

Annual Report

SOUTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE



SOUTH WEST
COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE INC





SWCLC acknowledges the traditional owners of the South West and recognises their continuing connection to land, waterways and community.
We pay our respect to Elders past and present.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

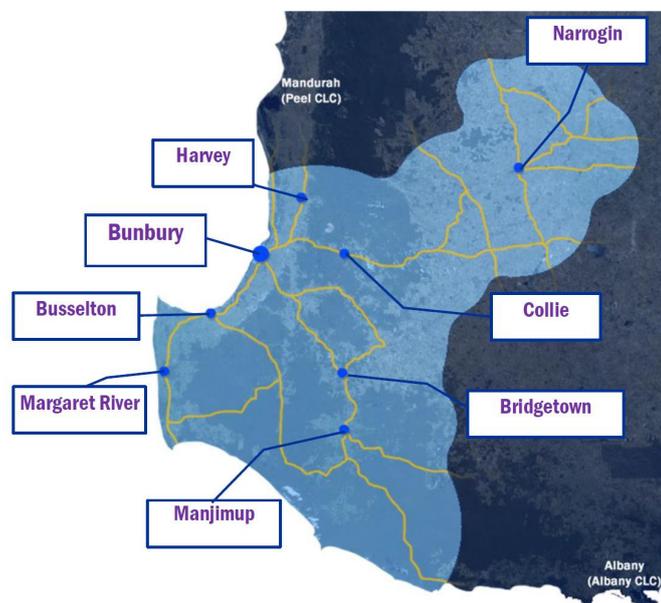
03	ABOUT US	16	VOLUME & DISTRIBUTION OF OUTREACH CLIENTS & LEGAL SERVICES
06	STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 - 2021	18	SHARING OUR CLIENT'S STORIES
07	BOARD OF MANAGEMENT 2019 - 2020	21	TREASURER'S REPORT
08	CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT	22	FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
09	OUR TEAM	23	SERVICE INFORMATION
11	MANAGING PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR'S REPORT		



ABOUT US

South West Community Legal Centre Inc.

South West Community Legal Centre Inc. (SWCLC) commenced operation in June 1989 as the Bunbury Community Legal Centre. Initially SWCLC began as an evening legal advice bureau staffed by a panel of local private practitioners who volunteered their time. Today, 30 years later, we are open five days a week and provide legal advice and related services. We offer advice appointments from our Bunbury office and from eight outreach locations across the South West Region. We also provide duty lawyer services in the Bunbury and Busselton Magistrates Courts for Restraining Order matters and a duty lawyer service at the Family Court Circuit in Bunbury. We are committed to providing quality legal and associated services to address disadvantage in the South West community.



OUR FUNDERS

The Board of Management and staff of South West Community Legal Centre Inc. gratefully acknowledge the support of our funders.



Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department
 Legal Aid Western Australia
 Family Advocacy & Support Services
 Public Purposes Trust
 The Law Society of Western Australia
 Shire of Capel
 Bunbury Zonta Club
 Chef's Long Table Luncheon
 Lotterywest



OUR PARTNERSHIPS

We would also like to thank and acknowledge the many agencies we have worked with and held membership with during the financial year.

Community Legal Centres Australia

Advocacy WA Inc.

South West Refuge Inc.

Community Legal WA

South West Law Society

Waratah Support Centre

Volunteer South West

Bunbury Zonta Club

Chef's Long Table Luncheon

Legal Aid WA

Accordwest

Shire of Capel



Community Legal Centres
Australia



SOUTH WEST REFUGE INC



COMMUNITY LEGAL
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



LEGAL AID
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Volunteer South West
the heart of our community



ZONTA
CLUB OF
BUNBURY INC
MEMBER OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL
EMPOWERING WOMEN
THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY



STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2020

Our Vision

Equal access to justice for all.

Our Mission

To provide quality legal and associated services to address disadvantage in the South West community.

Our Focus

Engage with Others

Collaborate with other legal assistance providers to enhance access to justice and respond to priority need.

Partner with community agencies to meet the needs of our clients.

Develop and implement a comprehensive community engagement strategy.

Build our support base and community champions.

Deliver Quality Services

Deliver quality legal, mediation and community education services, prioritising those with greatest need in the South West region.

Review models of service delivery to ensure alignment between outcomes and priorities.

Explore new technologies, resources and associated activities to maximise our impact.

Advocate for social justice on behalf of our communities.

Ensure Sustainability

Diversify our revenue and resource base.

Maintain a culture of learning that ensures we are responsive to emerging trends and best practices.

Maintain a standard of excellence by investing in our people.

Demonstrate and celebrate the value and impact of our work.

Our Foundations

Excellence in governance, leadership and management.

Valued, supported and well-trained staff and volunteers.

Quality business systems and financial stewardship.

Ethical practice, robust accountability and evidence-based decision making.

Our Values

Respect

Integrity

Dedication

Commitment to equity and social justice.



BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

2019 - 2020

Carol Reid
Board Chair



Jaysen de San
Miguel
Treasurer



Maggie
Kennedy-Piper
Secretary



Jenny Pickworth
Board Member



Ntuthuko
Mcingolwane
Board Member



Rosemary Taylor
Board Member



Dear valued stakeholders

I am pleased to present the Chair's report for the South West Community Legal Centre Inc. (SWCLC) for 2019/2020.

LOOKING BACK

What a year we have had! The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of everyone on the planet especially the most vulnerable members of our communities. At SWCLC we responded quickly. Thank you to the Risk Management Committee, Board members Jenny and Rosemary and all staff, for the rapid implementation of plans to protect staff and clients and to maintain continuity of service to the Southwest.

We are continuing to seek opportunities to collaborate with other organisations to provide effective services to those in need. We currently work with The South West Women's Refuge and Waratah, and have begun a relationship with Advocacy WA and are working with WA Country Health South West to identify ways we might be able to provide seamless support for vulnerable people.

OUR BOARD

Four of our Board members are due for renewal of membership this year and I am delighted that NT, Jenny and Jaysen will renew for a second term. Rosemary has decided to retire at this time to give more time to her other community activities and her family.

Thank you Rosemary for your gentle support and encouragement and your input to the Board and to the Risk Management committee. Thank you to Maggie, NT, Jenny and Jaysen for your work on the Board this year.

We transitioned to Zoom meetings at the beginning of the pandemic restrictions and decided that they worked so well we have continued meeting via Zoom.

OUR STAFF

We have an outstanding group of people at SWCLC. It is a delight to walk into 14 Plaza Street and be greeted by Crystal or Tahleisha. The teams have been restructured to better meet the needs of both our clients and the organisation and I am especially grateful to Eleanor and Jess for their continued work to shape SWCLC to provide the best possible service. Thank you to our amazing team. Your passion, dedication and commitment to the vision of SWCLC is second to none. And finally Vicki – how did we ever manage without you on board?

OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you most sincerely to our funding bodies and other benefactors whose ongoing support continues to make our service possible.

LOOKING FORWARD

The update of our Strategic Plan was put on hold because of Covid-19 but we held a planning session on Saturday September 19th to refine our direction for the next three years. Our facilitator, Ian Crawford, kept us focussed and engaged with the process and I am excited about the outcome of the day. Thank you to staff, Board members and other invited guests for your participation in this process. We will have an updated version of our Strategic Plan available on our website in the new year.

Finally, as Board Chairperson I would like to express how privileged I am to work with such a dedicated team of people, both staff and Board. I have decided to step down as Chair after a two-year term to focus on the Reconciliation Action Plan. However, I plan to remain on the Board and look forward to our continued relationship and to the coming year.

Carol Reid
Board Chair



OUR TEAM

2019 - 2020



Eleanor Yates
**Managing Principal
Solicitor**



Lauren Howlett
Senior Solicitor
(job share)



Renée Turner
Senior Solicitor
(job share)



Vicky McAppion
Senior Bookkeeper



Jess Cartwright
Practice Manager



Samantha Bettenay
Senior Solicitor
(maternity leave)



Michelle Gorham
Solicitor



Priya Mittal
Solicitor



Angela Wolfenden
Paralegal



Inge Slottje
**Administration
Officer**



Tahleisha Bennell-
Mustica
**Administration
Officer**



Crystal Peterson
**Administration
Officer**

STAFF CHANGES

2020 - 2021 - LOOKING FORWARD



We would like to thank Cléa Turner (Solicitor) for her work throughout the financial year.

Cléa contributed to our Duty Lawyer programs, Outreach advice service and the Bunbury phone advice service. In particular, she regularly delivered appointments at the Bridgetown and Manjimup outreach locations.

We wish her all the best on her continuing legal career.

We welcome Michael Nickolakis to our team for the financial year ahead.

Michael joins us as our Human Resources and Office Manager. He comes to us with a strong background in global recruitment and human resources management.

With his warm and engaging manner, we look forward to working with Michael in the new financial year.



Seeing in 2020!

Another year has come and gone, bringing with it many challenges, changes and new faces.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to all the Board Members who have guided this organisation and supported SWCLC staff across the last year. The Risk Committee, comprising Jenny Pickworth and Rosemary Taylor, rose to the challenge of COVID-19. They moved quickly to provide clear and safe direction for the management of our service. Our treasurer, Jaysen de San Miguel, and secretary, Maggie Kennedy-Piper, have been extremely generous with their time and expertise, fulfilling their duties admirably. Even a distance of 500kms between SWCLC and Ntuthuko could not dampen his enthusiasm or commitment to board membership.

I am very grateful for the generosity, wisdom and guidance that our outgoing Board Chair, Carol Reid, has extended to our organisation and especially to me, as I transitioned to the role of Managing Principal Solicitor. Carol has been a wonderful mentor, and under her leadership our organisation has grown to new heights. Thank you, Carol, for all you have done.

I look forward to working with our incoming Board Chair, Jenny Pickworth, across the next year and am confident that Jenny's legal expertise and passion will make her a robust advocate and leader for our centre.

I would also like to extend my personal thanks to Rosemary for her kindness and dedication to our centre. Rosemary will be stepping down from the Board and we wish her all the best for the future.

Staff

I would also like to acknowledge the courage, compassion and commitment of all the staff and volunteers at SWCLC. The world changed drastically in 2020, as coronavirus closed borders, economies and ultimately the doors at SWCLC. Throughout this time of uncertainty, SWCLC staff were magnificent; calmly adjusting to changes, innovating to overcome challenges and maintaining resolute commitment to the South West Community. Our Occupational Health and Safety Committee, lead by Angela Wolfenden and including Tahleisha Bennell-Mustica, worked very hard to ensure that all staff and clients were kept safe, and relevant information was shared quickly. Tough times reveal true colours, and I think that the true colours of SWCLC shone brightly in 2020!

Across the last financial year, our team has grown to include Priya Mittal as junior solicitor, and Renée Turner as senior solicitor assisting whilst Samantha Bettenay took maternity leave.

Sadly, we farewelled our volunteer, Othiniel Sithole, who contributed his vibrant character and legal research skills to our centre. Rebecca Dennison, who worked with us the previous financial year, continues to make SWCLC proud. I congratulate her for recently winning the 2020 Rural, Remote and Regional Woman Lawyer of the Year award.



Seeing in 2020!

I would also like to congratulate Michelle Gorham and Priya Mittal on successively completing all legal studies and being admitted to legal practice. The world is a better place with both of you serving our community.

Challenge and Change

Every challenge brings an opportunity for growth. As the world adapted to a growing global pandemic, SWCLC responded by moving our services offsite, with all staff working from home. We explored new technologies (hello Zoom and Teams Chat!) and seized the moment to transition to a paperless, cloud-based office. I would like to thank Trish Ryans-Taylor and Eva Betts from Community Legal Western Australia who worked long hours to help transition SWCLC to the cloud.

As expected, a few teething problems ensued and our 'virtual' morning teas didn't have quite the same flavour, but nonetheless we were still able to deliver quality services. Despite months of disruption, we were also largely still able to meet our service targets. I am very proud of the innovations that the SWCLC team created during this time of challenge, and the evolution of our service model.

Highlights of the Year

Community Legal Centres Australia Conference - August 2019

Some of our legal team headed to Brisbane for the Community Legal Centres Australia 2019 Conference. The team attended a number of valuable seminars, guest speaker presentations and networking events during the conference week. But it wasn't all work and no play! Our staff enjoyed a quiz night where they took out second place for the event, and won best team name with 'Subpoena Coladas'.



Live Lighter Information Stall - September 2019

SWCLC participated in the Live Lighter Senior Information Day at the Italian Club in Bunbury. Cléa and Jess spent the day speaking with attendees about our services and how we help people. The event had a great turn out with the Live Lighter team estimating nearly 900 people in attendance. Nearly 50 services and organisations provided information and activities on the day. Great entertainment was also on offer, including pop-up Zumba classes, Spanish Flamenco dancing, a live band and a pot plant workshop!



Student of the Year Awards - September 2019

Tahleisha was once again recognised for her dedication and commitment to training in Administrative Studies, being awarded Semi-Finalist in the Student of the Year Awards! The Awards presentation took place at the Burswood Casino.

Seeing in 2020!



30th Anniversary and AGM - October 2019

Last October, we proudly celebrated 30 years of the service. Many people from our local community and beyond joined us to celebrate. We were honoured that Father Joe Hopkins and his wife could join us, as he is one of the founding members of the Bunbury Community Legal Centre. Some of the other organisations and businesses represented included Community Legal WA, Legal Aid Bunbury, Peel Community Legal Service, Mediation South West, Accordwest, Advocacy WA, Kooyar Wongi, Bunbury Regional Prison, Bunbury Family Relationship Centre, Mediation Success, AMD Accountants, BodyRox Gym, and Magistrate Coleman of the Bunbury Magistrates Court.

Smart2Ask Stall - February 2020

We proudly participated in the Smart 2 Ask expo, an initiative of the Chef's Long Table Luncheon. An impressive number of local health and support services were represented, offering great networking opportunities for our staff. It was well attended and participants were able to access a number of on the spot services such as free eye testing, STI health checks, emergency kits (essentials for women leaving the home in a hurry), a light lunch or fresh fruit, quality second-hand clothes, haircuts, nail and manicure services, hand or foot massages, and even opportunities to win great prizes! We are pleased that the Chef's Long Table Luncheon team will be running the Smart 2 Ask stall again next year. We were thrilled to see how many local people benefited from this well planned event!



Harmony Day - March 2020



To honour Harmony Day and the diversity of our community, we celebrated multiculturalism by sharing stories and foods from our varying cultural upbringings. The team enjoyed 'Aussie' meat pies and lamington slices, an Irish inspired Bailey's cheesecake, Dutch pancakes (Poffertjes), Indian curry and a traditional Latvian salad!

Community Connections

In addition to revamping our website, our administration officer and in-house IT wizard, Tahliesha Bennell-Mustica, also launched our SWCLC Facebook page. 'Legal Lauren' continued to charm the airwaves with her regular segment on local ABC radio and we commenced work with Kooyar Wongi to create a SWCLC Reconciliation Action Plan.

To top off a very busy and successful year, I am pleased to announce that SWCLC attained Phase 2 National Community Legal Centre Accreditation. SWCLC was also successful in obtaining a number of grants from the Shire of Capel, Bunbury Zonta Club and the Chef's Long Table Luncheon to help fund specific community projects. We extend our gratitude to those supporters.

Seeing in 2020!

Legal Services

SWCLC continued to provide outstanding legal advice services across many areas of law. Although a generalist centre, the demand for family law advice has not abated and the top five legal issues we advise on are: Parenting, Property, Family Violence Restraining Orders, Divorce and De-facto Separations, and Criminal Injuries Compensation. The below table demonstrates the number of occasions on which we advised in these legal matter types during 2019-2020.

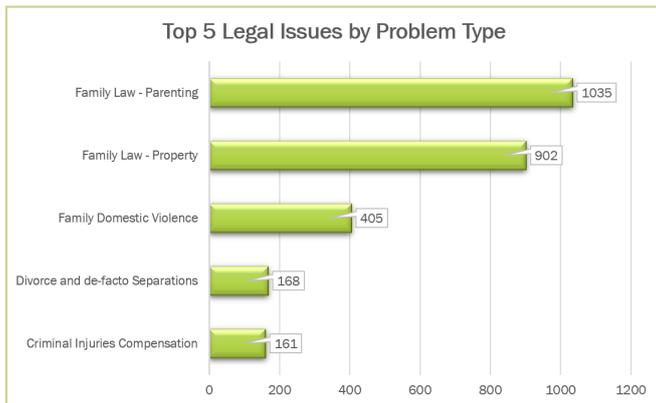


Figure 1. Top 5 Family Law Legal Issues by Legal Problem Type - Illustrating some of the complexity of our client's circumstances and the difficulties they face.

During the 2019/2020 financial year we assisted 981 clients and provided 2419 counts of legal advice and task services. We also continued to grow our duty lawyer services. We now provide a duty lawyer in both the Family Court as part of the Family Advocacy Support Service, and a Family Violence Restraining Order Duty Lawyer. This is in partnership with social support provided by Waratah Support Centre. In 2019-2020, we provided 245 Duty Lawyer services, which was incredible given the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions upon the service. We are excited to confirm we have received funding to continue both Family Court Duty Lawyer and Family Violence Restraining Order Duty Lawyer services into the 2020/2021 financial year.

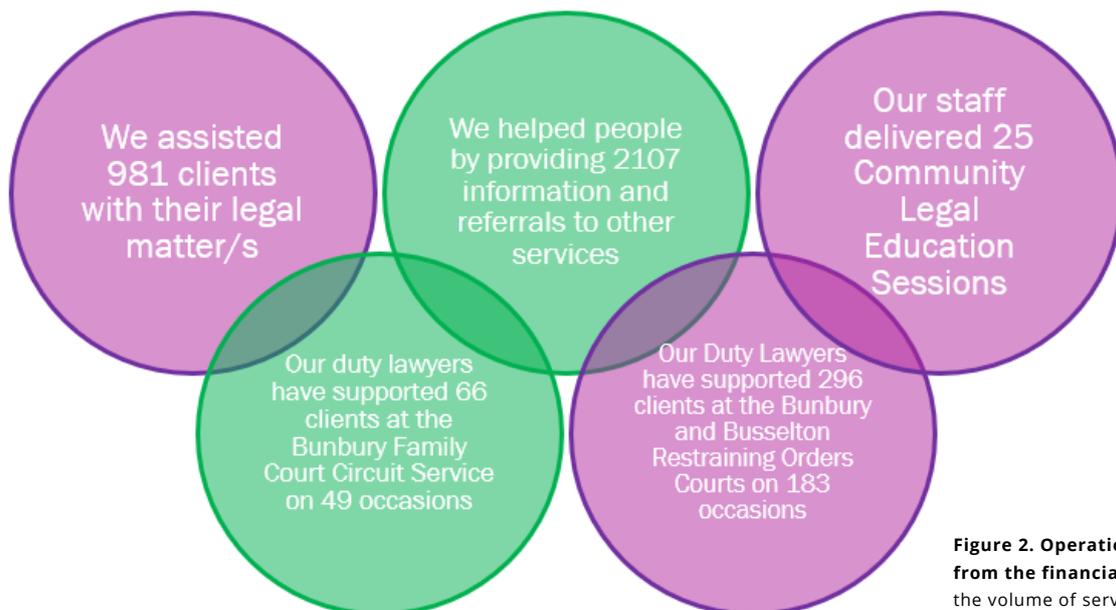


Figure 2. Operational Highlights from the financial year - illustrating the volume of service counts provided by our team.

Seeing in 2020!

Pandemic Recovery

We have settled back into face to face service delivery since the COVID-19 restrictions lifted. Our outreach locations include Bridgetown, Busselton, Collie, Harvey, Manjimup, Margaret River and Narrogin. We are currently offering advice appointments to clients at the Bunbury Regional Prison via Skype. See over page for service statistics from our Outreach program.

Client Feedback

The response to our legal support and community legal education services has again been overwhelmingly positive. All participants to our client feedback survey indicated that our service is of 'high' or 'extremely high' quality.

What our Clients and Stakeholders Say

"All the unlucky women really need the care from your company. God bless you"

"Very friendly helpful staff. The service is highly appreciated."

"Easy access, perfect staff both the booking lady and the legal advice person I saw in person. Absolutely outstanding and would recommend to anyone I know."

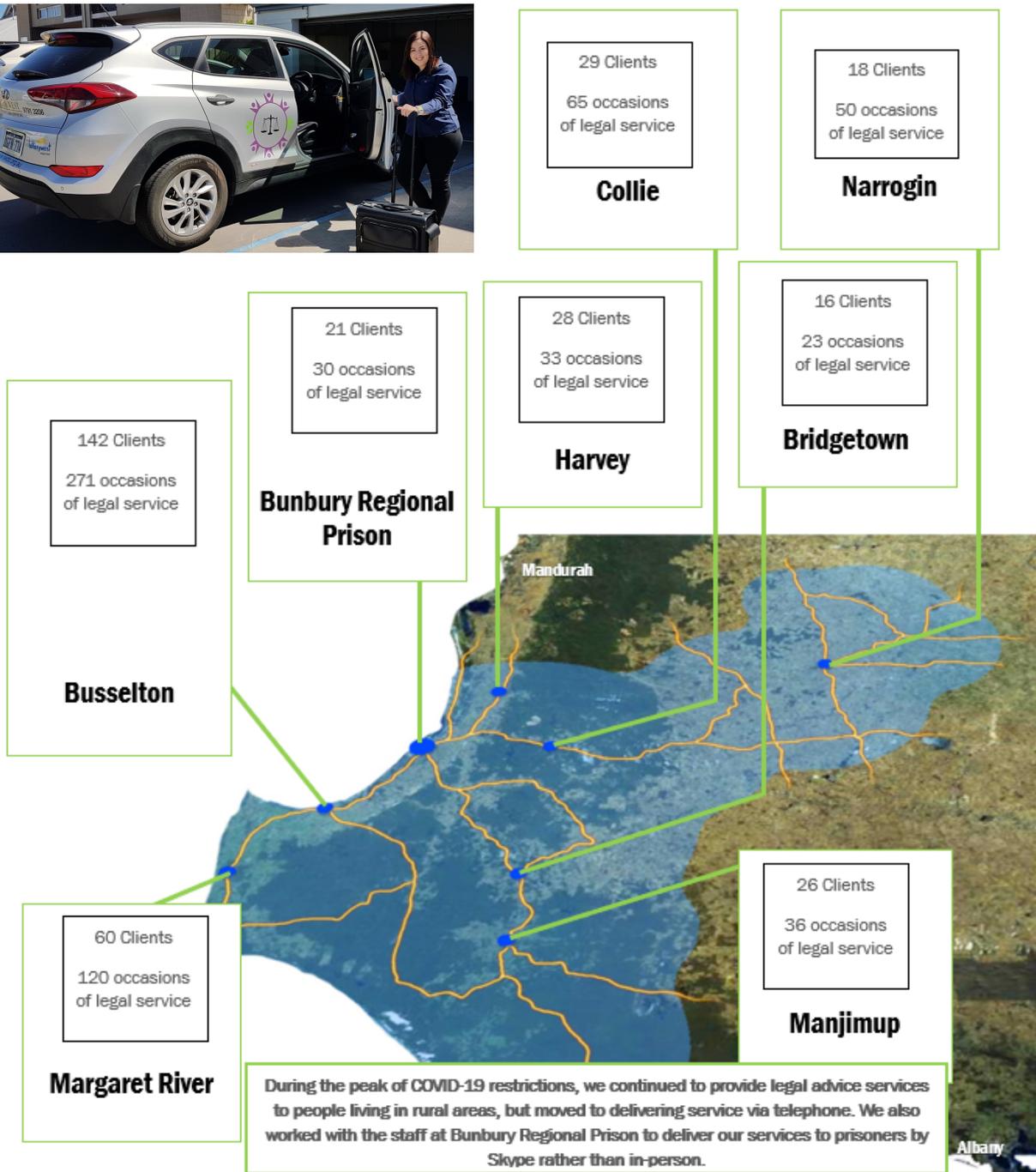
"This is such an important service If I knew there was legal support the first time I may have pursued the matter. The magistrate could have mentioned that your services are available and to contact you, I only heard of you because I contacted victim support which I didn't do the first time."



Seeing in 2020!

Volume and Distribution of Outreach Clients and Legal Services

1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020



Seeing in 2020!

From One Year To The Next...

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and thank our funders, the Commonwealth Government Attorney General's Department, the State Government, Legal Aid Western Australia, the Public Purposes Trust, Chef's Long Table Luncheon, Shire of Capel, Bunbury Zonta Club and Advocacy WA Inc. We are grateful for your ongoing support, without which none of this could have happened. However, now more than ever, we need your financial backing. The ripples of the coronavirus pandemic will be felt for months, if not years, to come. There is a growing divide between the haves and the have-nots, thousands have been brought to the precipice of homelessness, and many will soon topple over as income support payments inevitably subside. In addition, hundreds of people within our own region, experience the daily torment of family violence and, without help, may never be able to escape.

We urge all our supporters to continue the fight against inequality and injustice, redouble your efforts and focus our communities' resources where they are needed most.

Each year is a gift, let's see what 2021 will bring.

Eleanor Yates
**Managing Principal
Solicitor**

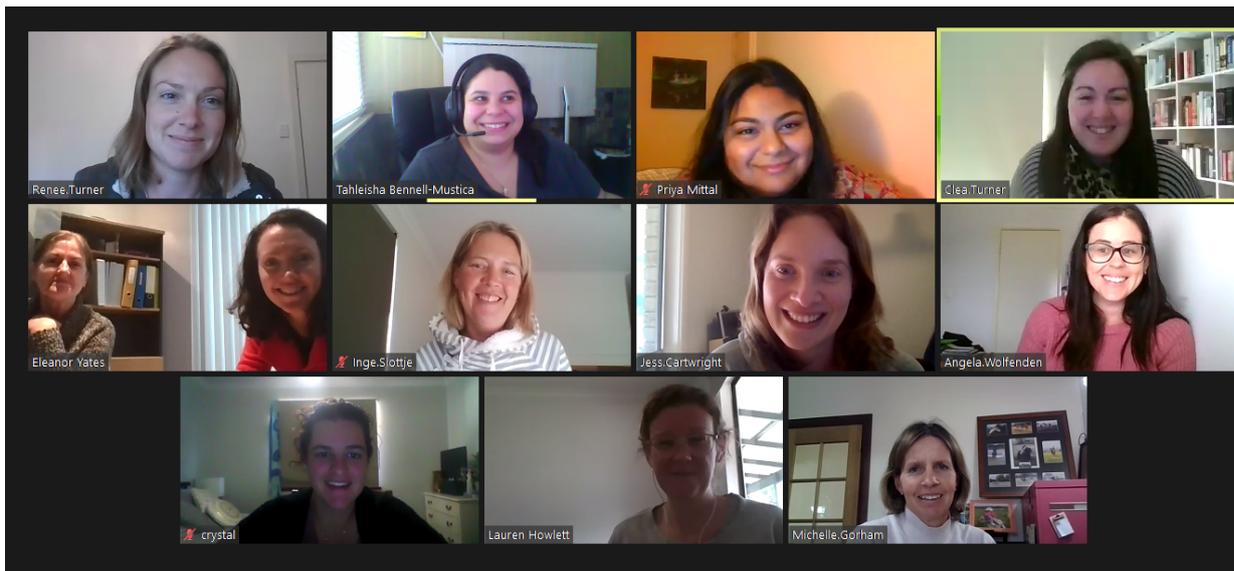


Figure 3. Zoom Meeting during COVID-19 restriction period

CLIENT STORIES

Carl

Carl* has two young daughters and had negotiated an informal arrangement with their mother to spend time with them two full days each week. The arrangement had been in place for over one year when their mother, Corrine*, prevented him from picking the girls up on the usual changeover day.

This was devastating to Carl who was eager to spend more time with his daughters. In fact, he had recently initiated mediation to discuss the girls spending time with their father over special occasions, as well as the possibility of additional 'regular' time. Knowing the children's mother had declined to participate in mediation, Carl sought legal advice. The SWCLC explained the legal options available, the processes involved and how to fill in the relevant court forms.

Carl's matter proceeded to the Family Court of WA where the SWCLC provided a duty lawyer service. Corrine was supported by a Legal Aid duty lawyer and the parties were able to negotiate through their respective lawyers.

Carl disclosed that he had returned to drug use when his contact with his children stopped, but was now clean and had been for more than 6 months. Considering his history, Corrine had concerns and suggested that Carl spend time with the children under supervision. Our duty lawyer assisted Carl in negotiations with Corrine via her duty lawyer representation in Family Court and referral to the Waratah Support centre counselling service.

Although Carl was disappointed at the prospect of spending time with his daughters while being watched, he recognised the opportunity to prove himself as a responsible father and to progress toward unsupervised time with the children. Court orders were put in place for Carl and Corrine's daughters to resume spending time with both parents. Since that time, SWCLC has continued to provide Carl with legal advice and support, including assisting Carl to draft necessary court documentation as his matter progresses.

Carl and Corrine's parenting matter has not yet been resolved, as Corrine did not meet her side of requirements to commence supervised visits. The parties have another court date set and SWCLC's duty lawyer will provide Carl further assistance at that time.

CLIENT STORIES

Grace

Grace is an Indigenous Australian woman who has been a victim of severe crimes by multiple offenders. Grace came to us this year requesting assistance with an application for Criminal Injuries Compensation. Grace suffers from significant trauma as a result of the incidents. The offences had a profound impact on Grace's life. One incident directly resulted in her becoming homeless and all the incidents have significantly affected her mental health. In particular, Grace has lost her desire to engage in activities which used to bring her joy and community connection, and no longer feels safe and secure in the world.

SWCLC has assisted Grace and continues to provide legal and social support for her in the following ways:

1. Organising an advocate to assist from our partnership with Advocacy WA.
2. Providing regular legal advice.
3. Completing Freedom of Information applications for information from various organisations on Grace's behalf.
4. Assisting with drafting victim impact statements.

Grace's application is still in progress as we continue to support her and gather evidence towards her claim.



CLIENT STORIES

Anna

Anna is an older Australian woman, originally from South East Asia. She has very little support in Australia and experiences language and cultural barriers, which make it difficult for her to understand legal processes.

Anna initially sought our advice for restraining order matters in 2018, following incidents of family violence perpetrated against her by her husband. Shortly after this, Anna separated from her husband and sought our assistance with property settlement matters. Anna had to leave the family home quite quickly following the incidents of family violence and left many of her personal possessions, including clothing and sentimental items in the family home.

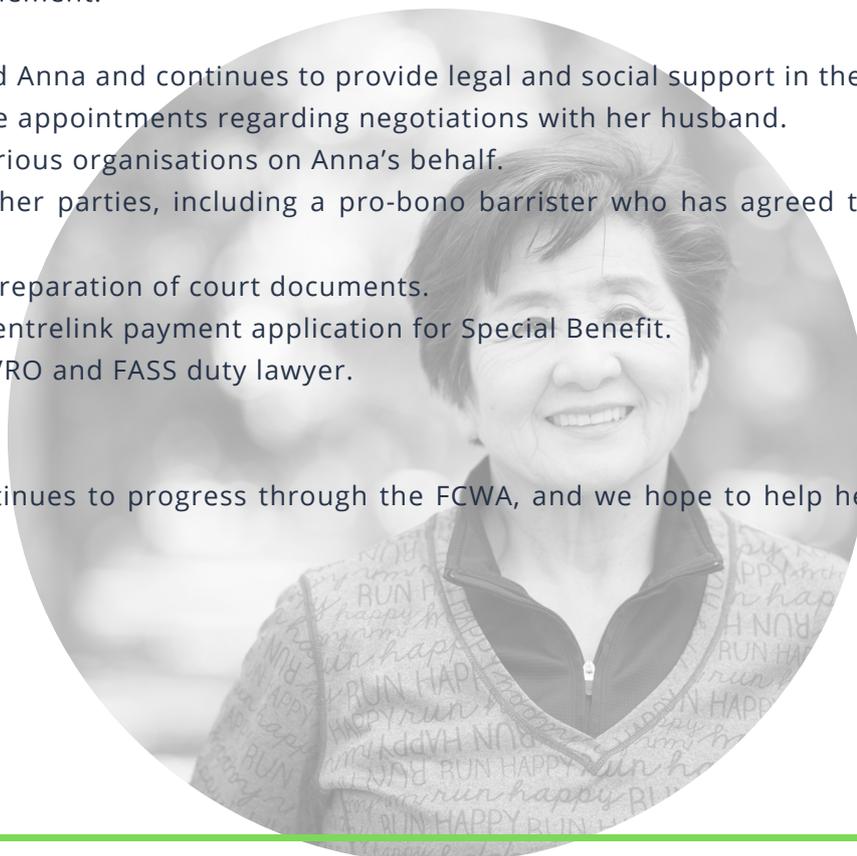
Unfortunately, Anna's husband made it very difficult for Anna to retrieve her personal items. We supported Anna to apply for orders which would allow her to recover her personal effects.

We have also assisted Anna to seek orders relating to the family home, in the hope that she can achieve a fair property settlement.

SWCLC has assisted Anna and continues to provide legal and social support in the following ways:

1. Providing advice appointments regarding negotiations with her husband.
2. Liaising with various organisations on Anna's behalf.
3. Liaising with other parties, including a pro-bono barrister who has agreed to assist Anna with this matter.
4. Assisting with preparation of court documents.
5. Assisted with Centrelink payment application for Special Benefit.
6. Appearing as FVRO and FASS duty lawyer.

Anna's matter continues to progress through the FCWA, and we hope to help her achieve a favourable outcome.



Dear valued stakeholders

In what has been an unprecedented year with the COVID-19 pandemic causing areas of concern for all businesses, I am pleased to present favourable 2019/20 financial statements.

The South West Community Legal Centre was fortunate enough that there was no cut of funding during the pandemic and was able to continue to operate and provide various programs. The attached Profit and Loss statement shows a favourable surplus of \$59,947. As always, expenses have been allocated to each funding grant with a total of \$122,775 of funds to be carried forward.

One of the main reasons the centre finished with a higher than normal surplus, was the ATO Cashflow boost that the centre was eligible for. This amount of \$59,663 is not required to be used for any program so it can be used for any future need the centre requires. The amount is shown separately to regular retained earnings, appearing under reserves in the balance sheet.

AMD Chartered Accountants once again audited the financial statements giving their opinion of a true and fair view of the financial position.

A special mention should be given to our Managing Principal Solicitor, Eleanor, who was able to navigate the difficult times and keep the centre operating whilst ensuring a favourable financial position.

I would also like to thank our Senior Bookkeeper Vicky for maintaining the financial records at such a high standard. Lastly a special thanks to the current board and of course, all the staff.

Jason de San Miguel
Treasurer



FINANCIAL REPORT

Please see attached document.

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Service Information



Hours of Operation: Monday to Friday 9am - 4pm

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South Bunbury WA 6230

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