

# Welfare- rights Centre Inc.



Annual Report 2013-2014





We would like thank our funders: the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Federal Attorney-General's Department.

BRISBANE  
FESTIVAL  
8 - 29 SEPTEMBER

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# Contents

About us	4
From our President	7
Our client service work facts and figures	8
Our client locations	9
From our Director	10
Client Services	13
Community Legal Education	17
Supporters, Sponsors and Donors	19
Volunteers	20
Management Committee	21
Our Staff	22
From our Treasurer	23
Financial Audit Report	24

Identifying details have been changed in all case studies.



# About us

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


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

WRC provides **information and advice** to everyone who calls in relation to a social security or disability discrimination problem. **Casework** has to be limited to those clients who are **very vulnerable** and unable to advocate for themselves.

Being a **state-wide, telephone-based** service, WRC 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 “**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 people’s **right to live a life free from discrimination**.

With an **early intervention** focus, WRC 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 in with local supports.

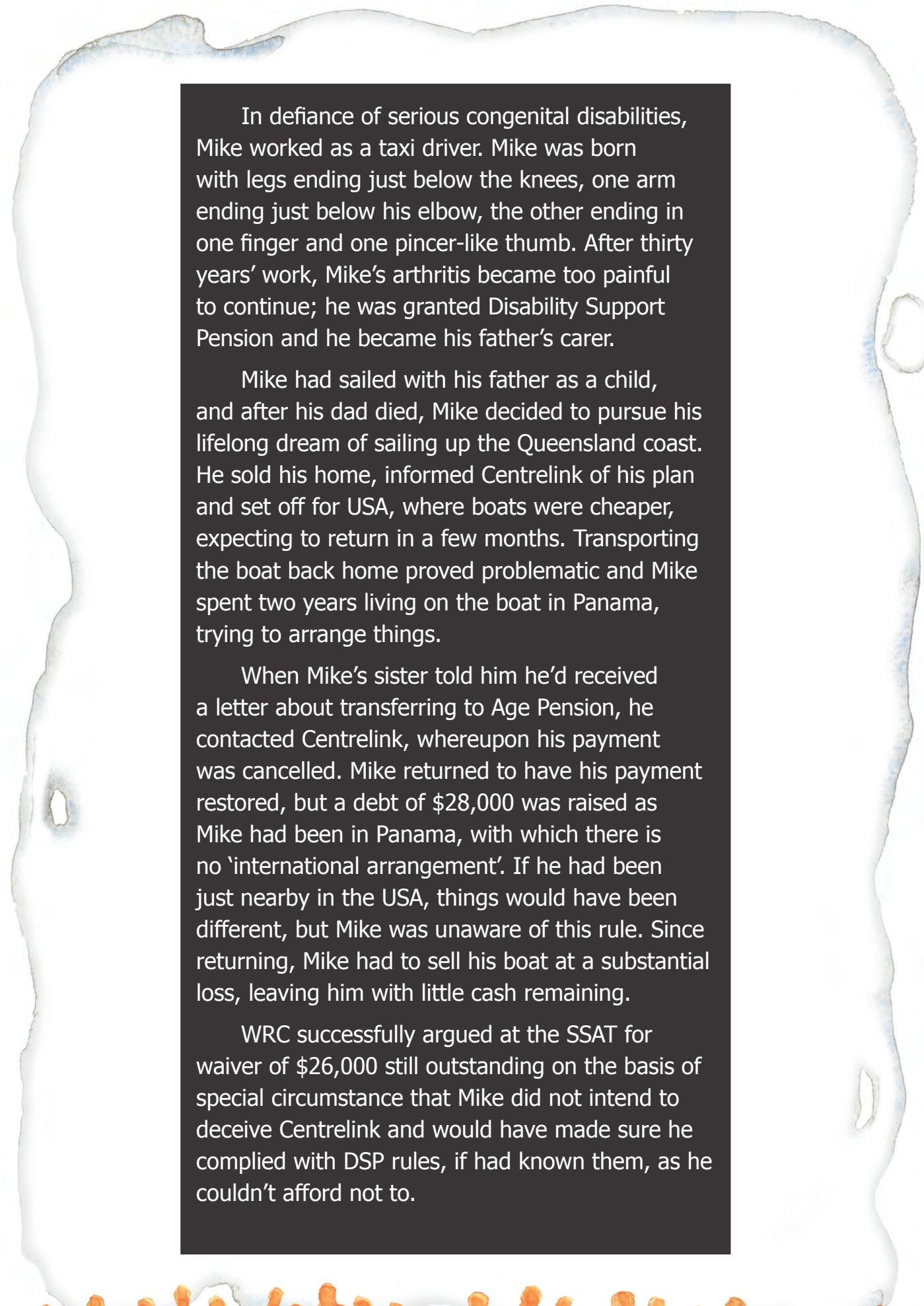
Through our **community legal education** program we produce factsheets and guides translating complex law into plain English. We also provide **capacity-building training** to community-based, private sector and government workers.

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 system is fair and accessible and the rights of people with disability are upheld.

We believe people are **better off in paid employment** than on welfare; however in situations where this is not possible, particularly where there are not enough jobs to meet demand, a **civil society** ensures provision of adequate social security.

We affirm the **right** of people to live a life **free from discrimination**.

Funded by the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, WRC has been **operating for over thirty years** with the support of **volunteers, sponsors, donors and pro-bono** assistance.



In defiance of serious congenital disabilities, Mike worked as a taxi driver. Mike was born with legs ending just below the knees, one arm ending just below his elbow, the other ending in one finger and one pincer-like thumb. After thirty years' work, Mike's arthritis became too painful to continue; he was granted Disability Support Pension and he became his father's carer.

Mike had sailed with his father as a child, and after his dad died, Mike decided to pursue his lifelong dream of sailing up the Queensland coast. He sold his home, informed Centrelink of his plan and set off for USA, where boats were cheaper, expecting to return in a few months. Transporting the boat back home proved problematic and Mike spent two years living on the boat in Panama, trying to arrange things.

When Mike's sister told him he'd received a letter about transferring to Age Pension, he contacted Centrelink, whereupon his payment was cancelled. Mike returned to have his payment restored, but a debt of \$28,000 was raised as Mike had been in Panama, with which there is no 'international arrangement'. If he had been just nearby in the USA, things would have been different, but Mike was unaware of this rule. Since returning, Mike had to sell his boat at a substantial loss, leaving him with little cash remaining.

WRC successfully argued at the SSAT for waiver of \$26,000 still outstanding on the basis of special circumstance that Mike did not intend to deceive Centrelink and would have made sure he complied with DSP rules, if had known them, as he couldn't afford not to.



# From our President

Lurline Comerford

Social security, freedom from discrimination and access to justice are part of the platform of human rights upon which peaceful and fair societies are based. In the year 2013/14 we grappled with how to best pursue our vision for a more inclusive society in a less inclusive environment. These considerations led us to plan for progressing the work of ensuring that people living in Australia can access a decent basic standard of living and freedom from discrimination. We conducted a service review to see how we can better sustain our commitment to providing our legal and social work services in the context of current challenges.

As a result of the review we restructured, increasing our service capacity and our provision of community education. The review also pointed to the need to ensure that our identity and image portrays our services and the people and organisations using our services in a positive light to government funding bodies, other funding entities, potential partners, sponsors and philanthropic groups.

Our commitment to support access to the life's basics: income security, health, housing, education and a discrimination-free society has led us to a name change to underpin the other improvements to ensure our relevance. Our new name is symbolic of the main organisational changes in the past year. We are launching "Basic Rights Queensland" and our new logo and website at our annual general meeting. Throughout 2014/15 we anticipate that we will move into our new persona with energy (and outcomes!).

It is important to acknowledge all those who have provided assistance throughout the year. All members of the management committee are committed to a fair society. Raylene D'Cruz our Secretary, provided essential wisdom and practical assistance in the change process as well as in her ordinary committee role. Raylene has now left the committee and we wish her all the best using her experience at community legal centres and the Qld Law Society, back home in Zambia. I'd also like to thank our two other retiring committee members: Scott Wilson and Melody Edwardson who have served on the committee for four and two years respectively. We have been very fortunate to have the benefit of their expertise and wisdom and we wish them well in future.

We give thanks to all our supporters: donors, sponsors, providers of pro bono services and of course funding bodies. Thank you also to all our wonderful volunteers, who are mainly law or social work students. We are pleased to be able to make a contribution to professional education while extending our capacity for service delivery. Of course it is our wonderful employees (small in number but making a great difference) to whom we make our final thanks as, without them, we would be unable to achieve as much as we do.

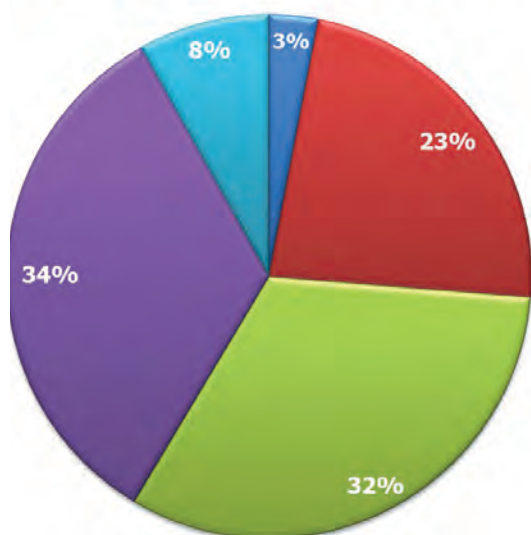
We will continue to work hard and also celebrate, for we will be 30 years young in 2015: watch out for our birthday celebrations in 2015.

# Our client service work

## facts and figures 2013–2014

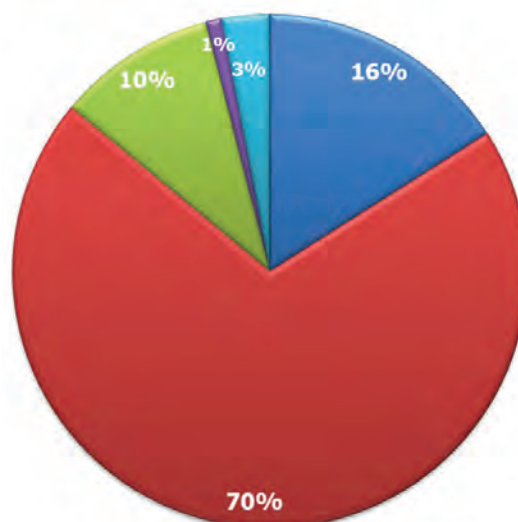
**Client Age Groups**

■ <18 ■ 18-34 ■ 35-49 ■ 50-64 ■ 65 & over



**Client Income Levels**

■ No Income ■ < \$500 / week  
 ■ \$500 - \$1,000 / week ■ > \$1,000 / week  
 ■ Not Stated

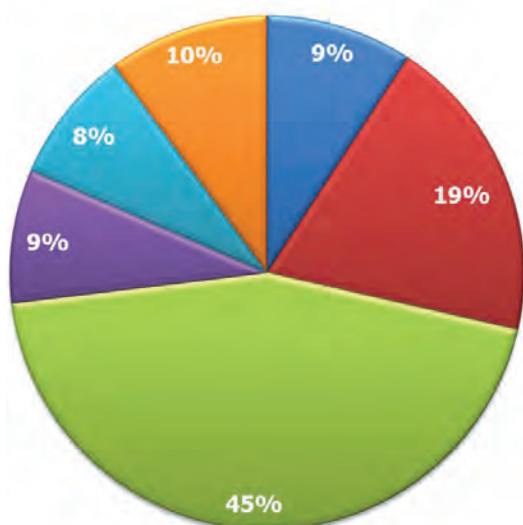


926 advices, provided

1,444 individuals assisted of whom 1,207 were new clients.

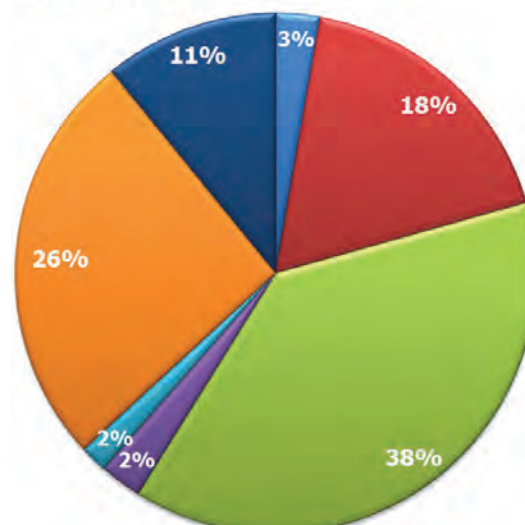
**Disability Discrimination Advices**

■ Accommodation ■ Education  
 ■ Employment ■ Government  
 ■ Provision services/facilities ■ Other Areas



**Social Security Advices**

■ Breaches/compliance ■ Overpayment  
 ■ Refusal eligibility ■ Member of a couple  
 ■ Other ■ Rate Reduction  
 ■ Processing Complaint or Issue

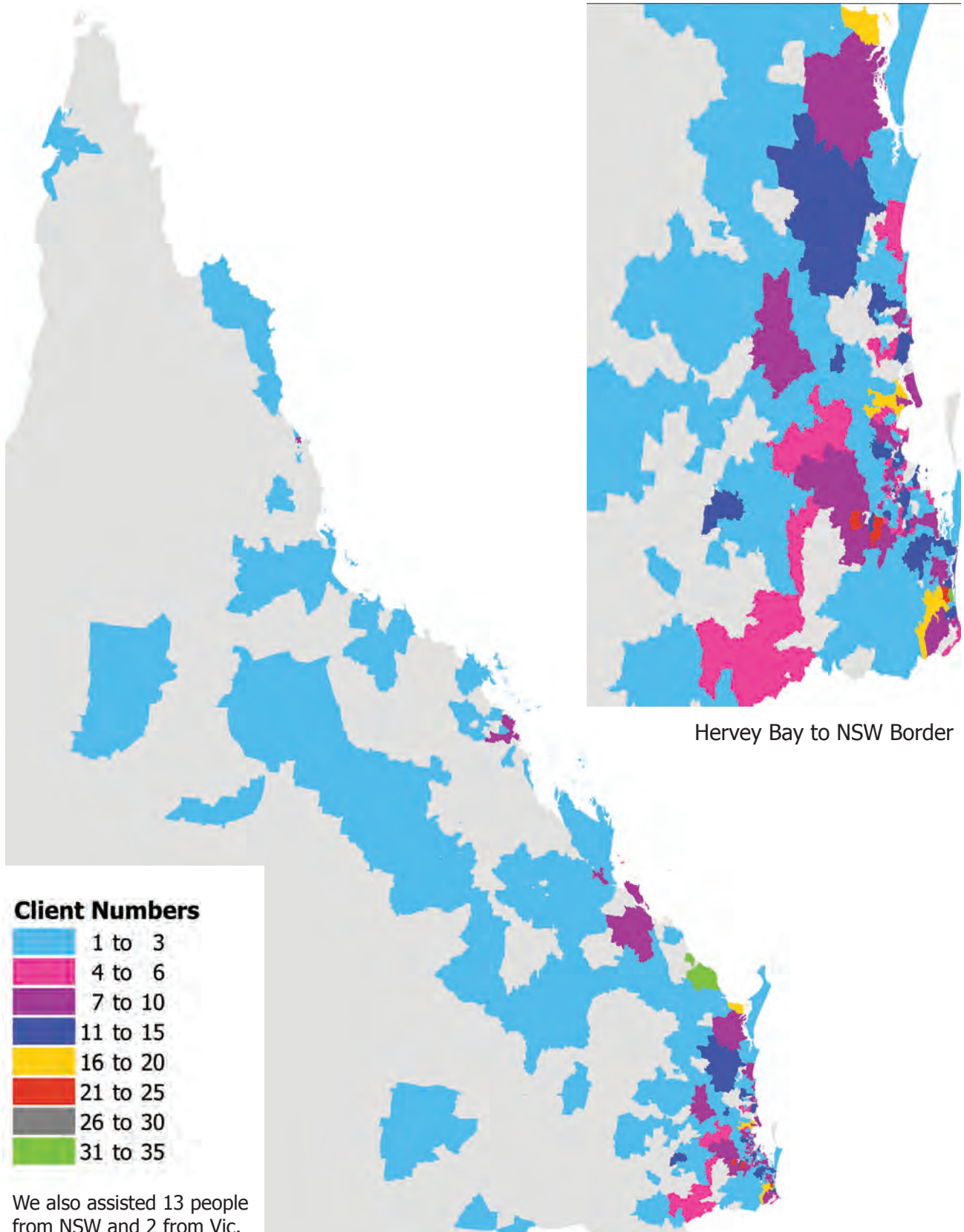


159 new cases opened, 178 cases closed

Over half our clients are people with disability.



# Our client locations



# From our Director


Georgina Warrington

This has been a year of change for WRC as we have engaged with the challenges of our operating environment and taken steps to ensure the sustainability of the service so that people experiencing problems accessing their social security entitlements or experiencing disability discrimination will continue to be able to get specialist help. It has been a big year organisationally: we have undergone a service review, undertaken structural change, launched into a rebranding process, reviewed and updated our association rules and embarked on a process of reviewing and updating our organisational policies and procedures. All with a view to providing effective and efficient services to the most people possible.

Our service review examined how we run and considered what changes we needed to make in order to ensure organisational sustainability. One major outcome of the review was our organisational restructure which has resulted in more worker hours going into frontline client services and community legal education; this is already producing positive results. Another outcome has been to “rebrand” WRC with a new name, Basic Rights Queensland Inc, with the descriptor – Social Security and Disability Discrimination Services, new tagline – A voice for fairness, and a new logo. The new name shows our service is more inclusive than just “welfare”/social security. It also allows for expansion into areas other than social security and disability discrimination, should such possibilities arise. “Basic Rights” is a reminder that the issues about which we advocate on behalf of our clients are not extraordinary; they are in fact basic/fundamental human rights, as recognised in international conventions to which Australia is a signatory. Our new look, including new website, is being launched at our annual general meeting. While arguably rebranding is about style over substance, how a service presents itself is increasingly significant in the current community service environment and we have to give it our best shot for the sake of our client base – and we’re confident that our substance is very substantial.

Our client work statistics for this year show how demand has grown, while we have improved our targeting of delivery of more intensive services such as casework. WRC provided 1,927 advices and closed 178 cases, assisting a total of 1,444 people with their social security or disability discrimination problem. We have continued to hone our early intervention focus, with the aim of resolving as many issues as possible at the advice level, while reserving our casework capacity for the very vulnerable clients whose cases have merit and for whom we are reasonably certain of making a positive difference. For 28 of our social security casework clients this year, our intervention had a direct positive impact on their capacity to maintain their housing. For 21 of our social security clients who identified as having mental health problems, our intervention had a positive impact on their ability to deal with the problem. These impacts ranged from reduced stress to now being able to afford medications or rehabilitation treatment. For more on Client Services, see report on page 8.





We were fortunate this year to enter into a pro bono partnership with Minter Ellison. They are providing their expertise for complex discrimination matters in addition to advising WRC itself. Minter Ellison have reviewed our Constitution to ensure it accords with the current incorporated association model rules and advised us on changes we wished to make. Their support has been invaluable and we are particularly grateful for how nothing was too much trouble and we were treated like an important client.


I'd also like to thank Clayton Utz for continuing to take care of our tenancy arrangements. This has become something of a watching brief while we wait for the council to sort out how they want to run our building, however it has been reassuring to know that we have experts to call on, when decisions do get made and we are grateful to them for their patience and support.

Having premises at the Brisbane City Council-run Maida Lilley Community Centre, close to Fortitude Valley station, is working well for us. We have appreciated being able to share expertise and cross-referrals with co-tenants and we are grateful to be paying considerably below-market rent, as this enables us to put more money into client services.

Uncertainty in relation to funding with its flow-on consequences has been a preoccupation. We were relieved to receive confirmation of 2014-2017 funding from the state Department of Justice and Attorney-General, however we will not know the level of our Commonwealth funding until after the May 2015 Budget, so the uncertainty continues.

Despite the uncertainties of the external environment, in which twelve months has become long-term, with all the challenges this brings to organisational planning and personal security, WRC's employees have determinedly soldiered on, attending to clients' needs with professionalism, dedication and concern and I'd like to thank them for this.

In the coming year we will be focussing on the development of relationships and partnerships as well as the strengthening of existing ones. We will also be seeking to pursue new funding opportunities. The challenges and uncertainties continue, however I am confident we are well-equipped to face them.



Paul suffered a brain injury in an accident and, as is quite common, he lacked insight into the effect his injury had on his brain function. For several years he attempted jobs but never lasted more than a month or two in any one position. He then spent all his savings trying to set up a small business which he was unable to manage.

It wasn't until four years after his accident that Paul saw a doctor who helped him to understand that the consequences of his brain injury were making it impossible for him to hold down a job and this was unlikely to change in future. This doctor helped him apply for Disability Support Pension (DSP), which was granted.

Paul came to the Centre after appealing for back pay to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal. With the help of a specialist, our solicitor argued that, due to his brain injury, Paul had not been able to understand he should have applied for DSP much earlier.

We were able to convince the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to award Paul back pay (of the difference between DSP and Newstart Allowance, worth about \$250/fortnight) for the two and a half year period prior to his DSP application. This gave Paul some savings to draw on in future for essential medical or other expenses.



# Client services

## Social Security, Patrick Cranitch, Senior Solicitor

We are acutely aware of the ongoing need to demonstrate our efficiencies whilst striving to maintain the quality of our services. We have continued to focus on the effective operation of the social security Telephone Advice Service (TAS), the main point of assistance for most of the centre's social security clients. TAS staff and volunteers have been encouraged to be more direct and robust with their advice to callers, while conscious of the time spent with an individual client, particularly if there will be further interaction with the person on the same issue at a later date.

This more focussed direct approach has been a factor, amongst others, in the increased number of TAS advices that have been completed throughout 2014, with 1794 advices provided, 191 more than the previous year.

The rejection of disability support pension claims continues to occupy more than 60% of our casework activities. This represents a slight reduction from 2013 when these cases accounted for at least 70% or more of our overall casework. Despite the reduction, the time spent in assessing the prospects of success and providing representation to those cases that meet our casework guidelines remain at the same levels as 2013.

We attribute the increased complexity of some disability support cases and the narrow construction of the legislation by the SSAT regarding the time frame for when a medical condition should be assessed as the primary reasons for the same amount of time spent. The SSAT insist that the date of claim is the relevant date for assessment of the medical condition. To overcome this hurdle, it is necessary to lodge a further application in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) where it is widely accepted that the relevant time frame is 13 weeks from the date of claim, a view shared by all Centrelink review officers and legal staff involved at the AAT level of review.

We have witnessed a slight increase in preclusion period cases, debts and member of a couple decisions. This year we opened 159 cases and closed 178.

## Social Security TAS, Bryony Walters, TAS Coordinator

The TAS (social security telephone advice service) fulfils several functions:

- One-off advice that resolves the client's presenting problem with one contact
- Ongoing support to a client to resolve their own matter, provided through multiple advices given over a period of time
- Advocating directly to Centrelink on a vulnerable client's behalf to resolve their matter at the earliest opportunity
- Intake for matters that meet casework guidelines and can be referred internally for case work servicing by solicitors or the staff social worker.

## Client services continued

### Social Security Telephone Advice Service continued

The demographics of the clients assisted by the telephone advice service was similar to previous years:

- The majority (59%) of our advice clients identified as having a disability
- 34% of our clients were caring for a child. About 20% of clients were caring for a child on their own, while 16% were caring for a child with their partner
- 3.5% of our clients were Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander.
- 4% of our clients were people who experience difficulties speaking English.
- The vast majority of our clients were working age with a slight skew toward older working age clients aged 35–49 and 50–64. This relates to the increasing likelihood of accident or injury preventing full time work as people age.

### Social Work, Teresa Grahame, Social Worker

The social work role enables the centre to provide a holistic service. A high proportion of social work clients suffer from mental health issues which can impact on their capacity to interpret and respond appropriately to their legal issue. A significant proportion of the social work role has involved negotiating directly with Centrelink on their behalf. Our social work clients often require ongoing support and intense follow up, including short term counselling, along with encouragement to complete tasks, to assist them to gain greater control of their circumstances.

This year, we increased our social worker capacity from three to four days a week. Our social worker provided telephone advice and case work to 296 particularly vulnerable clients during 2013–14. We also expanded the social worker role to representing vulnerable clients at the Social Security Appeals Tribunal in matters where it was important to highlight the impact of personal and social issues on the individual's Centrelink problem.

Our social worker has represented these clients in Disability Support Pension claims, "unreasonable to live at home" rate of youth allowance applications, waivers of debts based on special circumstances and waivers of preclusion periods based on special circumstances.

"My caseworker (Teresa) is extraordinarily kind and helpful. She has a very calming effect on me, and she really puts a lot of hard work and effort into being of good assistance to my case and personal (issues). I really do have only praise for her and her generosity."





## Disability Discrimination Advocacy Service, Andrew Kennedy, locum

As discrimination is such a personal issue, it is an area that can cause a great deal of anguish and upset. DDAS helps clients to understand what is realistically achievable, what are practical solutions, how to best achieve an outcome and what needs to be objectively demonstrated to achieve that outcome.

DDAS works closely with vulnerable clients and their families and/or other sources of support. Referrals are made for who require additional community services. We devote the time needed to lead these clients through the process until resolution.

The majority of advices this year have concerned allegations of discrimination in employment. In these matters we have given advice as to alternative ways to resolve the issue, with lodging a complaint as a last resort, while providing referrals to other community legal centres to receive employment law advice so that the client is aware of all legal avenues available and which is the most effective. Other areas that we give advice regularly are in the provision of education, services, facilities and accommodation.


Casework services have been provided for vulnerable persons, including for clients whose impairments result in their having difficulty communicating verbally, in writing or both. We have also represented clients whose impairments are such they do not have the resilience to be able to conduct a matter themselves. We have represented clients at conciliation conferences at the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland and the Human Rights Commission.

There was a considerable increase in the number of DDAS advices provided: this year we gave 132 advices, 35% more than last year.

“From my initial phone call to the Centre I have received  
understanding and most of all I was listened to.  
To know assistance with discrimination is available is a huge  
help with facing this awful problem.  
I can’t thank the staff of the centre enough for their help  
and most of all their time and support.”







Gracie had been on Youth Allowance (Jobseeker) for a while when she was accepted into a university course interstate. Not having a job in her hometown, Gracie decided to move to Queensland before starting her course to settle in and find work. Unfortunately the area Gracie had moved to for university had a higher rate of unemployment than where she was living previously, so Centrelink implemented a 26 week payment exclusion period. Gracie was struggling to manage.

By the time Gracie contacted us; she had received a negative review decision from the Authorised Review Officer (ARO) and had lodged with the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.

We contacted the ARO and asked them to reconsider their decision against the additional evidence we provided: evidence of Gracie's existing qualifications, evidence there were more vacancies requiring these qualifications in the area she had moved to than where she was living before, plus evidence of a job interview and a job offer.

The ARO agreed the decision should be changed and Gracie should not be subject to a 26 week payment exclusion period. Gracie now had the certainty that she could afford her living expenses, enabling her to start paid employment and prepare for her university studies.

Our intervention also avoided the necessity of proceeding to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.



# Community Legal Education

Melissa Langsford

In the second half of this year we boosted our Community Legal Education (CLE) program, increasing the frequency of worker training sessions and widening the geographic reach. Our CLE program has the dual aim of building capacity of community workers, to enable them to assist clients with less complex Centrelink matters, and raising awareness of WRC services to assist with more complex social security problems. This has largely been achieved through running legal information sessions at interagency meetings or community organisation team meetings and participating in public community events such as the Logan Finance Fair, Homeless Connect or the Community Mental Health Resources Expo.


We are also focussing on capacity building and on raising awareness of our services amongst Indigenous community organisations. As such, we have entered into a partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS) to deliver training to Indigenous services and Community Justice Groups. This partnership has led to the development of a co-facilitated session in which ATSILS provides training on common money problems, such as debt or mobile phone plans, while we provide training on social security matters. To date, ATSILS and WRC have conducted a number of sessions in local communities such as Woodridge.

To continue to provide this training in regional areas, we were successful in obtaining funding through the Legal Aid Queensland Community Legal Education Collaborative Fund. This funding will pay for accommodation and travel costs for WRC and ATSILS to provide training sessions in areas such as Roma, Charleville and Cunnamulla; planned to be held later this year.

Producing legal information materials is the other main aspect of our CLE program. In response to the widespread lack of understanding of the disability support pension claim process, identified through our client work, we produced a "DSP for doctors" kit, with the aim of helping doctors give informed advice to their clients, to manage expectations and provide appropriate medical evidence. This kit is available on our website.

"I am grateful that there are organisations like Welfare Rights to help people who are in hardship situations in their journey and to advocate behalf of them. Thank you very much indeed."





Jane sustained a work injury resulting in severe, chronic pain, which still had not resolved five years later. The pain exacerbated her depression, a condition she suffered from due to previous trauma.

Jane received a compensation payout but the funds were quickly used up in legal fees and in the costs associated with supporting family members who moved in to care for her and her young son after the accident.

Jane was eligible for a Centrelink payment, but this was not payable as she still had a year to go in her "compensation preclusion period". When she came to the Centre, Jane had no money left and was relying on charity and family members who were also in financial hardship.

We were successful in arguing for a waiver of the remaining compensation preclusion period on the basis of special circumstances which included Jane's poor mental health and the impact her circumstances were having on family members. Now Jane can focus on recovery and on caring for her son.



# Supporters, Sponsors and Donors

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

## **We would particularly like to thank:**

- The Electrical Trades Union – Qld and NT Branch for their ongoing sponsorship.
- Minter Ellison for their pro bono work for clients and for WRC itself.
- Clayton Utz for their pro bono work for WRC.

## **We would also like to acknowledge:**

- Queensland Department of Communities for a grant for office equipment.
- Gambling Community Benefit Fund for a grant for office equipment.
- Legal Aid Queensland for a CLE Collaboration Fund grant.

## **2013–2014 Individual Donors**

Thank you to:

Senator Claire Moore  
Stephen Keim  
Noel Muller  
Sandy Paton  
Mared Moya  
Vincent Horan  
John Kindt  
Michael Francis  
Wendy Turner  
Cale Fryer  
Paul Henman  
Michael Marcinkewycz  
John Marley  
Tim Fraser

## **Funding**

WRC is funded through the Community Legal Services Program. Funding for the program is provided by the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Federal Attorney-General's Department. We are grateful for their support.

# 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 range of aspects of community legal centre work and gain confidence in their professional skills.

Volunteering for the WRC gives me the opportunity to be a part of an organisation devoted to representing those in our community who may have slipped through the divides. As a law student I know how convoluted the legal system can be. For this reason it can exclude those who need it most, and can't afford or understand how to seek its help. WRC helps exactly these people. Also, the skills volunteering has equipped me with, talking to real clients with real issues, are something I could have never learned at University. Laurel Fox

I absolutely love and look forward to volunteering at WRC. Being able to help people who often need it the most is so rewarding and something I am so thankful to be part of. The team at WRC are always so friendly and happy to help with any issues I face. As a result, I am constantly learning and that is just another one of the many reasons I enjoy volunteering with such a great team. I am truly thankful for everything I have learned and for such an excellent opportunity. Dayne

Before volunteering at WRC, I had had no contact with the law outside of university classes. The role of first contact officer gave me an insight into the problems that are faced by the community, and how knowledge of the law can really help people who might not be able to advocate for themselves. I have become more confident in myself, in my ability to interact with people outside of my normal circle, and in the role of the law in helping people. It's been a challenging experience, and very rewarding. Cecelia

My time at WRC has given me the opportunity to help empower individuals who may be at significant social disadvantage and often have trouble asserting their rights. This process has given me the chance to gain appreciable experience applying relevant legislation to a broad range of situations while being pushed in the right direction by the centre's experienced staff; I can't thank them enough for their patience and commitment to such a worthwhile area of law. Dave.

I consider myself lucky to have been able to consolidate my knowledge and develop my skills while assisting a broad range of the centre's clients. I have always enjoyed working with and learning from the staff and will look back on my time spent volunteering at WRC with fondness. I believe the substance of the work undertaken by WRC as well as the staff's individual commitment to the values of the centre has and will continue to shape my awareness of and attitude toward social justice matters as my post university career progresses. Nic

I just wanted to say a big thank you to everyone at WRC for the past 2 years. I always looked forward to my shift as I always felt so welcome. I appreciate how everyone was so easy to approach and help was always given when needed so I never felt reluctant to ask a question. The role of a First Contact Officer is also perfect for law students to see how a CLC operates whilst having contact with clients and learning about the law. Keertan

## We'd like to say a big "thank you" to them all – Volunteers 2013–2014

Adriana Tate	Ailsa McKeon	Amy Williams	Andrea Farrell	Anna Huang	Anna Ju
Antonette Reyes	Brittoni Chin	Cecilia Chau	Cecelia Redfern	Claire Davies	Damien Craven
David Northcott	Dayne Kingsford	Dimity Thoms	Ellen Jones	Flora Lee	Jacinta Skipworth
Jenny Wang	Jessica Watter	Kate Ross	Keertan Samra	Laurel Fox	Lucinda Robertson
Melissa Brown	Michelle Pham	Naomi Hayes	Natalie Morris	Nathan Edridge	Neha Rao
Nicole Cooper	Petar Damnjanovic	Rebecca Lavithias	Robbie Black	Roisin Somerville	Santhye
Subramaniam	Sarah Gent	Steven McLean	Tinashe Makamure		



# Management Committee

## Lurline Comerford – President

Member of WRC committee for 4 years. Lurline has an interest in social justice and equity for all. A social worker since 1974, she 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.

## Scott Wilson – Vice President

Member of WRC committee since 2009. Scott also serves as a Director on the Energy Super Board and sits on Energy Super's Member Services, Marketing & Claims committee. Scott is a Training Officer for the Queensland Nurses Union and the Electrical Trades Union, drawing on years of experience as training officer with Future Skills Limited. Scott has worked extensively in the electrical construction and service industry in Australia and overseas and has extensive trade union experience, including membership of the State Executive and State Council, Electrical Trades Union and the Electrical Divisional Council of the CEPU.

## Rachel Watson – Treasurer

Rachel is a social worker who has been involved in the community sector for over 20 years holding various positions over this time ranging from Women's Health Worker, Education Officer, Senior Social Worker, Services Manager and Operations Manager. Rachel is currently working with the Australian Red Cross. She values diversity, social justice and a vibrant community sector.

## Raylene D'Cruz – Secretary

Raylene is a lawyer, admitted to the legal profession in 2009. She holds a Bachelor of Laws(Hons)/Bachelor of Business(Management) from Bond University.

## Melody Edwardson – Member

Melody has served on the WRC management committee for 2 years. Melody has a strong interest in human rights and social justice issues. She has been privileged to share people's personal journeys whilst working in service delivery and policy positions in disability and mental health services for 25 years. Melody has a Masters in Mental Health Practice from Griffith University and diplomas in community services, management and training. Melody is currently employed in a senior management position by the peak body Queensland Alliance for Mental Health.

## Paul Henman – Member

Paul Henman has served on the Management Committee for a year. He is 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 – Member

Cale holds a Bachelor of Business Management (Int. Business) degree as well as graduating with Honours from his Bachelor of Laws from UQ. Cale is a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Australia 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.

## Michael Francis – Previous Member

# Our Staff

## Georgina Warrington – Director

My dedicated colleagues determinedly seek new and creative ways to help our clients and I am proud to be part of the team. Immersed in administrative busyness, I get reminded of why we are here when a staff member says “you remember Mrs Jones, the one with the eviction notice? Well, we sorted ....” That’s what gets me to work in the morning: we’re using our combined expertises to make a difference in the lives of ordinary people, every day.

## Sue McComber – Finance Administrator

I have been involved with WRC both as a volunteer and a paid worker for more than ten years. It is a privilege to support the work of the Centre in assisting/empowering often vulnerable people to negotiate sometimes complex areas of law in order to address issues of social and economic disadvantage.

## Andrew Davison – Solicitor

I enjoy being able to explain how the Centrelink rules impact on people’s situations, coming up with options and advising clients on what they need to do to convince decision makers that a discretion should be exercised or how to change their circumstances to better fit the Centrelink rules. I also get great satisfaction from representing vulnerable people who are unable to do so themselves due to how complex their matter is.

## Patrick Cranitch – Senior Solicitor

Achieving a successful outcome for a client who might otherwise have fallen through the social security safety net is one of the most rewarding aspects of my work at WRC. I gain immense satisfaction from these cases, which are invariably demanding, knowing that I played a role in qualifying a client for a payment that will result in a decent standard of living and quality of life.

## Teresa Grahame – Social Worker

Working at the Welfare Rights Centre enables me to provide support to some of Centrelink’s most disadvantaged clients, many of whom are coping with mental/physical health issues as well as struggling financially. Making a positive difference in the lives of our clients, whether that includes a financial outcome or just taking the time to explain a Centrelink decision in a way my client can understand makes my role an extremely rewarding one.

## Bryony Walters – Telephone Advice Coordinator, Solicitor

I’m passionate about free access to legal services so I love working at WRC. It’s very rewarding to provide advice and assistance to a client that makes a material difference in their life. Systemically, I believe welfare systems are a form of social investment that should support those in need of assistance in ways that allow them to increase their capacity for self-reliance. I’m very proud to be part of an organisation that shares the same view and advocates on that basis.

## Melissa Langsford – Professional Advisor, Solicitor

For many years I have worked with very vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and the opportunity to work at WRC has allowed me to provide much needed free legal information to individuals and groups on a topic which is often found to be quite complicated and stressful. It is very rewarding to be able to assist people to understand what their next steps may be or to advocate on their behalf with Centrelink when needed.

## Nicole O’Keane – Office Administrator

After working at WRC for the past 8 years, I am thankful for the opportunity to interact with such a wide diverse group of people such as our clients. It has made me realise that there are so many barriers which can limit our clients’ abilities to self-advocate. The work that WRC does to support these clients is extremely worthwhile and to be a part of this team is very rewarding.

## Ellen Jones – Casual Administration Assistant

Working at the Welfare Rights Centre has given me an invaluable insight into both the complexity of the law and the difficulties that many of our clients experience trying to navigate this system by themselves. The Welfare Rights Centre provides clients with the tools and support necessary to resolve their issues. I believe this is an incredibly important service to the community and I am very glad to be able to support the Centre in its work.

## Andrew Kennedy – Locum Disability Discrimination Advocate, Solicitor

## Joel McComber – Casual Administration Assistant



# From our Treasurer

## Rachel Watson

WRC has always run on a pared-down, no-frills budget and this year has been no exception. As usual, salaries are by far our biggest expenditure item. Our rent, often a major expenditure item for community services, is well below market level, courtesy of the Brisbane City Council, who run the Maida Lilley Centre in Fortitude Valley, in which our premises is located.

The larger than expected end of year surplus was due to several reasons, including some changed external factors, a staff position being vacant for a period, a sizeable refund from Workcover (thanks to our Finance Administrator Sue McComber for her initiative!), and our staff economising wherever possible.

During this year we were successful in obtaining grants from the Queensland Department Of Communities and the Gambling Community Benefit Fund for office equipment and we obtained a grant from Legal Aid Queensland to conduct a collaborative community legal education project with ATSILS (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service).

I would like to thank our Finance Administrator, Sue McComber, for her diligence and dedication and our Auditors, Hacketts, for their work on the audit report.

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

A full copy of our financial audit report is available upon request.

"I thank you for helping and being there for those who are in need and unable to support themselves. Ms Jodie Moffatt (Disability Discrimination Advocate) is very compassionate, patient and understanding as well as having a massive amount of knowledge and skills. Thank you again.

Without WRC I don't think I would've been confident and strong enough to go through what I have been going through."

# Financial Audit Report

## (Extract)

### WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.

#### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2014

	2014 \$	2013 \$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Donations	1,645	895
Grants and funding received	769,909	653,710
Interest received	11,112	14,971
Memberships	136	191
Profit on disposal of equipment	374	-
Other income	14,366	54,608
Sponsorship	-	8,000
Total Income	797,542	732,375
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
AGM expenses	748	275
Audit fees	4,600	4,600
Bank charges	247	257
Cleaning	795	795
Computer expenses	1,430	1,962
Conference expenses	5,333	4,923
Consultancy	17,215	-
Depreciation	4,916	4,877
Document destruction and storage	2,050	1,850
Equipment - minor	2,374	389
Insurance	2,679	2,285
Levy to NACLC	3,662	3,476
Library	280	2,217
Light and power	-	3,956
Management committee	591	676
Postage, printing and stationery	7,328	4,844
Practising certificate	3,546	2,290
Program cost	509	429
Rent	19,476	19,476
Repairs and maintenance	2,738	2,737
Staff expenses	609,593	587,273
Subscriptions and registrations	2,584	2,539
Telephone, fax and internet	15,836	16,166
Travelling expenses	3,108	1,849
Planning day expenses	1,770	1,696
Volunteer costs	179	158
Website design and maintenance	400	1,795
Total Expenses	713,987	673,790
Surplus/(deficit) before income tax	83,555	58,585
Income tax expense	-	-
<b>Surplus/(deficit) after income tax</b>	83,555	58,585
Accumulated surplus at beginning of year	122,769	64,184
<b>ACCUMULATED SURPLUS AT END OF YEAR</b>	206,324	122,769

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.



**WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.**

**BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT 30 JUNE 2014**

	NOTE	2014 \$	2013 \$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	4	383,195	286,885
Prepayments		5,388	4,871
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>388,583</u>	<u>291,756</u>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Plant and equipment – at Cost		47,816	78,509
Less: accumulated depreciation		(29,802)	(68,303)
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>18,014</u>	<u>10,206</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<u>406,597</u>	<u>301,962</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade and other payables	5	57,873	41,466
Employee benefit provisions		125,865	114,527
Unspent funds	6	16,535	23,200
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>200,273</u>	<u>179,193</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<u>200,273</u>	<u>179,193</u>
<b>NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)</b>		<u>206,324</u>	<u>122,769</u>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>			
Accumulated surplus		206,324	122,769
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		<u>206,324</u>	<u>122,769</u>

*The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.*

## WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.

### STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the committee the financial report as set out on pages 1 to 6:

- (a) Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Welfare Rights Centre Inc. as at 30 June 2014 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
- (b) At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Welfare Rights Centre Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the committee and is signed for and on behalf of the committee by:

  
Member **LURNINE COMERFORD**

  
Member

Dated at Brisbane this Twenty-third day of September 2014.

#### Explanation of acronyms:

CLSP	Community Legal Services Program
CLEP	Community Legal Education Program
DEIR	Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
DEEDI	Department of Employment, Economic development and Innovation
DOC	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
GCBF	Gambling Community Benefit Fund
LAQ	Legal Aid Queensland
LPITAF	Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Account Fund
NACLC	National Association of Community Legal Centres



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