

ANNUAL
REPORT
2020-2021

na
women's
legal service



Serving the Community for 25 years

Women Creating Change

"I want to let you know how indebted I feel to NQWLS. I was supported by two different lawyers on different days. Their professionalism and empathy was second to none.

This is the first time I have used the Service and they both made the whole process so much easier. Please pass on these comments to these amazing women.

Sadly, your Service will always be needed, but I cannot praise you enough. Many thanks for the amazing work you do for the community. It is truly appreciated."

We acknowledge the traditional owners of all the land upon which we work and live, stretching north from Sarina to Cape York and out to the Northern Territory border. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.



We are committed to cultivating inclusive environments for staff, volunteers and our clients. We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities. We are an environmentally conscious organisation.

Contents

Purpose, Vision, Mission & Values	2
Reflections From The Director	3
Our Impact	5
Quality, Accessible Legal Services for Women	6
Community Partnerships & Events	9
Our People	10
Case Examples	11
25 th Anniversary Messages	14
Client Feedback	16
Acrostic Poems	17
March 4 Justice Speech	18
Financial Summary	20
Our Gratitude	21

North Queensland Women's Legal Service is grateful for the funding provided by the Federal government and the Queensland State government and sincerely thanks all community and corporate partners and supporters.

Purpose, Vision, Mission & Values

NQWLS Purpose:

NQWLS is a not for profit, specialist community legal centre. It works to empower women, to promote safety for women and children and to contribute to societal change that will support a better quality of life for women and their children.

NQWLS Vision:

Access to justice for the women of rural, regional and remote Queensland.

NQWLS Mission:

NQWLS empowers women, contributes to their safety and the safety of children and promotes societal change by:

- Providing free, accessible, high quality, holistic legal services;
- Providing education about injustice and inequity experienced by women; and
- Engaging in collaborative work to create change in policy and the law.

NQWLS Values:

- Safety First
- Respect
- Service
- Empowerment
- Leadership / Strength



Reflections From The Director

Celebrating 25 years of service to the women of North Queensland.

NQWLS has much to be grateful for as we review another year of hard work.

We all continued living with the uncertainties and impacts of COVID-19 and at NQWLS we also continued to learn and embrace new ways of working. These new ways of working have served our clients well, with more services provided for women for the year ending 30 June 2021, than in any year before.

We found new ways to provide legal help to women living in rural, regional and remote communities in Queensland. We provided legal advice often as a 'same day, every day' service by phone and video-call. We maintained face-to-face appointments for the women who needed them and had the greatest level of complexity in their circumstances. We provided remote advocacy and representation in courts as far away as Mareeba, Mt Isa and Thursday Island. We reached out further than ever across our service region with our 'wrap around' complex casework service. We visited every one of our fifteen (15) outreach partners from Mackay in the south, to Cooktown in the north. We presented new customised community legal education workshops and engaged in new ways with our community outreach partners. We participated in powerful work calling for changes in policy and the law, both in our own capacity and as a member of the Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) network. The number of legal services delivered increased from just under 12,000 in 2019 pre-COVID to nearly 15,000 this year. This represents an increased level of services for women by around 25%. The staff and management team at NQWLS have been nothing short of amazing and I am grateful to everyone of them for their dedication to the vision, values and mission that guide us in our work.

Many of the staff, management committee, general members, life members, friends and supporters of NQWLS have enjoyed reflecting on the achievements of '25 years of community service' which is the fantastic milestone that we have reached this year. Their reflections have been collated and many of them are shared in this year's Annual Report. It is my personal privilege to have been part of the committed group of volunteer women who worked together to establish a 'free legal service for women' in the early 1990s and who lobbied successfully to obtain the first funding grant in 1996.

Our records show that between 1996 and 2021, NQWLS has provided more than 125,000 free legal services for the benefit of women and their children.

For many of those women, this help has been life-changing. Our clients' have provided their feedback and together with the stories that are shared in this year's Report, give us a glimpse into the empowering and vital work that has been done.

Last year, we called for more collaboration, more commitment to change and more resources to support us in the goal of ending violence against women. This year, I am very happy to say that we got what we called for.

NQWLS played its part in an amazing feat of collaboration and commitment to change when we marched in solidarity with thousands of women across Australia for March 4 Justice (M4J). With less than a week to get organised, NQWLS took a lead role and coordinated the M4J event in Townsville and Hayley was invited as a keynote speaker at the March in Cairns.

We worked hard with our sister-service members of WLSA to deliver a pre-budget submission to the Federal government with detailed costings calling for increased resources to meet a sky-rocketing need for free legal assistance for women who had experienced domestic violence.

We are heartened because our submissions were heeded by government and an historic funding allocation of \$129 million was provided in the Women's Budget Statement to support the work of 'women's legal centres' across Australia.

NQWLS and the women's legal centres of Australia thank the Federal government for hearing the call to help us, help more women in crisis. NQWLS is also grateful to our Queensland government and Attorney-General, Shannon Fentiman, for supporting NQWLS' work for women and for the allocation of this new funding to the three (3) Queensland women's legal centres. More free legal services will now be available to women who need them across the State and new programs will soon be established.

Happy 25th anniversary, North Queensland Women's Legal Service.

I give my sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone who has been part of the NQWLS story and who has contributed to its work over the decades - whether as a staff member, a management committee member, a volunteer or supporter. Your work has made a difference. Let's celebrate all the achievements, large and small, that have meant so much to so many.

Finally, at this important milestone for NQWLS, may I also say thank you to our colleagues in every Community Legal Centre (CLC) across Australia. It is important to remember that we are all part of a nationwide network of CLCs, working to achieve increased access to justice for those in need. CLCs know how to put the 'UNITY' into comm-UNITY.

There is still a great deal of work to be done of course. Let's maintain the NQWLS vision and see what can be achieved in the next 25 years!

Anne Lewis

Director

Our Impact

14,907

services provided
to women

25%

increase on 2019
& pre-COVID

50%

increase in incoming
calls at peak times

5,287

advices, tasks,
representations

40

CLE & law reform
activities

2,052

duty lawyer
services

20%

of women
identified as
Aboriginal or
Torres Strait
Islander

15%

of women
were over 50
years of age

9%

of women
were homeless
or at risk of

88%

of women were
financially
disadvantaged

20%

of women
had no or
low income

18%

of women had
a disability

6%

of women were
from a CALD
background

100%

of women
were impacted
by DV

Quality, Accessible Legal Services for Women

Similar to last year, COVID-19 has had a huge impact on NQWLS and the women that it assists. However, the NQWLS staff team rose to the challenge and delivered nearly 15 000 services – a Service record!

Given the restrictions as a result of COVID-19, the majority of services were delivered via telephone or video conferencing. For many women this model of service delivery was very successful as it allowed same or next day legal advice in the comfort of their own homes, or wherever they happened to be, overcoming issues such as difficulty accessing transport or childcare if they had needed to attend an appointment in person. For some more vulnerable women however, remote service delivery is challenging, so for those women NQWLS continued to provide face to face appointments whenever possible.

NQWLS is proud to offer holistic, trauma informed services to all women who contact us, and we work closely with other services, especially specialist womens' and domestic violence services to ensure that women are able to have all their legal and non-legal needs addressed. Working closely and collaboratively and sharing information between support workers and lawyers means that women feel supported and do not have to retell their stories repeatedly to each different service. Having an in depth understanding of domestic violence, as well as an understanding of the impacts and presentation of trauma, means that NQWLS lawyers are able to work with women in a way that is efficient and effective at resolving their issues and increasing their safety, whilst being as non-triggering and empowering as possible.

Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer Service

Throughout YE2021, NQWLS lawyers provided advice and representation to over 2000 women who were involved in domestic violence proceedings in the Townsville and Cairns Magistrates Courts.

The value of this service cannot be overstated with feedback from women consistently stating how invaluable the service was and how they could not have done it without the assistance of the duty lawyers. Attending court is always stressful, however for many of these women, going to court and facing the perpetrator of the violence against them is triggering and overwhelming.

The trauma informed model practiced by the NQWLS lawyers assists women to feel more comfortable, supported, and able to articulate their story and achieve safer outcomes.

Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS)

NQWLS also delivered duty lawyer services to women appearing in the Federal Circuit Courts in both Cairns and Townsville through the FASS.

Although the numbers of women assisted are smaller than the domestic violence duty lawyer service, the outcomes for women are huge.

As part of the FASS, NQWLS lawyers have provided advice on what are often complex family law matters, drafted documents for women, negotiated with the other parties, and represented women in court. Again, the women that we assist through the FASS model have all experienced domestic violence by their partners/spouses and having lawyers who practice holistically and from a domestic violence and trauma informed perspective not only assists

women with their immediate legal needs at court but helps empower them and support them through the long and difficult family court process.

Domestic Violence Legal Service (DVLS)

The DVLS has been operating as part of NQWLS now since 2016 and during this time has achieved some remarkable outcomes for women. The DVLS is a holistic, wrap around complex casework service providing ongoing court representation for those women who are the most vulnerable and most in need of support and assistance. The holistic nature of the service means that women are supported to have all their legal and non-legal needs met.

The DVLS lawyers provide the legal assistance and support in relation to their domestic violence, family law, child safety, Victim Assist and any other legal matters they may be facing. At the same time, the Client Support Worker helps meet any non-legal needs including, financial, housing, counselling, health and mental health issues, through information, support and referrals.

It is our strongest wish that all women who contact NQWLS can be offered this level of assistance if required and that the funding committed to Women's Legal Centres by the Commonwealth and State Governments will go some way to achieving this.

Community Legal Education (CLE)

CLE is an integral part of any community legal centre service model and NQWLS is no different. Each year we deliver a variety of CLE sessions to a range of audiences. During this year, our Ask NOLA webinars ran monthly on topics including Child Protection Orders & Processes, Co-Parenting During COVID-19, Applying for a Divorce, Responding to a Domestic Violence Application, Relocation & Recovery of Children, Domestic & Family Violence in a LGBTI Context and, Independent Children's Lawyers & Family Reports.

Ask NOLA was designed as a CLE program to educate community workers to help them identify legal issues that their clients may present with and then provide appropriate assistance and referrals. Being web-based means that any worker, anywhere can attend the webinars, which is so important given the huge geographical area NQWLS services.

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions meant that face to face CLE was able to resume during the year. NQWLS lawyers shared their knowledge with fellow lawyers as presenters at the Children and Families Legal Assistance Forum (CAFLAF) Domestic and Family Violence Training Workshop. We were also invited to speak at the Family Law Practitioners Association (FLPA) CPD event where our Principal Lawyer took the opportunity to encourage local lawyers to be as 'DV informed' as possible and prioritise safety when working with clients.

NQWLS also delivered workshops to local domestic violence workers on how to draft domestic violence applications, as well presentations to Act 4 Kids and the Churches of Christ DV Survivors Group about domestic violence and domestic violence orders. We were again invited to talk to the 4th year Social Work students at JCU about the intersection between the domestic violence, family law and child protection systems, also to speak with a 'grandparents raising grandchildren' group about some of their legal issues, as well as appearing on local community radio during Domestic and Family Violence Prevention month to raise awareness of domestic violence and the help that is available. Our lawyers also presented sessions around domestic violence and family law at the Innisfail Community Support Centre and the Burdekin Neighbourhood Centre.

NQWLS updated its existing self-help resources and produced several new CLE resources including family law factsheets on the topics of spousal maintenance, parenting after separation, moving with children after separation, and grandparents and family law amongst others. A series of factsheets to help women who are involved in domestic violence proceedings were also developed, along with the first of a series of booklets designed to help women who are self-representing at domestic violence hearings. A Recognising Red Flags – Power and Control in a Pandemic factsheet was produced in response to new perpetrator behaviours and tactics that NQWLS was seeing as an emerging issue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Law Reform

Equally as important as CLE to the community legal sector is law reform and NQWLS again had a busy year on this front. NQWLS provided a comprehensive submission regarding women's experiences in the justice system and the criminalisation of coercive control to the Qld Women's Safety & Justice Taskforce. We also made submissions to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with a Disability and made recommendations calling for reforms to the domestic and family violence legal framework to better protect women with a disability.

As a member of Women's Legal Service Australia (WLSA), NQWLS contributed to submissions to the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, the National Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law, Family Violence and Child Protection Systems, the Family Law Amendment (Federal Family Violence Orders) Bill 2021, and to the Review of the ban on direct cross examination in family law proceedings. Through these submissions

WLSA, and NQWLS, continued the tradition of fearlessly advocating for laws, processes, practices and systems that promote the safety of Australian women and children.

NQWLS also contributed to the submissions made by the Queensland Law Society on such varied topics as: improving the family safety competency of legal practitioners, the practice direction regarding privileged counselling communications, the domestic and family violence best practice framework for legal and non-legal practitioners, protection for temporary visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence, a new decision making framework for property matters in family law, a national consistent definition of domestic and family violence, as well as submissions regarding , the National Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law, Family Violence and Child Protection Systems, the Family Law Amendment (Federal Family Violence Orders) Bill 2021 and to the Qld Women's Safety & Justice Taskforce and Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.



Community Partnerships & Events

NQWLS has shared another year of fantastic collaborative work with its community partners, with some new and some regular events on the calendar for the YE2021. We say 'thank you' for working with us again this year.

- Women's Centre
 - Townsville, Cairns, Atherton, Mackay
- DV Resources Service
 - Townsville, Cairns, Mackay
- Dovetail
- Cairns Collective Impact on DV
- Sera's Women's Shelter
- Ruth's Women's Shelter
- LoveBites Program, Townsville
- Mareeba Community Support Centre
- Innisfail Community Support Centre
- Mossman Community Support Centre
- Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre
- Prospect Community Services
- Burdekin Community Association
- Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre
- Townsville Drop-in Centre
- Mt Isa Neighbourhood Centre
- Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre
- Cooktown Neighbourhood Centre
- Whitsunday Crisis & Counselling Service
- Community Support Centre Ravenshoe
- Family & Child Connect Services
- Mercy Community Services
- Open Arms
- Queensland Human Rights Commission
 - International Women's Day Program
- JCU Townsville Fire - Youth Engagement Program
- NQ Toyota Cowboys – Tackle Domestic Violence campaign
- KLP Family Law – Annual Golf Day Charity event
- Catholic Education
- Magistrate Court Registry teams
 - Townsville, Cairns, Mt Isa
- Federal Circuit Court Registry teams
 - Townsville, Cairns
- Red Cross Queensland

Our People

Since its inception, NQWLS has been blessed to have attracted a team of staff and volunteers who have been intelligent, dedicated and passionate women. They are 'drawn' to NQWLS because of its purpose. Also because of their own commitment to work towards making positive changes in the circumstances of all women and children who come to NQWLS asking for help.

Once again this year, there were some farewells and some warm welcomes, as the team itself changed in alignment with changing life chapters for our wonderful staff.

This year, we said farewell to women who moved onto new jobs, new creative pursuits and choices which saw them relocate both interstate and internationally. We are very grateful for all that they have contributed to the work of NQWLS during their time with us. Big shout out to Leah Muller, Indigo York, Zara Spencer-Brown, Raelene Zollner and Fiona Glenister.

At the same time, we were fortunate to have new workers join our team, some local and some from far away. We warmly welcomed Kezia Thomas, Kirstyn Campbell, Alex Whitney, Tegan Hicks and Shandel Jones.

We thank our staff who continued on from the previous year, working harder than ever, including Hayley Grainger, Rachael Ozanne-Pike, Liz Brown, Ashleigh Lawrence, Glenda Demopoulos, Jade Connor, Danielle O'Connor, Ashleigh Metcalfe, Penney Ferguson, Samantha Levers, Jean Morton, Elizabeth Macaulay and Anne Lewis.

The NQWLS student and volunteer programs continued to be suspended during this year due to COVID-19 restrictions and uncertainties. However despite this, we would like to gratefully acknowledge the ongoing pro bono support work undertaken for NQWLS clients by both Alex Raeburn and Madonna Hayes.

Finally, we acknowledge and thank our wonderful, reliable and dedicated management committee members who continued to give their time, skills and expertise on a voluntary basis and who have provided tremendous stability for NQWLS during these turbulent times. Thank you to:

Natasha Busby	President
Kate Pateman	Vice President
Jodie Woolcock	Treasurer
Sally Watson	Secretary
Nardine Collier	General Member
Ann Carrington	General Member
Mandy Ferreira	General Member

Case Example 1

Help for Simone and Ben

Women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in almost every area of their lives. Women are over-represented in the industries which have been hit hardest by the economic impacts of COVID-19.

They are the ones who were and, in many cases still are, providing care and education to children when they need to be homeschooled, and unfortunately rates of domestic violence perpetrated against women by their spouses or partners during lockdowns skyrocketed.

NQWLS has seen a significant increase in women contacting the service for help with legal issues that have been created or exacerbated by COVID-19.

The pandemic has provided violent and controlling men with new tactics to use against their victims, including using COVID-19 itself as a reason to withhold or threatening to withhold children. NQWLS gratefully received additional funds during YE2021 to provide frontline legal services to help women impacted by both the pandemic and domestic violence.

Simone contacted NQWLS after her ex-partner Marty refused to return their 5-year child, Ben, after spending time with him. Simone had been a victim of domestic violence throughout their relationship and despite now living 1000's of kilometers apart, still suffered regular abuse from Marty and attempts to control her. Simone and Marty had a parenting plan in place which provided that Ben live with Simone in Far North Queensland and spend some time during school holidays in Sydney with Marty. At the time that Ben was to travel to Sydney, it was a declared COVID-19 hotspot, however Simone and Marty negotiated an agreement that Ben and his father would spend the time in rural NSW with Ben's paternal grandparents. Marty did not comply with the agreement and took Ben straight to Sydney, against Simone's wishes. He then contacted Simone and told her he would not be returning Ben to her until the end of the pandemic.

NQWLS discussed Simone's options with her, including applying to the court for an urgent recovery order to have Ben returned to her care. Simone was reluctant to go to court so NQWLS wrote to Marty to try and negotiate Ben returning to Simone's care, including a proposal where Simone flew to Sydney, did 14 days quarantine with Ben, and then could return with him to Far North Qld. Unfortunately, Marty was not agreeable to anything that Simone proposed so she was left with no option but to apply to the court.

NQWLS assisted Simone to file urgently in the Federal Circuit Court seeking that her matter be dealt with urgently under the Court's new COVID-19 list as being directly related to or as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Simone's application was accepted as a COVID-19 matter and heard urgently. Ben was returned to her care and orders were made confirming that Ben lived with Simone. NQWLS then assisted Simone to apply for a grant of legal aid for representation in the ongoing proceedings regarding the time that Ben was to spend with his father.

Case Example 2

Collaboration with other services and overcoming language barriers

A woman contacted our phone advice service on a Monday telling us she had just been served with an urgent recovery order application filed by her child's father seeking that she return the child to SE Qld from where she had fled. The woman had fled to Cairns with the child after the father assaulted her.

There was a long history of DV, a DVO in place to protect her from him, repeated breaches of the DVO by him, and the DV was still ongoing.

The matter had been to court a few days before and she had been ordered to file her documents and appear in court again on Wednesday. The woman was from the Philippines and English was her second language. She did not have an interpreter at the first mention of the matter. The NQWLS lawyer booked her in for an urgent face to face appointment. The woman attended the office on Tuesday and with the help of an interpreter over the phone, her documents were drafted and filed. Again, the woman attended court without an interpreter but on the strength of the documents prepared by NQWLS, the Judge did not make the recovery order but adjourned the matter off until Friday but did say that she was considering making the recovery order.

The woman rang us quite distressed on Wednesday afternoon. She was fearful she would have to send her child back down south to his father. The woman came back into the office on Thursday and NQWLS

drafted submissions and filed a supplementary affidavit attaching some further details of the DV and DVO that we did not have the day before. The NQWLS lawyer then rang the Brisbane office of Legal Aid and arranged for a duty lawyer to appear on the woman's behalf the next day. The documents and submissions prepared by NQWLS were emailed through to the duty lawyer.

Legal Aid contacted us after court to tell us the recovery order had not been made after all. A lawyer had been appointed for the child, a Family Report was being done and it was going back to court in three (3) months time. Due to the risks he posed to the child (and the mother) the father was not given any time with the child at this stage.

The woman had applied for Legal Aid early on, however she had written the application for aid herself and it did not contain enough information so had been refused. NQWLS assisted the client with providing more information to Legal Aid and she now has a grant of aid for the remainder of the proceedings.



Case Example 3

Safety at last – wrap-around casework and support services for Rachel

Rachel approached NQWLS for help with her ongoing circumstances of domestic violence and protracted family law matters.

She said she felt defeated by the system and extremely vulnerable. She explained that she had obtained a Protection Order against her ex-partner, who was also the father of her children, only after years of extreme physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse. However, due to continued breaches of the Protection Order she now wanted to vary the order to include additional conditions.

The NQWLS' specialist Domestic Violence Legal Service (DVLS) lawyer appeared in court for Rachel and was able to obtain an extensive Temporary Variation Order (TVO) for Rachel. The TVO named and protected their 2 children, included a residence condition, a no contact condition and prohibited her ex-partner from approaching or locating Rachel.

Sadly, Rachel's ex-partner continued to disregard the TVO and was ultimately charged with over 238 breaches of a domestic violence order, 2 counts of rape, and 1 count of unlawful stalking in a domestic violence setting.

As a result of his multiple serious criminal offences, Rachel's application was continuously adjourned to allow his criminal matters to progress.

This became increasingly frustrating and disempowering for Rachel. She wanted her application finalised and needed the certainty of the additional protections she was seeking.

Finally, after extensive negotiations between the DVLS lawyer and her ex's legal representative, Rachel's ex-partner agreed to consent without admissions to a final order in the same conditions as the Temporary Varied Order. Rachel's ex-partner also subsequently pled guilty to multiple criminal offences.

After the years of uncertainty and fear, upon hearing the news of this outcome from the DVLS lawyer, Rachel burst into tears. Her relief was palpable.

She was so appreciative the long-term legal casework and support provided by the NQWLS / DVLS team.



Congratulations NQWLS

25th Anniversary Messages

“ To the Committee, Staff and many past volunteers of this wonderful service – warmest wishes on your milestone Anniversary. I can recall the early days of the Service and many evenings spent at the Patrick Street premises answering phone calls with my colleagues including Wendy Pack.

From very humble beginnings the NQWLS has grown in both size but also reputationally as a Service which provides invaluable assistance to so many North Queensland women and children in need. May the Service continue to provide quality legal assistance for many years to come.

Warmest regards

Lucia Taylor

“ Dear Annie - I can't believe it's been 25 years since our humble beginnings in North Queensland!

Of course, the story began a few years before we opened our doors, when community meetings were held throughout North Queensland to draw up a “wish list” of what we thought a specialist legal service for women would look like. Having telephone access was the key to reaching as many women over as big an area as possible given a lack of resources. It is wonderful to see the fulfilment of our dreams and demonstrates the power of uniting for a common cause.

Kind regards

Deborah Boulden

“ From little things big things grow... That is certainly the case for our wonderful service. I recently spoke to one of our founding members, Kate Galloway, about her part in the genesis of NQWLS... she regaled me with the story of the infamous meeting in Cardwell with Kate's babe at her breast throughout... an incredible 25 years ago. The babe is now a big strapping man, a lawyer himself! Similarly, NQWLS is all grown up. I am so proud to be a small part of the great force for good that NQWLS always was and is today. Strong and bigger than ever before!

I studied law in my early forties to ‘help women’. I had no idea what that meant at the time but that was the abiding notion inside me. Within 18 months of graduating from JCU, I was lucky enough to be offered my place on this wonderful team. Each day, I feel it is an honour to have the opportunity to help so many of our disadvantaged womenkind. What an amazing experience it is to know that because of something our service has done, a woman's life is changed and better than it was before.

So much energy, time, love, passion (and at times outrage) goes into making our service what it is. For this, I would like to say thank you to all my colleagues past and present and those still to come... thank you to the dedicated committee members and to those who have volunteered their time over the decades. And thank you to Anne for steering this large ship and Hayley for pouring so much of her precious life into making sure our service is the best it can be and we as individuals are nurtured and mentored.

Written with love and gratitude,

Rachael



“ My name is Rae Greaves and I have been a worker at a Townsville’s Domestic Violence Shelter for over 30 years. A few years ago, I was honoured to become a Life Member of the North Queensland Women’s Legal Service along with one of Townsville’s well known legal practitioners, Wendy Pack.

When I reflect back to the very early days of NQWLS, one of the most inspiring experiences from my work life has been witnessing the beginning and the growth of North Queensland Women’s Legal Service (NQWLS). It all began when local legal practitioners and community workers saw the need for free legal advice for women who were experiencing coercive control from their partners or extended family members.

I was one of the early volunteers, rostered on a Wednesday night for two hours alongside a female solicitor, taking calls from women who wanted legal advice. There were many local solicitors who volunteered their time. Wendy Pack and Marjorie Pagani were two of the dynamos and a crucial part of the early days of NQWLS.

The free legal advice phone line continued for a few years before funding was finally granted – in recognition that this was a much-needed service and a vital part of helping women and children escape domestic violence.

Running the phone line and responding to the high level of calls for help called for a huge commitment from all of the women who volunteered their time. But, alongside the unpaid work, was a sense of camaraderie and passion for all of us who were involved. Lawyers and community workers came to

know and respect each other’s work and some of us became life-long friends, united in a shared vision for a safer and more just world for all women, not just those with money.

I could never have imagined then that we would have the amazing NQ Women’s Legal Service that we have today. It is a Service that continues to grow and develop in order to best support the women of North Queensland. I feel proud to refer the women I work with to the Service, knowing they will receive excellent legal advice in an accessible and respectful environment. I want to thank the staff of the Service and their amazing Director, Anne Lewis, for keeping alive our vision that began with a couple of local volunteers in an office at the Women’s centre in Townsville, answering phones on a Wednesday night.

Thank you from us all.





Client Feedback

“ The lawyer supported me in court to obtain my DVO. She walked me through the whole legal process making me feel supported and understood. I would not have been able to complete the process without her help in the state my mental health was in.

“ They need more lawyers because they were run off their feet on the day at court.

“ The solicitor helped me when I was not able to help myself. They are great.

“ The legal assistance I received from NQWLS made a huge difference with my life and my daughters lives and I am so incredibly happy. The solicitor represented me for a DV matter regarding my ex and kept me informed and supported throughout the entire, longwinded process with court. I consequently had a really good outcome in court and I credit my lawyer for her support and time.

“ The solicitor made the process much less daunting for me. She explained all the processes clearly and gave additional advice on other matters. Thank you for your kindness and support.

“ I could not have faced the court appearances without NQWLS support.

“ NQWLS helped me a lot. I am unsure if the TPO would have been awarded without the assistance provided me on the day. Thank you so much for this.

“ I wanted to let you know how indebted I feel to NQWLS. I felt so supported by 2 of the lawyers on different days. Their professionalism and empathy was second to none. This is the first time I have used the Service and they both made the whole process so much easier. Please pass on these comments to these amazing women. Sadly your Service and support will always be required, but I cannot praise you enough. Many thanks for the amazing work you do for the community. It is truly appreciated.

“ I could not have dealt at all in the courtroom without that amazing lady's help. The TPO definitely would not have been granted and I probably just would have left the state.

“ I felt supported by the whole team. They made me feel human again.

“ I want to let you know that I am so very thankful for the lawyer speaking on my behalf today. At this time in my life with all the pressure and stress, I don't think I could have done it on my own. Greatly appreciated.

“ I had no former experience or understanding of the legal world. It was incredibly daunting and stressful. I was able to access NQWLS for some valuable advice and direction moving forward. Without them, I would have been completely lost and under prepared. Thank you so much for this Service!

“ NQWLS has given me the confidence to proceed with my hearing.

Acrostic Poems

Nothing
Quite as
Wonderful as
Ladies being
Supportive

No wrong door
Queues no more
Women galore
Like never before
Support for all

Never
Quiet
Will
Loudly
Shout

Together
Our
Women
Need
Support
Voices
Ideas
Loyalty and
Laughter to
Excel

Calm and
Acepting
Ingenuity
Reign our
Novel
Service



March 4 Justice Speech

Thank you so much to you all for coming along today and thank you Ella for inviting me to speak. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet today the Gimuy-Walubara Yidinji people and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and note their continuing connection to land sea and culture – sovereignty was never ceded – it always was and always will be their land. I would also like to acknowledge the particular contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have made and continue to make to our community.

Why do I march today? I am sure it is for many of the same reasons you do – basically I am angry! I have been angry for a long time about the violence, misogyny and sexual harassment that is the reality of living as a woman in our society, but the response (or lack thereof) to the allegations of rape, bullying and sexual harassment in Parliament House, as well as to those against the AG has me raging! For our Prime Minister to accept at face value the denial put forward by the AG, without even reading the allegations, and then the only ones who have lost their jobs as a result of the allegations coming to light are the victims and those who dared to speak up and support them, pretty much sums up everything that is wrong with the system that allows men's violence against women to continue almost unchecked.

What sort of message does this send to our society – to my three daughters and my granddaughter? That they have to expect this to happen, that they have to accept it when it does, not to speak up because they will not be believed and, their life will be further destroyed if they do? And to my son? That he can treat women this way – sexually harass and assault them and there will be little if any consequences for him? No, enough is enough!

We need a comprehensive and urgent reform of our laws, policies and institutions to properly be able to

support and protect women and children and hold men who commit these behaviors to account. Our current system is failing victims miserably. A lot has been said about the rule of law recently – the rule of law means equality before the law, equality of access to the law and equality of protection by the law – the law and legal system is clearly not delivering this to women generally, but especially to those who are victims of sexual violence. In fact, it actually systematically retraumatizes victims and in most cases without even a positive outcome for them.

We know this because women have told us this – repeatedly. We also know this because less than 15% of rapes and sexual assaults are reported in the first place and of those less than 10% result in a conviction. The system is stacked against the victim and the way the trial process works the alleged rapist defends themselves by attacking the victim and her credibility – taking the focus off him and his behaviour – what was she wearing, was she drunk, was she flirting, did she go off alone with him, does she have a history of engaging in casual sex? The history of the alleged rapist, including previous charges or convictions for rape and sexual assault do not come out during the trial process.

This is why I march today, to demand change. For myself, my family, my female friends and colleagues and for my clients – the 1000's and 1000's of women who I have worked with over the years to help them navigate and survive a system that actively works against them.

I march to demand change so that the extremely brave 16-year-old girl who reports a sexual assault to police is no longer asked what kind of underwear was she wearing under the dress – a G-string? And the woman who reports being sexually assaulted by her housemate whilst having a shower is no longer questioned about what she might have done to cause it – well why did he barge in there, what did you do? Were you flirting with him beforehand? Or the woman who rang police distressed reporting her ex-partner had just sexually assaulted her but when police arrive, she is the one taken into custody and charged because they found some drugs in her room – her allegations were never addressed. These cases all occurred here in Cairns over the last 12 months. I could go on and on, but I won't.

But this is why I march.

I march for my Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters whose experience of violence is truly heart breaking, for my culturally and linguistically diverse sisters, my LGBTIQ sisters and for those with a disability whose, along with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, experiences of violence are huge and whose chances of justice and protection through our current systems and institutions is practically nil.

I also march for those 1000's of women who cannot, those who have paid the ultimate price and lost their lives as a result of male violence against women. Enough is enough!

We demand urgent societal and systematic change now – we must reframe the narrative – we don't have women's safety issues in our society – we have men's violence against women issues, and it must stop now, and change must start at the top. So, governments of Australia, you are on notice – we demand the right to be safe at home, at work and in the street.

WE ARE WOMEN – HEAR US ROAR!!

Thank you

Hayley Grainger

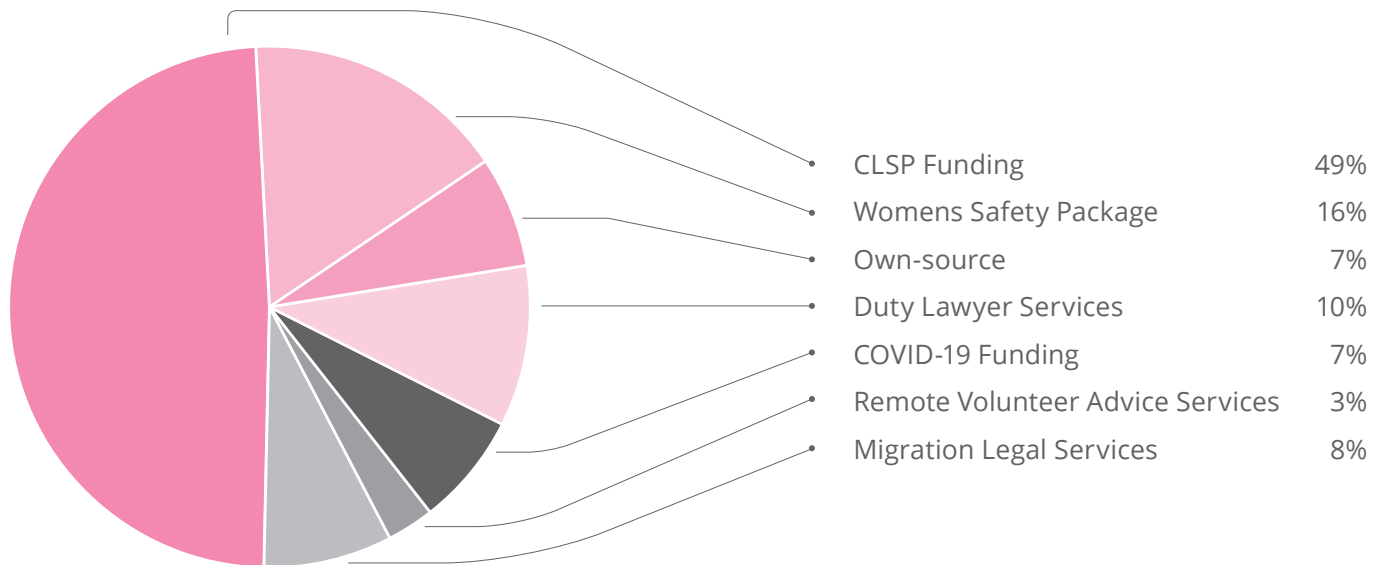
Cairns, 14 March 2021



Financial Summary

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE

Total revenue for the year ended 30 June 2021 is **\$2,746,300**



Total expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2021 is **\$2,128,837**



Employee Expenses
(76%)



Communication & Remote Work Arrangements
(5%)



Premises Costs
(8%)



Program Management
(6%)



Other expenses
(5%)

ANNUAL POSITION

Total members funds balance for the year ended 30 June 2021 is **\$1,634,070**



Assets
\$2,725,260



Liabilities
\$1,091,190



Equity
\$1,634,070

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Our **sustainability** reserve is **\$523K**

CLSP program funding is confirmed until **2025**

We expanded our program delivery with **two new** programs underway

Our **position** is strong with a current ratio of 2.7:1

Our Gratitude

Department of Justice & Attorney General Queensland
 Commonwealth Attorney General's Department
 Legal Aid Queensland
 Department of Social Services
 Management Committee members & Staff
 Community Legal Centres Queensland
 Community Legal Centres Australia
 Cairns RLAF & North Queensland Legal Assistance Forum
 Family Law Pathways Network
 Women's Legal Service Australia Network
 Townsville Bookkeeping Service & Cindy O'Shea
 Rod Parker Accountants
 Far North Queensland Law Association
 Women Lawyers Association of Queensland
 Townsville District Law Association
 James Cook University Schools of Law and Social Work
 Colin Biggers & Paisley Foundation
 Community, corporate and private supporters





Townsville

Phone: 07 4772 5400

Fax: 07 4772 5315

Email: tsvadmin@nqwls.com.au

Ground Floor, 42 Sturt Street
Townsville QLD 4810

P O Box 2209
Townsville QLD 4810

Cairns

Phone: 07 4033 5825

Fax: 07 4033 5845

Email: cairns@nqwls.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 88 Abbott Street
Cairns QLD 4870

P O Box 2542
Cairns QLD 4870