

CANBERRA  
COMMUNITY  
LAW

# Annual Report 2020–21



# Contents

<b>Acknowledgment of Land</b>	iii		
<b>Artwork Acknowledgement</b>	iii		
<b>Introduction</b>	1		
CCL's Services			
Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program			
Disability Discrimination Law			
Housing Law			
Street Law			
Social Security Law			
Socio-Legal Practice Clinic			
Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS)			
COVID-19 Initiatives			
Filling a Critical Need and Addressing Disadvantage			
National Accreditation Scheme			
Funding Sources			
CCL's Vision, Mission and Values			
CCL's Client Work at a Glance for 2020–2021			
CCL's Work Snapshot			
The People We Helped			
Hours of Operation and Location			
CCL's Board of Directors 2020-2021			
CCL's Staff			
<b>Chairperson's Report</b>	5		
<b>Executive Director/Principal Solicitor's Report</b>	6		
COVID-19 Impacts and Response			
Innovation and Responding to Community Need			
Sector Collaboration			
Accreditation			
Our People and Supporters			
<b>Sector Engagement</b>	9		
<b>Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program</b>	10		
Our Clients & COVID- 19			
Our Staff			
Students			
Dhurrawang AMC Prison Outreach Project			
Law Reform & Community Development			
Casework			
		Committees	
		Case Study – Katrina's Story	
		<b>Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Report</b>	13
		<b>Disability Discrimination Law</b>	14
		Staff	
		Client Work	
		Case Study: Lucy's Story	
		Stakeholder Engagement and Community Legal Education	
		<b>Disability Action Plan Report</b>	16
		<b>Housing Law</b>	17
		Overview	
		Trends	
		Case Study – Penny's Story	
		ACAT Duty Lawyer Service	
		Case Study: Gail's Story	
		Case Study: Hayley's Story	
		Community Legal Education	
		Policy Work	
		<b>Night Time Legal Advice Service and COVID-19 Legal Clinic</b>	20
		Case Study – Jane and Rob's Story	
		<b>Social Security Law</b>	22
		Overview	
		Trends	
		Case Study: William's Story	
		Case Study: Harry's Story	
		Community Legal Education	
		Policy Work	
		<b>Socio-Legal Practice Clinic</b>	24
		Overview	
		Year in Review	
		Acknowledgements and thanks	

<b>Street Law</b>	<b>25</b>
Program Overview	
Year in Review	
Outreaches	
Staff	
Pro Bono Support – Secondees and Volunteers	
Client work	
Community Legal Education	
Law Reform	
Community Engagement – Meetings and Events	
Case Study: Sophia’s story	
Case Study: Jason’s story	
<b>Social Media</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Professional Development</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Our Volunteers, Students and Secondees</b>	<b>31</b>
Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS Volunteers)	
Day Time Secondees	
Day Time Volunteers	
ANU Clinical Law Students	
<b>Appendix: Auditor’s Report</b>	<b>32</b>



# Acknowledgment of Land



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

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 realization of equity, justice, and partnership with the 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 clients and the broader community to live a better quality of life.

Our lawyers specialise in legal areas that affect people facing socio-economic barriers including public housing, Centrelink, and disability discrimination law.

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 domestic violence, or being socially isolated.

## CCL's Services

### Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program

A human rights focused legal service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the areas of Centrelink, public housing, and race discrimination law. We are the only free legal service in the ACT that specialises in race discrimination matters – a practice set up in direct response to a need identified by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

### Disability Discrimination Law

We are the only specialist disability discrimination law service in the ACT. We provide 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

We are the only specialist public housing legal service in the ACT. The service also provides legal assistance to community housing tenants and people on occupancy agreements including people who live in a caravan park, hostel, or boarding house.

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

### Street Law

We are the only specialist homelessness legal service in the ACT. 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, specialises in such matters as debts, public space law, access to accommodation and obtaining proof of ID.

### Social Security Law

We are the only specialist Social Security Law service in the ACT.

The service assists with a range of Centrelink issues including appealing Centrelink decisions, overpayments/underpayments, entitlements, debt recovery, claims refused and payment cancellations, reductions, and suspension.

### Socio-Legal Practice Clinic

CCL pioneered the model of a socio-legal practice in the ACT. The Social Legal Practice (SLP) Clinic combines legal advice, assistance, and representation with intensive social work support to maximise the prospect of a successful outcome. Our SLP Clinic does not accept direct referrals. Our paralegals or lawyers will make a referral to the clinic

### Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS)

NTLAS provides information, referral and/or one-off legal advice in most areas of law (not covered by CCL's daytime service) including fines and other traffic infringements, minor criminal law offences, family law and basic advice and referral on parenting plans/orders, separation and assistance, employment law (employees not employers), debts (people being pursued for debts not people seeking to recover debts), complaints and consumer law 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.

Both these initiatives continued to operate in 2020-2021.

## Filling a Critical Need and Addressing Disadvantage

We can all agree that everyone has the right to quality legal services no matter their income, the community they come from, or even what time of day they find themselves in need of help.

But the reality is that many people in the ACT and surrounding region experience multiple barriers to accessing justice.

CCL provides a range of specialist services targeted to people on low incomes who face significant disadvantage.

CCL is here to support people in the ACT and surrounding region who are doing it tough and have difficulty resolving their legal problems.

We provide easy to access and easy to understand assistance in our specialist areas of legal practice.

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

Our targeted support helps people prevent and manage their legal problems and empowers both our clients and the broader community to live a better quality of life.

## 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

CCL acknowledges and thanks all funders for their financial support and assistance during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, CCL received funding from:

- Commonwealth Government under the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services
- ACT Government through the Community Services Directorate and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate.
- Statutory Interest Account administered by the ACT Law Society
- ACT Government, Snow Foundation, and the Clayton Utz Foundation for our Socio-Legal Practice Clinic
- Australian National University for our Community law Clinical Program colloquially known as CLED
- Specific COVID19 funding from the ACT and Commonwealth Governments

We also received the following grants:

- Snow Foundation and the Ecstra Foundation for our COVID-19 Legal Help Website
- Chief Minister's Charitable Fund and Hands Across Canberra to pilot Dhurrawang's AMC Prison Outreach service at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC)
- ACT Corrective Services and Westfield for our Women in Prison Legal Empowerment Series (WIPLES)
- Mental Health Council Grant - Assistance Animals and Your Rights Community Legal Education (CLE) resources
- ActewAGL Community Grant – ID4Community – Canberra's First Proof of Identity Clinic
- Disability Inclusion Grant – Website Accessibility Audit
- ACT Government Rapid Response Rounds 1 – COVID-19 Legal Clinic
- ACT Government Rapid Response Round 2 – Remote Working ITC Implementation
- ACT Government Women's Grants Program – Parachute Program
- ACT Participation Grant – Video Conferencing System
- Clayton Utz Foundation – COVID-19 Legal Clinic
- ACT Office of Disability – Social Scripts Project

## 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, 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 2020–2021

### CCL's Work Snapshot

- Total number of clients assisted – 1074
- Information/referrals – 735
- Legal advices (one off) – 1735
- Duty Lawyer services – 90
- Legal Task Assistance services – 734
- Cases (ongoing) – 291
- Discrete Non-Legal Support – 158
- Ongoing Non-Legal Support - 19

## The People We Helped

Gender – Male 37%      Female 62%      Other <1%

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – 18%

People with disability – 62%

Experiencing or at risk of homelessness – 49%

Culturally and linguistically diverse background – 11%

Disclosed experiencing domestic or family violence – 49%

## Hours of Operation and Location

CCL is 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 operated on Thursday evenings from 6pm to 8pm (excluding December and January) during this reporting period.

## CCL's Board of Directors 2020-2021

Daniel Stewart, Chairperson

Helen Fisher, Deputy Chairperson

Genevieve Bolton, Director/Secretary

Anyia Aidman, Director

John Alati, Director (Staff Representative)

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 (Part Time)

Samantha Bradley, Street Law Solicitor (February to April 2021)

Genevieve Bolton, Executive Director/Principal Solicitor

Stephanie Booker, Street Law Program Manager/Solicitor;  
Resigned (January 2021) (Part Time)

Radhika Chaudhri, Solicitor, Parachute Project  
(September 2020 to June 2021) (Part Time)

Farzana Choudhury, Senior Solicitor, Disability Discrimination Law

Rachael Clark, Social Security and Tenancy Service Solicitor

Robert Cook, Locum Office Manager; Street Law Paralegal  
(from September 2020); Resigned (January 2021) (Part Time)

Clyde Cosentino, Senior Solicitor, Social Security and  
Tenancy Service

Anusha Goonetilleke, Senior Solicitor and Program Manager,  
Social Security and Tenancy Service and Street Law

Naomi Gould, Senior Litigation Solicitor, Social Security and  
Tenancy Service

Edith Graham, Finance Manager (Part Time)

Georgia Graham, Office Manager

Parastou Hatami, Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights  
Supervising Solicitor/Program Manager; Resigned (May 2021)

Sarah Hein, Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy Service;  
Resigned (August 2020)

Rebecca Irvine, Social Worker

Rachelle Kelly, Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program  
Paralegal (from September 2020)

Julie O'Donnell, Office Manager (from January 2021) (Part Time)

Alexandra Palk, Senior Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy  
Service; Program Manager, Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human  
Rights Program (from March 2021)

Erin Rikus, Street Law Solicitor, Parental leave (from March 2021)

Jessica Spargo, Office Manager (to January 2021), NTLAS Intake  
Officer (to June 2021) (Part Time)

Emma Towney, Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights  
Program Solicitor; Dhurrawang Solicitor/Program Manager  
(from March 2021)

Sophie Trevitt, Solicitor, Social Security and Tenancy Service  
(Part Time)



Canberra Community Law Staff attending March 2021 Planning Day

# Chairperson's Report



In my Chairperson's Report last year, I commented on a most extraordinary year, from bushfires to the start of the pandemic, and my hope that the new year would bring with it a chance to pause and reflect. A year on, and the effects of the pandemic have continued almost unabated. It has been another very difficult year as the Canberra community has shifted into and out of lockdowns. Perhaps, with vaccination rates now high in the ACT, and growing nationally, the next year might bring a return to normal, whatever that will look like in the future.

Once again, Canberra Community Law has demonstrated the commitment and resilience of its staff by continuing to provide extraordinary levels of service despite the demands. They have had to re-reconfigure services, relocate back into and then out of the office again, manage the stress and anxieties that all households have had to manage, and, above all, serve so well those people who have sought the assistance of the Centre over the last year. During Board meetings, the Board has been able to hear from a handful

of staff over the last year and learn a little more about the day-to-day operation of the Centre. Thank you to Genevieve Bolton and all the other staff and volunteers. CCL is very fortunate to have so many inspirational people.

I would particularly like to acknowledge Parastou Hatami who left the Centre this year. Parastou has been an integral part of the Centre for many years, including as Supervising Solicitor for the Street Law service and most recently the Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program. I always felt Parastou in many ways epitomised the community lawyer – expert, ever practical, outwardly calm, and yet deeply passionate about helping her clients and colleagues. Along with many others I have benefited greatly from her wise counsel. I hope that she is able to return to CCL in the future.

I would like to thank the ACT Government for its funding of CCL over the last twelve months, with the increased funding in response to the pandemic last year being largely continued through this year's budget. This reflects a confidence in the ability of CCL to continue to provide quality services to those in need in our community. I would also like to thank the other supporters of CCL, and in particular to the Snow Foundation and Clayton Utz Foundation whose faith in the Centre has extended to funding over multiple future years. We know that the effects of the pandemic will continue for some time, and that any funding increase will inevitably fall short of the demand for our services. The Centre continues to innovate, developing proposals for new initiatives and modifications to existing services to try to tailor our services more closely to the needs in the community. The challenge of securing increased, long-term funding, remains.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members who have endured a year of virtual meetings. Particular thanks goes to Margot Harker, who has had to leave the Board for personal reasons. Margot's insights and experiences have been invaluable to the Board and on the behalf of my fellow Board members I wish you and your family well for the future. Margot will be hard to replace, but we will continue to look to expand the diversity of experience and expertise of Board members.

So once again, it has been an extraordinary year, but CCL looks well placed. We will continue to learn and develop our services, support our staff as best we can in recognition of the exceptional work they are doing, and try to meet the many challenges that no doubt lie ahead.

**Daniel Stewart**  
Chair

# Executive Director/ Principal Solicitor's Report

In what has been another extraordinary year, I would like to acknowledge the important contribution that Parastou Hatami has made not only to the work of CCL but also to the broader legal sector over many years. It was with sadness that CCL accepted Parastou's resignation just prior to Parastou and her family relocating overseas on another great adventure. I consider Parastou the embodiment of much of that to which the Community Legal Centre movement aspires. Throughout her years at CCL, Parastou brought to her work a great devotion to the clients, a commitment to thorough legal assistance and a deep and genuine interest in CCL's clients. CCL has been very fortunate over the years, to have had Parastou at various times lead our Street Law and Disability Discrimination Law programs but her greatest legacy will be the Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program which she established and has led over the last four years. Parastou's tireless work in the establishment and development of Dhurrawang has brought about real cultural change within CCL – an increase in cultural safety, acknowledgment, and prioritisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Parastou has been a great mentor and colleague to many of CCL's staff, volunteers, and students during her time with the Centre. As Supervising Solicitor/Program Manager with Dhurrawang, Parastou championed and laid the foundations for leadership positions for First Nations lawyers within CCL. It was very pleasing that just prior to Parastou's departure from CCL, Emma Towney, Wiradjuri Woman, was promoted to the position of Dhurrawang Program Manager/Solicitor leaving the program's future in safe hands.

## COVID-19 Impacts and Response

Between the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 financial years, CCL experienced significant growth across most client areas, particularly in the second half of this financial year.

Our communities continued to face profound impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in higher levels of demand for CCL's services and increased complexity of cases. Financial hardship, affordable housing and family violence remained serious issues. The impacts of the pandemic and associated difficulties accessing services often exacerbated clients' mental health issues and reduced their capacity to engage effectively with housing providers. Particularly in the first half of the financial year, this resulted in an increase in the numbers of occupants contacting CCL for assistance after being locked out of their accommodation.

The lack of crisis accommodation, social housing, and low-income private rentals in the ACT continued to be particularly acute resulting in matters taking more time to resolve and being more time intensive. The easing of COVID-related support measures

from around the middle of the reporting period was a central cause of the significant increase in requests for assistance – Centrelink began to raise debts, debt recovery lifted, and the eviction moratorium was wound back. The massive increase in duty lawyer services (around 200%) reflected the removal of the eviction moratorium, a backlog in Housing ACT's applications for evictions and accrual of significant rental debt during the moratorium.

In addition to providing direct legal services, CCL continued to maintain and update its COVID Legal Help website in partnership with Legal Aid Commission ACT, Economic Justice Australia, the Women's Legal Centre, Care Financial Counselling Service, and the Consumer Law Centre thanks to funding from the Snow Foundation and the Ecstra Foundation. This website provided a one stop and invaluable source of information as government measures taken in response to the pandemic constantly changed. We also continued to roll out our series of Facebook Live Q and A sessions on hot legal topics related to the pandemic.

During the first half of the financial year, we continued to run the COVID-19 Legal Clinic on a Thursday night in response to community need. The COVID-19 Legal Clinic addressed a broad range of legal matters directly or indirectly resulting from COVID related issues.

The rise in family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on our clients and their need to access specialist public housing and Centrelink legal services. During this period, CCL successfully piloted and established Parachute through a one-off grant received from the ACT Office of Women in its Women's Safety Grant. Parachute has enhanced CCL's capacity to reach more women earlier who are experiencing family violence and need housing and Centrelink legal assistance. By working in partnership with front line domestic violence workers, Parachute has enabled frontline workers to better identify legal issues when they provide safety and crisis support to women seeking their help. This has been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic where women affected by family violence have experienced greater isolation, often finding it harder to leave their home and access necessary supports. Parachute delivered nine training sessions to community organisations that support women experiencing family violence who are also facing housing and/or social security legal issues. Feedback from the training was unanimously positive and resulted in a modest increase in referrals to CCL. A huge thanks to Radhika Chaudhri for her excellent work in leading this project during the financial year.



## Innovation and Responding to Community Need

During the year, we have continued to innovate and develop services in response to community need.

Thank you to the Chief Minister's Charitable Fund and Hands Across Canberra for providing grant funding to enable us to set up the Dhurrawang AMC prison outreach project. This grant assisted us to strengthen and consolidate our relationships with AMC's management and staff and increase awareness of Dhurrawang resulting in more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees accessing Dhurrawang's services.

We were also successful in obtaining a grant from ActewAGL to enable our Street Law program to establish a ID4Community clinic. Lack of ID represents a profound barrier for participation in community life and can trap people in homelessness and disadvantage. The clinic was able to assist highly vulnerable people to obtain ID and unlock access to housing and income support. The project also produced a factsheet and video on applying for ID. We record our appreciation and thanks to Giraffe for producing the video at a heavily discounted rate.

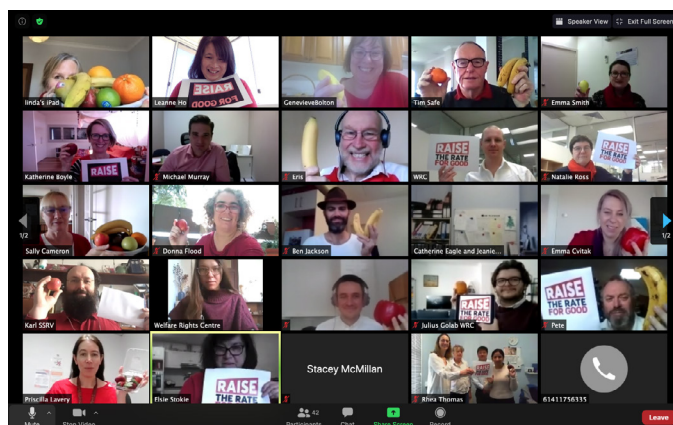
In June 2020, our Disability Discrimination Law service commenced its groundbreaking social scripts project after receiving funding from the ACT Office of Disability. The social scripts, produced in partnership with Autism Spectrum Australia, assist autistic people, people with mental health conditions and people with low levels of English literacy to access legal services through using a people centered narrative to introduce new events, interactions and what to expect. With a Mental Health Week Grant, our Disability Discrimination Law service also delivered a very successful seminar on assistance animals in partnership with mindDog Australia and developed factsheets on this topic which were also translated to Easy English.

Our Women in Prison Legal Empowerment Series (WIPLES) has continued to go from strength to strength despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and attracted funding from ACT Corrective Services reflecting the importance and value of this program in connecting woman in AMC with legal help and assistance. Michelle Barclay's excellent work in running this program was also recognised by the community in the award of a Westfield Local Hero Award in October 2020.

## Sector Collaboration

During the reporting period, CCL staff chaired or held leadership positions on several boards and committees at both a national and local level including the Economic Justice Australia Board, the National Human Rights Network, the ACT Law Society's Inclusion and Diversity Committee and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee which Dhurrawang was instrumental in establishing during this reporting period. CCL was also involved in stakeholder engagement nationally through Community Legal Centre Australia's Community Service Network, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Network and National Professional Indemnity Insurance Network.

CCL hosted "Scaling up Human Rights Protections in the ACT" discussion as part of Law Week with the panel consisting of Dr Helen Watchirs OAM, President of the ACT Human Rights Commission, Sean Costello, Principal Lawyer, Queensland Human Rights Lawyer, and CCL/ human rights lawyer, Naomi Gould who offered their perspectives on future proposals and directions to improve human rights protection in the ACT. Their speeches were published in a special Law Week Winter 2021 edition of Ethos. CCL actively supported the Raise the Rate campaign and participated in a range of external panels and seminars to further the interests of our clients including on Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility.



**Economic Justice Australia Conference 2020 Participants supporting the Raise the Rate Campaign**

## Accreditation

In what was truly an action-packed year we also successfully obtained certification under Phase 3 of the National Accreditation Scheme and was invited by the assessors to deliver a Webinar hosted by Community Legal Centre's Australia on the Dhurrawang model, how the program was established and the development and implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plan. Thanks to Clyde Cosentino and Anusha Goonetilleke for their work on the development and updates of policies, procedures and plans to support our accreditation work.

## Our People and Supporters

I would like to pay tribute to the extraordinary efforts of all CCL's staff during another difficult and stressful year. Thank you to John, Michelle, Farzana, Rachael, Clyde, Anusha, Naomi, Edith, Georgia, Rebecca, Rachelle, Julie, Alex, Erin, Jess, Sophie, Parastou, Emma, and our honorary staff member Cesira for your tireless commitment to advancing the human rights and access to justice of some of the most disadvantaged and marginalized members of the Canberra community. Thanks, must also go to Samantha, Stephanie, Radhika, Robert, and Sarah who left the Centre to explore other opportunities. It has been an honour to work amongst an incredibly talented, dedicated, intelligent and compassionate group of people who also managed to maintain a good sense of humour in face of relentless demand and insufficient funding to meet this need. Despite the additional funding and pro bono assistance CCL received during this period, the reality continues to be that many staff work well into the night and over weekends to assist CCL's clients to realise basic human rights such as the right to housing and income security and freedom from discrimination. The pandemic continues to teach us profound lessons about resilience and the force of the human spirit in hard and challenging times.

During this period, CCL has received tremendous pro bono support from the ACT legal community. A huge thanks to all our pro bono firms, secondees, volunteers and students for your excellent and generous contributions to CCL particularly where the pandemic meant that much of that assistance had to be provided remotely during this year. Special thanks to Clayton Utz and our new pro bono partner, HWL Ebsworth Lawyers for providing full time secondees during the year.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to CCL's Board for their diligent governance and support of the Centre's staff and operations during the year.



**Genevieve Bolton**  
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 this reporting period, Genevieve Bolton, continued to chair Economic Justice Australia's Board position she has held since August 2016.

During the 2020-2021 financial year, we participated in the following forums and meetings:

- Law Society ACT- Access to Justice Committee
- Economic Justice Australia - Members' Meetings
- Economic Justice Australia - Board Meetings
- Rough Sleeper Working Group
- Alexander Maconochie Centre Women's Reference Group
- Australia Wide Homeless Legal Persons' Legal Services Forum
- Youth Housing and Homeless Forum
- Joint Pathways Meetings
- Anti-Poverty Week Executive Committee
- Quarterly meetings with Housing ACT
- Community Legal Centre Australia - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Network
- Housing Affordability Forum
- ACTCOSS Monthly Members meetings
- Access to Justice and Human Rights Committee
- Roundtable on External Merits review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT
- Consultation on Bimbri
- Focus Group on the Protection of Rights Service Review
- Community Legal Centre's Australia - Network Convenors Meeting
- Community Legal Centre's Australia - Human Rights Network
- Community Legal Centre's Australia - Community Services Network
- ACT Law Society- Inclusion and Diversity Committee
- Community Legal Centre's Australia - Disability Rights Network
- ACT Law Society - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Committee Meeting
- CCL's Annual Disability Forum
- ACT Legal Assistance Forum
- ACT Legal Assistance Forum - Service Planning meeting
- What's New on the Street meetings
- Trauma – Informed Community of Practice
- Scaling up Human Rights Protections in the ACT, Law Week, Panel Discussion



# 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 our Program much success in spreading 'Dhurrawang' through your Aboriginal Human Rights Program."*

We also thank Wiradjuri artist Leanne Pope for 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 raindrops 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's solicitors and our resolve to empower our community through social justice.

During the 2020-2021 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 the 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 Co-operation – to progress the interests of our clients and assist First Nations people to access justice through a human rights and culturally informed framework.

## Our Clients & COVID- 19

COVID-19 continued to have an impact on our client group, and we saw an increase in requests for assistance during this time, particularly in respect of tenancy matters and requests for advice from clients in the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

## Our Staff

This financial year saw movement both in and out of Dhurrawang.

In October 2020, Rachelle Kelly joined Dhurrawang as a full-time paralegal whilst continuing her legal studies. Rachelle is a proud Barkindji Wiimpatja Noongu (woman) who has lived and worked on Ngunnawal Country most of her life. Rachelle joined us from the public service and hit the ground running on the SS&T advice line and with Dhurrawang.

On 22 March 2021, Wiradjuri woman and solicitor, Emma Towney commenced as Program Manager of Dhurrawang. Emma stepped into this role as Parastou Hatami began winding back in preparation for her departure from Dhurrawang and CCL in late May 2021 to undertake an exciting overseas opportunity with her family.

We would like to thank Parastou for the tireless dedication and commitment she brought to Dhurrawang over the years. Parastou championed with the support of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to establish Dhurrawang in February 2017 as a separate culturally safe and trauma informed program of CCL. Dhurrawang would not be where it is today without the constant drive from Parastou to ensure that Dhurrawang remained true to its goals of providing a safe and respectful legal service to all First Nations clients and the engagement and development of First Nations solicitors, paralegals and law students.

Towards the end of the reporting period also saw the commencement of Alexandra Palk as Supervising Solicitor in Dhurrawang. Alexandra worked closely with Parastou in transitioning into the Supervising Solicitor role and brought with her a wealth of litigation, tenancy, and social security law experience.

This financial year also saw the Dhurrawang team hold an inaugural planning day with Karl Manning, Genevieve Bolton, and Rachael Clark also in attendance. It was a very productive day and projected a clear path forward for the Dhurrawang team for the following 12 months and beyond.

## Students

During this reporting period Dhurrawang guided and supervised ANU CLED students Sarah Lim, Muhammad Khalil and Olivia Creagh to undertake casework with our clients. We delivered tutorials for all CCL CLED students on Human Rights Lawyering and on the social and legal issues impacting Dhurrawang clients and the communities we serve.



**Dhurrawang's Staff Team: Emma Towney, Parastou Hatami, Rachelle Kelly**

## Dhurrawang AMC Prison Outreach Project

During the reporting period Dhurrawang was successful in its bid to secure a \$10,000 grant from the Chief Ministers Charitable Fund through Hands Across Canberra. This funding has helped us set up the Dhurrawang AMC prison outreach project. We extend our appreciation to Commissioners Helen Watchirs, Heidi Yates, and Jon Peach for supporting our application.

As part of the commencement of the outreach, Dhurrawang met with AMC's executive officers to discuss our services and goals for the Dhurrawang AMC Outreach. We were pleased with the proactive and cooperative response received and this has paved the way for an ongoing dialogue with AMC management, in matters affecting our AMC clients.

We also met with AMC Sentence Management Officers to introduce our legal service and practice areas, share our goals for extending Dhurrawang's services to potential clients in AMC and to discuss pathways for making referrals.

In consultation with AMC Sentence Managers, Dhurrawang developed plain English fliers for distribution to raise awareness of and increase access to Dhurrawang's services within AMC.

Despite our planned face to face information and legal outreach sessions being impacted by COVID-19 restrictions Dhurrawang saw a modest increase in requests for legal advice and assistance, as well as for referrals to other services.

## Law Reform & Community Development

During the reporting period, Dhurrawang provided a submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. The submission was made in response to a call for contributions from community services and stakeholders to the issues of the experiences of First Nations People with Disability in Australia.

Dhurrawang also participated in a range of external panels and seminars including two important panels on Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility during Law Week 2021. We were also involved in co-hosting a panel at the University of Canberra on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Rights and Action during Reconciliation week 2021 and Emma Towney participated in the ACT Law Society Inclusion panel as a panelist to talk about her experience as a First Nations solicitor working at CCL and within Dhurrawang.

Dhurrawang also commenced discussions with the ACT Government and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and staff within community organisations on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the ACT justice system.



**Sophie Trevitt, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and Executive Officer, Change the Record, Dr Justin Barker, Executive Director Youth Coalition ACT, ACT Attorney General, Shane Rattenbury, Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner Jodie Griffiths-Cook and Emma Towney, Solicitor/Program Manager Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights program presenting at Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility – keeping kids out of prison – forum discussion as part of Law Week 2021**

## Casework

During the reporting period we assisted 139 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, providing 205 advices, 204 legal tasks and we carried 64 representation services. Of the 139 clients, 65 were new clients to Dhurrawang and CCL and over 70% of our client group presented with disability and/or mental illness.

Several of Dhurrawang's clients were incarcerated throughout the course of their matters, demonstrating the importance of our AMC prison outreach developing and maintaining communication and referral pathways for First Nations clients within AMC.

Many of Dhurrawang's clients were referred by a friend or relative. This both highlights the importance of building trust and support for Dhurrawang within the community and the success of Dhurrawang's efforts to reach clients through outreach activities.

The majority of our clients sought assistance in relation to a dispute with Housing ACT or in connection with seeking access to housing while homeless. There was also a steady increase in requests for assistance in relation to seeking repairs to current Housing ACT properties.

## Committees

Emma and Parastou continued to sit on the ACT Law Society Access to Justice and Human Rights Committees.

In September 2020 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee was officially established within the ACT Law Society. Dhurrawang was instrumental in advocating and progressing the establishment of this committee with Emma being named the inaugural chair of the committee

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

## Case Study – Katrina's Story

Katrina (not her real name) is a Torres Strait Islander woman who had been residing in a community housing property for the last 10 years. The housing provider towed Katrina's car away without her consent and a verbal altercation took place. As a result of the conflict, she was issued an eviction notice with immediate effect.

Katrina walked into our office seeking advice and given the urgency of her impending homelessness, she was immediately seen by a solicitor in our Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program. A decision was made to file an urgent application that afternoon with the ACT Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (ACAT) to prevent the eviction.

ACAT stopped the eviction and set the case down for a full hearing the following week. During our discussions with Katrina, we identified that without her home Katrina would likely be homeless for an extended period due to a lack of available alternative housing; that her long recovery from drug and alcohol dependence would be put at risk; and that she would be unable to attend regular visits with her children who are in kinship care. In light of this information our solicitors worked with Katrina to connect her with other community and culturally appropriate services to ensure that all of Katrina's current needs were being met.

The Dhurrawang solicitor remained in constant contact with her via phone and text to ensure she understood the ACAT process and to assist in making any additional referrals Katrina required. While the litigation was ongoing, Dhurrawang facilitated a referral to a different community housing provider and fortunately Katrina was offered and accepted a stable and secure home in a different property. Dhurrawang proceeded with the ACAT hearing to ensure appropriate orders were put in place so that Katrina had time to collect her personal possessions and to ensure that rent she had paid in advance to be returned to her in a timely manner



# Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Report

During the 2020-2021 financial year the RAP working group finalised CCL's second RAP – Innovate RAP. This RAP was officially endorsed by Reconciliation Australia on 7 July 2021 and can now be accessed on CCL's website. This RAP concentrates on implementing reconciliation in the workplace and is designed to outline actions that work towards CCL's vision of reconciliation.

In February 2021 we purchased artwork from a First Nations man in AMC for use as the cover work for the Innovate RAP. We acknowledge and thank Wiradjuri man TJ Freeman for use of his artwork 'Prison Dreaming'. The artwork depicts TJ's feelings about being in prison. As he says "I have been through dark times but I can still see the good things I have to look forward to when I get out."

Whilst work was done on finalising this RAP, the RAP Working Group continued monitoring the progress of Action Items in the Reflect RAP and can report that all action items have been actioned or were near completion at the end of the reporting period.

We celebrated NAIDOC week (8 – 15 November 2020) with Yeddung Mura at their NAIDOC week event. As well as hosting a film screening for CCL and the Women's Legal Centre. Dhurrawang T-Shirts were designed and purchased to help staff celebrate NAIDOC week.

In March 2021, the RAP Working Group in consultation with First Nations staff started a First Nations Bookshelf in the CCL library. The vision of the bookshelf is to build a collection of fiction, non-fiction, autobiography and other books on or by First Nations people for staff to take home and enjoy. This bookshelf goes towards our RAP action item of increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning.

As part of Reconciliation week 2021 (27 May to 3 June 2021) CCL attended a film screening organized by Women's Legal Centre and Dhurrawang. Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program also co-hosted a panel at the University of Canberra on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Rights and Action.

There was some movement in membership within the RAP Working Group this reporting period, in September 2020 we welcomed Helen Fisher from our board as a member to the Working Group and Michelle Barclay joined the Group when Erin Rikus commenced maternity leave.

**Emma Towney**

Chair, Reconciliation Action Plan working group



**CANBERRA  
COMMUNITY  
LAW**

## Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

November 2020 to November 2022



# Disability Discrimination Law

## Staff

Disability Discrimination Law (DDL) had one staffing addition this financial year. Jessica Spargo joined DDL as a temporary Project Officer from 21 June 2021, working approximately one day a week for 6 months on our Social Scripts project.

## Client Work

DDL provided assistance to 81 clients in the 2020-21 financial year, representing a 17% increase in the number of DDL clients.

The three major areas were provision of services and facilities, education, and accommodation.

DDL provided 29 representation services to 26 clients. Each of these services related to disability discrimination, with 4 of these cases also including a complaint against a health service, 1 complaint also involving race discrimination, and 1 complaint involving a sexual harassment complaint. Several of these complaints settled with the payment of monetary compensation; changes to policies and procedures; the provision of reasonable adjustments for the client; and the provision of training.

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



**Farzana Choudhury, Disability Discrimination Law Senior Solicitor.**

## Case Study: Lucy's Story

Lucy (not her real name) has a vision impairment. She was a volunteer at a retail store. When the store advertised a paid position, she decided to apply. When Lucy approached her manager at the store to ask for a reference, the manager refused her request and discouraged her from applying, saying that she would not be able to fulfil the requirements of the role because of her disability.

DDL helped Lucy draft a disability discrimination complaint to the ACT Human Rights Commission and assisted her at conciliation. The other party agreed to all of Lucy's claims including a compensation payment, a letter of apology and references, reviewing the organisations training and induction procedures and providing staff with disability awareness training.

## Stakeholder Engagement and Community Legal Education

DDL participated in the Community Law Clinical 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 CLCs Australia Disability Rights Network and National Human Rights Network, and locally through the ACT Law Society Inclusion and Diversity Committee. DDL presented on issues experienced by people with disability in social housing at Rights and Inclusion Australia's ACT Disability and Housing Forum.



**Farzana Choudhury presenting at the Rights and Inclusion Australia ACT Disability and Housing Forum. May 2021.**



DDL delivered community education to students at Canberra Institute of Technology on discrimination law and spotting legal issues and delivered a community legal education seminar on assistance animals and your rights in partnership with mindDog Australia, as part of Mental Health Month 2020. DDL developed factsheets on this topic which were also translated to Easy English. DDL also facilitated monthly community education sessions on a range of topics through the ACT Law Society's What Are We Not Talking About inclusion and diversity webinar series, including a session on building an inclusive legal profession (with a focus on inclusion of lawyers and law students with disability).

DDL also commenced its innovative social scripts project in June 2020 (expected completion December 2020). Social scripts are person centered narratives used to introduce new events, interactions and what to expect. They use a combination of simple text and images to explain concepts and foreshadow emotions and what to expect. CCL's social scripts are designed to help autistic clients as well as clients with intellectual and psychosocial disability as well as low levels of English literacy to access legal services and engage with certain legal processes. The scripts are being developed in partnership with Autism Spectrum Australia and with support from the ACT Office for Disability.



Farzana Choudhury with Assistance Animals and Your Rights learning lunch presenters and participants. October 2020.

# Disability Action Plan Report

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

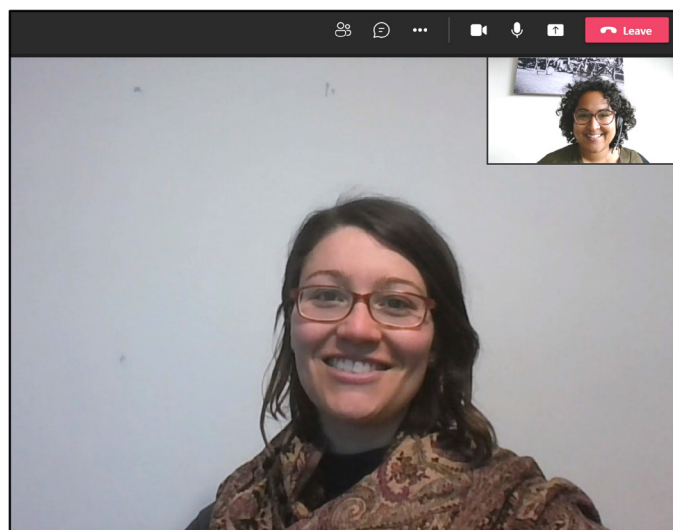
1. To increase awareness at CCL of the needs of people with disability.
2. To improve accessibility to CCL's services
3. To increase participation opportunities for people with disability and provide reasonable adjustments
4. To increase consultation with and participation by people with disability in 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 2020-21 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. Developing a brochure on help CCL provides for people with disability (including an Easy English version)
3. Developing Easy English brochures on CCL Help for People with Disability, Assistance Animals and your Rights, and Free Legal Help for People in Prison
4. Conducting an accessibility audit of the CCL website and implementing changes to improve its accessibility (expected completion December 2020)
5. Providing training to staff on working with clients with psychosocial disability
6. Updating CCL's training on working with clients (delivered to Community Law Clinical Program students) from a trauma informed practice perspective
7. Facilitating monthly community education sessions on a range of topics through the ACT Law Society's What Are We Not Talking About inclusion and diversity webinar series, including a session on building an inclusive legal profession (with a focus on inclusion of lawyers and law students with disability), and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
8. Attending consultations on the proposed changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme

9. Commencing CCL's innovative social scripts project in partnership with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect), to help autistic clients as well as clients with intellectual and psychosocial disability as well as low levels of English literacy to access legal services and engage with certain legal processes – which has included paid consumer testing of the scripts through Aspect's think tank of autistic adults from diverse backgrounds
10. Updating our list of suppliers that support people with disability, and sourcing catering from an organisation that provides employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

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.



**Jessica Spargo working remotely on the social scripts project with Farzana Choudhury.**



# Housing Law

## Overview

Housing Law provided assisted 479 clients in the 2020-2021 financial year.

Housing Law provided the following assistance in relation to public housing, occupancy agreements, community housing matters and related issues:

- 764 legal advices;
- 291 legal tasks
- 87 duty lawyer services
- 117 representation services

## Trends

Housing Law services relating to social housing assistance have been continual and demanding. Severe shortage of social housing stock in the ACT has seen a continual trend of desperate clients telephoning the service and seeking advice and legal assistance in trying to move from standard and high needs housing list to the priority housing list so they can be allocated housing faster. Unfortunately, the reality has been that even tenants on the priority list are waiting many months (and some more than 2 years) to be allocated accommodation, even on the priority housing list.

Urgent repair issues seem to make up more than 50 per cent of clients seeking advice and legal assistance in trying to have Housing ACT remedy these repairs. Many repairs have remained unremedied for many months with some not being attended to for a few years. The worrying trend here is that tenants are having to deal with Housing ACT and with Programmed (the maintenance contractor to Housing ACT) together. Many of our telephone advice sessions are working with housing tenants who are pushed back and forth between Programmed and Housing ACT with no final resolution provided by either. Many housing tenants are ill equipped to advocate on their own behalf to ensure that these repairs are remedied in a timely nature. We can do that for them.

A further noticeable trend has been Housing ACT contacting long standing tenants who have been living in freestanding homes for periods between 20 and 30 plus years, only to advise them that they will need to move under the Growth and Renewal Public Housing Program. Many clients who contact us in this category are distressed due to the lack of consultation with them by Housing ACT and the real prospect of being moved elsewhere and away from family and community that they have spent much of their life establishing. While any move under the Program is couched as being "voluntary" at this stage, tenants have also been reminded by Housing ACT that it has legal triggers to move tenants if it needed to. We have seen in our communication with

Housing ACT, on behalf of clients, that simple further dialogue and communication can alleviate a tenant's concerns and anxiety.

There has also been a consistent trend of legal advice and assistance given to tenants telephoning about Tenant Responsible Maintenance invoices, Notices to Vacate, applications for transfer, internal review of Housing ACT decisions, tenancy debts, Housing ACT property standards guidelines, death of tenants, residents residing with tenants and rent matters. Our Housing Law service attends to all these matters on tenants' behalf.

## Case Study – Penny's Story

Penny was a model tenant in her public housing property in a high-density complex for 10 years. She became a target of abuse, escalating to physical threats by her neighbours who moved into the complex for approximately one year before seeking some assistance from CCL. The client had obtained Personal Protection Orders (PPO's) against the neighbours, but the police were unable to enforce the PPO's due to the proximity of the properties. Penny fled the property believing that she was unsafe in the complex. Penny exhausted all her savings staying in motels and became mentally and physically ill because of her situation. She was unable to continue to work due to ill health.

Penny engaged consistently with Housing ACT and the Australian Federal Police and was placed on the High Needs list for a one-bedroom property. Penny requested assistance from CCL to be transferred.

CCL worked with Penny to obtain the necessary evidence and documentation to support her urgent application for a transfer. CCL then prepared detailed submissions and persistently advocated to Housing ACT by phone to first get her onto the Priority Housing List and then for an out of turn allocation. CCL's advocacy was successful, and Penny was transferred to a quiet property complex.

Penny contacted CCL again for assistance when she received a bill from Housing ACT from the old property. CCL was able to get the charges withdrawn on the basis that there was no final inspection conducted at the old property. Penny reported to CCL that she was happy in the new property and that she had recently started to work again.

## ACAT Duty Lawyer Service

During the reporting period, the ACAT Duty Lawyer service provided 87 duty lawyer services. Throughout the entire reporting period, the ACAT Duty Lawyer service worked with ACAT to provide duty lawyer services in person. Substantive hearings were done via videoconference.

Although the eviction moratorium was in place for part of this period, the ACAT Duty Lawyer service was extremely busy running some complex repairs and maintenance cases. It also provided urgent assistance to several people in occupancy agreements who were given either lock out notices or had already been locked out of their premises. The ACAT Duty Lawyer service also ran several matters where the status of the person (that is whether they were a resident, tenant, or something else) living in the accommodation was not clear and needed to be established. When the first eviction moratorium ended, the ACAT Duty Lawyer service was faced with a backlog in Housing ACT's applications for evictions and accrual of significant rental debt during the moratorium.

The ACAT Duty Lawyer service had three published ACAT decisions during this period.

## Case Study: Gail's Story

Gail (not her real name) was homeless with children after escaping family violence. Even though she was concerned about the condition of a Housing ACT property offered to her she took the property because she had no other options. Gail started raising her concerns about the mouldy carpet, damp conditions, and lack of security from the moment she moved in. The family started to get sick regularly. She continued to raise her concerns over many years, and it was not until Housing ACT agreed to change the carpet after a family violence incident that the contractors discovered dangerous black mould throughout the property and issued a stop work order on the ground that the property was too dangerous to work in. Gail was refused entry to the property and placed in a motel. In the meantime, her belongings were left out in the rain destroying much of what was precious to her.

Gail commenced proceedings on her own before ACAT but due to the complexity of the factual

and legal issues involved ACAT requested CCL's assistance and we agreed to represent.

CCL's Duty Lawyer attended ACAT and successfully amended Gail's application. She then spent many hours with Gail obtaining her instructions and collecting the evidence required to support her claim. The legal work included reviewing documents, undertaking legal research, quantifying Gail's claim, and drafting detailed legal submissions. Throughout the matter, CCL's lawyer also strongly advocated for Gail and her family to be transferred to another Housing ACT property. Prior to the substantive hearing of the matter, CCL was able to negotiate a settlement with Housing ACT on behalf of Gail which consisted of a substantial compensation payment and a transfer to another property.

## Case Study: Hayley's Story

Hayley was a young woman with multiple severe and complex physical and mental health conditions. She had recently separated from a violent partner who had insisted that she hand over all her Centrelink payments to him. This had resulted in Hayley having no money to pay the rent. Due to her medical conditions, she was also scared of being away from her home for too long. This meant that Hayley was not completing her mutual obligation activities required by Centrelink and her payments were being regularly suspended.

CCL's Duty Lawyer appeared at the first hearing and obtained an adjournment to provide time for Hayley to get supporting evidence from the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) about the controlling behaviours and abuse she had suffered. The adjournment was also granted to allow CCL to assist Hayley get her Centrelink payment reinstated, get a temporary exemption from her mutual obligation activities, and apply for the Disability Support Pension (DSP) based on her medical conditions.

Hayley was often difficult to contact as she did not always answer her phone and missed scheduled appointments. However, CCL's Duty Lawyer was able to contact Centrelink to reinstate her payments and with CCL's support, Hayley went to her GP to get medical evidence for Centrelink and ACAT. CCL provided Hayley with a letter to give to her GP setting out the factors/matters that needed to be addressed in her doctor's report. With this evidence, CCL's Duty Lawyer entered negotiations with Housing ACT. Housing ACT agreed that the rental arrears had arisen in exceptional circumstances and that it would be unjust to evict Hayley from her home. Housing ACT and the Duty Lawyer negotiated a payment plan for Hayley and agreed to submit the agreement to ACAT to make orders by consent. ACAT agreed to make the orders preventing Hayley from being evicted.

Post hearing, the CCL Duty Lawyer continued to assist Hayley with her DSP claim which was ultimately successful.

## Community Legal Education

During the reporting period, Housing Law delivered the following community legal education (CLE) activities:

- CLE session: Strategies for Law Reform – CCL's CLED students
- CLE session: Wellbeing CCL Work – How to be an effective lawyer – CCL's CLED students
- Law Week Panel Discussion: Scaling Up Human Rights Protections in the ACT (hosted and organised by CCL)
- Publication of article in ACT Law Society's Ethos Winter 2021 Edition – The need for an accessible human rights complaint system

## Policy Work

Housing Law engaged in several law reform activities in the 2020-2021 financial year including:

- Engagement with ACT Government and key stakeholders on tenancy protections/proposals in response to COVID19
- Engagement with ACT Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly members on a range of systemic public housing issues impacting on CCL's client group (including severe shortage of public housing, evictions, removal of no cause notices, occupancy agreement reform)
- Engagement with key community partners on systemic housing issues
- Participation at workshop on minimum energy performance standards for rental homes in the ACT
- Quarterly meetings with Housing ACT
- Participation at Housing ACT Strategy Symposium



# 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.

In 2020 expanded the service to include a Thursday night COVID-19 Legal Clinic as part of NTLAS. The COVID-19 Legal Clinic addresses a broad range of legal matters directly and indirectly resulting from COVID related issues. These included things like function and travel cancellations which affected many people during the period and continues to affect people. The COVID-19 Legal Clinic also advised on quite several employment disputes directly or indirectly related to the pandemic. Our COVID-19 Legal Clinic ceased operations at the end of June 2021 as the funding for the service ceased.

After changing to a fully remote service in early 2020, we kept the service operating that way anticipating further lockdowns. The service currently operates entirely remotely.

The service has seen an increase in the complexity of matters. We have dealt with a significant number of building disputes, including issues with off the plan purchases.

Our remote model has changed our volunteer roster as solicitors used to work in pairs, but now work alone taking instructions from clients and providing advice after conferring with the supervising solicitor and conducting any necessary research. Hence, we have not used as many volunteers as we did in the past, but we have certainly appreciated the enthusiastic support of our volunteers and pro-bono partners.

We have found that our clients are still facing a great deal of unpredictability. Building projects have stalled, employment issues have arisen. We are still conducting a lot more in-depth research and analysis on matters, and we are spending more time on each matter. We are also performing a lot more legal tasks (as opposed to one-off advices).

Having provided around 180 discrete legal advices in the last year, (a 30% increase on the previous year) NTLAS continues to be busy and continues to be a barometer for legal issues in the community, with everything from employment law, traffic infringements, contracts, insurance, wills and estates, consumer issues and a range of other issues brought to us by clients. The lowering of the speed limit in Civic to 40km/h has seen a marked increase in enquiries regarding traffic infringements.

NTLAS is there to fill the service gap for clients who would not qualify for means tested services but cannot afford private legal representation. We strive to assist in some way with virtually every enquiry we get. We don't always solve people's problems, but we mostly always assist them with next steps, whatever they may be.

This year we got a dedicated NTLAS email address to facilitate fast, direct communications with clients. This has been another important step in adapting to our revised service delivery model.

We are proud to offer this vital, adaptable, unique service to the Canberra community. We are extremely grateful to those members of the Canberra legal community who give generously of their time and expertise to keep NTLAS operating. We couldn't do it without them. Some of our volunteers have moved on to other roles, and other jurisdictions in the last year or so. We thank them sincerely for their dedication.



## Case Study – Jane and Rob’s Story

Jane (not her real name) and her partner Rob (not his real name) had booked a trip to Africa just before Covid. It included flights, accommodation and unique local tours and experiences. They booked through a large local travel agency which then booked several in-country services on their behalf. The total was over \$20 000, and they had pre-paid most of that.

They purchased travel insurance which allowed them to change their travel dates, but for very limited reasons. Naturally they were not able to travel due to Covid. In the meantime, the booking agency they used became insolvent. They were left with vaguely worded travel insurance and no chance of taking action against the (now insolvent) company they had booked with. We analysed their travel insurance document and advised them on an offer of settlement with the insurer. While they did not get a full refund, they were certainly in a more advantageous position than they might have otherwise been.

Jane and Rob sent a follow up email after settling with the insurance company:

*‘it’s been very helpful to have had your advice on the matter. As I mentioned on the phone, this has been a very arduous process for my partner and I, with limited luck from other support services. However, to receive your expert advice (and so promptly!) has helped to set our mind at ease... The Night Time Legal Advice Service has certainly been of great help to us and I will be recommending your services far and wide! Thanks again for your assistance.’*



John Alati, Supervising Solicitor, Street Law, Night Time Legal Advice Service, COVID-19 Legal Clinic

# Social Security Law

## Overview

Social Security Law assisted 209 clients in the 2020-2021 financial year.

Social Security Law provided assistance in relation to Centrelink, Social Security and Family Assistance law and related issues:

- 276 legal advices
- 137 legal tasks
- 40 representation services

## Trends

Common issues included:

- Applying for the disability support pension and appealing rejection of the disability support pension claim;
- Centrelink debt (including Robodebts);
- Cuts or reduction to payments.

During the period where COVID19 was in the ACT community, clients, particularly those with conditions or family members with conditions that made them more vulnerable, were reluctant to access Centrelink service centres. There were also changes to Centrelink's service delivery with social workers and community engagement officers not offering in person appointments. Clients reported difficulties navigating the alternative service options such as the phone and online systems. We worked to assist clients to get income support payments or deal with other social security issues in a timely way.

Following the lifting of the temporary suspension on mutual obligation requirements and debt raising and recovery activities and the end of the COVID19 supplement, we saw an increase in demand for our services. We have also more recently seen a rise in demand following the end of the COVID19 disaster payments for incredibly vulnerable people who are not eligible for any other payments (usually due to visa status).

We thank HWL Ebsworth for partnering with us to provide legal support to the advice line with their graduates undertaking 1-2 rotations of 3 weeks full-time. They provided invaluable assistance writing up interview notes, undertaking legal research, drafting correspondence and submissions, and making follow up calls. Adrian Power and Philip Finley continued his volunteering with the Service, and we thank him for his assistance.

The Social Security Law service enjoyed working closely with the Socio-Legal Practice Clinic to help with clients with complex social and legal issues.

## Case Study: William's Story

William (not his real name) contacted our Social Security Law service as he was facing extreme financial hardship. He had no income, no assets and no shares or property that he might rely upon to sustain himself during the preclusion period. He was also unable to meet his liabilities, including ongoing utilities bills and rent to remain in his community housing. As a result, he was facing the real likelihood of eviction.

Centrelink rejected his claim for Jobseeker due to the imposition of a compensation preclusion period. Following a serious accident at work, William had received a compensation payment and was precluded from receiving a Centrelink payment for several years.

CCL's Socio-Legal Practice (SLP) Clinic social worker met with William by phone over many hours to gain an in-depth understanding of his situation. With his funds exhausted and his financial situation dire his fragile emotional state from the ongoing experience of complex trauma was at risk of further deterioration.

Following the psycho-social assessment and report the SLP Clinic social worker and the Social Security lawyer had several joint phone meetings with William to assist him to obtain supporting documentation including medical reports to document the trauma that he had experienced for which he was now being treated by a psychologist. The SLP Clinic social worker and Social Security lawyer together drafted a submission to the Authorised Review Officer (ARO) arguing that the compensation preclusion period ought to be reduced based on special circumstances. The ARO agreed to waive the compensation preclusion period from the date of William's Jobseeker claim resulting in William getting an arrears payment.

The Social Security law service assisted many clients who had legal issues which had arisen directly due to the health pandemic. One example is Harry's case.

## Case Study: Harry's Story

'Harry' (not his real name) had received the single rate of Age Pension for over 10 years after a successful Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) decision to not treat him as part of a couple for special reason. His wife spends substantial time in Austria seeking medical treatment and had not been able to return to Australia due to COVID-19.

In March 2020, Centrelink changed Harry's payment to the partnered rate resulting in less income. Harry appealed this decision to the AAT (Tier 1) and was successful. Centrelink appealed that decision to AAT (Tier 2). Harry's mental health started to deteriorate as the legal proceedings continued for almost a year.

CCL assisted Harry by reviewing the Tribunal documents and providing him with advice about additional evidence needed. We helped him get expert reports from his travel agent to confirm his wife was unable to get back to Australia and from his wife's doctors to confirm her medical condition and the need for continuity of care. CCL drafted witness statements for Harry and his wife together with a statement of issues, facts, and contentions in response to Centrelink's submissions. CCL had discussions with Centrelink with a view to trying to settle the matter.

Following a review of the material, Centrelink agreed to withdraw its appeal due to the impact of COVID-19, restored his single rate and made an arrears payment. Harry's mental health improved once this matter was resolved, and he was receiving the appropriate rate of payment.

## Community Legal Education

During the reporting period, Social Security Law delivered the following community legal education (CLE) activities:

- CLE session at Toora: Centrelink and Employment (with Women's Legal Centre)
- CLE session – Facebook Live – Update on Centrelink
- CLE session – Centrelink – CCL's CLED students

## Policy Work

Social Security Law's main level of engagement in law reform activities during in the 2020-2021 was through providing input into Economic Justice Australia's (EJA) policy work and law reform activities. Social Security law provided case studies to support EJA's national law reform work and provided input into policy positions.

Social Security Law also attended and participated in Departmental meetings with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia as part of an EJA delegation including on topics such as the review and appeals processes and Disability Support Pension -eligibility and assessments.



**Social Security and Housing Law Team Members:**  
Anusha Goonetilleke, Rebecca Irvine, Alex Palk,  
Genevieve Bolton, Clyde Cosentino and Rachael Clark

# Socio-Legal Practice Clinic

## Overview

Many of our clients are very resourceful and are adept at finding solutions to the challenges and systemic barriers they are facing. Many have experience of complex trauma throughout their childhood and beyond, which may impact on their emotional, physical, and psychological wellbeing. For example, their cognition, their emotional regulation, and their memory may all be adversely affected. Whilst people might want to obtain a Centrelink income or social housing, for many the energy and effort required to participate in their legal matter is sometimes overwhelming. Most clients supported by the SLP Clinic disclosed experiencing suicidal ideation, social isolation, and sleeplessness due to the losses and challenges they were facing.

## Year in Review

The Socio-Legal Practice Clinic (SLP Clinic) assisted 61 clients through providing 152 discrete non legal support services and 19 ongoing non legal support services. By providing holistic, trauma-informed, and intensive support to clients, communicating with them as regularly as possible and acknowledging and validating their concerns and fears, the SLP Clinic actively encouraged clients to be involved in their legal matter.

Some examples of collaborative efforts of the SLP Clinic include supporting two individuals whilst their compensation preclusion periods were being challenged. This intensive support involved conducting ongoing psycho-social assessments and providing crisis counselling to support each person throughout their legal matter. Thankfully these matters were not concurrent, so the SLP Clinic was able to provide high-level support for each person. Several clients were supported whilst submissions were being compiled for transfer applications with Housing ACT, with the reason for the transfer request most often being experiences of trauma at the home. The challenges of accessing support from services due to resources and eligibility criteria means that compiling support letters for Housing ACT might take several weeks or months. The SLP Clinic provided some comprehensive support letters upon request, to assist solicitors with advocacy to Housing ACT.

With restrictions due to COVID-19, communication with clients was often facilitated by telephone and text messages, and sometimes email. Face to face appointments were offered for people due to cultural protocols and for people with a disability, people without access to a telephone and / or internet, and for people of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander identity, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The SLP Clinic is very grateful to The Snow Foundation, YWCA, and Community Options for providing brokerage for essential assistance such as psychology appointments, rent payments and rubbish removal. The SLP Clinic also liaised with community services such as Women's Legal Centre, Winnunga, Companion House, Multicultural Hub, Community Health and Care Financial Counselling. Together these collaborations helped people to access urgent healthcare and practical support, which strengthened their capacity to work with CCL.

The SLP Clinic also participated in professional development throughout the year and joined the CLC Community Services Network facilitated by Community Legal Centre's Australia and chaired by Helen Wallace of Caxton Legal Centre Inc, all of which provided learning, support, and reduced isolation. We also participated in a webinar about integrated legal and social work practice in July 2020, hosted by Community Legal Centre's Australia.



**Rebecca Irvine, Socio-Legal Practice Clinic Social Worker, Farzana Choudhury, Disability Discrimination Senior Solicitor and Genevieve Bolton, Executive Director/ Principal Solicitor**

## Acknowledgements and thanks

The SLP Clinic also wishes to pay tribute to the staff, solicitors, volunteers, and students across CCL who have provided support to the SLP Clinic in many ways, including time (a precious resource at CCL), understanding about legal advice provided to clients, resources (including information about local services) and energy boosts from chocolate and snacks!

Huge thanks to the Snow Foundation, the Clayton Utz Foundation, and the ACT Government for funding this service.



# 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 pandemic interrupting legal service delivery across the Centre and with our outreach partners, the 2020-2021 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. 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. We then moved our session back in person when and where possible working with our community partners. Street Law received a grant from ActewAGL to assist its ID clinic and included funds for birth certificates for clients as well as a video and factsheet about obtaining ID in the ACT.

Street Law's Women in Prison Legal Empowerment Service (WIPLES) program went from strength to strength, with our WIPLES co-ordinator and Street Law solicitor, Michelle Barclay, delivering the program in conjunction with several 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. Michelle was awarded the Westfield Local Hero award in October 2020 based on her work running the program for the last two years, the outstanding outcomes she has obtained for her clients, and was voted as one of three winners by members of the community.

## 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 2020-2021, Street Law provided regular outreach services at the following locations:

- Early Morning Centre
- St John's Care
- Woden Youth Centre
- Junction Youth Service

- AMC (WIPLES)
- Toora House

Street Law also established two new outreaches in the first half of 2021 at Toora AOD clinic and Mackillop House.

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 pandemic led to a temporary pause of outreaches, and then an adjustment to online outreaches. Most outreaches returned to in-person except where the outreach partner requested that they stayed online.

## Staff

Street Law had a few staffing changes in the 2020-2021 year:

- John Alati continued as Supervising Solicitor;
- Michelle Barclay continued on as WIPLES coordinator and Street Law Solicitor;
- Erin Rikus continued in the Street Law team until she went on maternity leave on 12 March 2021; and
- Stephanie Booker continued as Program Manager until 12 February 2021;
- Samantha Bradley joined Street Law as a solicitor from 8 February 2021 to 23 April 2021.
- Anusha Goonetilleke joined Street Law on 15 February 2021. Anusha was Street Law Supervising Solicitor from June 2013 to December 2017 and has been working in the Social Security and Tenancy Program since 2018;
- Robert Cook, a previous front office manager and admin intern at CCL, commenced his Practical Legal Training in Street Law for 3 days per week from September 2020, to finish up on 22 January 2021.

We thank Robert, Stephanie, and Samantha for their contribution to Street Law and look forward to Erin returning to the Street Law team soon.



**Street Law's Staff Team: John Alati, Michelle Barclay, Erin Rikus, Anusha Goonetilleke and Samantha Bradley**

## Pro Bono Support – Secondees and Volunteers

Street Law continued to receive amazing support from the ACT legal community. In 2020-21, Street Law received over 592.5 hours of pro bono support in the form of secondments.

This financial year our secondees were:

- Lauren Lai, Claire Smart and Charlie Light from Australian Government Solicitor; and
- Gabrielle Wilson and Lydia Edwards from Clayton Utz.

We would like to thank all our secondees who provide invaluable support to Street Law's operations.

## Client work

In 2020-2021 Street Law assisted 131 clients. We provided 172 one-off legal advices and 63 legal tasks assistance services, opened 26 cases and finalised 39 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
- Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme
- Fines
- Bankruptcy; and
- Homelessness issues.

Through our WIPLES, we partnered with several other free legal services in the ACT to co-present community legal education sessions on the following topics:

- Credit and debt consumer credit
- Child protection
- Domestic Violence and Centrelink and Housing issues
- Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme
- Bail and Parole with McKenna Taylor and Legal Aid;
- How to spot a legal issue
- Care and Protection (with Women's Legal Centre).

During this reporting period, Street Law developed some new fact sheets about:

- Applying for an ACT Proof of Identity Card Without a Birth Certificate
- Pets
- Window washing and other on-road commercial activities
- Public Transport Offences

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

## Law Reform

During the period, Street Law provided a written Submission to the Select Committee on the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Bill 2021 and undertook some media around this submission. Street Law provided evidence at a hearing into this bill.

Street Law informally engaged in law reform activities orally and via email on proposals to future public health directions to ensure sufficient protections for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

## Community Engagement – Meetings and Events

Street Law continued to engage with the community sector to raise awareness of our service and remain abreast of developments in the sector. In 2020-21, Street Law attended the following meetings and events:

- ACT Council of Social Services – Justice Reform Group meetings
- ACT Legal Assistance Forum, including the Community Legal Education Working Group
- Joint Pathways forums
- Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum
- Who's New on the Streets Meetings
- Youth Coalition Housing and Homelessness forums
- Hands Across Canberra Fundraising lunch
- ACT Government's Rough Sleepers Working Group
- Health Justice Australia workshops and tutorials
- Economic Justice Australia (EJA) Social Media Working Group
- ACTCOSS meetings
- AMC Women's Reference Group
- Women's Advisory Group – Women's Centre for Health Matters
- Know Your Services – Mingle community event
- Anti-poverty week meetings
- Meeting with other homeless people's legal services around Australia

## Case Study: Sophia's story

Sophia (not her real name) is a 16-year-old woman who left home due to reasons of family violence and abuse. Sophia was born in South Australia and has been in the ACT for 10 years. Since leaving home Sophia was couch-surfing with friends, did not have permanent accommodation and did not have access to her own identity documents. Without a passport or birth certificate, Sophia was unable to access services like Centrelink or Housing. Sophia's employer told her that she would be fired in two weeks if she didn't get a tax file number. Sophia was referred to Street Law by Anglicare to assist with obtaining an original copy of her South Australian birth certificate.

Street Law advised Sophia on the identity requirements of the South Australian government and assisted her to complete the relevant application forms. We were able to liaise with the South Australian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to arrange and pay for priority processing of Sophia's application. Since she did not have safe stable accommodation, once approved, her birth certificate was posted to Street Law for Sophia to collect. Street Law also wrote a letter to Sophia's employer explaining that she was in the process of getting the identity documents required to obtain a TFN. With Street Law assisting Sophia to access these essential identity documents in a timely way, she was able to obtain her independence and avoid returning to a situation of family violence.

## Case Study: Jason's story

Jason (not his real name) is a language teacher employed on a casual basis. In February 2021 Jason came to Street Law with a summons to attend the ACT Magistrates court due to a drink driving offence. Jason was stopped by police and returned a breath test demonstrating 0.06 BAC, above the legal limit of 0.05. Jason did not dispute that he was responsible for the offence and was remorseful. Before this incident Jason had no history of driving offences.

At the time of receiving the summons Jason had not been rostered for any shifts lately due to COVID-19 and was relying solely on Jobseeker payments from Centrelink as his only source of income. It was not feasible for him to pay a fine if convicted of the offence. It was very important to Jason that he not lose his license as he needs to drive to work due to medical conditions making it difficult to catch public transport. Further he needs to be able to drive to his medical appointments and family commitments with caring responsibilities for his adult daughter.

Street Law assisted Jason to first successfully seek an adjournment to gather evidence. With the help of Street Law Jason was able to collect letters of support from his General Practitioner, Counsellor, family and close friends. Jason also wrote a letter of apology for his offending and attended an educational program about unsafe driving. At his court appearance, Street Law represented Jason to enter a guilty plea and seek a non-conviction order.

The Magistrate was satisfied based on our submissions that it would not be appropriate to impose a penalty on Jason and he successfully got a non-conviction order. This means that the court discharged Jason without recording a conviction.

There was no penalty, no loss of licence and no criminal record. This was a great outcome for a client who was financially and mentally vulnerable and remorseful for his offending.

# Social Media

CCL is active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn and use all four platforms to promote community legal education, events we host or participate in, employment opportunities and community or sector-wide announcements that are relevant to our clients, colleagues, and the broader community.

We have 2,546 followers on Facebook, 1505 on Twitter and 862 on Instagram. Our posts regularly reach 250 – 400 individuals, with highly successful posts reaching 1000 individuals at a time.

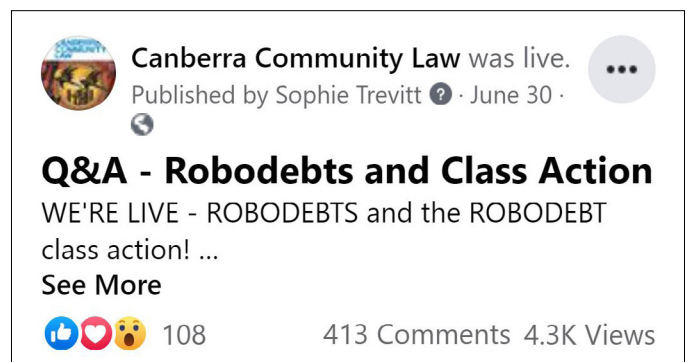
We use our social media presence to:

- Engage directly with the community about legal changes and announcements. This was particularly important during the ACT lockdown when there were numerous changes to public health orders, rights and responsibilities under Canberra's tenancy laws and social security payment entitlements.
- Facilitate and distribute community legal education by hosting live Facebook Q&As where we prepared and delivered housing and Centrelink sessions and answered community questions.
- Share government and non-government resources about where to get assistance for different legal and social needs. This was particularly important during COVID-19 when

people were struggling to pay rent, buy groceries and cope with additional pressures.

- Promote our, and sector wide, events to both our client base (over Facebook and Instagram primarily) and our colleagues (over LinkedIn and Twitter).
- Promote our COVID-19 Canberra website and its resources at <https://canberracovidlegalhelp.org.au>
- Answer general questions directly when clients message us on various platforms and refer them to appropriate legal services to ensure they get the support they need.

We make the majority of our social media content ourselves using the online design tool canva and have worked hard to improve the accessibility of our social media presence by adding image descriptions and transcripts to videos where possible.





# 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 provide external supervision for its Social Worker and granted study leave to one staff member studying law.

Professional Development Opportunities provided to staff during the reporting period included:

- Clayton Utz Webinar – Materiality, Judicial review and government decision making
- Social Security in the time of COVID (Economic Justice Australia and Community Legal Centre's Australia)
- Physical Activity and your Mental Health
- Residential Tenancy Law (ACT Law Society)
- Meaningful Conversations at Work (Community Legal Centre's Queensland)
- Key principles in administrative law and some recent cases (Australian Institute of Administrative law)
- Black Lives Matter – A Roadmap for Policing and Justice Reform in Australia (Redfern Legal Centre)
- Working towards more client centered approaches in the community legal sector -social work and legal services (Community Legal Centres Australia)
- COVID19 and the Not-for-Profit Sector – tips, traps and the unexpected (Clayton Utz)
- Automated decision making and administrative law
- CLASS new user and general user training (Community Legal Centres Australia)
- Managing Suicidal Clients (all day training) (ACT Law Society)
- Economic Justice Australia conference
- Equality in the Act: The New Discrimination Grounds and Beyond
- Work it Out: LGBTQIA+ inclusive workplaces (Community Legal Centre's Australia)
- Advanced Trauma Counselling (ACT Law Society)
- Using Actionstep as a practice management tool in your Community Legal Centre
- Workplace Year in Review FY 20 (Clayton Utz)
- Keeping calm while carrying on: Dealing with emotionally dysregulated clients
- Making strategic litigation happen (Grata Fund)
- Buffer Training (Economic Justice Australia)
- CLASS Training (Community Legal Centres Australia)
- Some tips on using service data to measure the impact of COVID19 (Community Legal Centres Australia)
- Law for non-lawyers – CYPs (Legal Aid ACT)
- Practising healthy boundaries for relationships at home and work (Community Legal Centres Queensland)
- Working effectively with people who have experienced domestic, family and/or sexual violence
- Not for Profit Leadership and Governance Masterclass (Clayton Utz)
- Intersectional diversity and the legal profession (ACT Law Society)
- Not for Profit Leadership and Governance Masterclass Session 2 (Clayton Utz)
- NDIA – Improving the NDIS Participant Experience
- Not for Profit Leadership and Governance Masterclass Session 3 (Clayton Utz)
- Stop Domestic Violence Conference
- Centrelink debt calculation training
- Working with Clients with Psychosocial Disability
- Easy English Training
- Involving communities in legal design (Justice Connect)
- National Homelessness Conference
- Mental Illness Education ACT – Lessons from 2020: Strategies to Balance the Mental Load
- Working Remotely – How to keep happy, healthy, and productive (ACT Law Society)
- Claiming Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment
- Phone System Upgrade Training
- Family Violence Experts in Conversation (ACT Law Society)
- Law Trobe Living with Disability – The named social worker project
- Mindfulness for Lawyers (ACT Law Society)
- Ethics – Action, Recognise, Manage and Resolve (ACT Law Society)
- Workplace Investigations (ACT Law Society)
- Successful Career Planning While Working Remotely
- Making your workplace more inclusive (ACT Law Society)
- ACAT Proceedings regarding the Validity of an Enduring Power of Attorney
- Understanding Refugee Experience
- Legal Intensive Series (ACT Law Society)
- Deregulation of migration agent lawyers
- Changes to Occupancy Laws (Justice and Community Safety Directorate)
- Robodebt Settlement Q and A session
- Admin Law – A Year in Review 2021 (Clayton Utz)
- Domestic Violence and Centrelink
- Tenancy changes (Legal Aid ACT)

- Trauma informed workshop
- Engaging effectively with clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Disability Support Pension session (Economic Justice Australia)
- Working Cross Culturally
- Vicarious Trauma and Burnout
- Co-tenancy presentation (Justice and Community Safety Directorate)
- Working with Interpreters (Companion House)
- Phone Training
- Unconscious Bias Workshop
- Smiling Mind Sleep and Work Recovery Webinar
- Making insurance notifications
- Action Step – a case management system demonstration
- Charting a Better Recovery – Human rights
- Confidentiality, Privacy and Data Protection – Meeting our obligations
- What does co-design really mean (Disability Leadership Institute)
- Trauma Training (Rebus Theatre)
- Child Protection: Learnings from Working with First Nations Clients (Community Legal Centres Queensland)
- Disability Support Pension: Eligibility, Challenges and Resources
- Working with People who have experienced trauma or torture (Companion House)
- Data and Access to Justice Training (Community Legal Centre's Queensland)
- Lets talk about women in prison – National Council of Women ACT
- Professional Coaching Workshop (ACT Law Society)
- Disability Justice Strategy Reference Group
- Roundtable with ACT Government on Overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the ACT
- National Professional Indemnity Insurance Network
- ACT Law Society Inclusion and Diversity Committee
- Whose New on the Street
- Economic Justice Australia's Social Media Subcommittee
- ACT Legal Assistance Forum
- Women with Disabilities ACT Networking Forum
- Integrated Socio-Legal Models and National Network Meeting
- Housing ACT Housing Strategy Symposium



Economic Justice Australia Conference 2020

# Our Volunteers, Students and Secondees

We greatly appreciate the volunteer, student and pro bono support we have received over the past year.

Thanks also to our pro bono partners, Australian Government Solicitor, Ashurt, Clayton Utz, Hall & Wilcox, HWL Ebsworth, Ken Kush and Associates (Mark Barrow), Minter Ellison and Sparke Helmore for their ongoing commitment to the CCL and our work.

## Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS Volunteers)

### *Pro Bono support*

As always, NTLAS has enjoyed enthusiastic support from pro bono partners, including Minter Ellison, Clayton Utz, Hall & Wilcox, Sparke Helmore, as well as many private individuals who gave of their time.

### *NTLAS volunteers*

Lauren Armstrong  
Rahul Balan  
Frances Bradshaw  
Henry Chang  
Radhika Chaudhri  
Jasmine Chen  
Cindy Chia  
Rachael Clark  
Ingmar Duldig  
Rachael Grivas  
Deborah Mak  
Hilary Neville  
Nicholas Potter  
Eric Raymond  
Erin Rikus  
Maddison Williams  
Nicholas Wilson

## Day Time Secondees

Australian Government Solicitor: Lauren Lai, Charlie Light and Claire Smart

Clayton Utz: Lydia Edwards, Ali McMaster, Oliver Morris and Gabrielle Wilson

HWL Ebsworth Lawyers: Liam Gilligan, Marissa Parel, Mollie Smith, Anna Ziegel

## Day Time Volunteers

Rosemary Budavari  
Christopher Budd (ANU Internship)  
Cesira Costello  
Philip Finley  
Adrian Power  
Ken Wu (GDLP placement)  
Christopher Budd (ANU Internship)

## 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, 2020*

Mason Britton  
Lauren Clifton  
Ryan Goldsworthy  
Claudia Hodge  
Andie James  
Sarah Lim  
Clement McLernon O'Donnell  
Ella McNiece  
Ashish Nagesh  
Mitchell Trinder  
ANU Course Convenor: Radhika Chaudhri

### *Semester 1, 2021*

Olivia Creagh  
Rebecca Crisp  
Lydia Corcoran-Eagleton  
Jacqueline Hrast  
Muhammad Khalil Kamali  
Jenny Kei  
Huiruo Pang  
Gemma Smith  
Liam Taylor  
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](http://canberracommunitylaw.org.au)

