



Annual Report

2015-2016





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NQWLS celebrates 20 years

North Queensland Women's Legal Service (NQWLS) is thrilled to be celebrating 20 years of service to the community this year.

In 1994, a group of Townsville women decided there was a need for a dedicated Women's Legal Service for North Queensland and so formed a working group to achieve this goal. They created a roster of volunteer lawyers and community workers and started a free legal advice service by telephone on Wednesday evenings, operating from the Women's Centre.

The new volunteer phone advice service was in high demand from the start. So, in early 1996, the Townsville women saw an opportunity to obtain funding from the Keating government's \$160 million Justice Statement initiative to 'evolve' the volunteer only service, into a funded service.

At the same time, a group of women in Cairns were also keen to have specialist legal services for women in the Far North. They too worked hard and together with the women from Townsville, agreed upon and settled a joint proposal seeking funding from the Commonwealth government.

It was good news! The Commonwealth approved funding for a specialist

women's legal service for North and Far North Queensland.

Funds were provided to the Townsville Women's Centre as the auspicing body at that time for the existing volunteer legal service. The women of Townsville and Cairns came together to incorporate and deliver services across the top half of Queensland.

This was a big evolutionary step. The Townsville volunteer service evolved into NQWLS.

The women argued that more resources were needed to deliver services. They were concerned that the geographic realities weren't fully understood by the funders. At one point, information was forwarded by the women to the funding body which included a map of North and Far North Queensland - with a map of Victoria super-imposed over it - to press home the geographic challenges that the women were facing.

At the inaugural General Meeting of NQWLS on 12 December 1996, a total of **75 women** from Mackay, Townsville and Cairns gathered together. Using a phone link up, they elected the first management committee to guide the significant work that lay ahead.

This was an impressive turn out for the meeting - and a clear demonstration of the commitment to build a successful and effective legal service for women. A further **45 women** tendered their apology for the inaugural General Meeting.

The first elected management committee of NQWLS comprised women from Townsville, Cairns and Mackay

Jackie Kerr *President*

Raylene Bugden *VP*

Lisa Bernhardt *Secretary*

Maxine Bell *Treasurer*

Sharlene Nipperess *Member*

Anne Lewis *Member*

Lyndy Burke *Member*

Meg O'Neill *Member*

Joanne Bowie *Member*

Gwen Seru *Member*

Evelyn Scott *Member*

Mandy Shircore *Member*

Julie Suthers *Member*

Lesley Clark *Member*

Darlene Fell *Member*

Through frequent meetings, long discussions and great effort, the committee worked through the challenges.

Staff were employed, offices were set up in Townsville and Cairns and a service delivery model was developed to ensure that women across the vast service region had

the greatest access possible to free legal help within the available resources.

There are too many women to name individually in this Report who are due our gratitude for their contribution to the work and growth of NQWLS. But, the test of time has shown that they have succeeded in achieving the NQWLS vision: access to justice for all women living in North and Far North Queensland.

However, special mention must be made to the first employed staff in Townsville – **Ruth Venables** as Principal Solicitor and **Monica McCabe** as Coordinator; also **Deb Boulden** as first solicitor in the Cairns office and **Kay Thoren** as Administrator.

Together, they carved the path for others to follow over the next 20 years.

Since 1996, NQWLS has provided more than **75,000 legal services** to the women of North and Far North Queensland.

In 1997, NQWLS received additional funding to provide specialist legal services for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander women across the region.

A lengthy consultation with the community was initiated including visits to communities in key locations such as Cape York, the Gulf region, Mackay, Mt Isa and Townsville. A Reference

Group was established to guide the formation and work of the Indigenous Women's Unit (IWU).

Once again, we acknowledge the first workers of the Indigenous Women's Unit, namely, **Desley Thompson, Carmel Ybarlucea and Deb Malthouse** in Cairns, also **Melanie Burch, Jeanne Nuggin, Kay Cavanagh and Jasmine Perry** in Townsville.

In 2005, the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department accepted the proposal made by the NQWLS management committee and the IWU Reference Group to establish and incorporate a fully independent community legal centre for indigenous women – which we now know as the **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service (NQ)**.

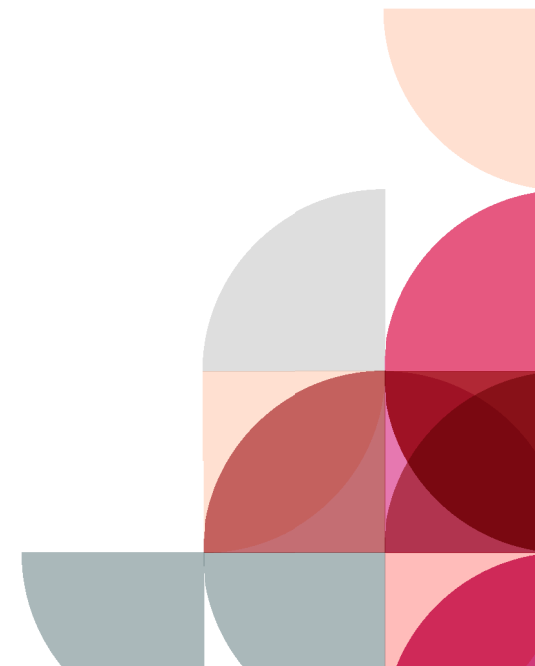
NQWLS congratulates all past and present women who worked hard to achieve this important milestone for indigenous women in this 10th anniversary year of its independence.

To each and every woman who has been part of the work of the last 20 years, may we simply say to each other, thank you. This collective work has made a difference in the lives of the women who reached out for help.

The NQWLS Townsville office has a message on the wall which sums it all up nicely:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead 1901 - 1978



20 years of free legal services

23,444 Information and Referral

47,687 Legal Advice

3,401 Casework services

731 Non-Casework/CLE/projects

75,263 Total services

NQWLS records show that between 1996 and 2016, requests for legal assistance have increased steadily each and every year.

A message from the Director

The 2015-16 year has been another year full of changes, expansion of space, staff and services for women. NQWLS can enjoy a great sense of achievement as it reflects on the work done over the past year - and over the past 20 years!

In the first quarter of 2015-16, we received news from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department that NQWLS was to receive a grant of \$1.05 million over the next 3 years from the Women's Safety Package. The funds were given to establish a complex casework service for women facing the greatest barriers to accessing the legal help that they needed and who were also at the greatest risk of violence. Three new staff positions were funded and new staff were recruited. This meant that NQWLS had to move its office from Level 3, 42 Sturt Street, to the Ground Floor tenancy to accommodate the increase in its Townsville staff team.

We worked through the service development milestones, conducting community surveys and hosting or attending multiple community meetings across our service region. Eventually, in April 2016, NQWLS launched the new specialist

Domestic Violence Legal Service and the intake of clients commenced.

Amidst the work to get the new Service off the ground, all of the other NQWLS services continued on 'as usual' in the background.

In October 2015, Legal Aid Queensland was funded to provide a network of duty lawyer services in 14 Domestic Violence Courts in Queensland.

NQWLS was already delivering duty lawyer services at the Domestic Violence Courts in Townsville and Cairns on all sitting days. So, it was natural that it was selected as a preferred supplier at both Courts to provide the new funded duty lawyer services to women, both aggrieved and respondents.

The collaboration on the hectic DV list days in both Townsville and Cairns Courts between NQWLS staff, Registry staff, Queensland Police, preferred supplier practitioners, and Domestic Violence court support workers has resulted in increased safety and better outcomes at court for women.

This year, in the Townsville office, we said farewell to **Linda Anderson** who moved to Victoria with her family. We also said goodbye to **Lyndal Spear**. We were joined by **Danielle O'Connor**, then **Jodie**

Woodward, Jade Connor and **Kathy Giles** was appointed to the paralegal role for the new Domestic Violence Legal Service.

Sharell O'Brien was given increased responsibilities and appointed as Supervising Solicitor in the Townsville office. This new role was created to manage the increased number of lawyers working in Townsville, the expanded and complex casework matters that were being taken on and the fact that Principal Solicitor, **Hayley Grainger**, is located in the Cairns office.

Debbie Taylor returned from a year's leave of absence to tell us about her exciting overseas adventures and to her job-share role on the front desk in Townsville, with **Glenda Demopoulos**.

We were blessed to have **Cheryl Bonnefin** fill Deb's role during her absence for a year and we were pleased that on finishing up with NQWLS, Cheryl was offered a position with the Townsville Community Legal Service (TCLS).

In Cairns, we said goodbye to **Samantha Byles** and also **Sharon Witteveen** (who also moved to Victoria) and we welcomed local solicitor, **Rachael Ozanne- Pike**, to the Cairns legal team. The temporary position filled by **Michelle Whitfield** ended when **Leah Muller** returned

from maternity leave to the job-share front desk position and was welcomed back by **Moira McGovern** and **Katherine Weston**.

We thank Linda, Cheryl, Sam, Sharon, Lyndal and Michelle for their work for NQWLS.

The NQWLS staff team were joined by many, fabulous new volunteers this year and their contribution is covered in detail later in this Report.

With the expansion and increase of legal services, moving office for the second time in 12 months, multiple staff changes, undertaking some fantastic new projects and establishing several great new partnerships, I can only feel grateful to be part of such an amazing team of dedicated women.

On behalf of the NQWLS staff team, I would like to express thanks for the guidance and leadership given by the NQWLS management committee in the past year.

Likewise, we appreciate the work and support provided by our State Association, rebranded now as **CLCQ**, and also the National Association, fondly known as **NACLC**. We also thank the State and Commonwealth government for the funding provided to NQWLS to deliver services to vulnerable women.

It has been said that one of the most extraordinary opportunities we have in life is the chance to help others. That is why working in a community legal centre, like NQWLS, is a great privilege.

As we head into deeper waters of change with regards to the funding and sustainability of legal assistance services in

Queensland, I believe the strength that comes from the unity and teamwork within NQWLS and the collaborative work we do with our many community partners, will keep the NQWLS ship safely on course.

Anne Lewis

Director



The solicitor was patient, understanding, polite, caring and very professional. She was easy to talk to and friendly. She worked after hours to complete the affidavit on more than one occasion. I am very pleased with the support received from NQWLS.

NQWLS staff and management team

CAIRNS

Hayley Grainger

Hayley has been with NQWLS since 2008 and was appointed as Principal Solicitor in 2014. Hayley has a Bachelor of Social Work as well as a Bachelor of Laws and finds that her social work skills complement her work as a community lawyer when working with vulnerable clients.

Rachael Ozanne-Pike

Rachael joined NQWLS in early March 2016. She has worked in the Office of Public Prosecutions and in private practice. Rachael brings with her a great deal of work and life experience and a determination to help women in need.

Michelle Whitfield

Michelle began volunteering with NQWLS because she has a strong interest in social justice. She is completing a graduate law degree through QUT.

Leah Muller

Leah has worked with NQWLS since 2013 and has recently returned from maternity leave. Leah's passion for helping others attracted her to work with NQWLS. She says the impact that the Service has on the lives of women who are in need of legal help and support is often life-changing.

Moira McGovern

Moira has a background in small business, technology, tourism, travel, executive support, workplace health & safety and fitness. Helping women to help themselves, is something close to Moira's heart and part of her every day work on the frontline of NQWLS.

Katherine Weston

Katherine is a law student and part of the administrative staff team in the Cairns office. She is building skills and knowledge about community legal practice and social justice issues that will be of benefit to her in the years ahead for her career in law.

TOWNSVILLE

Glenda Demopoulos

Glenda has been with NQWLS since 2009. Her knowledge of NQWLS services and local community referrals is an asset. Glenda is professional, supportive and respectful in her frontline work with clients of NQWLS.

Sharell O'Brien

Sharell left private practice and joined NQWLS in April 2013. Sharell was appointed as Supervising Solicitor in 2016. She provides quality legal advice and casework assistance for women in the areas of family law and domestic violence.

Danielle O'Connor

Danielle joined the NQWLS team in November 2015. Danielle provides complex casework services for vulnerable women, with matters in varying jurisdictions. Danielle strongly believes in every person's right to access quality legal assistance.

Jade Connor

Jade joined NQWLS in May 2016. Already an experienced commercial and property lawyer, Jade has received intensive training and gained valuable experience in the areas of family law and domestic violence since joining NQWLS. Jade is passionate about her new practice areas and draws upon her commercial and property knowledge to assist clients.

Jodie Woodward

Jodie joined NQWLS in January 2016. She is experienced in the areas of family law and domestic violence. Jodie has taken on the role of Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer at the Townsville Magistrates' Court.

Samantha Kelley

After spending 5 years in private practice, Samantha joined NQWLS in March 2015. She is an experienced family lawyer and provides complex casework services and representation for clients in multiple jurisdictions.

as part of her work with the Domestic Violence Legal Service.

Debbie Taylor

Debbie has been with NQWLS since 2011 and has made a valuable contribution to the efficient operation of the Service's administration systems. She has recently returned from 12 months leave, taken to travel the world. Debbie is one of the first points of contact for women seeking help from NQWLS in Townsville. She is responsive and supportive to women in conflict or crisis.

Robyn Gee

Robyn joined NQWLS in October 2015 in the role of Intake Worker for the duty lawyer service at Townsville Domestic Violence Court. Prior to this, Robyn had spent four years in the Townsville Court system working with Court Network including time on the Front Desk.

Anne Lewis

Anne had extensive experience as a paralegal and legal practice manager in private practice before joining the CLC sector in 1992. She has also worked with Victoria Legal Aid in a management role. She took on the role of Director of NQWLS in November 2013.



NQWLS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

NQWLS management committee members are a talented and dedicated team of volunteers who have provided support, wisdom and good governance throughout the year. The committee for 2015-16 was:

Natasha Busby *President*

Kate Pateman *Vice President*

Jodie Woolcock *Treasurer*

Renae Stocks *Secretary*

Ann Carrington *Member (Cairns)*

Amalie Grima *Member (Cairns)*

Di Ruhl *Member (Townsville)*

Another exciting year of growth and change for North Queensland Women's Legal Service, with new staff, projects and partnerships building on the already incredible work done by the Service to assist the women of North Queensland (NQ).

We are especially grateful to those who have given their time and skills so generously as volunteers and pro bono partners for the benefit of women seeking help from NQWLS.

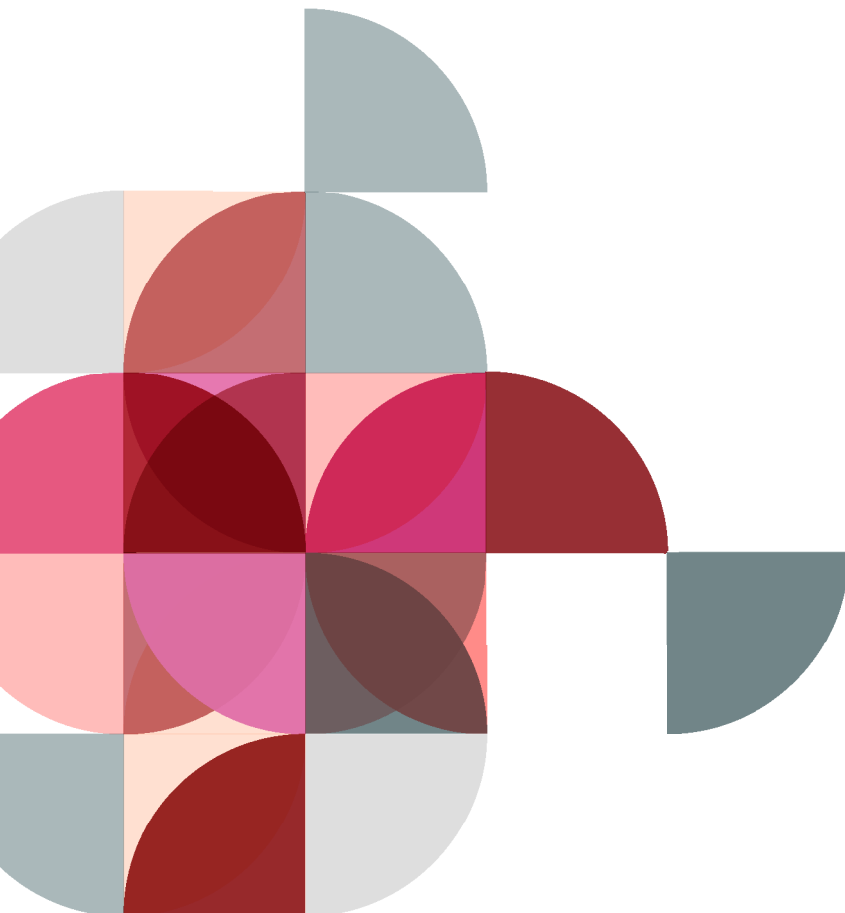
The growth factor has also extended to the management committee. We have welcomed new members this year, including three new babies. To the members stepping down this year, as always we are sorry to see you go and wish you all the best. To the members staying or coming on board, thank you for your commitment in what we expect to be another terrific year ahead for NQWLS.

A special thank you to the wonderful staff of the Service, who make our job as a management committee a dream.

I cannot wait to see what the next year brings and I am incredibly excited to be a part of it.

Natasha Busby
President

A message from the President



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS - EVENING ADVICE SERVICE

At the end of the 2015-16 year, NQWLS recruited and provided induction training sessions for volunteer lawyers from private firms in both Townsville and Cairns. The volunteer lawyers will provide an evening advice service by telephone from both NQWLS offices every Wednesday evening.

The evening advice service will give access to an **additional 1000 women** living anywhere across the vast NQWLS service region. Women can make a telephone appointment for legal advice with our volunteer lawyers, no matter where they are living.

We are extremely grateful to the following family lawyers for their generous commitment of time and expertise to help us increase access to free legal services for women living in rural, regional and remote (RRR) communities in Queensland.

Cairns Volunteers

Julie Mason
Helen Oliver
Patricia Cope
Bonnie Stevenson
Peta Parsons
Mairi Kerfoot
Nicky Mitchell
Elena Pelbart
Lettice Patterson

Townsville Volunteers

Rayarna Ritchie
Courtney Aitken
Sarah Belford
Emma Donald
Nikki Dawson
Audrey Bevan
Natalie Elms
Diana Falcomer
Diane Grace
Di Turner
Jess Shuttleworth
Deanna Musemeci
Janice Mayes
Kate Pateman
Kimberley Williams
Emma Crozier
Kellie Hopkins
Claire Sullivan

LAW STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

We are grateful for the time and work done by the law student volunteers and high school work experience students named below. The students have assisted with a wide range of tasks from administrative tasks, to front desk and reception work, taking phone enquiries, filing documents at courts, preparing Briefs to Counsel, assisting with intake and observing interviews at the Domestic Violence Courts and many other tasks. Thank you!

Carly Baker
Morgan Williams
Courtney Beveridge
Amelia Doolan
Efimia Loizou

JCU LAW SCHOOL - LEGAL PLACEMENT SUBJECT

NQWLS values its partnership with the James Cook University Law School and the opportunity to involve law students in community legal practice in our Townsville and Cairns offices.

We especially thank **Mandy Shircore**, Head of the Law School, for her ongoing support and assistance in 'matching' students enrolled in the new Legal Placement subject, with the specialist work undertaken by NQWLS.

In the second semester of 2015, we welcomed our first Legal Placement students. It was a pleasure to get to know and work with **Emma Crozier** in the Townsville office and **Rebecca Habermann** in the Cairns office and we thank them both for their contribution and work for NQWLS clients.

We have estimated that during 2015-16, law student volunteers and placements contributed around **672 hours** of work for the benefit of NQWLS and its clients



Having their say

Student volunteers & placements have their say

Thank you so much for everything. I really appreciate it. Everyone has made me feel welcome and comfortable. You have made an impact on my life and my future career path. Hope to see you all again soon. **Efimia Loizou**

I have really enjoyed my time as a volunteer at the NQWLS. I have learnt so many skills that I feel I can take into my career as a solicitor. I hope to work with the inspiring, supportive team at NQWLS again in the future. Thank you. **Courtney Beveridge**

Thank you so much for having me as your first placement student. The experience has been truly incredible - not only have I learnt more from each of you than I would ever have in any classroom, but you have helped me find an area of law that I'm truly passionate about and for that I'll be forever indebted to you all! **Emma Crozier**

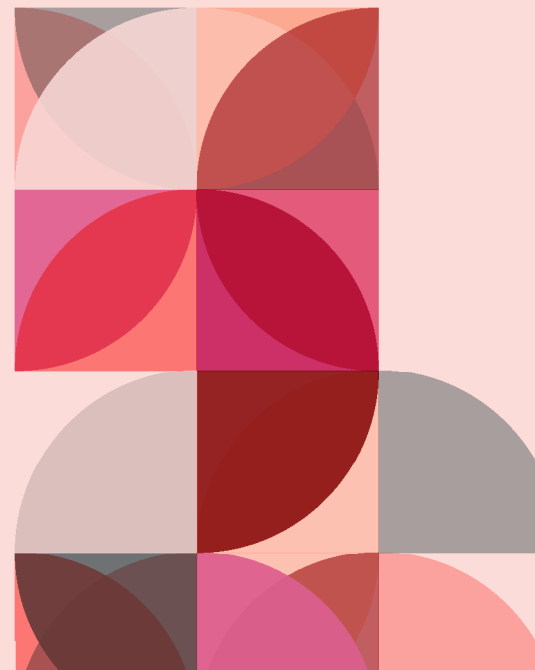
My time at NQWLS has provided me with invaluable skills including learning interviewing techniques and assisting vulnerable clients. I have gained insight into the practical side of working in a law office and had the opportunity to observe legal theory helping to resolve real legal issues that women in crisis face. I am appreciative

of the experience NQWLS has given me and the vital services they provide for our community. **Carly Baker**

During my time volunteering for NQWLS I have experienced a number of situations that not many other second year law students have. I have enjoyed my experiences assisting with client cases at the Magistrates Court, and I feel as though I have learnt a great deal about the dynamics and complexities of domestic violence already. The experience has opened my eyes to the hard work and dedication that the solicitors put in for every client. **Morgan Williams**

It has been a privilege to be a volunteer at NQWLS this year. It has given me a much clearer understanding of the vital service that NQWLS provides. I am grateful for the guidance and patience given by the women at the legal centre, and I look forward to continuing to volunteer with them as I complete my studies in the legal profession. **Amelia Doolan**

You have helped me find an area of law that I'm truly passionate about and for that I'll be forever indebted to you all!



PRO BONO PARTNERS COLIN BIGGERS & PAISLEY

Another highlight of the 2015-16 year was the new pro bono partnership that NQWLS established with **Colin Biggers & Paisley (CBP)**.

The partnership has been formalised by way of an MOU and the collaborative work to be undertaken will be known as the **North Queensland Access to Justice Project**.

CBP has provided a team of dedicated lawyers for the Project and we are deeply appreciative of the work and support of the following CBP volunteers:

Dan Creasey, *Partner, Head of Pro Bono & Responsible Business*

Daisy Johnson, *Responsible Business Coordinator*

Rebecca Castley, *Partner*

Damien Butler, *Partner*

Samantha Hall, *Partner*

Nadia Czachor, *Senior Associate*

Kathryn O'Hare, *Lawyer*

Nina Crew, *Lawyer*

Marguerite Donaldson, *Lawyer*

Morgan Stack, *Lawyer*

Georgina Taylor, *Lawyer*

The CBP lawyers provide legal advice and casework services in civil law and other areas of law that

are outside the scope of the specialist areas of the NQWLS lawyers.

The North Queensland Access to Justice Project got off to a great start with CBP volunteer lawyers agreeing to take on a significant public interest case in the Supreme Court, arising from a domestic violence matter.

Many other matters have been accepted by our CBP partners as well. For work already underway we give thanks to CBP volunteers across the country including **Dan Brush, Jarrod Tucker, Carlos Gouveia, Matt Deighton, David Miller, Lisa Sciberras**.

In addition to the direct client services that CBP provide, they are also assisting NQWLS with various operational, governance and sustainability matters. They have also provided other 'in kind' support and a generous donation of funds.

NQWLS is very fortunate to have the benefit of the collective expertise, time, support and generosity of the CBP team which will help us achieve the NQWLS Vision and Mission for the benefit of vulnerable women and their children.

PRO BONO PARTNERS

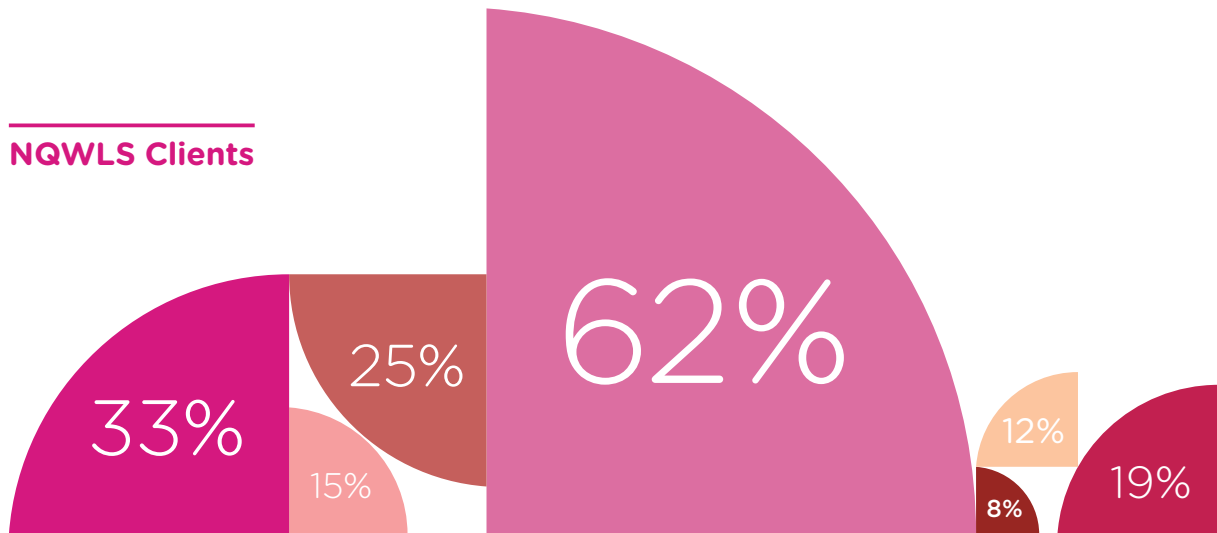
CLAYTON UTZ

NQWLS has also had some preliminary discussions with **David Hilliard, Jessica Thrower** and **Alyce Elder** of Clayton Utz about potential collaborative work and projects that would meet the goals of both NQWLS and Clayton Utz. It is early days, but we are hopeful that some great outcomes can be achieved through our joint efforts in the coming year.

We give thanks to Clayton Utz lawyer, **Danielle Barry**, for advice provided in support of a recent community legal education project we delivered.

I want to thank the NQWLS lawyers so very much for your time, advice, guidance and compassion. I hope you all one day know just how much your work is appreciated by people like me. I pray that you receive more funding to assist other people like me also.

NQWLS Clients



NQWLS delivered services at **33%** above its annual targets.

New clients increased by **15%** from last year

Women affected by domestic violence increased by **25%** from previous year.

Women affected by domestic violence were **62%** of all clients.

Women identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were **12%** of all new clients

Women disclosing disability were **8%** of all new clients

Women born overseas were **19%** of all new clients

Direct Client Services

2,034 Information & Referrals

3,262 Legal Advice

307 duty lawyer services

393 Other casework/representation

6,040 Total client services

Unmet Legal Need

A total of **8449** calls to the 1800 Advice Line were unable to be answered.

This represents an **increase of 60%** from the previous year.

For every 1 call answered, 8 calls go unanswered due to lack of resources.

Problem 'clusters'

Legal advices provided covered **99 different problem types**. The client advice records above of 3,262 in fact cover **5,930 different legal problems** within those records. This is because NQWLS clients frequently present with 'clusters' of legal problems. The top ten areas of advice provided in 2015-16 are:

Child contacts	1,331
Family / Domestic Violence	1,299
Property (<i>marriage & de facto</i>)	1,133
Child Residency	461
Specific Issues	435
Divorce	159
Parenting Plans	118
Relocation	114
Child Support issues	68
Victim Assist / injuries	55
Various other problems	757

Non-Casework Services

Community Legal Education activities **23**

Policy / Law Reform activities **6**



1800 Legal Advice Line

NQWLS operates a free 1800 legal advice line (1800 244 504) which provides confidential advice and referrals to women from Sarina in the south, to the Torres Strait in the north and west to the Northern Territory border.

The Advice Line gives women the opportunity to speak directly with a solicitor about the legal problems they are facing. Where a problem is outside of NQWLS core practice areas, our solicitors are able to provide legal information and referrals to alternate legal assistance or other support services for help.

Whilst the Advice Line is best suited to discrete issues, it also provides an alternative option to an appointment for regional and remote clients, or for clients who are unable make or keep an appointment for various reasons, even by telephone or by Skype.

However, a large number of clients present with long standing and complex legal issues which suggests that access to legal assistance has been an issue in the past for these clients. Where possible, attempts are made to refer clients with more complex or lengthy matters to our Townsville or Cairns offices for face to face, Skype or telephone appointments in order to respond to the

calls of as many vulnerable women through the Advice Line as possible.

As indicated, demand for NQWLS services is constantly increasing. In an attempt to meet this demand, the Advice Line was **expanded from 3 to 4 days each week** during this year. The service now operates on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 9.00am and 1.00pm.

Even still, the Advice Line recorded that for every 1 call answered, another **8 calls went unanswered** due to lack of resources. This unmet legal need at the ratio of **1:8** is an **increase of 60%** on the data collected by NQWLS in the previous financial year. Sadly, this means a total of **8449 calls** went unanswered.

This unmet legal need is of great concern to us. The women calling the Advice Line are often in rural, regional and remote areas where they cannot simply walk into a community legal centre or a Legal Aid office and other support services are sometimes few and far between as well. These women are often in crisis or experiencing family or domestic violence.

NQWLS is doing everything in its power to increase access to free legal help for women and address the unmet legal need in its service region.

Face to face appointments

Face to face appointments (including pre-booked telephone and Skype appointments) were in high demand again this year across both our Townsville and Cairns offices.

Women can obtain advice in relation to family law, family and domestic violence, child protection, sexual assault, discrimination and Victim Assist matters. Although our individual appointments often cover a wide range of legal matters, recent trends have shown that a high number of women are seeking advice and assistance in relation to family law including parenting and property settlement matters (often where the value of the property pool is either minimal or a negative value) or in relation to family or domestic violence.

With the number of enquiries far outstripping our capacity to provide appointments, NQWLS offices have been required to limit the booking of appointments to two weeks in advance. This has meant that it has been necessary to refer women to the 1800 Advice Line if they need advice and cannot get an appointment within the two week window. Fortunately, despite this high demand, our solicitors have consistently been able to juggle their existing

workloads to accommodate urgent matters where necessary.

It is hoped that the commencement of our **Volunteer Evening Advice Service** from the close of the 2015-2016 year will alleviate some of this pressure by providing a further **1000 women each year** with access to legal advice.

Domestic Violence Legal Service

NQWLS received funding from the Federal Government in late 2015 to establish and operate a holistic, complex casework service for women who are at the highest risk of domestic violence and are in the greatest need of assistance. This funding allowed NQWLS to **expand its existing services** so that more women can access free legal help, particularly ongoing, intensive casework assistance and representation in court.

The Domestic Violence Legal Service (DVLS) was established after community stakeholders were consulted about how the new service could work in collaboration with existing services and in particular with the long established 'integrated community networks' that respond to domestic violence in our region. In Townsville, that network is **Dovetail**. In Cairns it is the **Cairns Collective Impact**. New networks have recently been established in the Burdekin, in the

Hinchinbrook area and at Charters Towers. Valuable input and feedback was provided by many stakeholders within our service area who responded to our community survey and during the consultation meetings that we hosted or attended.

The DVLS offers a holistic service for women who have been, or are currently, the victim of domestic or family violence. It is well understood that women escaping violence require legal and non-legal supports. NQWLS has strong, established relationships with community organisations and stakeholders who provide support services and other assistance to women affected by domestic and family violence. DVLS works collaboratively with those organisations to ensure that women are not only receiving legal advice and assistance, but also appropriate non-legal supports and services. This may include supports such as financial counselling, safety planning, personal counselling and housing assistance.

DVLS provides ongoing casework assistance and representation (including Court representation) to women in relation to domestic violence matters, parenting matters, property settlement and spousal maintenance matters, child protection matters, tenancy matters and Victim Assist QLD applications.

DVLS consists of two Solicitors and a Paralegal/Client Support Worker. Client intake commenced on 15 April 2016. Since then, DVLS has received a continual flow of referrals from community organisations across North and Far North Queensland. Staff have maintained a high volume of work and prioritise urgent referrals.

Outreach services

One of the challenges of delivering services to women living in communities across the top half of Queensland, is simply the sheer size of the NQWLS service region and the geographic isolation that our clients experience.

We know that many of the most vulnerable women are those who live in rural and remote communities where accessing any services, let alone legal services, is almost impossible.

In an effort to address this and provide access to justice for these women, NQWLS runs regular outreach legal clinics. Each month a lawyer from our Townville office travels on circuit to Ingham, Ayr and Charters Towers, and from our Cairns office to Atherton, Mareeba, Innisfail, Mossman and Port Douglas to deliver face to face legal advice clinics to women in those towns and surrounding communities.

This year we assisted **232 women** in our outreach clinics. We would like to

acknowledge our community partners who coordinate the bookings for the clinics and provide confidential interview rooms to conduct the appointments. Without their invaluable support we would not be able to provide the service that we do, therefore we would like to thank:

Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre

Burdekin Community Association

Prospect Inc.

Women's Centre Atherton

Mareeba Community Centre

Community Support Centre Innisfail

Mossman Community Centre

Port Douglas

Neighbourhood Centre

Expanded Outreach Services - RRR Legal Assistance Project

Although the outreach clinics go some way to increasing access to justice for women in regional areas, we are not able to physically visit some of the more outlying and remote communities in our extensive service area to provide advice.

We are therefore presently establishing new partnerships with community centres in additional RRR areas - **Kuranda, Mount Isa, the Whitsunday region, Cooktown** and at the **Women's Centre** in **Mackay** - who will provide confidential and safe

spaces for women to 'link in' and access legal advice by Skype appointments.

The **RRR Legal Assistance Project** is being made possible by the generous donation of laptops by **GHD Pty Ltd** in Townsville. GHD Pty Ltd is a leading international engineering, architecture, environmental and construction services company and a co-tenant with NQWLS in Townsville.

Clint Spencer, GHD Manager in Townsville, said the company wanted to make a practical contribution that would support women affected by domestic violence and help them get the legal help they needed.

The donated laptops are a key ingredient to making the new Skype services possible and we would like to acknowledge and thank GHD Pty Ltd for their contribution to improving access to justice for many North and Far North Queensland women.

Outreach Townsville Women's Correctional Centre

During 2015-2016, NQWLS continued to provide a weekly phone advice clinic for women incarcerated at the Townsville Women's Correctional Centre. Women in prison are often the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our society and often present with a number of legal issues.

Each Monday women are able to ring through to NQWLS and speak to a solicitor about any legal issues they may have. If the matter is something that we are able to assist with, a further telephone appointment is organised to allow them more time to receive the advice and assistance they require, otherwise prisoner calls are limited to just 10 minutes.

If the woman is seeking help about a matter where we are unable to provide advice, a warm referral is made to another appropriate service. This system is working well and a number of women have received advice on family law issues and child protection matters.

Domestic Violence Courts

At the Townsville Domestic Violence Court, the duty lawyer service ran on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays throughout 2015-16.

In the Cairns Domestic Violence Court, the duty lawyer service ran on Thursdays.

This means the NQWLS duty lawyer is present each day the Domestic Violence Court operates in both cities. On some days, the NQWLS duty lawyer assists anywhere up to 10 women with advice and / or representation.

The duty lawyer provides legal information, referrals, legal advice, assistance with negotiations and representation in Court for any unrepresented women, whether they are the aggrieved or respondent party.

NQWLS duty lawyers work closely with other stakeholders at Court including the Domestic Violence Court Support Workers, the Queensland Police, other preferred suppliers or private lawyers and the Court Registry staff.

We know that appearing in Court can be a daunting and difficult experience. It is particularly confronting for women who have experienced domestic violence who are then required to face the perpetrator of vi-

olence in Court. The duty lawyer regularly assists women by appearing for them in Court, seeking or arguing for or against temporary protection orders, seeking adjournments and directions.

In certain circumstances, the duty lawyer will refer women back to NQWLS for an appointment at the office. This is usually when more extensive advice is needed, affidavit material needs to be prepared, submissions are to be made to Queensland Police Service, or where there are other related legal issues.

Federal Circuit Court

The duty lawyer service at the Federal Circuit Court in Cairns operates on the Monday and Tuesday of the duty list week each month. The service runs complementary to the Legal Aid duty lawyer service and often the NQWLS lawyer is approached by the Legal Aid duty lawyer to assist when there is a conflict of interest or when two parties to a dispute are self-represented and require help. On occasions, Her Honour Judge Willis has referred parties to the duty lawyer for legal advice or other assistance, such as finding emergency accommodation in a women's shelter.

The NQWLS duty lawyer can assist a client by negotiating with the other party or their solicitor, providing

advice on consent orders, providing advice on the relevant law underpinning the matter, and in some instances by appearing for the client.

In one recent matter, the duty lawyer advocated for a client in an impromptu meeting at the courthouse with representatives of the Department of Child Services.

On some occasions, local practitioners have requested the duty lawyer explain proposed consent orders to the other party in their matters, in order to address the power imbalance brought about by a lawyer acting on one side and a self-represented party on the other.

The duty lawyer service at the Federal Circuit Court is an excellent example of collaborative work between NQWLS, Legal Aid, private practitioners and the Court.

Community legal education

This year, NQWLS presented **23 community legal education sessions** for community support workers, solicitors, social workers, schools and government organisations.

NQWLS provides community legal education sessions on a variety of topics and in different formats.

Each month, sometimes in collaboration with our community partners, the **Ask Nola** website broadcasts webinars for workers in community organisations across the State. This year, **Ask Nola** topics have included:

- A brief overview of the Anti-Discrimination Act Queensland
- Child Protection Series Part 1: Child Protection Basics
- Victim Assist Queensland
- How Family Law Interacts with other areas of law: Part 1
- Your First Court Date
- Domestic Violence Orders: Standard Conditions vs Non-Standard Conditions
- How family law interacts with other areas of law: Migration, Social Security, Family Allowance: Part 2

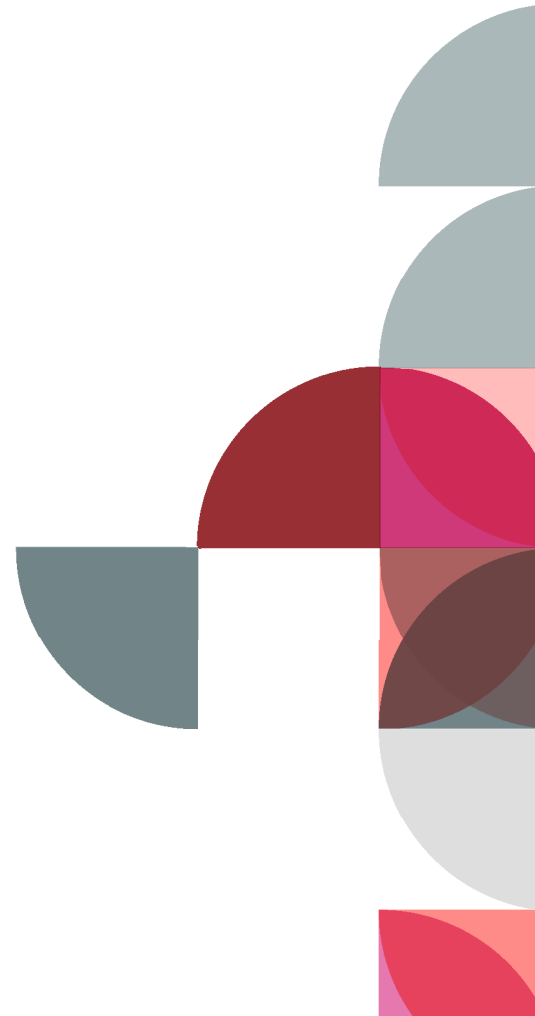
- Domestic and Family Violence: Unusual and Tricky Applications under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012
- Property Series: What is a Conciliation Conference?
- Children Series: Making Arrangements for Children After Separation: Part 2
- Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

We thank guest presenters **Anne Franzman**, **Peter Ferguson** and **Bill Mitchell** for their expertise and time in delivering Ask Nola webinars.

NQWLS has also engaged with schools in our service region to provide legal education for teachers and staff, as well as healthy relationship programs for students with a focus on domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

NQWLS believes that it is not only important to be a part of the **response** to issues that affect vulnerable women through our direct client services, but also a part of the **prevention** work and efforts to bring about a change in attitudes and eventual elimination of violence against women.

“Thank you for the opportunity to connect and as a non-legal person, the information presented on the Ask Nola webinar was easy to understand and easy to relate to. It’s a thumbs up from me!”



Tackle Domestic Violence Campaign

The collective work to shift culture, attitudes and the prevalence of violence against women is long term. Together with our partners, the **North Queensland Toyota Cowboys** and the **JCU Townsville Fire**, we are passionate about seeing an end to violence against women.

So, it was another big year for the **Tackle Domestic Violence Campaign** with the Campaign reaching over **50,000 people**. The **Tackle Domestic Violence Campaign** was present at the following events:

- JCU Townsville Fire v Perth Lynx WNBL game
- Campaign TV commercials were broadcast on the BIG screen during the WNBL finals
- North Queensland Toyota Cowboys Community Fan Day
- North Queensland Toyota Cowboys vs Broncos NRL match

The **Tackle Domestic Violence Campaign** was also present at a number of Domestic Violence Expos & Rallies - including Red Rose Rallies and Domestic & Family Violence Community Action days. During these events, NQWLS staff and volunteers handed out information about how the public can access free le-

gal assistance and support services if they, or someone they know, is experiencing domestic violence or family breakdown.

NQWLS thanks **Relationships Australia, Zonta** and the **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service (NQ)** for their support as volunteers at the Cowboys v Broncos big game in 2016.

This year, we were delighted when the **North Queensland Toyota Cowboys Community team** donated the proceeds from the sale of the signed jerseys from the **'Women in League'** round (2015) to NQWLS. These funds will go directly to sustain the current expansion of work being done for women seeking free legal help.

The Queensland government included information about the **Tackle Domestic Violence Campaign** in its final publication of the 'Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland' as an example of community collaboration and the power of sporting personalities and clubs to carry messages of change effectively to the public.

Thank you North Queensland Toyota Cowboys!

Thank you JCU Townsville Fire!



International Women's Day

International Women's Day events

NQWLS partnered with the **Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (ADCQ)** in both Cairns and Townsville to host a morning tea event in both cities to celebrate **International Women's Day (IWD)**. Invitations were extended to local service providers, their clients and the wider community.

The events were generously funded by the **YWCA** and **Queensland Government**, Department of Communities under the inaugural Queensland Women's Week Scheme and were a great success, with nearly 200 women attending.

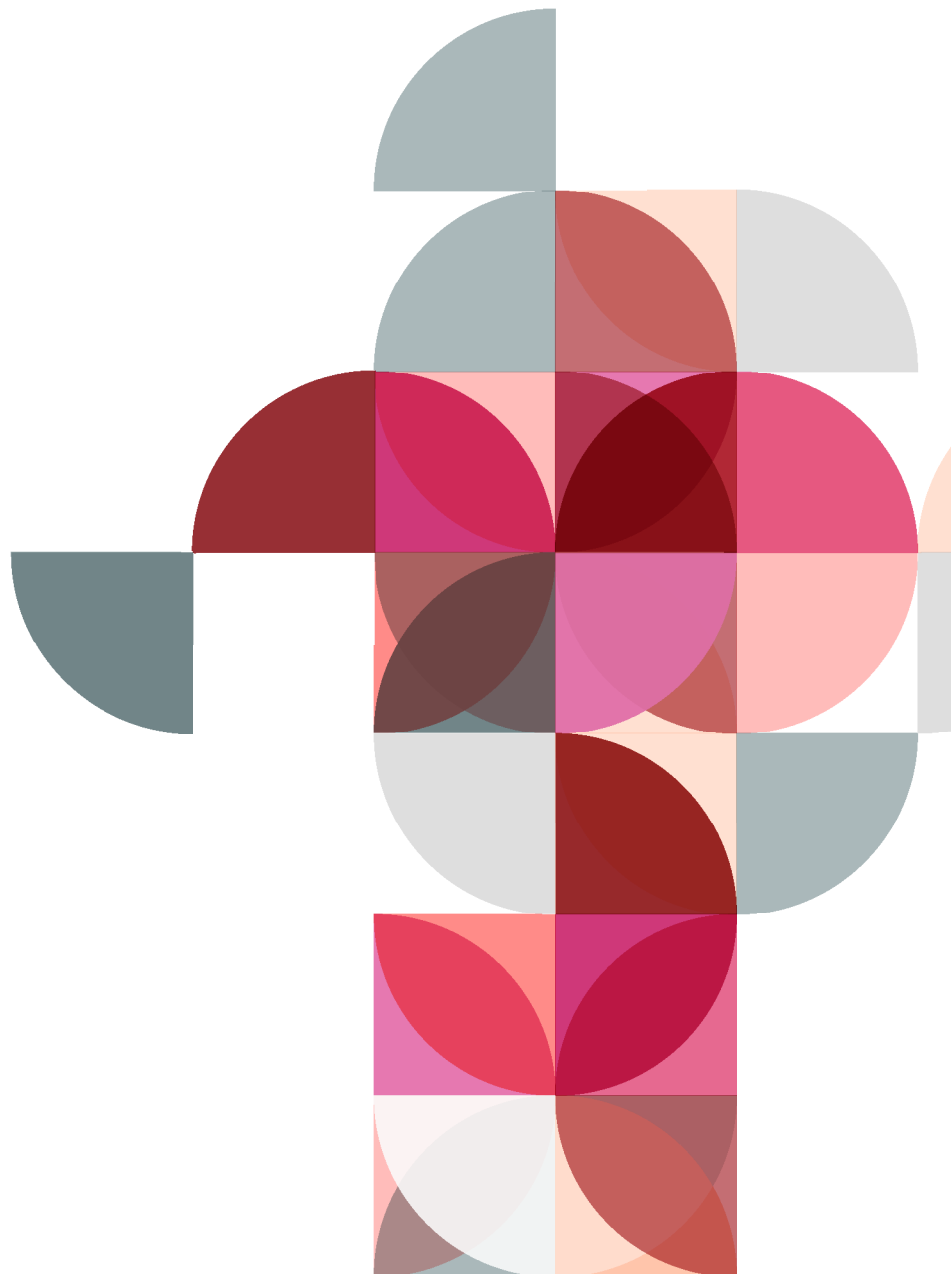
NQWLS thanks speakers including **Madge Sceriha**, **Fiona Cochrane**, **Belesila Nakure**, **Julie Simon-Abbott**, **Fiona Jose** and **Kristy Valley** (the Imperfect Mum blogger).

Performances by **La Luna Youth theatre**, **St Margaret Mary's School choir**, soloists from **St Monica's College** and a **Zumba** demonstrator by **Debbie Ball** made sure women left feeling encouraged, uplifted and inspired.

In Cairns, Principal Solicitor, **Hayley Grainger**, was also invited to speak on IWD at the **FNQ Law Association** breakfast about the challenges faced by women

in accessing justice and the work NQWLS do to help address this.

In Townsville, **Samantha Kelley**, was invited to speak to the **Zonta Clubs** at their annual IWD Cocktail event at the North Queensland Club. Sam's inspiring talk led to other invitations to speak, including at **The Magic House**, and to generous donations to NQWLS.





Zonta Support

Linda and **Sharell** gave a talk about NQWLS services for one of the **Townsville Zonta Clubs** earlier this year. The women of Zonta were inspired sufficiently by the talk that they offered to organise a fundraising project to benefit NQWLS. The funds raised will be used to revise and reprint our range of self-help booklets.

The fundraising project involves the sale of beautiful cards through networks, markets and at community events.

NQWLS is very grateful to Zonta for this fantastic support and looks forward to the revamp and reprint of the booklets in the coming year.

Movie Night Fundraiser

A big thank you to **Glenda Demopoulos** in our Townsville office for coordinating such a great event!

Around **207 people** bought tickets to watch the movie "Me Before You" and enjoyed complimentary wine from Dan Murphy's Cellars,

yummy finger food and great company whilst fundraising for a great cause – NQWLS!

Prizes for raffles were donated by **Terry White Chemist Annandale, Her Top Shop, Sizza's Hair & Beauty, Bluebell Trading, Sandwich Express, Dan Murphy's Cellarbrations Annandale Central, Event Cinemas City, Hands in Harmony, Annandale Hair Design, Daisy Maisy Flowers, F45 Townsville Central, Coles, Woolworths and The Balcony Restaurant.**

All in all, nearly \$3000 was raised on the night. Thank you especially to everyone who supported this event.

Child Protection Week

NQWLS attended Ravizza Park at Edmonton and provided free sensory play activities for children and set up a stall with information about NQWLS services for people attending the community event. Thank you, **Katherine Weston**, for your coordination and creativity at this and numerous other Cairns community engagement events this year!

Women's Lifestyle Expo, Cairns

NQWLS received a grant from the **Mayor's Discretionary Fund** which helped us to attend the Women's Lifestyle Expo with an information stall. There were many women who wanted to know more about free legal services. As always, there were women who wanted to purchase the bright pink 'Tackle Domestic Violence' shirts to carry the message and support this fundraising effort.

Innisfail Community Centre 40th Anniversary

NQWLS has been visiting Innisfail Community Centre for around 20 years of the 40 years it celebrated this year. We were invited to attend the community celebrations and were able to set up an information stall and talk to women about accessing free legal help – and yes, we sold a few more pink t-shirts!



Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Family Law Pathways Network

The Steering Group continues to meet regularly and NQWLS has acted as Secretary for the Network meetings this year. The Network aims to assist and educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, with the aim of avoiding intervention by Child Safety and instead use the **Federal Circuit Court of Australia** to ensure children are not removed from country and culture. The Network was formed as part of the Reconciliation Action Plan for the Federal Circuit Court in Cairns and is led by **Her Honour Judge Josephine Willis**.

Award Winning Team

NQWLS solicitor, **Sharell O'Brien**, brought home the Awards this year.

Sharell was a finalist in the **Australian Women's Weekly 'Woman of the Future' Awards** for her work on behalf of NQWLS. She very generously donated her **Qantas** travel bursary and cash winnings to support NQWLS' travel costs, in particular to expand the Skype outreach programs and Schools CLE program for women and their children living in RRR areas.

As if that was not enough, Sharell also took out the **Lawyers Weekly 30 Under 30** Award in the Pro Bono section. Well deserved, we say too. Congratulations and thank you, Sharell!

Fundraiser at The Magic House

A group of women who meet at The Magic House contacted NQWLS and offered to donate funds to be raised at a morning tea

event to support the work of the Service. This generous offer was an outcome of an earlier talk given by NQWLS solicitor, **Samantha Kelley**, at the Zonta IWD cocktail event.

Many long hours were given by the organisers to arrange and promote the morning tea, bake scones and seek a number of generously donated prizes for a raffle. In total \$1,000 was raised at the event. NQWLS had the opportunity to speak with the women present about the free legal services offered by NQWLS and to answer their questions about various legal issues.

NQWLS greatly appreciates and thanks the women who organized and attended this morning tea, as well as those made donations to NQWLS.



In addition to the many community collaborations already outlined in this Report, NQWLS has continued to strengthen ongoing partnerships and forge new partnerships throughout 2015-16.

We acknowledge and thank the following organisations, networks and individuals for their support and willingness to work closely with NQWLS to deliver services to the community in the past year.

- Member organisations of NQLAF (Townsville) and RLAF (Cairns)
- Member organisations of Dovetail (TSV)
- Member organisations of the Cairns Collective Impact on DV (CNS)
- Law School, James Cook University
- Law students of James Cook University
- School of Social Work, James Cook University
- Members of Townsville District Law Association
- Members of the FNQ Law Association
- Members of the Queensland Bar Association
- Rosemarie Coxon, Business Partnerships, Legal Aid Queensland
- Colin Biggers & Paisley
- Clayton Utz
- GHD Pty Ltd
- North Queensland Toyota Cowboys
- JCU Townsville Fire
- Zonta Clubs (TSV)
- Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ)
- National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC)
- Women's Legal Service Australia (WLSA) network and all member organisations
- Members of Family Law Pathways Networks (TSV & CNS)
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Family Law Pathways Network (CNS)
- Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (TSV & CNS)
- Centacare & Family Relationship Centres (TSV & CNS)
- Relationships Australia (TSV & CNS)
- Members of Partnerships in Anti Violence Education (PAVE), (TSV)
- Catholic Schools Network (Townsville)
- Victim Assist (TSV & CNS)
- State and Federal MPs (TSV & CNS)
- McCullough Robertson
- Anderson Fredericks Turner
- Brad Boterhoek
- Liz Inglis, QCCN
- Michelle Woodward
- Friends & Supporters who attended our Movie Night fundraiser
- Suzy Dormer
- The Magic House
- DUO magazine
- Garbutt Neighbourhood House

I am astounded that such an incredible, helpful service is available, free of charge. Thank you.

Client Story - Helping Grandparents

Over recent years, two of Margaret's step-grandchildren have come into her full time care. Margaret's stepdaughter has drug dependency issues and the Child Protection Agency and Act for Kids had been previously involved over concerns of neglect.

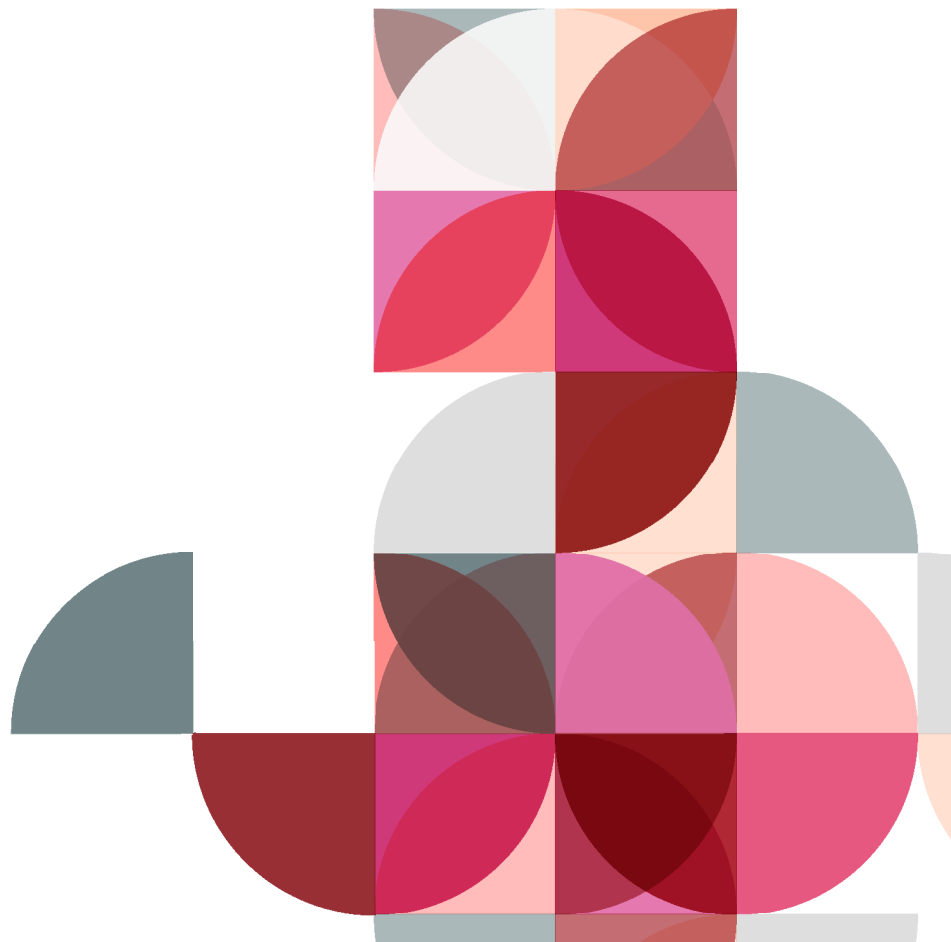
The children's mother had made it known that she had no interest in being meaningfully involved in the children's lives. She lives within a five-minute drive from Margaret and had only visited the children twice in 18 months. The children's father lives in Perth with another child from a new relationship. Although he maintains regular contact with his two children in NQ, he was unable to take them into his care.

Margaret came to NQWLS with a signed statutory declaration sworn by her step-daughter to the effect that the step-daughter abdicated all parental responsibility for her children. The NQWLS solicitor explained that the only way for Margaret to have legal parental responsibility was through parenting orders made by the family law courts. We assisted Margaret by drafting consent orders and other court documentation for execution by the

children's mother, father and also Margaret. The solicitor also drafted a letter to the Family Court to explain the unusual circumstances behind Margaret as the step-grandmother and the father seeking equal shared parental responsibility.

After Consent Orders were finalised, Margaret told us that the behaviour of the eldest grandchild, who is 9 years old, had completely changed simply by knowing that her mother could no longer take the children away from their stable life with their grandparents. The child had stopped soiling herself and wetting her bed. Her behaviour at school had also settled down.

Margaret was very relieved that the parenting arrangement was now legally formalised and the health and wellbeing of her grandchildren was improving.



Julie attended one of the NQWLS outreach advice clinics in a small North Queensland (NQ) town.

Julie has long-term mental health issues including severe depression. She had been married since she was 18 years old. Some months ago, Julie had fled the family home after a violent incident where her husband yelled at her “to get out” or he would stab her. Julie had not been able to take her children with her as her husband would not allow her. DV Connect had assisted Julie to move interstate to live with relatives. After this move, Julie applied for a grant of Legal Aid to initiate court proceedings to have her children come and live with her.

However, Julie had recently returned to live in NQ again after her husband had told her to withdraw her abuse allegations and sign ‘parenting rights’ over to him and then she could return to the family home and see the children whenever she liked. Julie wanted advice about signing over ‘parenting rights’ and about her decision to move back into the family home to be with her children.

During the appointment Julie disclosed a long history of serious domestic violence perpetrated by her husband against her

and the children, including a number of threats to kill. They lived on an isolated property surrounded by cane paddocks and Julie did not have a driver’s licence or vehicle and was reliant on her husband to take her where she needed to go. Julie did not work or have any income. Her husband did not allow her to engage with friends or family or the children’s school.

Julie told NQWLS that things had gotten worse since she had returned to the family home. When she said she wanted to leave and take the children, her husband threatened to shoot them all, rather than let her take them. Julie and her children were in danger.

NQWLS asked Julie whether she wanted to end the relationship? Julie was undecided. She wanted to, but did not want to lose her children. NQWLS explained to Julie the risks of signing over ‘parenting rights’ and asked Julie if there was a way she could leave the relationship and still see her children, would she like to do that? Julie said yes.

NQWLS was in the process of getting Julie’s consent to speak to other services on her behalf when she told us that she did not have a phone and the number that she had given us and her Legal Aid lawyer was in fact her husband’s phone. This meant, he would be

standing right next to her, listening, when her lawyer was speaking to her!

NQWLS then immediately accompanied the client to speak to a worker within the Community Centre where we were providing the outreach advice clinic. The worker arranged a voucher for Julie to go and buy a phone and immediately started trying to secure Julie some emergency accommodation. The worker was able to secure Julie a unit, however it would not be available for about 2 weeks. In the meantime, Julie would be staying at a hotel near our office. NQWLS liaised with the Police and the Community Centre to arrange for transport to the city for Julie. She would not be returning home.

NQWLS agreed to assist Julie with applying to the Magistrates Court for a Domestic Violence Protection Order against her husband. While Julie was staying in the city, she attended NQWLS office for an appointment to prepare the application. Whilst there Julie received a phone call saying she was being transferred to a women’s shelter, over an hours drive away. NQWLS then worked with the Women’s Centre to finalise, sign and file Julie’s application for a protection order.

A Temporary Protection Order was granted preventing her husband from contacting her, trying to locate her, from coming to her residence or approaching her. This meant that when Julie moved into her unit, she would have protection.

NQWLS then spoke to a social worker from Centrelink about arranging a crisis payment for Julie to assist her as she had no income. The social worker was able to arrange for a payment thanks to the information provided by NQWLS and Julie was also now being assessed for a disability support pension.

NQWLS also agreed to speak to Julie's Legal Aid lawyer and see what was happening with her family law matter as Julie said she didn't know if her solicitor or the Court knew she had returned to the home and she didn't know or understand what was happening with her Court proceedings.

Julie's Legal Aid lawyer said it was vitally important that Julie attend the next court date in person as she had not yet done so and asked if we could assist by ensuring she attended. Once again we worked with the Community Centre worker and arranged for transport for Julie to attend the next Federal Circuit Court date

so that the Judge could see Julie in person and her level of concern for her children.

Finally, the NQWLS duty lawyer spoke with Julie at length at the Federal Circuit Court, at the request of her Legal Aid lawyer, explaining what was going to happen, and then again afterwards, explaining what had happened in Court and the outcome of her application regarding her children.

The ability for NQWLS to work collaboratively with the Community Centre worker, the Women's Centre and Women's Shelter workers, the Police, the Centrelink social worker and the Legal Aid lawyer was key to the positive outcome Julie achieved and crucial to the safety of Julie and her children.



Client comments

- Extremely helpful, very informative. Excellent service. **Thank you** very much.
 - Helped me lots, showed compassion and **made me feel safer**, knowing the legal side of things.
 - The solicitor was a great comfort and a supportive person. **She helped me through a terrible time** and was the greatest support when needed. We managed to get a fair settlement and we were both happy with the result.
 - **The solicitor went above and beyond** to help and gave me good advice. She was very upfront and friendly. It was a pleasure dealing with her and I will highly recommend her.
 - Great service, valuable advice, **much needed service for women**. I am very appreciative for this service.
 - Would be good if the office was nearer the DV Service as it is so important a link. I had to wait too many days for an urgent appointment. **Would help to have appointments after 5pm for single parents who have no availability or transport during office hours**. More parking would be good. Great
- that you have wheelchair access though as I have 2 walking sticks.
- I had phone advice on 2 occasions, then an appointment in the office. My experience with NQWLS was **prompt, efficient and professional** with my situation. I appreciate the legal advice and support by all staff. Thank you.
 - She explained what happened since the Protection Order was in place. She also followed up and explained things for me. She made me clear and **gave me advice** what I am going to do next. I have been in the Magistrates Court more than 7 times in the last 2 years. My argument is they are casting the blame for a problem on each other between the Family Court and Magistrates Court.
 - I had a court date and I thought that I must appear alone and was very uneasy. But there was a lawyer from the Women's Legal Service, so I was very stout-hearted. **Thank you so much**. I would like the help from now on too.
 - I was waiting in the lobby at the police station and then met my solicitor there. She explained what would happen. Her assistant helped me
- fill out forms, then they both walked with me to the court. They took me to the safe room and checked in on me at times. They were so helpful. I was so stressed then my solicitor came and took me to her office and explained everything so well to me. I was so thankful and relieved. She was so good. I just felt a lot better in myself even when my time came to go into the Court room because **the solicitor was by my side**. It was my first time in court. Many thanks.
- I found the solicitor to be very clear, concise and very professional whilst representing me in Court. **She was also very easy to talk to**. I would personally like to thank her.
 - At the time I was talking about the domestic violence, the solicitor offered me support at the court. I am very happy with the services. **Very helpful**.
 - I first contacted NQWLS in 2012. It took a long time to finalise my matter. **All staff were polite and helped me when I needed help**.
 - As I have never dealt with the court system before, I found this service **extremely helpful** as I was given

guidance in not only how the process worked, but was given advice that would achieve the best outcome for my situation. It gave me confidence knowing that I had someone understanding towards my concerns and displayed high levels of expertise in her role. I am very grateful to have had access to this Service.


- **NQWLS is wonderful.** They helped me get my legal documents together. I never would have done it without them. Much appreciated. Very good service for women with domestic violence problems. They have been great. Thank you.
- Clear advice. Explained everything well.
- Excellent Service.
I felt cared about and not judged.
- The solicitor explained everything very clearly. She showed me where to go, explained the process and **made me feel more relaxed** because I felt I had a better understanding of what was going on.
- I would like to thank the solicitor for her work as it was useful, helpful. Knowing that **I had her advice, knowledge and support gave me strength through this**

very stressful time.

I would also like to thank all of the staff at the Cairns DV Service for their support and guidance also.

- The solicitor ensured that the whole process was supported by advice and guidance.
I did not expect to receive such wonderful, professional service.
- I have had 2 solicitors from NQWLS assist me. They are both intelligent and professional.
Brilliant at their job and caring and supportive. I have really appreciated the assistance, support and advice I have been given during this very stressful time in my life.
- Generally, when victims of violence need help – take it! Because I needed help and I received the help I needed, to respect myself and stop friends and family from hurting because of me, when I was blinded. Amazing Grace. Everything went well for me and **I have stayed strong ever since.** It took me more than 5 years to get to this point, to accept it is over and that I have had enough. I do not regret getting the Order.
- The solicitor treated my case with the utmost respect and professionalism.

Although the outcome for the first hearing wasn't what I anticipated, the solicitor has continued to guide and support me through the steps to the second hearing. **I feel I have been given the best advice and treatment by the NQWLS solicitor.**



I appreciate and am grateful for the kindness you have shown my daughter and her children, and for the support you have given her when so many before hadn't done so. You have shown me there are still people out there who are willing to assist others in trouble. You are a genuine solicitor, and my daughter has the utmost respect for you and your expertise, as do I.

Treasurer's Report 2015-16

On behalf of the Management Committee, I present the following Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2016.

I am very pleased to report NQWLS has continued to operate within budget for another financial year, with the audited financial results reflecting another successful year of operations. Total operational government funding received in the year amounted to \$824,438, which was boosted by some unspent operational funding from the 2014 and 2015 financial years, bringing the total operational funding to \$1,260,375. The brought forward surpluses from 2014 and 2015 allowed for some additional spending by the service on wages, motor vehicles, computer/IT support, and raising much needed community awareness about domestic violence and access to free legal services. The total amount of operational funding was almost entirely expended on operations in the 2016 financial year, with only a small surplus remaining. At 30 June 2016 the carried forward amount of unspent operational government funding was \$113,993. This amount will be applied to the 2017 financial year as an approved carried forward surplus.

Additional to operational funding and costs for the 2016 financial year, the Service also received other program specific grant funding. Specifically these relate to the "Women's Safety Program" and "Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer" work. Both Programs had a surplus at 30 June 2016 which will be carried forward to the 2017 financial year to continue with the work in these areas.

Aside from this, NQWLS continues to maintain a level of cash reserves which are applied in a more strategic nature. These cash reserves allow for a focus on the ongoing financial viability of the service (Sustainability Project) and for much need programming and planning, and homelessness projects. I am very happy to report here that NQWLS is working to generate alternate sources of income which will gain momentum into the future. However small at this time, it represents and demonstrates our clear focus on ensuring we are not wholly dependent on government funding moving into the future. The hard work of the Service's employees is now transforming into financial results through donations, memberships, fundraising and small community grants.

Cash at bank at 30 June 2016 amounted to \$1,311,586:

13% of these funds are set aside for employee benefits (leave entitlements);

2% of these funds are set aside for capital replacements; and

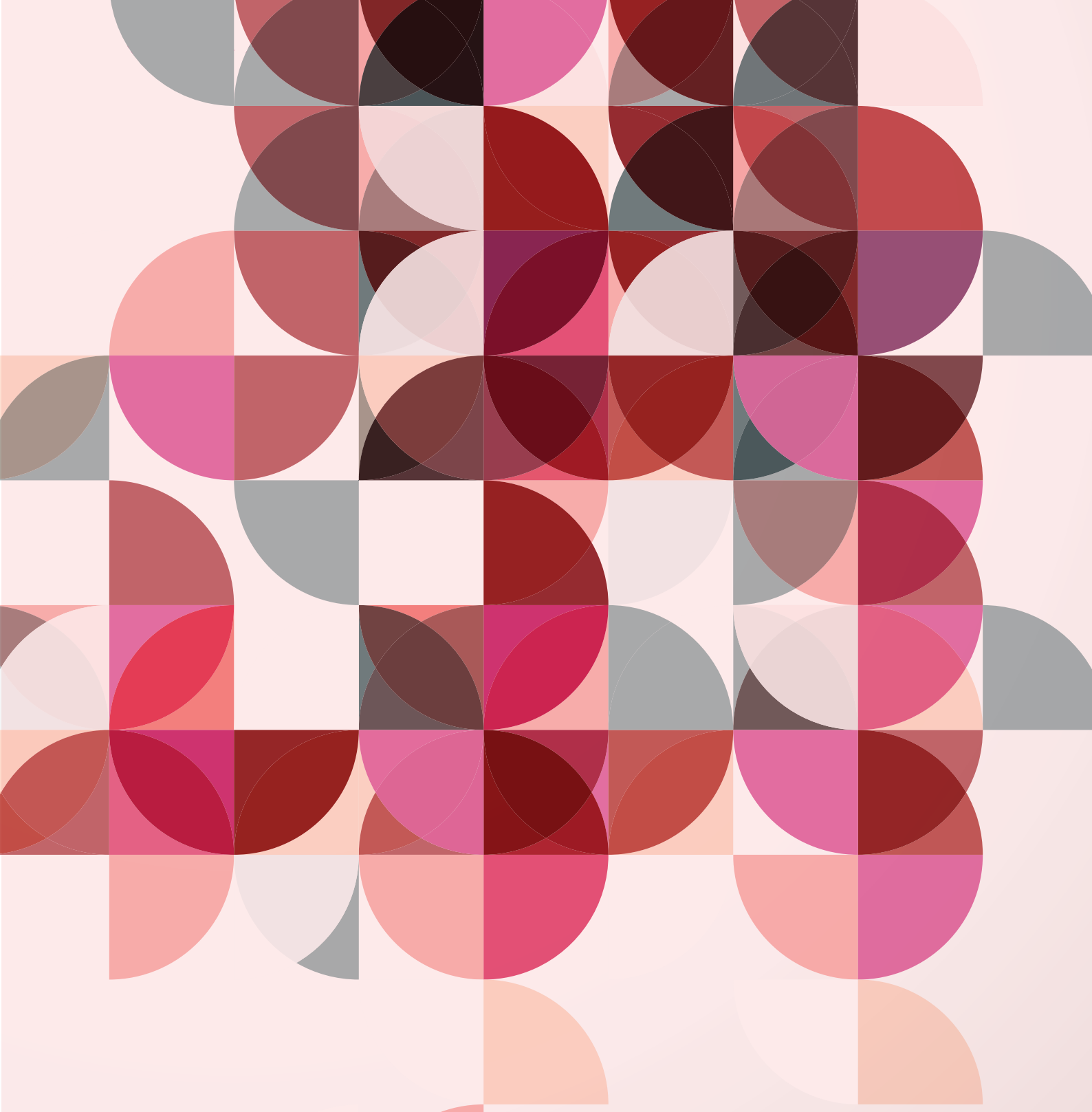
74% of these funds set aside for expenditure on program and project specific purposes.

11% of the funds are unrestricted and represent the Service's retained surplus.

I am very proud to be involved with, and a part of, such a hard-working and committed group of women. The product of this commitment and hard work reflecting in the strong and sound financial position of the entity. I am confident the service will continue in this strong financial position as we maintain our focus on self-sustainability and ongoing viability within the community.

Jodie Woolcock

Treasurer



Audited Financial Statements

2016-2017

Responsible Entities' Report

Your responsible entities' submit the financial report of North Queensland Women's Legal Service Inc for the financial year ended 30 June 2016.

Responsible Entities'

The names of the responsible entities' in office at anytime during or since the end of the year are:

Natasha Busby
Kate Pateman
Renee Stocks
Jodie Woolcock
Diane Ruhl
Amalie Grima
Ann Carrington

Principal Activities

The principal activities of the association during the financial year were:

To assist North Queensland Women, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalised women, to obtain access to legal services.

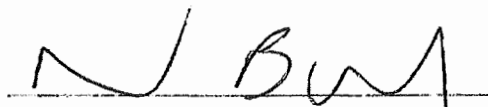
Significant Changes

No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the financial year.

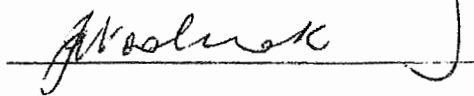
Operating Result

The profit after providing for income tax amounted to \$NIL.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the responsible entities':



Natasha Busby



Jodie Woolcock

Dated this 16 day of October 2016

Statement of Income and Expenditure

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	Note	2016 \$	2015 \$
Revenue	2	1,295,110.82	1,040,755.30
Employee benefits expense		(914,761.76)	(690,417.83)
Depreciation		(19,207.00)	(16,088.00)
Other expenses		(361,142.06)	(334,249.47)
Surplus before income tax	2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Income tax expense		<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Surplus for the year		<u> </u>	<u> </u>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Assets and Liability Statement

As at 30 June 2016

	Note	2016 \$	2015 \$
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash assets	3	1,309,697.51	1,307,970.54
Receivables	4		466.61
Other	5	1,888.60	4,677.20
Total Current Assets		1,311,586.11	1,313,114.35
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	6	74,433.24	93,640.24
Total Non-Current Assets		74,433.24	93,640.24
Total Assets		1,386,019.35	1,406,754.59
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Payables	7	964,102.50	1,007,280.49
Financial liabilities	8	7,899.87	
Current tax liabilities	9	355.33	7,774.56
Provisions	10	134,011.98	117,903.93
Total Current Liabilities		1,106,369.68	1,132,958.98
Non-Current Liabilities			
Provisions	10	39,820.43	33,966.37
Total Non-Current Liabilities		39,820.43	33,966.37
Total Liabilities		1,146,190.11	1,166,925.35
Net Assets		239,829.24	239,829.24
Members' Funds			
Retained profits		239,829.24	239,829.24
Total Members' Funds		239,829.24	239,829.24

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Statement of Changes in Equity

for the Year Ended 30 June 2016

	Retained surplus \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2014	239,829	239,829
Comprehensive income		
Surplus for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of the association	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Balance at 30 June 2015	<u>239,829</u>	<u>239,829</u>
Balance at 1 July 2015	239,829	239,829
Comprehensive income		
Surplus for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of the association	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Balance at 30 June 2016	<u>239,829</u>	<u>239,829</u>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2016

Note 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

The financial statements cover North Queensland Women's Legal Service Inc as an individual entity. North Queensland Women's Legal Service Inc is an association incorporated in Queensland and operating pursuant to the Associations Incorporation Act (Qld) 1981. The financial statements were authorised for issue on the date of signing the Responsible Entities' Report.

These special purpose financial statements have been prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (Qld) 1981, Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act) and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Regulation 2013 (ACNC Regulation). The association is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian accounting Standards. The responsible entities' have determined that the association is not a reporting entity. The responsible entities' have determined that the accounting policies adopted are appropriate to meet the needs of the members.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements specified by the Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) and the disclosure requirements of AASB 108 "Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors", AAS1031 "Materiality", AASB 1048 "Interpretation of Standards" and AASB 1054 "Australian Additional Disclosures", as appropriate for not-for-profit oriented entities.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historic costs and do not take into account changing money values or, except where stated specifically, current valuations of non-current assets. The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless stated otherwise, have been adopted in the preparation of these financial statements.

Income tax

No provision for income tax has been raised as the entity is exempt from income tax under Div 50 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

Plant and Equipment

All plant and equipment are initially measured at cost and are depreciated over their useful lives to the association. The carrying amount of plant and equipment is reviewed annually by the responsible entities' to ensure it is not in excess of the recoverable amount. The recoverable amount is assessed on the basis of expected net cash flows that will be received from the asset's employment and subsequent disposal. The expected net cash flows have been discounted to present values in determining recoverable amounts.

Depreciation

The depreciable amount of all fixed assets is depreciated on a straight line basis over their useful lives to the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use. The assets' residual values and useful lives are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at the end of each reporting period. An asset's carrying amount is written down immediately to its recoverable amount if the asset's carrying amount is greater than its estimated recoverable amount.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2016

Employee Benefits

Provisions are recognised when the association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reasonably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits, annual, personal and long service leave are measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled. Annual, personal and long service leave expected to be settled within 12 months are recorded as current liabilities. Annual, personal and long service leave not expected to be settled within 12 months are recorded as non-current liabilities.

Cash on Hand

Cash on hand includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

Revenue and Other Income

Grant revenue is recognised in the income and expenditure statement when the entity obtains control over the funds. When there are conditions attached to grant revenue relating to the use of those grants for specific purposes it is recognised in the balance sheet as a liability until such conditions are met or services provided.

Interest revenue is recognised when received.

Donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Tax Office. In these circumstances, the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payables in the assets and liabilities statement are shown inclusive of GST.

Economic Dependence

The North Queensland Women's Legal Service Inc is dependent on various funding agencies for the majority of its revenue used to operate the business. At the date of this report the Management Committee has no reason to believe those agencies will not continue their support for the 2016/17 financial year.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016	2015
Note 2: Revenue and Other Income		
Revenue:		
Unexpended grants brought forward	435,937.00	661,451.00
Unexpended project brought forward	558,799.04	513,956.36
Memberships received	486.36	311.26
Funding - Family Violence		40,116.00
Funding - Commonwealth	505,367.00	352,451.55
Funding - Commonwealth (Women's Safety)	350,000.00	
Funding - Commonwealth FRC		44,435.00
Funding - SACS Remuneration		58,253.00
Funding - State LPITAF	319,071.00	310,155.45
Small Govt Grants	3,990.91	
Legal Aid - Duty Lawyer	24,914.69	
Interest received	46,657.04	47,638.13
Donations	12,597.91	2,463.40
Sundry income	1,275.90	800.00
Profit on sales		3,460.15
Unexpended grants carried forward	(328,218.34)	(435,937.00)
Unexpended projects carried forward	(635,767.69)	(558,799.00)
	<u>1,295,110.82</u>	<u>1,040,755.30</u>

Note 3: Cash assets

Bank accounts:

Bendigo Bank Cash Management	206,274.22	95,375.99
Bendigo Bank Term Deposit	554,481.88	674,251.46
Bendigo Bank Term Deposit 2	537,672.80	524,338.79
Bendigo Bank Term Deposit 2505	10,768.61	10,450.00
Bendigo Business Credit Card		3,054.30
Other cash items:		
Cash on hand	300.00	300.00
Petty Cash - Cairns	200.00	200.00
	<u>1,309,697.51</u>	<u>1,307,970.54</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016	2015
Note 4: Receivables		
Current		
Trade debtors	<u> </u>	<u>466.61</u>
	<u> </u>	<u>466.61</u>

Note 5: Other Assets

Current

Prepayments	<u>1,888.60</u>	<u>4,677.20</u>
	<u>1,888.60</u>	<u>4,677.20</u>

Note 6: Property, Plant and Equipment

Plant and equipment:

- At cost	101,643.24	101,643.24
- Less: Accumulated depreciation	<u>(27,210.00)</u>	<u>(8,003.00)</u>
	<u>74,433.24</u>	<u>93,640.24</u>
	<u>74,433.24</u>	<u>93,640.24</u>

For disclosure on movement in carrying amounts
please refer to note 12

Note 7: Payables

Trade creditors	115.67	12,543.94
Other creditors	<u>963,986.83</u>	<u>994,736.55</u>
	<u>964,102.50</u>	<u>1,007,280.49</u>
	<u>964,102.50</u>	<u>1,007,280.49</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016	2015
Note 8: Financial Liabilities		
Current		
Bendigo Credit Card	7,899.87	
	<u>7,899.87</u>	
	<u>7,899.87</u>	

Note 9: Tax Liabilities

Current

GST Clearing	355.33	7,774.56
	<u>355.33</u>	<u>7,774.56</u>

Note 10: Provisions

Current

Staff entitlements	134,011.98	117,903.93
	<u>134,011.98</u>	<u>117,903.93</u>

Non Current

Staff entitlements	39,820.43	33,966.37
	<u>39,820.43</u>	<u>33,966.37</u>

Note 11: Auditors' Remuneration

Remuneration of the auditor of the company for:

Auditing or reviewing the financial report	5,500.00	10,634.55
Other services		
	<u>5,500.00</u>	<u>10,634.55</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30 June 2016

Office Equipment	Motor Vehicles	Plant & Equipment	Total
\$	\$	\$	\$

NOTE 12: MOVEMENT IN CARRYING AMOUNTS

Movements in carrying amounts for each class of property, plant and equipment.

Balance at 1 July 2014	11,842	39,269	393	51,504
Additions	43,843	51,497	-	95,340
Disposals	(7,674)	(29,452)	-	(37,126)
Depreciation expense	(5,852)	(10,125)	(111)	(16,088)
Carrying amount at 30 June 2015	42,159	51,189	282	93,630
Depreciation expense	(6,335)	(12,797)	(75)	(19,207)
Carrying amount at 30 June 2016	35,824	38,392	207	74,423

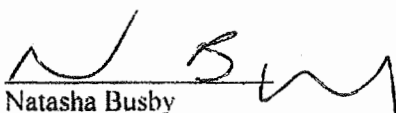
Responsible Entities' Declaration

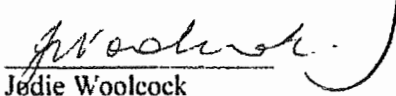
In the Responsible Entities' opinion:

The incorporated association is not a reporting entity because there are no users dependent on general purpose financial statements. Accordingly, as described in note 1 to the financial statements, the attached special purpose financial statements have been prepared for the purposes of complying with the Associations Incorporations Act (Qld) 1981, Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act) and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Regulation 2013 (ACNC Regulation).

1. the attached financial statements and notes comply with the Accounting Standards as described in note 1 to the financial statements;
2. the attached financial statements and notes give a true and fair view of the incorporated association's financial position as at 30 June 2016 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date;
3. at the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that North Queensland Women's Legal Service Incorporated will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is signed for and on behalf of the responsible entities' by:

President 
Natasha Busby

Treasurer 
Jodie Woolcock

Dated this 16 day of October 2016

Auditor's Independence Declaration

TO THE RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES' OF NORTH QUEENSLAND WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE INC

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2016 there has been:

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in the *Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- (ii) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Rod Parker & Associates Pty Ltd



Rod Parker (CPA)

Director

Dated 12/10/2016

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report of the North Queensland Women's Legal Service Inc which comprises the Assets and Liability Statement as at 30 June 2016, the Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Changes in Equity, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information and the responsible entities' declaration.

Responsible Entities' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The responsible entities of the registered entity are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act), the Associations Incorporations Act (Qld) 1981 and the needs of the members. The responsible entities' responsibility also includes such internal control as the responsible entities determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the responsible entities' preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the responsible entities, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report of the North Queensland Women's Legal Service Inc has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act (Qld) 1981, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2016 and of its financial performance for the year ended on that date; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1 and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013.

Basis of Accounting

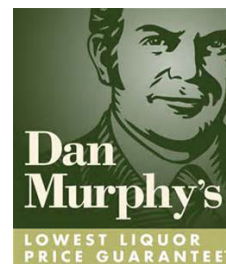
Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the responsible entities' financial reporting responsibilities under the ACNC Act and the Associations Incorporation Act (Qld) 1981. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Signed on : 12 October 2016



Rod Parker & Associates Pty Ltd
Rod Parker (Director)





NQWLS Vision

Access to justice for all women living in North and Far North Queensland.

NQWLS Mission

We seek to advocate for and empower women by providing free, accessible and high quality legal advice and assistance. We also work holistically with the broader community, by providing education to address injustice and inequity experienced by women.

NQWLS Values

Integrity, Service, Respect, Empowerment, Innovation.

