



NORTH QUEENSLAND WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE INC.

ANNUAL REPORT

2013-2014





Our mission
To work towards the
empowerment of women
within the legal system to
achieve social justice and
equity before the law.

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A message from the Director

The 2013-14 year has been one of many changes for NQWLS.

Changes to staff saw locum Director, Ann Florence, leave in August 2013 to enjoy a trip to Europe and to commence a happy retirement.

Having been involved with NQWLS since its inception in 1994 as an unfunded volunteer service and as a Management Committee member at different times over the years since then, I was delighted to take up the position of Director in November 2013.

In April 2014 after six years of service, Principal Solicitor, Tanya Andersen, also left Townsville to go travelling and to follow new challenges.

Soon after that, the Townsville DV Solicitor, Sarah Haack, left to welcome the birth of her first child.

NQWLS was fortunate that its long-serving staff lawyer in Cairns, Hayley Grainger, stepped up and accepted the position of Principal Solicitor mid year. Hayley's experience and knowledge of NQWLS operations meant that this key position was filled by a woman who had already demonstrated her commitment to NQWLS' vision and goals.

Plans were made to find bigger, still affordable, but more suitable offices in both Townsville and Cairns. This was considered an important change to help with staff recruitment, to give us space to involve more volunteers with the Service, which ultimately means NQWLS can increase access to services for women who need free legal help.

In Townsville, we chose to find premises where we could co-locate with 2 other community legal centres – that is, QPILCH and the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service NQ – as the benefits of co-location are many to the CLCs themselves and to the community.

NQWLS Management Committee members have given strength and commitment to the staff team through all of these changes. The promised continuity of service by all committee members into the 2014-15 year, maintains the steady foundation for NQWLS to work and grow from. On behalf of the staff team, we give our sincere thanks and appreciation to –

- Natasha Busby President
- Kate Pateman Vice President
- Siobhan Tangney Secretary
- Jodie Woolcock Treasurer
- Shonnay Nicholson General Member

We also thank of all of the women, men and organisations who support NQWLS in being a centre of excellence by joining and renewing their membership each year – and for encouraging others to do so as well.

Finally, we acknowledge and thank the Commonwealth and State governments for the funding given to NQWLS to provide the much needed, free community legal services to the women of NQ and FNQ.

Anne Lewis, NQWLS Director

NQWLS Data

NQWLS services provided to women in 2013-2014

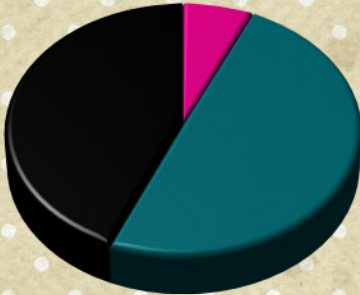
Information & referrals	1659
Legal advice	2589
Casework (new files)	83
Casework (new & existing)	107
Casework closed	95

Advice provided to women



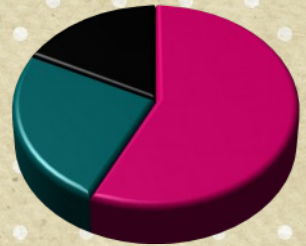
- Face to Face
- Telephone Advice
- Advice by mail

Client demographic



- Identified Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Low Income
- Women affected by domestic violence

Client problem types



- Children's matters
- Property matters
- Domestic Violence

Financial Report

The audited financial statements for 2013-2014 form part of this annual report.

If you would like a copy, please email tsvadmin@nwqls.com.au or download them from our website www.nwqls.com.au.

NQWLS Team

Anne Lewis - Director

Anne joined the NQWLS staff team in November 2013. She has worked in the community legal sector for over 20 years and has also worked with Victoria Legal Aid and in private practice in Melbourne.

Debbie Taylor -Administration Officer TSV

Debbie started work with NQWLS in 2012. She has worked to enhance administration systems and has undertaken training this year to look after NQWLS' bookkeeping now as well. Debbie provides first rate frontline services to our clients.

Linda Anderson - Solicitor

Linda left private practice to join the team at NQWLS in August 2012. Linda is an experienced solicitor, specialising in the areas of domestic violence and family law. Linda has taken on the role of Outreach Solicitor from the Townsville office and travels regularly to provide face to face advice for women in Ayr, Charters Towers and Ingham.

Ann Florence -Locum Director (2012-August 2013)

Ann was one of the NQWLS solicitors back in the 90's and has a long history of work in the Queensland community legal sector. She took up the role of Locum Director for approximately 12 months, before leaving to travel overseas in 2013. Ann is highly respected by all for her work with NQWLS.

Hayley Grainger - Solicitor / Principal Solicitor

NQWLS has been fortunate to have had Hayley providing client services since 2008. She was appointed to fill the vacant position of Principal Solicitor this year. She brings a wealth of experience in working with NQWLS clients, providing outreach face to face advice clinics in Innisfail, Atherton, Mareeba, Port Douglas and Mossman as well as providing the Duty Lawyer service at the Cairns Domestic Violence Court each week.

Glenda Demopoulos - Administration Officer TSV

Glenda has been with NQWLS since 2009. Her knowledge of NQWLS services and local community referrals is a great asset. She is one of two first points of contact for women seeking assistance from the Townsville office. Glenda is professional, supportive and respectful in her frontline work with clients.

Tanya Andersen- Principal Solicitor (2008 -April 2014)

Tanya has provided many years of quality services to the women of NQ and FNQ as well as having mentored and supported all NQWLS staff during her years with the Service. We are grateful for her contribution and dedication during her time with us. Tanya left to explore new life adventures and we wish her well for the future.

Leah Muller -Administration Officer CNS

Leah has been working with NQWLS in the Cairns office for just over a year. She provides valuable support for the legal staff there and excellent assistance and support for NQWLS clients.

Sharell O'Brien - Solicitor

Sharell left private practice and joined NQWLS in April 2013. She has worked hard to develop new Community Legal Education resources, including the fantastic Ask Nola web project. Sharell also assists with the direct client work of NQWLS, providing quality legal advice and assistance for the women of NQ and FNQ.

Sarah Haack-Solicitor (May 2013- July 2014)

Sarah worked to set up the Duty Lawyer service at the Townsville Domestic Violence Court during her 12 month contract with NQWLS. She also provided advice and legal assistance to many women in the area of family law.



NQWLS Service Region

NQWLS provides services to women from Sarina in the south, to the Torres Strait in the north and west to the Northern Territory border.

"NQWLS has been a great support for me and I could not get through it without them. I was encouraged and I could find hope with somebody supporting me. Thank you so much. I would like to support somebody one day too, just like you have."

"Everyone at NQWLS made me feel welcome and were sensitive to my needs during a very stressful time. The advice I got empowered me and allowed me to take control of the situation."

"I cannot say enough positive things about the help that I received from NQWLS. I would not be where I am without the support and guidance given by the solicitors.."

1800 Phone Advice Line

Each year, thousands of women contact NQWLS through the 1800 phone advice line and receive information, referral and legal advice. The phone line operates between 9am and 1pm every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

The phone line allows women from rural and remote locations to obtain legal advice in their own home, or from the safety of another location of their choosing.

"This Service has been a life-saver for me. I was supported, encouraged and provided with sound legal advice. It was easy for me to contact my solicitor and she always called me back when she said she would. It has been a great relief at a difficult time to know I could count on you for advice."

Case Study 1

Good outcome through collaboration by legal services.

A woman contacted NQWLS as she had been served with an application by her former husband. He wanted the Court to make orders about him spending time with the children. There was a strict domestic violence order in place for the woman's protection, including a condition that the ex husband was not to know her address or attempt to locate her. At the time of service of the application, one of the children was recovering from a critical illness. NQWLS assisted the woman to make an application for Legal Aid. In the meantime, we wrote to the solicitors for her ex husband in an effort to reach a negotiated outcome about his application with the hope that the woman would not need to prepare or file court documents in response. Repeated efforts by NQWLS failed to achieve this outcome for the woman. The decision about whether the woman was eligible for Legal Aid assistance still had not been made by the time the woman received notice of the court hearing date. NQWLS then prepared an affidavit for the woman in readiness for the hearing date and whilst waiting on the decision about her Legal Aid application. The woman was assisted by the Legal Aid Duty Lawyer at her first court date. Ultimately, Legal Aid was granted to her to attend a conference and an agreement about ongoing arrangements for the children was reached. The combination of assistance of both NQWLS and Legal Aid was important in reaching this outcome for the woman and her children.

NQWLS Services

Clients services

Townsville & Cairns

Women can access legal advice appointments in both Townsville and Cairns offices. Appointments were also offered from the Domestic Violence Resource Service premises in Townsville and Cairns during 2013-14.

Legal advice is provided to women in the areas of domestic & family violence, family law – regarding children and property, divorce, child support, child protection matters, sexual assault, discrimination and Victims Assist amongst other things. Casework is undertaken in accordance with NQWLS guidelines.

NQWLS Outreach Services

From the Townsville office monthly advice clinics are provided in Ingham, Ayr and Charters Towers. We are grateful to our partner organisations who support these clinics by providing the interview space, by making the appointments and by referring women with urgent matters for assistance as required in between clinic dates. Thanks are due to the staff and volunteers of:

- Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre, Ingham
- Burdekin Community Association, Ayr
- Charters Towers Neighbourhood Centre, Charters Towers

From the Cairns office monthly advice clinics are provided in Innisfail, Atherton, Mareeba, Mossman and Port Douglas. Again, close and collaborative working relationships have been built over the years with our community partners and we sincerely thank the staff and volunteers of:

- Community Support Centre, Innisfail
- Tablelands Women's Centre, Atherton
- Mareeba Information & Support Centre, Mareeba
- Mossman Community Centre, Mossman
- Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre, Port Douglas

Ask Nola



"The webinar was really informative and clarified a number of questions"

"It confirmed what I already knew and provided me with further knowledge."

Webinars broadcast 2013-2014 included:

- Property settlement series: Coming to an agreement
- Children series: Making Arrangements for children after Separation Part 1
- Domestic & Family Violence Part 1: An Overview of the Application Process
- Property settlement series: the Four step process
- Legal Implications of Social Media

This year saw the much anticipated launch of the **Ask Nola** project.

Ask Nola or North Queensland Online Legal Access is a website designed for community workers. It provides free, secure online legal information & education resources for community workers in NQ and FNQ, who are responding to women with legal needs.

Monthly webinars are broadcast providing education about legal issues such as domestic & family violence, family law, child protection, victims support and much more.

Beyond the webinars, the Ask Nola resources also include self help publications, case studies, fact sheets and links to assist referrals to other legal and community services

Membership of **Ask Nola** is free. Check out the website at www.asknola.com.au

"I have been enjoying learning from the webinars"



Launch

www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au

ask nola women's legal service

North Queensland Women's Legal Service
invites you to
the website launch of



Join us and find out about our new community legal
education and information website called
"ask NOLA".

DATE: 16th April, 2014

TIME: 5.30pm-7.30pm

VENUE: The "Cameron Room" Metropole Hotel,
81 Palmer Street
Townsville, QLD 4810

All Management and staff of your organisation are welcome.
Refreshments provided.

Please RSVP by 9th April, 2014 to assist with catering -
phone 4772 5400
or email tsvadmin@nqwfs.com.au

www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au www.asknola.com.au



Stop the violence



"My solicitor spent a lot of time researching my matter and I was represented in the Cairns DV Court. If I had not had NQWLS help, I would not have had the outcome I got as I did not have the confidence and ability to represent myself. She is helpful, courteous and dedicated to all the women she sees at the DV Court in Cairns."

Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer

We are all confronted by media reports that each week in Australia, a woman is killed by a current or former partner. Despite the efforts of the community, the incidence of family and domestic violence has significantly increased in recent years.

In 2013-14, NQWLS established a Duty Lawyer Service at the Domestic Violence Court in both Townsville and Cairns. Women with matters before the Court are assisted with information, referral, legal advice and assistance in court for those who are unrepresented.

Case Study 2

Ex threatens to kill mother of his children with a knife

A woman sought assistance from the NQWLS Duty Lawyer at the Domestic Violence Court. She wanted to ask the Court for a variation of her Protection Order.

Two days before, her former partner had threatened to kill her with a knife because she had refused him entry to her home. Her ex partner was already on charges as a result of breaches of the existing Protection Order. The woman wanted the Order varied to include a specific 'no contact' condition as she was in fear of her life.

During the course of the legal interview ahead of the court hearing, the woman received a call from the children's School. They advised her that her ex partner had just been to the school and had taken the children out of class. The woman was understandably distraught at this news.

The NQWLS Duty Lawyer appeared for the woman when her matter was called. It came to light that her Application to Vary her existing order had not yet been served on her ex partner, however based on the submissions of the NQWLS Duty Lawyer, the court saw fit to issue a Temporary Protection Order with specific no contact conditions as requested and also included the children's names on the Order as well.

Contact us

Townsville Office

Phone: (07) 4772 5400
Fax: (07) 4772 5315
Email: tsvadmin@nqwls.com.au

Mail: PO Box 2209
TOWNSVILLE, QLD 4810

Cairns Office

Phone: (07) 4033 5825
Fax: (07) 4033 5845
Email: cairns@nqwls.com.au

Mail: PO Box 2542
CAIRNS, QLD 4870

Website: www.nqwls.com.au

Hours of operation

Monday - Thursday : 9.00am - 5.00pm

Friday: Closed to the public



nq

women's legal service

