




# Telling Our Stories

Annual Report 2015

Celebrating 30 years



**Basic Rights  
Queensland** Inc.  
SOCIAL SECURITY & DISABILITY  
DISCRIMINATION SERVICES



We would like to  
thank our funders

Queensland Department of Justice  
and Attorney-General and the  
Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department

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Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including... the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Article 25*

States Parties shall prohibit  
all discrimination on the basis  
of disability and guarantee to  
persons with disabilities equal and  
effective legal protection against  
discrimination on all grounds.

*United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 5*



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# About Us

Basic Rights Queensland is a state-wide specialist community legal centre, providing free advice, advocacy and legal services to people having problems with social security or disability discrimination.

Being a state-wide, telephone-based service, BRQ is able to offer the same expert, specialist services to all clients, whether they live in Brisbane or Boulia.

Our work is about ensuring the social security “safety net” is working fairly, that our clients can afford the basic necessities such as housing, food, medications, or perhaps a school excursion for their child, the things most of us take for granted.

Our work is also about ensuring a person’s right to live a life free from disability discrimination across a range of areas. For instance, that their employer makes reasonable adjustments to the workplace, enabling them to maintain employment, that their children with disabilities are properly supported to participate in the education system, or that they have access to a toilet at their local shopping centre, again things most of us take for granted.

More than half our clients are people with disabilities, one-quarter have a mental health issue, 90% of our clients are living on under \$500 a week and nearly one-fifth have no income at all.

“Probably the best service I received in the last 5 years since I got very sick”


With an early intervention focus, BRQ aims to resolve matters before they escalate, thereby minimising clients’ stress and saving public expenditure on tribunal or court processes.

Our work also is about prevention: when people can afford to adhere to their treatment programs they are less likely to end up in hospital; when they can afford to pay rent and buy groceries, they are not in need of emergency food parcels or shelter accommodation.

We provide social work services to clients in need of brief counselling or linking to other local supports.

Through our community legal education program we produce factsheets and guides translating complex law into plain English. We also provide capacity-building training to community-based, private sector and government workers.

We work with government and community organisations on law reform activities to improve laws, policies and procedures with a view to ensuring that our social security



“I wouldn’t be here without them”

system is fair and accessible and that the rights of people with disabilities to freedom from discrimination are upheld. BRQ provides information and advice to everyone who calls in relation to a social security or disability discrimination problems. Casework has to be limited to those clients who are very vulnerable and unable to advocate for themselves. Funded by DJAG (Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General) and AGD (Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department), BRQ has been operating for over thirty years with the support of volunteers, sponsors, donors and pro-bono assistance.









## Client Story - Charlie

### Now able to afford essential medical requirements.

Born with spina bifida, Charlie suffered from faecal and urinary incontinence. Having been a recipient of the disability support pension, Charlie decided he wanted to enter the workforce on a full time basis. He found a job and surrendered his pension. Charlie drove trucks for nearly 6 years. Whilst driving, he had regular “accidents” which left him with no option but to go home and shower. At work, he avoided contact with his co-workers and never ate in the lunch room for fear they would detect the odour that was normally present. Managing his disability in these circumstances eventually became too much and Charlie was forced to resign.

Unsuccessful with a new claim for the disability support pension, Charlie had to exist on Newstart Allowance and his living standards fell dramatically. Unable to afford the latex liner bags for his catheter, Charlie cleaned and reused the liners, contrary to medical advice that they should be replaced, never reused. This made Charlie prone to serious bladder and kidney infections, which he contracted on an almost monthly basis.

On review to the former Social Security Appeals Tribunal, BRQ succeeded in obtaining the disability support pension and more than 12 months of arrears for Charlie. Now Charlie has some financial security, he is able to afford his medical requirements and he has recovered some dignity.

# From our President

## Reflecting on 30 years of Basic Rights Queensland (formerly Welfare Rights Centre)

The tempo of the times and the various stages of BRQ/WRC reflect social changes and the shifts in political and economic climates; all of which dramatically affect the lives of people who are most vulnerable in our community.

This report is a reflection on our history, from the perspective of someone who has lived and worked through all of these years.

What I have chosen to reflect on is People and Place, linking our past to our present and to celebrate our values, our work, our resilience and to acknowledge that we have a fine foundation for future development.

### People

I would like to celebrate all the visionary and activist people who collectively worked to create community structures to address the problems faced by people who could not access, or were systematically denied access to, our income security system. These visionaries worked from social and professional values and frameworks that prioritised justice, economic equality and access to individual and systemic remedies to the dysfunctions of the Australian social security laws, bureaucracy and practices.

Finding better ways of improving the lives of those who miss out, are excluded and punished were the foundations laid 30 years ago. Social security in Australia should operate as an equitable safety net for those who would otherwise exist in extreme poverty.

Government policies have been invented and reinvented and we have sometimes found ourselves trying to keep our heads above water while countering the pull of the strong and turbulent currents of the funding tides, not to mention the fads in stereotyping the latest minority group to pose a threat to privilege and wealth. It has to be said that the concepts and paradigms of 30 years ago are still sorely needed.

We may not have yet achieved equality and access for all to the basics of life in modern Australia: housing, education, income security, health, welfare and freedom from discrimination, but we are keeping the ideas, the advocacy, the service delivery, the philosophy and the practice alive and well practiced.

### A few figures

Many people have benefitted from the services offered and those people have therefore had a fairer and better deal as a result. During our 30 years we can count around 30,000 people who have been directly assisted by way of specialist advice or individual representation in matters within

the Centrelink appeals process, at Tribunals and Courts, the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland, the Australian Human Rights Commission and other locations. Multiply that by the hundreds who have indirectly benefitted from individual assistance, our law reform and systems advocacy or our community education and our law reform and systems advocacy.

We have delivered 35,000 advices and in-depth advocacy and representation has been provided in 10,000 cases. And all that with a small number of employees assisted by volunteers.

In recent years we have been able to employ a complement of just 8 to 10 (mostly part time) workers. In earlier years it was a much smaller staff group than that. The numbers of volunteers are legion and it is the case that the beginnings of the then Welfare Rights Centre in Queensland was heavily reliant on volunteers, often Citizens Advice Bureau people, retired teachers, others, students (Social Work and Law mainly) and also employees of Universities and the Department of Social Security, and law firms who saw that their role included expanding horizons and pushing boundaries and applying research to develop alternatives based on social justice.

I would love to be able to name everyone who has made that difference; however I would be bound to offend by inadvertent omission. That is why I have made these

generalisations, so I can acknowledge the work of all the above people from so many walks of life.

Having stated this all-encompassing approach, I will now acknowledge individually the small group of people who saw the chance and carried the flame forward from 1982 since before we were formally incorporated. These people are Edna Chamberlain, Bill de Maria, Matt Foley, Roselyn Melville and Kate Lavender. They formed a Department of Social Services – University of Queensland working party, carrying out research commissioned by the then Commonwealth Legal Aid Council in 1982, to identify and analyse the legal needs of social security claimants.

It was the start of much activity and the involvement of many to advocate for those needs. The fledgling group was eventually funded as the Welfare Rights Centre in 1986. It was part of a national network of Community Legal Centres which were evolving throughout Australia and most of which continue to this day in one form or another.

While the service gradually expanded, employing a multidisciplinary approach, i.e. law and social work, the next major focus was the Disability Discrimination Service which was first funded in 1994 and which, remarkably, continues to be funded at a 1994 level to this day.

We have worked in community radio, photography, publishing, community education and outreach to young

"I found it difficult when it hadn't been settled and Centrelink was taking money from me. I managed to live on \$346 a fortnight"

people and to Indigenous communities; we used to do home visits, now we use the telephone to deliver geographically widespread advice, negotiations, casework and even legal representation.

## Place

We have worked from eight locations, since first forming the Welfare Rights Centre – all of them in the central Brisbane area. That's approximately one move every four years. We are pleased to have been located in the Maida Lilley Centre since 10/11 as part of the Brisbane City Council's commitment to social inclusion and Hubs. We hope to have a home there for at least another four years to come, as we have relatively affordable operating costs and it is beneficial to be co-located with other community services which also assist vulnerable people

Social Security and Disability Discrimination work is also carried out by our colleagues at the Community Legal Centres in Townsville and Cairns. The work we do within

our specific Networks – QAILS, NWRN and NALCLC – is essential and we appreciate the support of our work that these and many other peak bodies and societies and other organisations represent. Our place is well represented in all these networks and this is so important to finding a place, a voice and recognition for the people for whom we advocate.

So what place for BRQ in the future? Think of what sort of place Queensland is now. Some of you will say history repeats but I'd like to conclude with the words of that icon Grace Jones who's had many years singing about the tempo of the times:

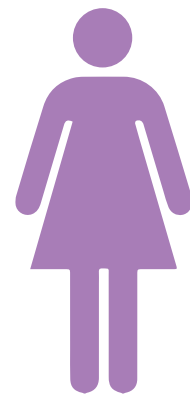
"The problem with reaching your goal quickly is that there is no long term vision, and (people) forget that once you get into that whirlpool then you have to fight the system that solidifies around you in order to keep being the outsider you claim to represent ... There will always be a replacement coming along very soon- a newer version ... a louder version. So, if you haven't got a long term plan, then you are merely a passing phase, the latest trend, yesterday's event ... You are in the middle of the road. People see you but they are not really paying attention. If that's what you want, fine, but it's a road to nowhere."

We are going somewhere and we are here for the long haul. We have kept our eyes on justice equity and participation and rights and that's our road.

*Lurline Comerford*

# Client Work

## 2014-2015 Clients



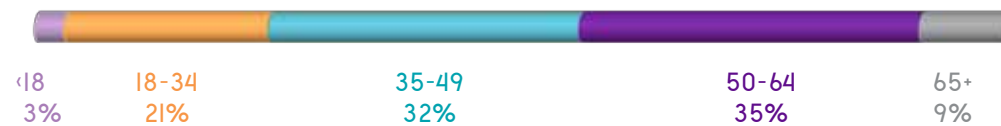
897  
Female  
55%



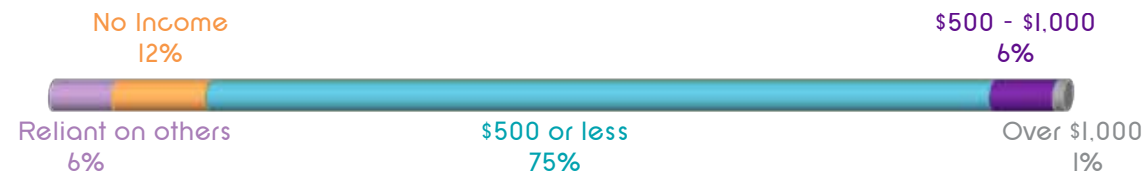
733  
Male  
45%

1,632  
Clients

### Age Groups



### Weekly Income



## 2014-2015 Clients

### Client matters

---

90%

Social Security

10%

Disability  
Discrimination



### People with disabilities

---

2/3



People with mental health problems

---

1/4



## Over 30 Years

### People we've helped

---

30,000



### Cases closed

---

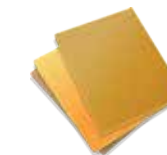
10,000



Advices provided

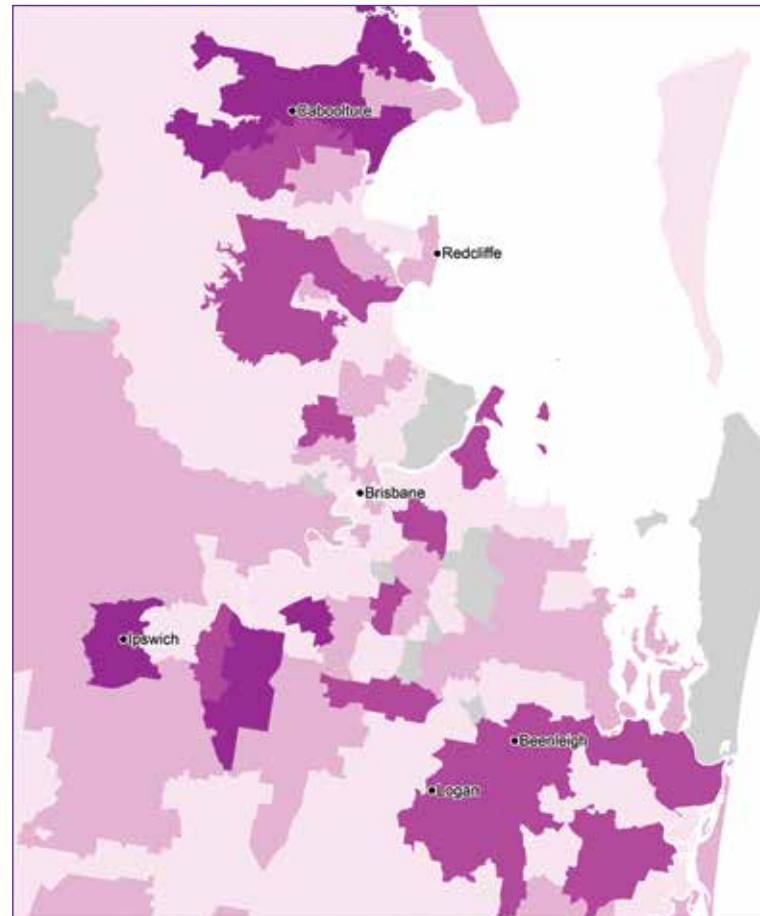
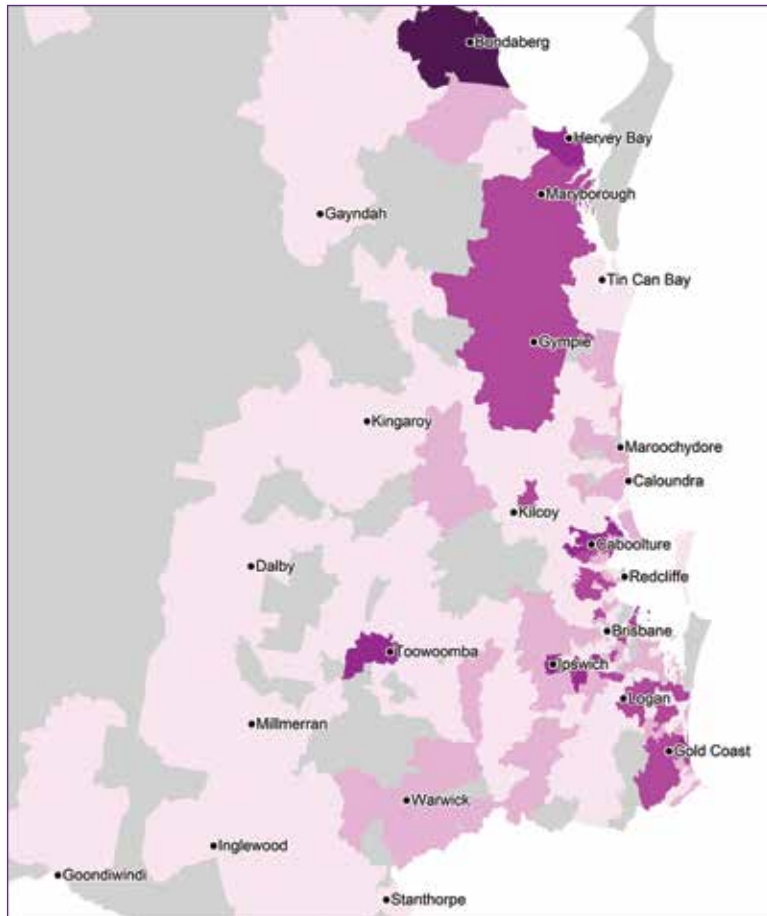
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35,000





# Client Locations



Clients by Postcode



# From our Director

Reaching a significant milestone triggers reflection and stock-taking, something we've been doing quite a lot of in our 30th year since incorporation as the Welfare Rights Centre.

We've rummaged around in our archives and sifted the memories of earlier welfare-righters. We've also counted some impressive figures. In particular, over the past 30 years, this service has helped around 30,000 people. There's more on BRQ-WRC history in our President's report.

Following our 30th Birthday celebration, a colleague from another community legal centre commented on what an excellent evening it was, adding, "It reminded me why we do what we do." Later, I reflected that my colleague was spot on – we're so immersed in the here-and-now business of providing help to as many people as possible, we seldom take a step back to consider the bigger picture or to congratulate ourselves on a job well done.


While BRQ is a specialist community legal centre and we're proud of our ability to use our in-depth knowledge and the wisdom gained over many years to run complex legal arguments to the benefit of our clients, what we do is

pretty simple really. With apologies to our lawyers - BRQ is (mostly) not about running high-profile cases; rather we use our expertise to enable participation, a fair go, joy in life, for people who otherwise would not have this chance.

Our work enables access to the basics of life that most people take for granted: accommodation, a school excursion, medications and dinner on the table, access to a toilet in your local shopping centre. There's nothing headline-grabbing in any of these things, but take them away and life becomes harsh, isolated, undignified, dangerous even.

The need for BRQ services continues to grow. This year we assisted 1,632 people, providing 2,334 expert advices and closing 171 cases, a prodigious output for a service employing just over seven full-time-equivalent staff. Behind those bare numbers are individuals, people with problems ranging from upsetting to so long-term and apparently unresolvable, that the person has attempted suicide.

While our work is rewarding, it is also challenging and demanding, particularly in the face of increasing need. BRQ staff have continued to do their utmost to assist our clients with dedication, determination and compassion, and I'd like to thank them. I'd like to thank our team of fabulous volunteers who cheerily assist with tasks ranging from doing intake calls to waiting at functions, all whilst acquiring



"I was able to buy my dog, my absolute best friend."

useful skills for their future careers. I'd also like to thank our Management Committee, who are also volunteers, for giving their time and expertise to guide BRQ.

I'll leave it to one of our clients to sum up the real, human impact of BRQ interventions. When asked, six months later, about the consequence of the assistance she'd received from BRQ, she replied, "I was able to buy my dog, my absolute best friend."

*Georgina Warrington*

# Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Our Vision

Basic rights  
for a just  
society

"The Tribunal put me onto Basic Rights, my last resort. What a turnaround. Such a pleasure to be given interest and confidence with you, and the work done for me I appreciate so much. The way everything was explained was such a relief and a load off me. I fought my case alone until you were there for me. Sincere thanks"

## Our Strategic Priorities

- Organisational sustainability and responsiveness
- Leaders in social security and disability discrimination rights
- Effective stakeholder relationships
- Recognised service excellence

## Our Purpose

- Providing high quality, independent advice, legal services and community education
- Upholding rights to social security entitlements and freedom from discrimination
- Advocating fair and just outcomes for vulnerable people

## Our Values

### Fairness

We act with integrity, ensuring our resources are targeted equitably while prioritising the most vulnerable.

### Access

We are committed to enabling access to justice through innovative service provision and making the complex comprehensible.

### Inclusion

We are non-judgmental and we embrace diversity.

### Transparency

We are clearly accountable for our actions so as to maintain trust with our clients, the wider community, and funders.

### Respect


We respond to all who need our assistance with compassion and understanding, maintaining a non-judgmental perspective.

### Responsiveness

We provide our clients with an objective assessment of their situation while also being empathic to the difficulties of their situation and the challenges of dealing with it.

### Expertise

Through continually developing our in-depth knowledge of complex areas of law, we provide expert, evidence-based advice to our clients.



“Don’t know how I would have coped without help from Teresa. She was so good and very helpful in every way. I would have ended up giving up if it was not for her. And I would like to say thank you to her”







## Client Story - Sue

### Elderly Carer with a \$60,000 Centrelink debt reduced to \$9,000

Many years ago, our elderly client, 'Sue', took a severely disabled child into her home and then continued to care for her for decades. Over the years, Sue received some financial support from a state government-funded agency to cover the child's – and then adult's – care needs. Having not questioned the amount she was given, Sue was pleased to receive a payment of \$100,000 arrears owed to her. When Centrelink heard about this arrears payment, they raised a debt of \$60,000.

BRQ's caseworker demonstrated that Centrelink had calculated the debt incorrectly. BRQ also argued "special circumstances" such as legal fees and Sue's notional entitlement to the Pension Bonus, had she received the annual payment increases when they were due, rather than in one lump sum in arrears.

As a result, BRQ was successful in having the debt reduced to a much more manageable \$9,000, thereby greatly reducing our elderly client's financial and emotional stress.

# Client Services

## Social Security

Patrick Cranitch, Senior Solicitor

BRQ's telephone advice sessions have witnessed an increase in the average number of monthly callers telephoning with either a Centrelink problem or seeking advice in relation to a discrimination matter. This increase is illustrated by the growth in our average monthly advice numbers which were 145 in 2013, rose to 183 in 2014 and rose again 190 for the year ending 30 June 2015.

BRQ's casework for the corresponding years has not seen any significant increase as we have increasingly carefully targeted this more resource-intensive work. Most of our case work over the past year involved the rejection or cancellation of the Disability Support Pension. We also assisted with a range of other social security matters, in particular compensation preclusion periods and debt. Our casework services are highly targeted and we only represent very vulnerable people who are unable to self-advocate. The vast majority of our casework has been conducted in the former Social Security Appeals Tribunal, now referred to as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) Stage 1. Our success rate in this jurisdiction is more than 75% which is high, but not unexpected, as representation is restricted to vulnerable persons with reasonable prospects of success.

Some of our unsuccessful cases are appealed to the AAT Stage 2 level, particularly where there is relevant evidence which has been given limited weight by the first Tribunal. At this level of review, a further submission can result in the Department of Human Services conceding the appeal and granting the disability support pension without any further hearing. Our success rate with these type of cases is remarkably high.

Rather than continue with statistics which can become somewhat dull, it is easier to picture the people we assist and the nature and impact of our work from the case stories which are spread throughout this report. Our clients are often misrepresented by some of the media and in public discourse, so part of our role is to present the reality of their situations and why they need our help. For example, contrary to the picture of the roting DSP recipient presented on current affairs television, the clients we assist are usually in a parlous state by the time they contact us, living with serious chronic conditions aggravated by a lack of sufficient resources to afford their medications and/or medical requirements. Charlie, whose story can be found on page 6, was one such client.

## Disability Discrimination Advocacy Service (DDAS) Andrew Kennedy, Disability Discrimination Advocate

DDAS provides advice to all people with a disability who seek advice about the possibility that they have faced unlawful discrimination on the basis of their impairment. We also work closely with the families and/or other sources of support of these clients, especially when they are vulnerable.

We encourage our clients, where possible, to resolve their issue with the alleged discriminator before making a formal complaint to either the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland or Australian Human Rights Commission. This may result in a timelier and empowering resolution for our clients. Further, we help clients to understand what an achievable and practical outcome will be, based on what they can objectively demonstrate as evidence with respect to their complaint.

Referrals are made to relevant community organisations for those who require additional support, advice or advocacy outside the legal context, or in pursuing remedies in other areas of law outside the scope of our service. An example is when clients have allegations connected to employment and we encourage those clients to explore any remedies available to them according to employment law.



"BRQ is the first serious help I've received since this whole nightmare began. I hope Patrick is very well paid!"

BRQ's DDAS has recognised a marked increase in matters involving the provision of education. We have worked with clients and their families to ensure that the provider, whether it be a school or training organisation, make the reasonable adjustments required to allow the student to participate in learning and demonstrate skill and knowledge taking into account their disability. This work has significant consequences, as maintaining a positive connection to school and the education system is vital for a young person's chances in life.

Vulnerable clients with meritorious matters have received casework services, especially where the clients' impairments result in communication difficulties whether written or verbal. We have also represented clients whose impairment means they do not have the resilience to conduct a matter themselves. We have represented clients at conciliation conferences at the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland and the Australian Human Rights Commission. We have also represented a client with our pro-bono partner, Minter Ellison, at the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the work and the confidentiality agreements by which complainants are bound after settlement, we are unable to provide any case stories from our disability discrimination work.



## Social Work.

### Teresa Grahame, Social Worker

The BRQ Social Work service has continued to assist some of BRQ's most vulnerable clients with their Centrelink issues. In 2014-2015 our social work service supported 46 clients, provided 426 advices and closed 43 cases. Social work clients typically have severe mental health issues that prevent them from engaging effectively with Centrelink and from collecting the right kind of information to support them with their Centrelink matter.

BRQ's social worker provides short term counselling and intense casework support to these extremely vulnerable clients, walking alongside them through the challenging and often elongated process of dealing with their Centrelink issue. In addition to providing social work support, our social worker represents these clients at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This highly supportive, small-scale "wrapped-around service" works well for our very vulnerable clients and is highly effective where it is important to highlight the impact of personal and social issues on the individual's Centrelink problem.


Whilst Disability Support Pension claims, relating to mental health issues remain the predominant issue for social work clients, our social worker has also assisted clients with

waivers of debt based on "special circumstances", young people with "unreasonable to live at home" claims, and secured the waiver of "compensation preclusion periods" for some very vulnerable clients. This has included doing an holistic social work assessment of their circumstances and highlighting special factors in their cases.

BRQ clients often present with suicidal ideation or intent and our social worker continues to provide crisis and supportive counselling as an integral part of her work.

### Social Security Telephone Advice Service. Bryony Walters and Melissa Langsford, TAS Co-ordinators

Our Social Security Telephone Advice Service focuses on making complex law comprehensible and, where possible, equipping people to deal with their legal problems. Where there is no avenue of redress, our service at least enables the client to know they've explored all options, to understand the reason why things are as they are and, hopefully, to obtain closure. This requires expert knowledge, the ability to translate complicated rules into simple step-by-step processes, patience, compassion and – given the high volume of calls – stamina.



"I had trouble getting answers from Centrelink until I found somebody who put me in touch with Basic Rights Queensland. From then things started to happen"

BRQ provided 2,171 expert advices on social security matters in 2014-2015, an increase of 19% on the previous year.

BRQ's social security telephone advice service fulfills several functions:

- One-off advice that resolves the client's presenting problem
- Ongoing support to a client, supporting them to resolve their matter, provided through multiple advices over a period of time
- Advocating directly to Centrelink on behalf of very vulnerable clients, to resolve the matter at the earliest opportunity. BRQ is able to do this thanks to the ongoing assistance and cooperation we receive from Department of Human Services
- Intake for matters that meet casework guidelines and can be referred internally for case work by solicitors or our social worker.







## Client Story - Mandy

### Security of continuing income

"Mandy", who has an acquired brain injury resulting from a car accident, had been manipulated into spending over \$500,000 of her accident compensation payment in one year. With no money left, unable to work, and facing a 'compensation preclusion period' which means she would not receive any welfare payment before 2019, Mandy and her children were in a desperate situation.

BRQ sourced funding for a neuropsychologist report which showed that, as a result of her injury, Mandy lacked financial decision making capacity, was easily influenced and highly impulsive.

BRQ successfully argued for the preclusion period to be waived, backdated to the new claim we had assisted her to lodge.

Mandy now had a little arrears with which to pay her rates, phone and electricity, (which was about to be cut off). Most importantly, Mandy, who is permanently unable to work, now has the security and peace of mind of ongoing income.

# Community Legal Education

Melissa Langsford.

Community Legal Education Coordinator

The main activities of BRQ's community legal education (CLE) program are:

- Producing materials for individuals and the people who work with them, explaining how the law works and how to access their rights under it
- Providing capacity-building training for community workers, enabling them to better support their clients
- Promotion of our services and facilitating wider access.

We proudly produced and launched a major publication this year, our new website: [www.brq.org.au](http://www.brq.org.au). In our totally unbiased view, it is a work of art, user-friendly, easy to navigate and visually appealing and it explains clearly and concisely what we do and how to access our services.

In partnership with ATSILS, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, and supported by a grant from Legal Aid Queensland's Collaboration Fund, we were able to

expand the reach of our CLE program to the regional towns of Roma, Charleville, Cunnamulla, Yeppoon, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Woorabinda and Toowoomba. ATSILS presented on common money problems such as debt and hire-purchase traps, while BRQ presented on dealing with common social security problems. Despite facing unexpected obstacles, such as arriving in Yeppoon shortly after the cyclone, these sessions received very positive feedback from the community workers who attended.

In addition to training or presentations provided by BRQ this year, BRQ participated in various community-run events such as Homeless Connect in Brisbane, the Fresh Futures Market in Ipswich, Anti-Poverty week forums conducted by the Capricorn Community Development Association in Rockhampton and Brisbane City Council in Brisbane, and the Queenslanders with Disability Network Forum on the McClure Review into welfare reform.

Our culminating CLE event for this year was the highly successful Community Workers' Forum we ran in June in

Chermside, with the support and participation of Centrelink, the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and Legal Aid Queensland. The panel with representatives from these organisations, plus a BRQ caseworker, was led through a "hypothetical", following the path of a client through claiming the disability support pension, being rejected and going through the various stages of the appeals process. The audience asked questions along the way and afterwards reported that this session had been very informative and useful. We plan to run more of these sessions next year.

# Supporters and Donors

We are grateful for the support we receive, both financial and in-kind, from former clients, private individuals, business and organisations.

## Sponsor

- The Electrical Trades Union, Qld and NT branch, sponsor since 2009

## Pro bono

- Minter Ellison
- Clayton Utz

## Grants

- Legal Aid Queensland for a Collaboration Fund Grant

## 2014-2015 Private Donors

BRQ has received a number of donations from individuals over the year. We would like to express our gratitude for their generosity and support.

## Funding

Basic Rights Queensland is funded by the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department through the Community Legal Services Program. We are grateful for their support.

## OUR PEOPLE

# Management Committee

### Lurline Comerford, President

Lurline has been BRQ's President for 5 years. Lurline has an interest in social justice and equity for all. A Social Worker since 1974, Lurline is keen to maintain a strong community based organisation that can address social security issues, anomalies and problems and participate in improving the system for those who are disadvantaged.

### Paul Henman, Vice President

Paul had served on the Basic Rights Qld committee for a year before becoming Vice President. He is an Associate Professor of Social Policy at the University of Queensland. Paul has a strong professional interest in social security policy and administration, and of wider issues of inequality. His research focuses on the nexus between social policy, public administration and digital technologies.

### Cale Fryer, Secretary

Cale holds a Bachelor of Business Management (Int. Business) degree as well as graduating with Honours with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Queensland. Cale is a solicitor of the Supreme Court and the High Court of Australia. He has extensive experience in all aspects of general practice with particular focus on personal injury litigation. Cale is committed to helping ordinary Queenslanders achieve improvement and justice.

### Paul Freeburn, Committee Member

Paul was admitted as a solicitor in 1983. After working as a solicitor at Feez Ruthning (now Allens) and as a Senior Associate at Morris Fletcher & Cross (now Minter Ellison) Paul was admitted as a barrister in 1990. He 'took silk' in 2003. Paul has a strong belief in social justice.

### Rachel Watson, Treasurer

Rachel has over 20 years' experience working in the community services sector across local, state, commonwealth and not-for-profit sectors including experience in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. She has held various positions including Women's Health Worker, Education Officer, Senior Social Worker, Services Manager and Operations Manager. Rachel is currently working with Brisbane Housing Company, Creating Liveable Communities and she values diversity, social justice and a vibrant community sector.

### Christopher Saines, Committee Member

Christopher is the founder of Galleon Law Group which specialises in corporate and commercial law. Since being admitted as a solicitor of the Queensland Supreme Court in 2006, Christopher has assisted a broad variety of clients across all areas of commercial law. He has a particular interest in corporate governance and has assisted companies with the implementation of best practice corporate governance principles and advising board members about their director duties.



## OUR PEOPLE

# Staff in 2014-2015

### Pat Rogers, Committee Member

Pat has been on the Committee for 12 months and has been active in the Union movement since the mid 1980's. Pat holds a degree in Business and is an Industrial Officer with the Electrical Trades Union. Pat has a strong interest in social justice and community development.

### Stuart McDowall, Committee Member

Stuart is a management consultant with over 15 years of professional experience in retail, professional services and public sector organisations. He has professional qualifications in Business and Information Technology, and is also a Chartered Accountant. Stuart is currently working as an Associate Director in Grant Thornton's Public Sector Advisory practice.

### Who's Who at Basic Rights Queensland

Member	Role	Time at BRQ
Georgina Warrington	Director	7 years
Patrick Cranitch	Senior Solicitor	13 years
Andrew Davison	Social Security Solicitor	7 years
Teresa Grahame	Social Worker	10 years
Nicole O'Keane	Intake & Admin Officer	8 years
Ellen Jones	Administration Support	1.5 years
Melissa Langsford	Social Security Solicitor, Community Legal Education and Telephone Advice Coordinator	1.5 years
Andrew Kennedy	Disability Discrimination Solicitor	4 years
Sue McComber	Finance Administrator	10 years
Bryony Walters	Social Security Solicitor, Telephone Advice Coordinator	5 years

## OUR PEOPLE

# Volunteers

Without our volunteers, we would not be able to assist nearly as many people each year. In return for their contribution, volunteers gain experience in a wide range of aspects of community legal centre work and gain confidence in their professional skills.

*"Volunteering at Basic Rights Qld has been an invaluable experience. As a law student, it can be easy to get bogged down in stress, but volunteering every week has reinvigorated my passion for using the law as a tool to help others. As a First Contact Officer, I'm exposed to a range of real people, many of whom face enormous*

*challenges, and this brings home the importance of the work that the team at BRQ do in a challenging area of law. The staff's commitment to social justice is inspiring, and my volunteering experience has been instrumental in helping me to understand the importance of social justice to my own professional future"*

*Hannah*

We would like to say a big "Thank You" to them all - Volunteers 2014-2015

Klaudine Barnsley  
Amy Chou  
Nicole Cooper  
Matthew Cummings  
Petar Damnjanovic  
Arleena Dellaway  
Andrea Farrell  
Laurel Fox  
Skye Johns  
Ellen Jones  
Brigid Kelly  
Dayne Kingsford  
Tinashe Makamure  
Bronwyn Marttin  
David Northcott

Jeanette O'Reilly  
Michelle Pham  
Kyla Phillpotts  
Cecilia Redfern  
Kate Ross  
Karmen Russell  
Krish Sharma  
Alexandra Stevens  
Santhye Subramaniam  
Adriana Tate  
Hannah Taylor  
Dimity Thoms  
Phylli Verrall  
Kirsten Zander







## Client Story - Sam

### \$50,000 debt waived

Sam's payment had been reduced to just \$200 per fortnight because he had to repay a Centrelink debt of \$50,000. The debt was raised due to numerous unexplained deposits in Sam's credit card account; deposits which Centrelink considered to be income.

Sam had memory and cognitive problems due to a brain tumour, he could not explain what was in his account and he was confused by the debt notice and distressed at having to manage on such a low income

BRQ immediately got Sam back on full payment as it was a year since the last unexplained deposit and Centrelink had wrongly coded his ongoing income.

After our painstaking review of Sam's accounts, we were able to show that 90% of the deposits originated from Centrelink payments to which Sam was actually entitled. The other deposits were from Sam's relatives who had been using his credit card so he could accrue the points, then repaying him later.

The Tribunal found the debt did not exist, thereby removing a great source of financial and mental stress for someone who was not able to cope with either the debt or the stress.

## From our Treasurer

I am pleased to present the inaugural Basic Rights Queensland (BRQ) Treasurer's Report, for the 2014-2015 financial year. In the previous Treasurer's Report, we were still Welfare Rights Centre (WRC). As you know, we changed our name in November 2014.

BRQ's recurrent funding over this period was provided by the State Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department through the Community Legal Services Program. We are grateful for this support and we would particularly like to acknowledge the ongoing assistance and support of DJAG staff. BRQ is pleased to advise that we were successful in obtaining a grant from Legal Aid Queensland to conduct a collaborative community legal education project with ATSILS (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service).

BRQ has always been a service that produces the outputs of a Mercedes whilst consuming the fuel of a moped; we have limited resources that are squeezed to create the

best possible service delivery model for our clients. This year it is the same. As treasurer it is exciting at times to see if we can actually make it all add up. Salaries are our predominant expenditure; being a telephone-based service we have relatively low operational costs as we do not have to factor in vehicles or running reception and client spaces. Being located in the Maida Lilley Centre is of great benefit to us as it gives a centralised location, sharing of support and resources with "like" services and it is very affordable.

**As can be seen from the audit report, BRQ has finished the year in a strong financial position and we are well able to meet our ongoing commitments in the coming year.**

BRQ will continue to seek alternate funding streams to ensure sustainability but to also continue to provide the most relevant, contemporary and exemplary service possible to clients.

This is my last financial report as I am stepping down from the board. I have enjoyed the 6 years as a member of the WRC/BRQ Committee. It is an important organisation, one of the myriad of service delivery that is provided to disadvantaged Queenslanders, but one that can prevent the cycle of poverty continuing.

I would like to express my thanks and respect to the staff at BRQ, without them the service does not function, and to Georgina Warrington the Director who moves through the most stressful moments calm and serene. She leads the multidisciplinary team with grace and ensures that BRQ is represented strongly in the sector.

Finally I would like to thank our Finance Administrator, Sue McComber, for her diligence and dedication. Sue has numbers in her head but the needs of clients in her heart and for that we are grateful. I would also like to thank our Auditors, Hacketts, for their work on the audit report.

*Rachel Watson*

# Financial Report

## Income and Expenditure Statement for the Year Ended 30 June 2015

Income	2015 \$	2014 \$
Donations	1,480	1,645
Grants and funding received	748,470	769,909
Interest received	9,632	11,112
Memberships	323	136
Profit on disposal of equipment	-	374
Other Income	2,554	14,366
Sponsorship	8,000	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>770,459</b>	<b>797,542</b>
Expenses		
AGM expenses	778	748
Audit fees	5,000	4,600
Bank Charges	255	247
Cleaning	132	795
Computer expenses	1,269	1,430
Conference expenses	9,218	5,333
Consultancy	4,574	17,215
Depreciation	5,527	4,916

Document destruction and storage	2,028	2,050
Equipment - minor	705	2,374
Insurance	2,329	2,679
Levies to NACLC and NWRN	4,487	3,662
Library	463	280
Management committee	1,285	591
Postage, printing and stationery	12,644	7,328
Practicing certificate	2,962	3,546
Program cost	185	509
Professional fee	609	-
Rent	19,476	19,476
Repairs and maintenance	513	2,738
Staff expenses	650,775	609,593
Subscriptions and registrations	5,848	2,584
Telephone, fax and internet	18,853	15,836
Travelling expenses	8,722	3,108
Planning Day expenses	1800	1,770
Volunteer costs	445	179
Website design and maintenance	8,465	400
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>769,347</b>	<b>713,987</b>
Surplus/(deficit) before income tax	1,112	83,555
Income tax expense	-	-
<b>Surplus/(deficit) after income tax</b>	<b>1,112</b>	<b>83,555</b>
Accumulated surplus at beginning of year	206,324	122,769
<b>Accumulated Surplus At End Of Year</b>	<b>207,436</b>	<b>206,324</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.



# Financial Report

Our Full Audited Financial Reports Are Available  
Via Email [Brq@Brq.org.au](mailto:Brq@Brq.org.au)

## Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2015

Current Assets	2015 \$	2014 \$
Cash And Cash Equivalents	386,096	383,195
Accounts Receivable	9,917	5,388
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>396,013</b>	<b>388,583</b>
Non-Current Assets		
Plant And Equipment - At Cost	49,161	47,816
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(35,329)	(29,802)
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>13,832</b>	<b>18,014</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>409,845</b>	<b>406,597</b>
Current Liabilities		
Trade And Other Payables	52,203	57,873
Employee Benefit Provisions	139,277	125,865
Unspent Funds	10,929	16,535
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>202,409</b>	<b>200,273</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>202,409</b>	<b>200,273</b>
<b>Net Assets (Liabilities)</b>	<b>207,436</b>	<b>206,324</b>
Members Funds		
Accumulated Surplus	207,436	206,324
<b>Total Members' Funds</b>	<b>207,436</b>	<b>206,324</b>



