we have been dealing with has increased exponentially as well. For example, we are now seeing far more complex contract disputes, particularly in building and development, as people find themselves in unpredictable situations due to COVID-19 and cannot access the private profession. This has meant we are conducting a lot more in-depth research and analysis on matters, and we are spending more time on each matter.

Having provided more than 140 separate legal advices in the last year, NTLAS continues to be busy and continues to be a barometer for legal issues in the community, with everything from employment law, contracts, wills and estates, consumer issues and a range of other issues brought to us by clients. Building disputes have featured prominently in our work this year.

As always, the strength of NTLAS is its capacity to fill the service gap for clients who would not qualify for means tested services but cannot afford private legal representation. We don't always solve their problems, but we virtually always assist them with next steps, whatever they may be.

We don't know how long the need for our COVID-19 Legal Clinic will last but we are certainly proud of what it has achieved so far, with rapid inception and a vast array of matters already dealt with. We hope to be able to continue to offer the service while ever the need is there.

We are proud to offer this vital service to the Canberra community and extremely grateful to those members of the Canberra legal community who give generously of their time and expertise to keep NTLAS and the COVID-19 Legal Clinic operating. The willingness in the Canberra legal community to provide assistance to those who need it is truly heartening. It is a genuine privilege to work with them.

Case Study: Helga's Story

Helga (not her real name) was working in a professional capacity in a middle management role. She had been asked to supervise her section for some months, with a promise of a promotion and a pay rise. She was not paid for higher duties, nor did her pay rise eventuate, even though the enterprise agreement under which she worked clearly required that her role be recognised and remunerated.

Helga was from overseas and was not clear on Australian employment law. She knew something was wrong but was reluctant about approaching management.

We assisted her to draft an email clearly setting out her position, with appropriate references to the applicable agreement. In a short time she received the pay rise that she was entitled to, and more than \$10,000 in back pay. She later called our service to thank us for our assistance.

Helga is a good example of someone caught in a difficult situation, whose rights are not being recognised but whose matter would probably not be viable for a private practitioner. Some clear guidance and simple ways forward meant a great deal to her.

COVID-19 Community Legal Education Initiatives

Canberra Community Law has, in the 2019–20 financial year, engaged in a range of new and innovative Community Legal Education (CLE) activities and resources in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Three particular highlights for the 2019–2020 financial year are:

Facebook live events

One of the challenges of Community Legal Education is reaching out to audiences that need legal education the most. Combining social media and legal information was a win for Canberra Community Law and the ACT community in the 2019–2020 financial year. The provision of legal information in Question & Answer format on Centrelink issues such as JobSeeker, JobKeeper, changes to Centrelink payment and public housing, collaborating with other legal services where possible, saw a huge increase in the uptake of plain language, accessible information to the public, and some of Canberra Community Law's most popular CLE sessions.

Canberra COVID Legal Help

Through the support of the Snow Foundation and the Ecstra Foundation, Canberra Community Law was able to develop a one-stop hub for legal information impacting on Canberrans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

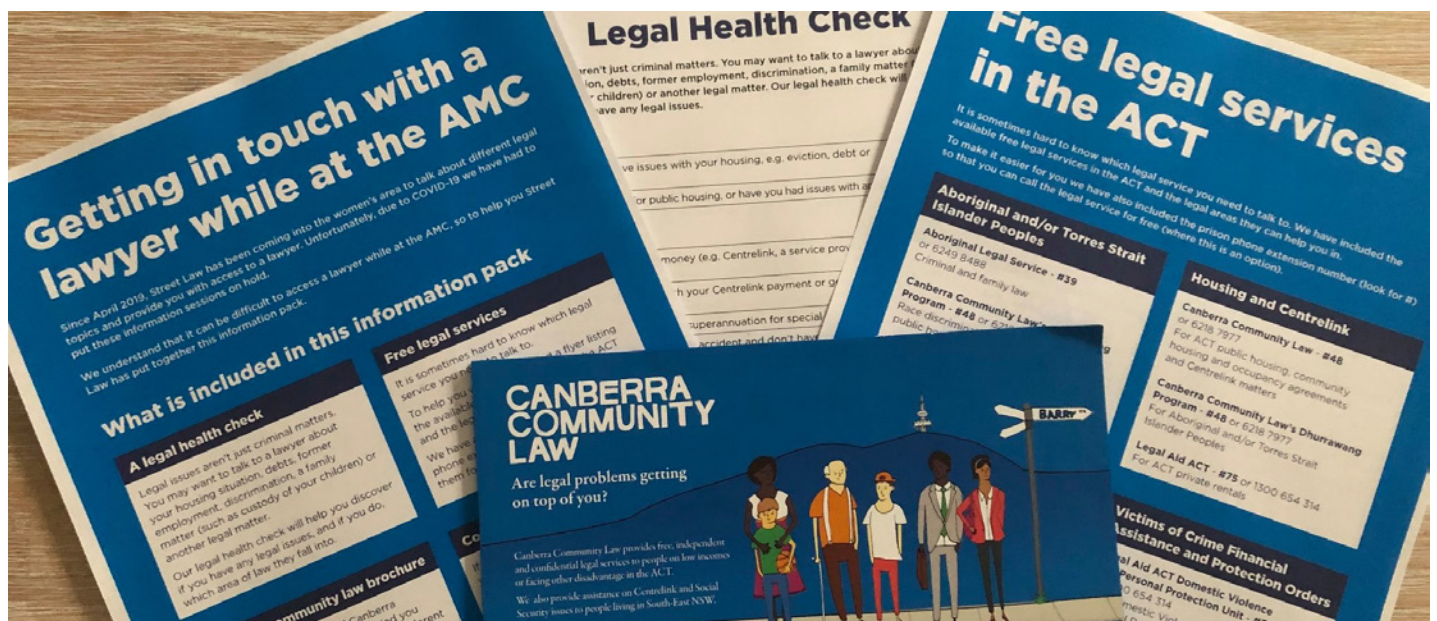
Canberra COVID Legal Help (<https://canberracovidlegalhelp.org.au/>) was developed over a short period of time to first cater for changes to laws and legal processes for areas such as Centrelink, ACT public housing, ACT courts and COVID-related crimes. There was an emphasis on producing information in different forms (for example, information to read or watch) that was in plain language and accessible to ordinary Canberrans during this extraordinary time. As a result, a range of factsheets were created, in addition to edited versions of the Facebook live events.

As time progressed, information was sourced from a range of different organisations to flesh out other topics of interest to the Canberra community, such as private tenancies, family law, employment, small business and credit, debt and consumer law.

WIPLES Information Pack

Given difficulties in attending the Alexander Maconchie Centre for the Women In Prison Legal Empowerment Series (WIPLES), a plain language information pack was created to encourage women to seek free legal assistance while on remand, in lieu of our monthly Community Legal Education sessions. It contained:

- A legal health check, specifically tailored to AMC clients;
- A fact sheet listing free legal services available to inmates;
- A corresponding prison phone free extension number (where available); and
- Information and form detailing how to get in contact with Street Law via email.



Social Media

Over the last financial year, we expanded our social media presence with a steady increase of followers and likes on all four social media platforms — Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

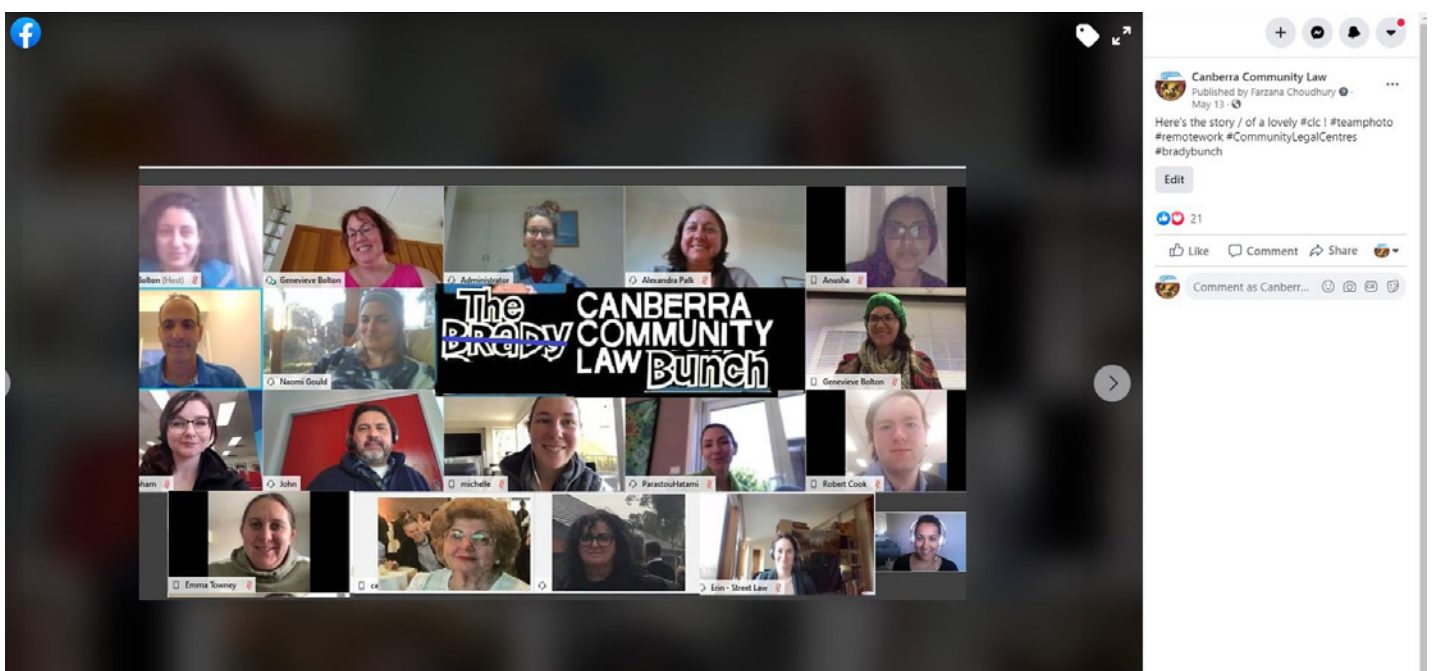
For example, we saw a 48% increase of followers to our Facebook page, and as at 30 June there were 1899 followers. We expect that this will continue to grow.

On 2 April 2020 we were the first ACT community legal centre to run a Facebook Live Q&A session. We delivered seven sessions on Centrelink and housing as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in some of these sessions we asked the following organisations to join us — Legal Aid (for our tenancy session), Women's Legal Centre ACT (for our JobKeeper vs JobSeeker session) and Gordon Legal (for our Robodebt session). Our most successful session was on Robodebt and it has been viewed by over 4300 people.

We have also had the ACT Government and Members of the Legislative Assembly seeking additional information about some of our recent initiatives and projects as a direct result of our social media posts. This has led to the work we are doing at Canberra Community Law being promoted within high level forums and has helped increase our reputation as

an innovative community legal centre. We have also received a direct benefit from the Commonwealth Bank, with a \$500 donation as a result of our social media presence.

Our social media is a team effort. The team includes Sophie Trevitt (our Facebook Live Q&A presenter), Erin Rikus (responsible for Twitter and a moderator for the live Q&A sessions), Farzana Choudhury (responsible for LinkedIn and Instagram and a moderator for the live Q&A sessions) and Michelle Barclay (coordinator of the social media platforms, responsible for content development and Facebook and also a moderator for the live Q&A sessions).



Professional Development

CCL is committed to providing professional development opportunities for its staff.

CCL supported all staff lawyers holding practising certificates to meet their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements. The Centre also provided external debriefing for some staff and external supervision for our Social Worker.

Professional Development opportunities provided to staff during this financial year included:

- Vicarious Trauma – Blue Knot
- High Conflict Disputes
- Clayton Utz – Government Data Breaches – Preparation and Response
- Borderline Personality Training
- CASTAN Centre for Human Rights Annual Conference
- Economic Justice Australia Annual Conference
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Network day
- Community Legal Centres Australia – Annual Conference
- Advocacy for Women Lawyers
- ADACAS Redress Scheme
- Employment Out of Hours Conduct
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency – Administrative Decision Making training
- Building Bridges Training
- Intervening with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence – frontline response workshop
- RUOK Day Seminar
- Autism Awareness Training
- Parole training
- NDIS training
- Rebus Theatre Training on Disabilities
- ANU Public Law Conference – technology, public law and administration
- ACT Law Society Training – Drug and Alcohol Court
- Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List Day 1 — Foundations
- Working with children experiencing trauma (Companion House)
- Raise the Age of Criminal Responsibility Forum
- ACOSS National Conference
- Ashurst Early Career Lawyer Event
- Community Forum to explore the ACT Government's discussion paper on elder abuse reform
- Ethics training
- Final Quarter Screening
- Ethics round up – hot ethical issues in Australia
- Preparing a case, presenting a case
- Negotiating costs
- In times of peace, prepare for war
- Vicarious trauma, burn out and psychological injury in lawyers
- Marketing your firm in a commercial world
- Ethics
- Statutory Interpretation: a practical update
- Resilience and thriving in change
- The law firm of tomorrow
- AMC Security Awareness Training
- Human Rights Commission eSafety for Women Training
- Practice Management in Your Inbox
- People with intellectual disabilities: Group homes, concerns about 'risk' and the use of restrictive practices: De-differentiation and people with intellectual disabilities in the NDIS
- The Neurobiology of Stress and Trauma Webinar
- RAP COVID-19 Webinar (Reconciliation Australia)
- Supporting our People to Work Well Webinar
- Law for Non-Lawyers: Young People and the Law
- Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) seminar – Redesigning the system to reduce youth homelessness
- How do you do it? The realities of home schooling and working from home
- ACOSS – JobSeeker After COVID-19 Seminar.



Jessica Spargo, Farzana Choudhury and Genevieve Bolton with interstate Welfare Rights colleagues at Community Legal Centres Australia Conference, August 2019

Our Supporters

We greatly appreciate the support which has been provided to CCL over the past year (especially during COVID-19) in the form of grants, voluntary assistance, advice, training, meeting space etc.

Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS Volunteers)

Radmila Andric	Finnegan Lowe
Lauren Armstrong	Nishtha Mahajan
Rahul Balan	Deborah Mak
Caroline Beasley	Charisse Matthews
Frances Bradshaw	Jennifer McRae
Damien Brown	Oliver Morris
Michael Burton	Hilary Neville
Henry Chang	Rachael Noronha
Radhika Chaudhri	John Park
Jasmine Chen	Louise Parry
Cindy Chia	Claire Paton
Rachael Clark	Nishadee Perera
Kirsty Corby	Nicholas Potter
Kylie Crawford	David Purvis
Laura Crick	Adam Ray
Richard Donaldson	Eric Raymond
Ingmar Duldig	Erin Rikus
Rebecca Evans	Anita Smith
Rachael Grivas	Kate Smyth
Anna Gruen	Isla Tobin
Lynda Khan	Fiona Toohey
Tyson Lange	Maddison Williams
Sarah Lefevre	Nicholas Wilson

Student observers

Anya Bonan	Sophie Harper
Hannah Bowcock	Evangeline Maguire
Antoine Bowman	Julia McLean
Alice Durham	Natalie Seeto
Jialin Guo	Denise Wong
Aislinn Grimley	Brianna Woodhead
Susan Ha	

Admin Interns

Our Admin Interns in the first half of this reporting period continued to provide an invaluable source of administrative support for our busy legal practice whether it be through answering the phone, performing intake, greeting clients, photocopying, filing as well as para-legal support. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 we had to suspend the Admin Intern program in early 2020.

UC Interns

Aaron Crow	Lewis Clarke
Tess Watson	Rachelle Kelly

Admin Interns

Kate Sogn	Kevin Tanaya
Denise Wong	Bhanuka Seineviratna
Casley Rowan	Fiona Wilkinson
Tenzing Sherpa	Allie Penny
Alice Durham	Courtney Page
Pip Gelland	Lily Pang
Kim Franca	Robert Cook
Maggie Tang	



Some of our amazing Admin Interns, Photo taken November 2019

ANU Clinical Law Students

Our ANU Clinical Law students provided invaluable paralegal assistance to CCL's lawyer working one day a week during the Semester.

Semester 2, 2019

Connor McMaster
Amy Davis
Emily Shaw
Megan Crompton-Smith
Lauren Abrahams
Annabella L'Estrange
Abhi Sethi
Derek Tan
Jinging Zhan

ANU Course Convenor:
Professor Peta Spender

Semester 1, 2020

Monica Dalton
Kalidevi Samuels-Connell
Ashlee Smith
Kelly Cai
Luca Sdraulig
Afifi Haque
Juyeon (Christina) Lee
Zoe Cooper

ANU Course Convenor:
Radhika Chaudhri



Appendix: Auditor's Report

Canberra Community Law

Level 1, 21 Barry Drive, Turner ACT 2612

Postal Address:

PO Box 337, Civic Square ACT 2608

canberracommunitylaw.org.au

