



"Where community and law meet."



CONTENTS

pg. 3	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
pg. 4	CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT
pg. 5	MANAGING SOLICITOR'S REPORT
pg. 6	WHO WE ARE & WHY WE'RE HERE
pg. 7	AT A GLANCE
pg. 8	OUR PRIORITY CLIENTS
pg. 9	CONFERENCES, EVENTS & STAKE HOLDERS
pg. 10	FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2022/23
pg. 11	FURTHER CASE STUDIES
pg. 12	CLIENT SURVEY & FEEDBACK

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

WCLC acknowledges Aboriginal Peoples as the traditional and current custodians of the land upon which we work. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and emerging. We celebrate the strength, culture, connection to Country, incredible resilience and contribution of Aboriginal Peoples to our whole community.

We are grateful for the knowledge and wisdom so many Aboriginal people have shared with us and we look forward to working together in the years ahead.

OUR BOARD

The Board drives WCLC's strategic direction and ensures a strong system of governance and oversight to maximise the organisation's impact. Guided by the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, the governance of WCLC is professional, transparent, accountable and forward thinking. The Board ensures that the Centre is able to obtain and effectively allocate resources to implement the organisation's strategic priorities.

Through a developed structured risk management framework, the Board ensures WCLC's complies with all legal and policy obligations, while working towards the organisation's ongoing sustainability. The dedication of the Board members is to be applauded, as is their commitment and drive. As a voluntary role, sitting on a Board can be time consuming and challenging. The Board members of WCLC are to be congratulated for all their work and valuable contributions.

BOARD MEMBERS 2022-2023

Aaron Dewse (Chair)
Emily Hanson (Treasurer)
Kate Turtley-Chappel
Atilla Mencshelyi
Samantha Cornthewaite

Delia Pascua-McGlew
Joesph Fitch
Tricia Chrimes
Robyn Lord (Ex Officio Secretary)

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

As the Chairperson I am very pleased to present the report for the 2022/23 Financial Year.

The Wheatbelt is a tough environment and it can take its toll on the members of our community. Thankfully the WCLC team is there with the professionalism and the skills to help. The WCLC team is committed and driven to provide without favour a legal and advocacy service to those less fortunate in the community.

The 2022/23 Financial Year has been a year of great growth for the WCLC. Our team, small but effective, has grown which is incredibly pleasing to report however now we need bigger offices, a problem but a good problem to have.

The team have done a remarkable job in increasing WCLC's presence in the region. It was fantastic to see WCLC hold a number of community awareness events in Law Week this May. WCLC's first annual information day during Law Week was very well attended and the presenters throughout the day were exceptional and provided ample amounts of relevant and practical information. Thank you to all those involved in preparations for Law Week and doubly to the presenters who took time out of their very busy schedule to take a day trip to the country.

I would like to also thank my fellow Board members who have worked tirelessly this year find the right direction for WCLC and protect the exceptional service provided to the region. The Board is committed to the Wheatbelt and is driven to growing the team so that we can provided more outreach across the Wheatbelt.

To the team I would like to say well done and keep up the excellent work. NFP legal work is challenging however I only hear positive things about what you have been doing for the Wheatbelt community so you are certainly rising to that challenge, thank you.

Without funding the WCLC would not be able to keep going providing such an excellent service. I would like to that all those that made private donations to WCLC in the 22/23 year and I would hope that they are pleased to know that these funds were invaluable with the team using a part of these at their discretion to give a greater impact to the events that were held during Law Week and also Homelessness Week which was such a success. I would like also to thank our main funders for the 22/23 year being, the Department of Justice and the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety whose commitment to the region's less fortunate is truly commendable.

WCLC will be looking to grow Law Week and expand other projects further into the region and we welcome any further funding or charitable support so that we can get these projects to the clients.

The WCLC team have again shown that they are part of the Wheatbelt community and are there to help those less fortunate. The Board looks forward to seeing WCLC grow even further and perhaps transition to become part of a larger organisation in the year ahead however keeping focused on reaching into the Wheatbelt to provide our service to all that need it in the Wheatbelt community.

Aaron Dewse

Chairperson, Management Board

MANAGING SOLICITOR'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure that I present my report for the 2022-2023 financial year. As I reflect on the last year, what stands out to me is the ability of our organisation to successfully respond to emerging trends and gaps within the Wheatbelt region.

As an organisation, we yield significant strength from our relationships with our stakeholders, including our outreach circuit locations, other service delivery providers, community members and clients. These relationships assist in informing us of where the local needs are. As the Principal, it is always our aim to take such feedback and adapt that within our service delivery framework. It is the to credit of our staff that our service is able to work collaboratively with other Service providers, to fill identified gaps for their client groups, to problem solve and ultimately deliver a needed service to the community.

This year in response to community feedback, the Service extended our outreach service and employed a senior practitioner to focus solely on servicing outreach areas – Moora Merredin and Narrogin and to roll out additional CLE sessions in regional hubs throughout the Wheatbelt. Additionally, we employed a new solicitor and an additional restricted practitioner in the Northam office to offer more face-to-face appointments and to increase our ability to offer end-to-end service.

We extended our reach to our community through an enhanced and professionally managed social media platform. We engaged the service of a local social media & communications officer to ensure that posts were relevant, up to date and consistent.

WCLC ran a very successful law week program this year. Joined by various presenters for specialist CLC's we provided relevant and informative sessions for the public. We thank those CLC's that made the trip up to the Wheatbelt and provided so generously their time. My thanks go to Welfare Rights and Advocacy Group, Consumer Credit Legal Service, Legal Aid WA, Circle Green and State Administrative Tribunal. In addition to this, staff spent the week at pop up centres, handing out cupcakes, balloons and brochures to inform the public of our service. Just under half the people we spoke to did not know of our service but believed they may wish to use the service at some point in the future. Connecting with our community in this way was really rewarding and fun.

Further community engagement was undertaken for Homeless week – an initiative to highlight the issues for people facing homelessness. As well as engaging in various community events during the week, we arranged that our service be a collection point for donations of toiletries and other essential items.

Our staff are committed to best practice and constantly striving to provide a quality service to the community. They take a holistic approach to ensure the client is supported throughout their legal journey. I'd like to thank the Staff and Management Committee for their contribution to the Service's achievements this year and encourage them to continue into the coming year with as much passion and vigour as they have previously.

Robyn Lord
Managing Solicitor

WHO WE ARE

Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre offers a dedicated and experienced team who can deliver valuable and excellent quality services across different legal areas.

WCLC is based in Northam, WA and works alongside with other well established services located in the Wheatbelt.

Our staff are hard-working members of the Law Society and the Family Law Practitioners Association, who are committed to providing the best possible assistance for you.



WHY WE'RE HERE



We're here to empower disadvantaged people within our community by providing insightful information, advocacy and advice for those with legal problems. and to increase community awareness of the law.

We aim to be a highly respected legal advice service throughout the Wheatbelt by offering our services, accessible environments and client-friendly atmosphere to people in greatest need.

We assist people who would otherwise be denied access to justice, due to social or economic disadvantage, to exercise their legal rights.

OUR CORE DRIVERS

1. To improve our client's wellbeing, understanding and position is our priority.
2. To improve the community's understanding and access to quality and equitable legal services and tenant advocacy.
3. To retain our accreditation and reputation in the local communities of the Wheatbelt region.

AT A GLANCE

4460
WEBSITE
VISITS

599
ENGAGEMENTS



738 **LEGAL**  **CONSULTATIONS**

66 **REQUIRING COURT
REPRESENTATION
OPENED**

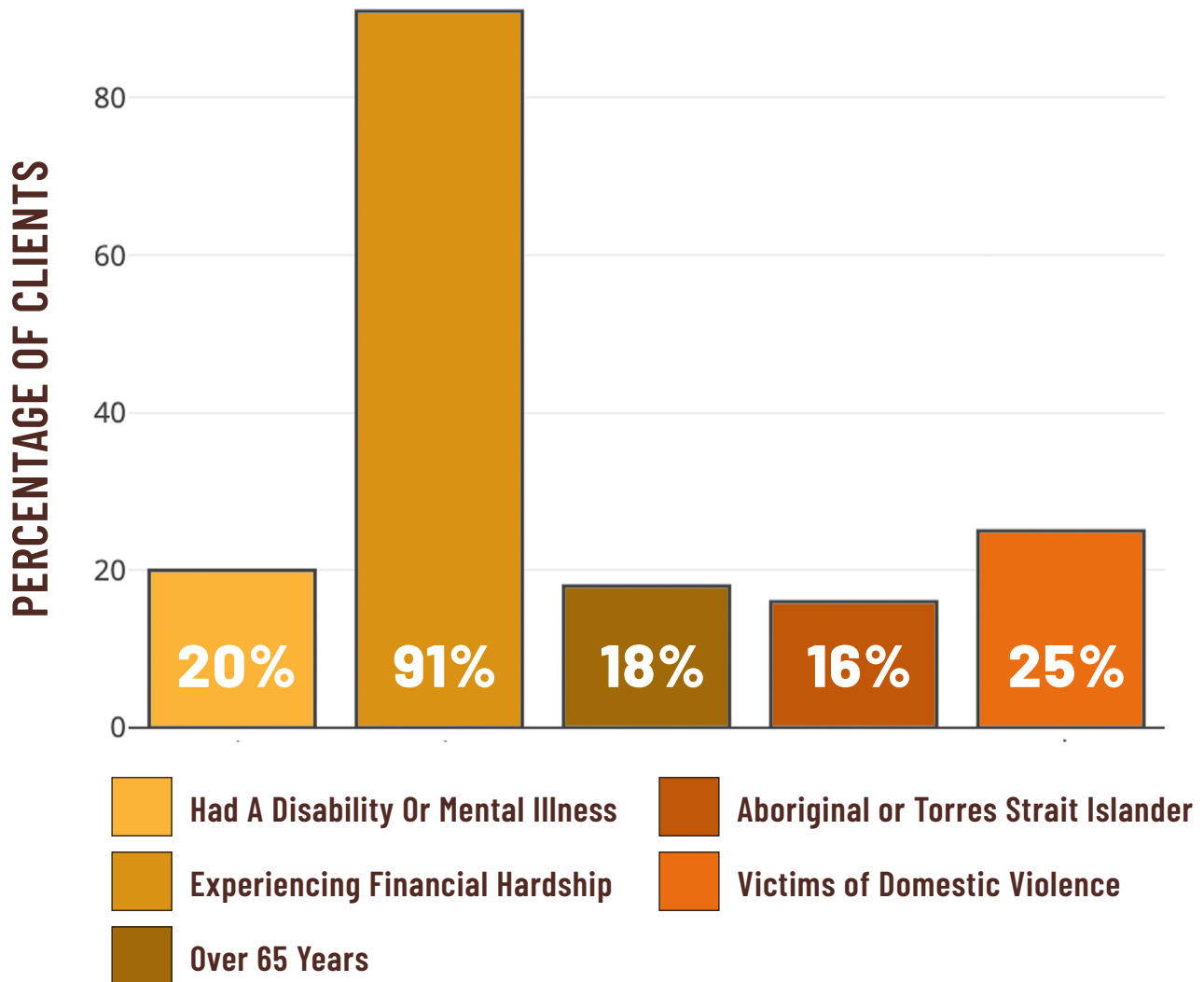
52 **REQUIRING COURT
REPRESENTATION
CLOSED**

66 **INFORMATION
RESOURCES
DISTRIBUTED**

186
TURNAWAYS*

***A TURNAWAY IS ANY
PERSON WE WERE UNABLE
TO ASSIST WITHIN THE
NEEDED TIME FRAME DUE
TO LACK OF RESOURCES
OR EXPERTISE IN THE
PARTICULAR LEGAL
AREA OF ENQUIRY**

OUR PRIORITY CLIENTS



CASE STUDY

The client is terminally ill with 2 children. She separated from her partner while living up North, and returned to the Wheatbelt with the children of the relationship while the other party remained living up North. The client was unable to return to the marital home as it had been tenanted out. The ex-partner was refusing to ask the tenant to vacate the property which solely owned by the other party.

Our client and her children were therefore homeless and forced to couch surf. We assisted the client in an attempt to resolve issues informally however the ex partner was not willing to engage. The statutory time limit for applying to the Family Court was approaching and the client's health was declining. WCLC filed an application in the Family Court for property orders and parenting orders on an urgent basis. The other party is represented by a private firm of solicitors. This matter is ongoing but we will continue to work towards a positive outcome for the family.

CONFERENCES, EVENTS & STAKE HOLDERS

1. National Association of Community Legal Centre's: held in Tasmania. Staff from WCLC was one of 500 delegates for the first National CLC conference since 2019.

Opportunities to connect, share ideas and network with our colleagues from the sector. Our thanks to a generous donation from the preceding year for assisting us with the travel costs of attending this conference.

2. Homeless week and Law week. 169 people visited our pop-up stalls. Of which 46% had not heard of our service but would anticipate needing the service or knowing someone who might need our service in the future.

We are proud of the engagement with other CLCs as well as community service groups in the Wheatbelt to bring about these important events.

3. Over 45 stakeholder engagements including a CLE presentation to Darkan community groups on issues facing seniors and the Law.

We also connected with local WA Police officers, SMYL community services, Mens Sheds, Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service, Amity Health, Share & Care financial counsellors and many CRC's throughout the Wheatbelt.

4. Attendance at the Wheatbelt Human Services Managers Forum and the Domestic violence sub-committee to promote discussions and action with an aim to reduce impact of family violence.

CASE STUDY

Client was victim of historic childhood sexual assault and several family violence related offences perpetrated by the same offender over a period in excess of 15 years. Provided advice and representation to enable client to apply to Office of Criminal Injuries Compensation to requesting award for statutory maximum, supported client to gather evidence through Freedom of Information channels empowering client to tell their own story through their application.

Client was linked with ongoing psychological support which was reported to be extremely beneficial in both their own and their children's lives. Office of Criminal Injuries Compensation awarded the statutory maximum amount including provision of future treatment for psychological expenses. Client described the outcome as "life-changing" for them and their children.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2022/23

OPERATING EXPENSES	\$	INCOME	\$
Admin Expenses	\$74,546.03	Carry Over Funds	\$95,300.16
Office Expenses	\$85,715.67	Commonwealth	\$345,450.21
Premises Expenses	\$38,907.10	DMIRS	\$135,724.30
Programming and Planning	\$33,880.64	Interest	\$4055.51
Staff Training & Development	\$12,214.35	State Funding	\$268,010.60
Wages and Ongoing Costs	\$656,796.81	State Funding Boost	\$121,841.88
TOTAL:	\$902,060.60	TOTAL:	\$972,399.28

EMPOWERMENT

Staff undertook many sessions with a variety of training providers to increase their skillset and knowledge base.

PROVIDER	EVENT
Blue Knot Foundation	Using a Trauma lens when working with Domestic and Family Violence
Community Legal WA	Ethics of Community Lawyers
Family Law Practitioners of WA	Form 11 Applications and Consent Orders
Law Society	Courts in the Regions & Essentials of Advocacy and Negotiations
Legal Aid WA	Work and Development permits and Criminal Injuries
MIFWA	Mental Health First Aid
Piddington Society	Family Law Advocacy workshop weekend
Redfern Legal Centre	Family Law and Financial Abuse – Spousal maintenance
South West Law Society	Treatment of inheritance in Family Court
WA Family Law Pathways Network	Family Law and Financial Abuse

FURTHER CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY

A Client came into our Centre for an urgent appointment because she was served with Family Court documents from her ex-husband's lawyers, without any notice. We prepared the client to self-represent at the first court appearance.

The Client returned to our Centre for us to prepare responding court documents as per the court orders. We assisted her with this as well as showing her how to lodge documents on eCourts portal and to serve the documents on her ex-husband's lawyers. Later we assisted her to negotiate and understand the terms of a proposed Minute of Consent Orders. The Client continued to represent herself, with us giving her guidance and legal advice.

The outcome was that the Client and her ex-husband achieved Final Consent Orders for property settlement without having to go through the Family Court proceedings/process.

CASE STUDY

Client was a single Aboriginal woman, aged 50, on Job Seeker who lives with her adult son who contacted our office for assistance with her tenancy. The managing agent rang the client "out of the blue" stating she had rental arrears of \$1,300 and water arrears of \$1,000 but did not provide her with any documentation.

We assisted her to communicate with the agent and request clear details of the alleged arrears including details regarding rental and water accounts, and payments made and must show meter readings. At the same time we referred her to the local financial counselling service.

CASE STUDY

The client struggled with drug addiction, significant mental health, and a criminal history-serving time in prison. Prior to incarceration, her son was removed by the Dept of Communities, into the care of her cousin and a family arrangement was in place.

On her release and now sober, the client worked to meet all the Dept's concerns and to work towards reunification with her son. The client contacted our service for legal advice as the cousin filed an application for sole parental responsibility. We assisted the client with advice, drafted court documents, in response to the application, and provided court representation. It is important to note that the client was not eligible for other public funded legal assistance and unable to afford private solicitor fees.

To navigate the court system as a self-represented litigant was a daunting prospect for the client, given her history. The client mentioned on numerous occasions that without our assistance, she would have given up.

CLIENT SURVEY



COMMENTS & FEEDBACK

"Thank you so very much great clarification of the issue."

"Very good service."

"Very helpful."

"More research/info needed, so will be contacted afterwards."

"Very happy with the help and advice I received today. I feel confident going forward. From reception to the lawyer, very professional and helpful."

"I gained more knowledge about my concern and the lawyer explained my concern really well. Very thorough, answered every question I had whole heartedly."

"Excellent service."

"Awesome service and reception."

"The service was very pleasant and informative."

"Very happy with the advice I received today. I feel comfortable to proceed with the next step of my journey, thank you."