



Annual Report 2011-2012

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*Identifying details have been changed in all case studies

Welfare Rights Centre is a charity and classified as a "Deductable Gift Recipient as a Public Benevolent Institution".
Gifts of \$2 and over to the Centre are tax-deductible.

About Us

Our Vision

We are an independent voice for fairness, determined to empower people who are often unheard.

What we Believe

The Welfare Rights Centre believes people are better off in paid work than on welfare; however for those who are unable to maintain themselves financially, Australia should have a social security system which is based upon the following principles:

- A civil society supports those who are unable to earn an adequate income, while in return the recipients contribute as they can.
- Social security should be sufficient to afford a decent standard of living, based on what is widely considered acceptable in Australia.
- The social security system should be accommodating of diversity and responsive to individual needs and circumstances.
- Social security payments, criteria, rules and processes should be simplified into a system that is easily comprehensible, accessible and fair.
- Social security decision-making processes should be transparent, with a right of review of all decisions and access to independent advice, advocacy and representation.

What we do

The Welfare Rights Centre provides specialist advice, advocacy, support and free legal services to people having problems with social security or disability discrimination in employment

Client services

Our client services are largely telephone-based, as we provide social security services for the whole of Queensland up to Townsville and disability discrimination services for Queensland up to Mackay.

We provide information and advice to all clients and we make considered referrals for those whose issue is outside our areas of expertise.

Our legal and social work casework is targeted towards the most vulnerable, those facing many, compounding difficulties and those who are unable to advocate for themselves.

Community legal education

We focus on facilitating understanding of the law and promoting access to rights through our easy-to-read publications and website. We also train community workers to enable them to best help their clients.

Systemic advocacy

We use our client work to inform our law reform and policy work, grounding our submissions and proposals in the lived experiences of those whom the law affects.

President's Report

It has been another big one as we have consolidated changes made in the previous two years.

These changes have been required as a result of funding constraints which placed pressure on our service delivery capacity. We have now restructured, and a more focussed Disability Discrimination Advocacy Service is in place.

Our long term Solicitor, Larry Laikind was farewelled in October and we also appointed Georgina Warrington as our new Director. We have settled into our new premises and enjoy being part of a hub. We are implementing the pay equity benchmark and continue to advocate to ensure that funding is provided to meet our new obligations for equal pay.

We face a rather uncertain future as the March state election led to a new government which immediately started cutting many services to the disadvantaged, both government and non-government. We seek to work with the State government to ensure that essential services for people who are the most vulnerable can continue.

With rising unemployment in Queensland, we anticipate increased need for our services. The Centre noted a spike in queries from people who had been made redundant and who had discovered that a Centrelink benefit was not payable as they should have kept their redundancy payouts for living costs, rather than paying down debt. This led to WRC producing and broadly distributing a factsheet explaining the law in relation to this situation. It is a strength of the organisation that it is able to respond rapidly to emerging issues such as this.

We are grateful to our wonderful workers and volunteers who have developed in-depth knowledge and skills in social security and disability discrimination law.

I would also like to acknowledge the management committee, all of whom themselves have very busy lives and who continue to support the important and valuable work done by the Centre.

Lurline Comerford

Management Committee Members

Lurline Comerford – President
Scott Wilson – Vice President
David Powell – Secretary
Rachel Watson – Treasurer

Luke Tiley—Member
Raylene D'Cruz—Member
Amanda Lear (resigned) - Member



James's Story....

James became a quadriplegic in a car accident in 1997 and received \$5.8 million in compensation in 2001. He was then told he would be precluded from receiving any Centrelink payment until 2096 (when he'd be 133 years old). James requires around the clock care and in the following 10 years he spent \$2.1 million on carers.

During that time, one of those carers took financial advantage of him, using his money for personal gain and James also made some bad investments. As a result of this and the high cost of his care, James had been forced to sell his house by 2007 and only had \$50,000 and a few inaccessible assets remaining.

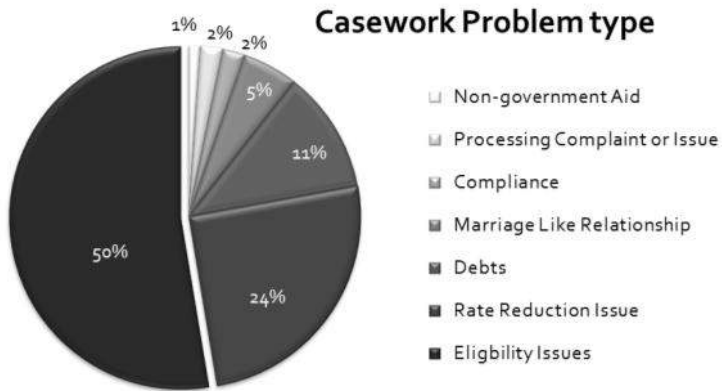
Queensland Health helped him get into share accommodation run by a charity with carers shared between the residents. James was so stressed about his future he did not pay for items which would increase his quality of life, including repairs for his wheelchair and car.

In 2011 James reapplied to Centrelink to reduce his preclusion period. When he was knocked back the Welfare Rights Centre became involved.

After working with his accountant and social worker, the Centre was able to obtain sufficient evidence to convince the Social Security Appeals Tribunal that James will need his remaining savings to co-fund essential medical aids that the state government will not fully pay for. James was granted Disability Support Pension.

Our intervention resulted in greater security of James' affordable and appropriate accommodation and he will be able to ensure he has functioning medical equipment and transport. In the long term, he is less likely to rely on expensive hospitalisation and state government support. Most importantly, James has some financial security and will not have the stress of worrying about his future.

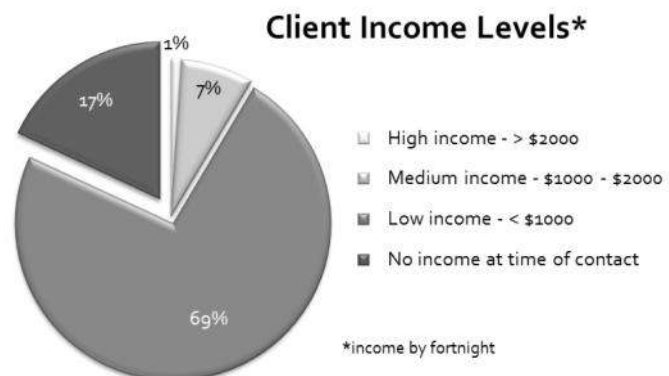
Social Security Facts & Figures



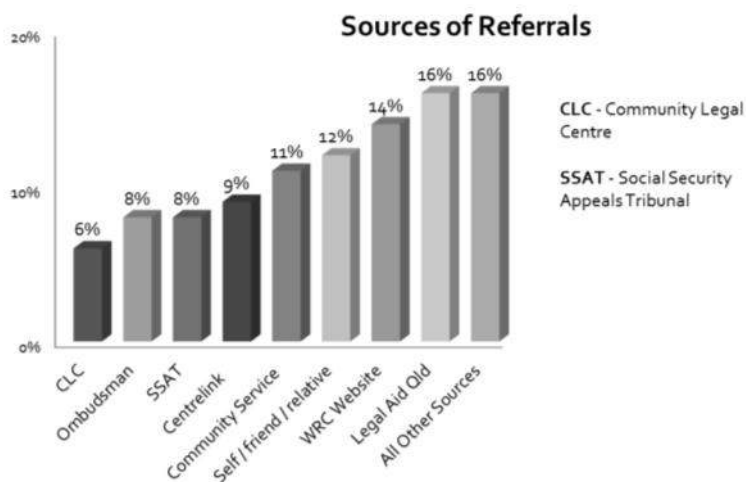
35% of all casework related to **Disability Support Pension Eligibility**

269 cases were opened and **277** cases were closed

38% of all advices related to **eligibility for payments**



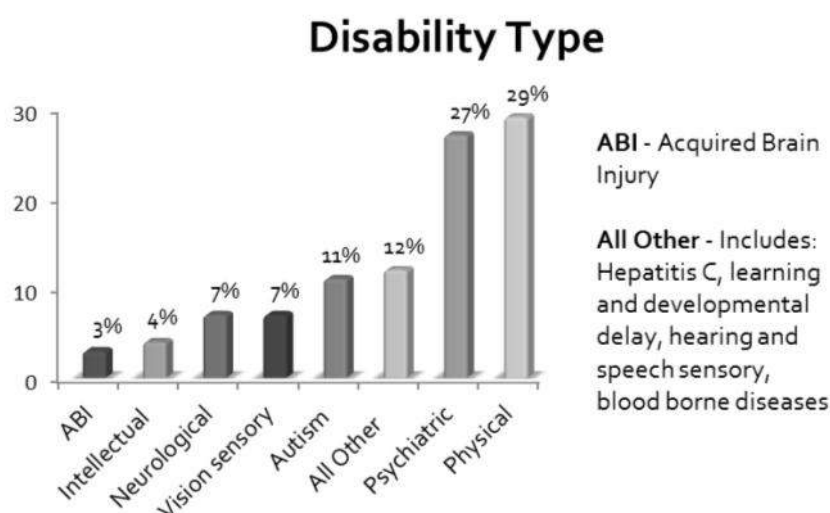
Approximately **50%** of our clients identify as having a **disability**.



1346 advices were given

Almost **50%** of our clients **live alone** or in **share** or **boarding houses**

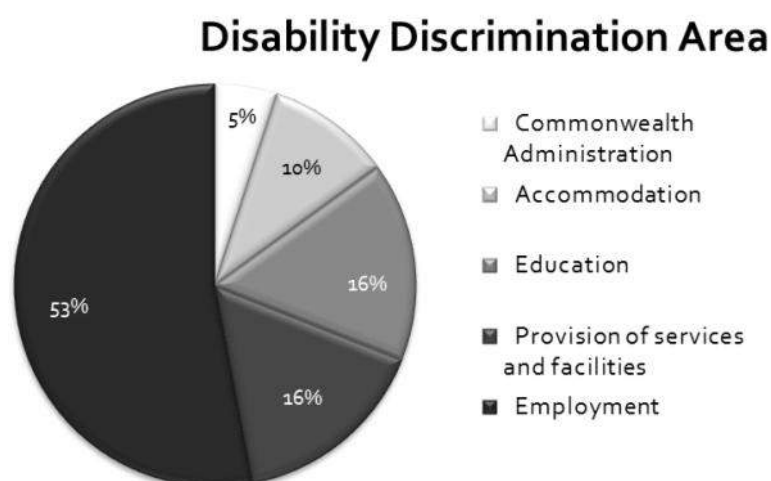
Disability Discrimination Facts & Figures



171 advices
were
given

20% of clients identified as having **more than one disability**

19 cases
were opened
and **27** cases
were closed



40% of clients' main source of income was **social security** payments

Law Reform

Welfare Rights Centre engages in law reform projects to advocate for social justice and a fairer social security system. Some examples of our work from 2011 – 2012:

- Completed a joint Submission with the Australian Association of Social Workers to the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into family violence and Commonwealth Law
- Participated in the Senate Committee review of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 Schedule 3 (Disability Support Pension Impairment Tables)
- Contributed towards the National Welfare Rights Network submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011 and two related bills
- Gave evidence before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment Inquiry into Mental Health and Workforce Participation
- Provided our expertise in social security law and its impacts to Queensland Shelter's "What Does it Take to House a Young Person?" report
- Researched the characteristics of clients coming to our service with zero income to inform law reform activities
- Worked with QMusic and Music Victoria to inform their work on the activity requirements and self-employment status for musicians
- Served as Secretary on the National Welfare Rights Network Management Committee and organised the 2011 NWRN Annual Conference in conjunction with the NWRN President

Community Legal Education

Community legal education is essential to building the capacity of community workers and other stakeholders to advocate for their clients around Social Security Matters.

In 2011 – 2012, the Centre;

- Delivered training to workers from over 20 organisations in the Caloundra region
- Presented to law and social work students at the University of Queensland
- Participated in Brisbane City Council's Homelessness Bus Tour for community organisations
- Presented to Centrelink and Legal Aid Queensland workers about our organisation and its model of service and referral pathways
- Researched and created Queensland specific Income Management Fact Sheets in response to the introduction of Place Based Income Management to Logan and Rockhampton and the need for clear information identified from discussion with local communities
- Appeared on local radio in Cherbourg to discuss social security rights and the Welfare Rights service model
- Piloted an outreach service in Caboolture with the dual role of providing advice to services and capacity building for local workers.
- Produced 3 new publications: WRC Brochure, Don't let your disability stop you working and a quarterly E-Bulletin
- Distributed over 4000 copies of our publications to over 100 community organisations, 15 Federal Government Members and 17 State Government Members

Director's Report

While most people reading this may consider themselves unlikely to ever need the assistance of the Welfare Rights Centre, the fact is that many things can change abruptly. A public servant's life can be thrown into turmoil as a consequence of budget cuts. An elderly widow can be forced to live on tea and toast as the result of an incorrect Centrelink decision. The hearts of parents of a young disabled man, swelling with pride at his first 'real' job, can be abruptly broken when that young man is cruelly discriminated against by his co-workers.

We focus our intensive services on the most vulnerable; however our clients are also ordinary people: your brother, your grandma, your neighbour. We help them sift through the often chaotic jumble of compounding problems to identify the ones that we can assist with and either skill them up or advocate for them where self-advocacy is not possible. For those we cannot assist, we make considered referrals to agencies we know can.

This has been a year of change for WRC, both internal and external. Having been given six weeks' notice to quit, we were glad to find our new home in the Brisbane City Council Maida Lilley building in the Valley and grateful to Clayton Utz for their pro-bono assistance with this. Sharing our floor with homeless services has been beneficial as we've been able to cross-refer and share expertise.

In November, the Executive Director, Gail Middleton, moved on. I acted in Gail's role and am now confirmed as the Director. We would like to thank Gail for her hard work for WRC, her energy and enthusiasm and her dedication to the welfare of vulnerable people. Another long-term staff member, Disability Discrimination Solicitor Larry Laikind, left WRC in October. We thank Larry for his many years of dedicated service.

This year saw the outcome of a lengthy review of our Disability Discrimination Legal Advice Service. With funding remaining static, it has had to be increasingly supported by the social security funding, an unsustainable situation. The "Disability Discrimination Advocacy Service" now operates on the same model as our social security service, with telephone advice being provided to all callers, while casework and representation is limited to the very vulnerable. The Disability Discrimination Advocate hours have had to be reduced and the service now focusses exclusively on discrimination in employment, referring on all other enquiries. This is particularly hard to do as many of our clients are extremely vulnerable and have experienced discrimination and mistreatment on several levels. If further attempts to secure funding commensurate with demand, or corporate sponsorship, are unsuccessful, the future for this much-needed service is bleak.

Despite the disruption of moving and the reduction in worker hours, our social security service gave more advices than during the previous year, while we closed slightly less cases. This illustrates the value of our volunteers: without their contributions, our service provision would be greatly reduced.

Almost 40% of our social security advice and casework relates to eligibility, in particular for disability support pension, a growing issue as the impact of the changed rules is felt. The cost of people not receiving their correct payment is often passed onto the state government as people then need to seek support from state-funded services.

How to continue to meet the demand for services in the face of financial constraints has been an on-going challenge this year. The pay equity decision was welcomed by WRC which drew on savings to pay the increased rates. Now, however, that pool is exhausted and without matching funding increases in future, we will have to follow the path taken by other centres: reduce staff hours and services.

With further spending cuts being implemented by the State Government, WRC is gearing up for another year of challenge and change. The ACOSS 2012 Community Sector Survey identified that one of the main areas of unmet need across Australia is for legal assistance. With rising unemployment likely leading to increased demand for services, and uncertain funding, we can expect to have to target our services more stringently, resulting in more unmet need.

In the face of the challenges, what keeps us going is the knowledge that we have made a positive difference in our clients' lives. We teach our clients about the law and assist them to access their rights within it; in turn they teach us about the daily realities facing the 2,265,000 people living in poverty in Australia¹. The resilience and dignity of so many of our clients in the face of great hardship is both humbling and inspiring and we are honoured by the trust they place in us.

Georgina Warrington

¹ACOSS, 2012, *Poverty in Australia*.

Social Work Services

Some of our clients have concurrent social, medical or personal problems which are getting in the way of solving their legal problem. For others, the legal problem is exacerbating or even triggering the other problems; for instance where the suspension or cancellation of a payment results in rent default which results in eviction. With their training in assisting the person-in-context, rather than viewing a problem in isolation, social workers are well skilled to support these clients with complex needs.

Our social worker assists clients in crisis, for example those with no accommodation or means of support, and also works with those who are not in crisis, but have complex needs. The social worker may provide assistance with a client's social security issue, focussing on particular problem types such as assisting a young person who has to leave home to escape family violence and needs to demonstrate that it is "unreasonable to live at home", or Disability Support Pension appeals for clients with serious mental health issues. The social worker makes referrals to community or government organisations for assistance in relation to issues such as housing, emergency relief and ongoing emotional support. The social worker also

acts as a conduit between vulnerable clients and the more intense legal services that the centre provides and is available for ongoing consultation once a matter is receiving legal intervention.

Incorporating the social work role into WRC has been a process of ongoing development and refinement. As part of finding the best model of inter-disciplinary practice and also to further knowledge in this area, WRC commissioned Associate Professor Tamara Walsh, University of Queensland, to undertake research into how lawyers and social workers work together in Brisbane community legal centres. This research underlined what we had been discovering: inter-disciplinary practice between two professions with such different training and frameworks for client work can be very challenging and it requires a lot of effort to make it succeed. However, the overwhelming positive message is that client outcomes are better, so it is well worth the effort.

Nadia's Story....

Nadia came to WRC with a large debt related to her overseas age pension. While we were unable to assist her with the reduction of the debt, our social worker became involved as Nadia was under intense emotional and housing stress. We were able to negotiate smaller debt withholdings from her pension in an effort to stabilise her accommodation. Subsequently our social worker also assisted Nadia to apply for public housing, including providing a letter of support. WRC also supported her to appeal her payment rate which resulted both in an increase in the rate, back pay, and additionally a reduction in her existing debt. Nadia would have been unable to negotiate this independently due to her lack of success to date in managing her issues with Centrelink and her high levels of emotional stress.

Mark's Story....

Mark came to WRC only two weeks before a scheduled Social Security Appeals Tribunal hearing after being rejected for Disability Support Pension. Mark had a condition which made him dependent on at least fortnightly blood transfusions which also required periods of rest before and after due to lethargy. He had increased risks of bleeding and infections so although he might have been well enough to work in the weeks that he wasn't getting a transfusion, this would put him at increased risk of serious medical complications.

Our caseworker immediately wrote to his GP and Haematologist for more information to support the appeal. The additional information provided by his doctors, and an argument that his condition was likely to prevent him from maintaining any regular employment successfully; resulted in the decision to reject his DSP being overturned. This outcome was achieved within 6 weeks of Mark's initial contact with the Centre.

Pranee's Story....

Pranee first came to WRC because the rate of her Centrelink payment had been reduced. Pranee's husband passed away last year and she received approximately \$150,000 from his life insurance policy. Subsequently, Pranee lost this money in what is sometimes known as a "Nigerian Scam". Pranee's rate of payment had been reduced as Centrelink were treating this loss of money as a loan, therefore treated as a financial asset which was then assessed under the income test.

Pranee had been unable to obtain verification of her circumstances from Queensland Police. WRC supported Pranee and worked collaboratively with a generalist community legal centre. We were successful in liaising between Queensland Police and Centrelink to verify the client's circumstances to Centrelink's satisfaction. Pranee's rate of payment was restored and she received \$3000 of arrears. This was achieved through early intervention, thereby saving the public resources required to go through the formal tribunal process.

Supporters

We would like to thank the organisations that have supported our work in cash and in kind during 2011—2012.

Electrical Trades Union—Old and NT Branch

The ETU supports the WRC because we believe in a society that supports those members of the community who need assistance to get back on their feet. Like the WRC, the ETU believes that for some, fairness and equality isn't always afforded in equal measure. The WRC fights for these principles.

Clayton Utz

Pro bono practice is about making people's rights mean something. In addition to work for individuals, it is about helping community organisations and charities to get on with their vital work assisting disadvantaged and marginalised people. It is about fixing injustice. It is for these reasons that Clayton Utz has given this support to the Welfare Rights Centre.

Sothertons Chartered Accountants

Sothertons Chartered Accountants is a leading National Association of Independent Chartered Accounting firm, consistently placed in the top 40 accounting firms within Australia. Sothertons Brisbane works with not-for-profits to assist them to understand the challenges they face in today's competitive funding environment. We use our experience and resources to help organisations which support people who are disadvantaged and marginalised.

Government funding

Welfare Rights Centre is funded through the Community Legal Services Program. Funding for the program is provided by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department, the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the (Queensland) Legal Practitioners' Interest on Trust Account Fund (LPITAF).

Mick's Story....

Palace

Mick is a young Indigenous man who suffers from a moderate intellectual impairment. He was working as a casual kitchen hand in regional Qld for a month, when his position was terminated.

Mick's disability included a slow developmental delay and this affected his short term memory. As a result Mick was unable to remember simple instructions at work and had to keep asking the other staff for assistance. He was abused and bullied in the workplace and called stupid because he could not remember how to do things.

This was Mick's first job and he was very proud to be working. When he lost his job he was emotionally crushed. He developed severe anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder as a result of his termination.

Mick tried every community legal centre and law firm near his home town for help. All of them said that his case had no merit because his employers were arguing poor work conduct as the primary reason for his termination.

WRC became involved when Mick approached our Disability Discrimination service with his complaint. It was clear to us that his former employers must have known that he had a disability as he was on a Disability Support Pension when he applied for the position and had school related special education classes included in his resume.

The matter was settled at conciliation and Mick was awarded a work reference and a sum of money for pain hurt and humiliation. This outcome means that Mick may in time have confidence to try to re-enter the workforce.

Volunteers

Our volunteers help fill the gap between funded capacity and demand for service, thereby playing a vital function within the Welfare Rights Centre. Put simply, if we did not utilise volunteers in all aspects of our service provision, we could not assist as many clients.

Volunteer First Contact Officers handle reception and intake. These volunteers answer our phones for the majority of our business hours. They ascertain if we can help the caller with their issue and take their personal and social security or disability discrimination problem details or provide a referral to an appropriate service.

Volunteers within our Social Security Telephone Advice Service are supervised by the TAS Coordinator, who is a qualified solicitor. These TAS volunteers provide advice and/or advocacy in order to resolve the client's issue early on, if possible while the matter is still within the Centrelink decision-making process. Our Disability Discrimination volunteers are supervised by the Disability Discrimination Advocate who is also a qualified solicitor.

Some of our volunteers undertake casework under the supervision of the Senior Solicitor. This may include drafting letters or submissions to tribunals, researching legal issues and negotiating with Centrelink on behalf of clients.

The majority of our volunteers are students. We also have a number of qualified practicing solicitors who provide pro-bono casework and representation.

The following people provided invaluable assistance to our organisation in 2011 – 2012.

Volunteers

Aaron Beh
Amanda Sinclair
Amy Williams
Andrea Lopez
Anna Huang
Anne Nguyen
Antonette Reyes
Ashnita Kisun
Branka Mijovic
Carl Henwood
Carolyn Hill
Catherine Taplin
Cecilia Chau
Charmaine Webster
Chia-Yi Kuo
Claire Davies
Damien Craven
David Robinson
Flora Lee
Gabriella Ford
Genevieve Yates

Georgia Haydon
James Hodge
James Stedman
Janice Hwang
Jenny Wang
Jessica Beikoff
Jessica Wilson
Karamjit Kaur
Ken Ishiwatari
Laura Manley
Mainaaz Oakley
Margaret Seevaratnam
Marika Pathe
Maja Cvjetanovic
Melinda Lim
Michala Purasinghe
Mikayla Kuhne
Mike Harris
Naomi Hayes
Neha Rao
Ryan Moore
Samantha Brown

Shama Dean
Tanya Vanderiet
Tinashe Makamure
Vera Radisavljevic
Zenab Khalil

Student Placements

Amanda Sinclair
Constance Lee
Kayne Sheenan
Rebecca Larcombe
Richard Fernandes
Seone Woolf

Pro-bono Legal Client Work

Andrew Kennedy
Cherryl Lanyon-Owen
Karen Thorpe

Why I Volunteer...

My favourite part of volunteering at the WRC is being able to help real people who are going through difficult circumstances. Even though I don't provide any legal advice as a First Contact Officer, I do get the opportunity to ensure that clients feel heard and understood, and to reassure them that someone does care about the problems they are experiencing — Melinda

Administrative law is designed to empower individuals who wish to appeal government decisions. However, all too often the law is too detailed and cumbersome. What I value most about volunteering is the ability to translate detailed quasi-legislative directions into advice, so that our clients can continue to achieve their purpose. — Maja

I have been volunteering at Welfare Rights for 6 months. It has provided me with an opportunity to advise on a complex area of law and policy to clients from a disadvantaged background. I enjoy assisting those in need, and gain personal satisfaction from the successes we have. Clients are extremely grateful for my time, and to be given the opportunity to be heard and know their rights. It is enjoyable to work alongside others with a passion for social justice in a supportive environment — Andrew

Each client is a new puzzle to solve and it is a great feeling to come out of a call knowing that you've been able to clear up a client's issue. After a wobbly beginning in TAS, I have seen an improvement in my ability to handle calls and I am grateful of this opportunity to learn practical skills that will help me in the future. It is great to get constructive feedback after each phone call — Laura

I have been volunteering for 6 months now and have thoroughly enjoyed the welcoming and friendly environment of the WRC. Through the volunteer position, my eyes have been opened to the many vulnerable people in our community in need of legal advice. The WRC makes a substantial difference to its clients in helping exercise their legal rights as well as providing support both emotionally and practically through referrals. The WRC provides help as best it possibly can through its funding and I am grateful to be a part of an organisation that helps those who are truly in need.—Antonette

There's so much I like about being a vollee at the welfare rights centre. Firstly, the opportunity to work with talented solicitors/ support staff and learn from them is invaluable. Then there's the contact you get to have with clients, most of whom are extremely grateful for the service the centre provides. Best of all is the feeling volunteering creates - I know that I am making a small difference in the lives of people who need it most — Mikayla

CURRENT

Georgina Warrington—Director

For me, working at the Welfare Rights Centre is challenging, frustrating and ultimately rewarding. Challenging because many of our clients need our help to obtain the necessities of life as this is dependent upon securing a basic income. Frustrating because we can't always provide all the assistance needed or we have to turn people away since decreasing funds have resulted in reduced capacity to provide services. Rewarding because we know that this service makes a positive difference to the lives of our clients and to the broader community.

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 the Welfare Rights Centre. I gain immense satisfaction from these cases, which are invariably demanding, knowing that I played a role in qualifying a client for a pension or benefit that will result in a better standard of living and quality of life.

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.

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. My job is a very satisfying one as

not only can I help produce a tangible outcome for clients through helping them to secure a positive financial outcome, but I can also assist them to negotiate the confusing maze that is the social security system, and provide ongoing support and referrals as required.

Bryony Walters—Welfare Rights Advocate

I'm passionate about free access to legal services so I love working at WRC. Many of the people who approach us are unaware of their right to review and it's very rewarding to provide advice and early intervention assistance to a client that can actually make a material difference in their life. Systemically, I believe social security policy should aim to maximise social capital by supporting those who are less fortunate 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.

Jodie Moffatt—Disability Discrimination Advocate

The qualitative practice of law is not all about going in low and fast and hitting hard to get the best client outcome. That is a pit bull mentality to law to which I am diametrically opposed. I believe in social justice and the ethical practice of the law. Working as a solicitor in a community legal centre gives me enormous job satisfaction because I can help disadvantaged people settle their disputes.

Sue McComber—Finance Officer

I have been involved with the Welfare Rights Centre both as a volunteer and a paid worker for more than ten years. 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 is a privilege.

PREVIOUS

Georgina Lawson—Policy and Communications Officer

I enjoy examining the Social Security system and how legislation and policy impacts on vulnerable people. More importantly I have the opportunity to contribute my ideas to law reform activities and provide solutions on how the system could be better. I believe that given Australia is a first world country, our government has a responsibility to ensure that people have a decent standard of living while on welfare payments. I am happy to pay a role in advocating for social justice and fairness and appreciate working in an organisation that shares my values.

Nicole O'Keane—Office Administrator

After working at WRC for the past 7 years, I am still thankful for the opportunity to interact with such a widely diverse group of people as our clients. It has also made me realise that there are so many barriers which can limit our clients' abilities to self-support or advocate for themselves, some of these can include cultural, religious and/or racial diversity. The work that WRC does to support these clients is extremely worthwhile and to be a part of this team is very rewarding.

Joel McComber—Casual Administrative Assistant

Since beginning work at the Welfare Rights Centre I've been consistently struck by how seemingly small changes and events can lead to the most complex consequences in people's lives. However, at the same time, I've also been struck by how even the sometimes seemingly small contributions made by the Welfare Rights Centre can similarly have similarly significant consequences.

Gail Middleton—Executive Director

I am inspired by people who have the courage to speak up when they see things that are unfair. I relished the opportunity to support people to do so, and assist those who couldn't during my time at Welfare Rights Centre. An adequate level of social security should be considered a human right in Australia and after trying to get government to realise this for 8 years I decided to hand the fight over to some "fresh legs".

Larry Laikind—Disability Discrimination Solicitor

My involvement with Welfare Rights spanned nearly a generation. I enjoyed the disability discrimination work on two levels. First, there was the opportunity to make significant changes through the removal of barriers to allow more equal participation in the community for persons with disabilities. Second, there was probably greater satisfaction on an individual personal level in settling a complaint through conciliation to enable a child with a disability to attend school or to keep a person with a disability in employment. Many advances have been made but the work is still only beginning.

Treasurer's Report

The last year has been one of uncertainty for the entire community sector, including Welfare Rights. We have seen a \$70,000 decrease in funding levels as one-off funding was not available during the year. The impacts have been that Welfare Rights looked at various cost saving measures that do not impact upon quality service delivery and we continued to rely on accumulated surpluses from previous years to fund operations. The accumulated surpluses reliance is not one that is sustainable, but has ensured that service provision continues.

The Committee continues to explore alternative funding opportunities to provide the key services of advice, policy, support and legal representation for clients. In 2012/2013 we will see these surpluses extinguished – primarily as a result of wages increases not being supported by a funding increase. Without increased or alternate funding, some contraction in services is envisaged next year (2013/2014).

Despite this, service delivery has remained strong and we are confident that Welfare Rights Centre will continue in its great work to the residents of Queensland. A big thanks to the staff of Welfare Rights, particularly Sue McComber, Nicole O'Keane and Georgina Warrington for keeping the backroom burning efficiently and effectively. Sue McComber's dedication to making every dollar work for the Centre is greatly appreciated. Onwards to 2013!

Rachel Watson

WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2012

	2012 \$	2011 \$
Opening balance	60,352	112,155
INCOME		
Donations	1,708	2,353
Grants and funding received	2 670,820	741,146
Interest received	17,250	21,867
Memberships	518	437
Other Income	(3,062)	2,067
Sponsorship	8,000	8,409
Total Income	755,595	888,434

EXPENSES

AGM expenses	523	608
Audit fees	4,600	4,500
Bank Charges	405	482
Cleaning	1,002	2,206
Computer expenses	3,261	4,433
Conference expenses	1,064	8,857
Consultancy	(1,742)	25,167
Depreciation	4,520	8,161
Document destruction and storage	1,851	1,765
Equipment - minor	487	15,740
Insurance	3,060	2,590
Levy to NACLC	3,882	3,500
Library	2,720	5,263
Light and power	437	4,810
Management committee	612	1,473
Relocation costs	25,000	-
Postage, printing and stationery	7,168	17,873
Practising certificate	2,545	2,353
Program cost	4,324	1,244
Rent	10,849	42,800
Repairs and maintenance	2,301	98
Staff expenses	3 646,703	692,387
Subscriptions and registrations	2,346	2,110
Telephone, fax and internet	18,070	15,207
Travelling expenses	1,776	3,162
Planning Day expenses	927	-
Volunteer costs	111	445

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2012

	2012 \$	2011 \$
EXPENSES (Continued)		
Website design and maintenance	(1,050)	5,553
Total Expenses	756,868	872,984
Profit/(loss) before income tax	1,727	13,450
Income tax expense	-	-
Profit/(loss) after income tax	(1,273)	13,450
RETAINED PROFITS/(LOSSES) AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR	119,974	164,876
Unspent funds transferred to assets & liabilities	154,517	160,352
RETAINED PROFITS/(LOSSES) AT THE END OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR	64,184	119,974

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES STATEMENT
AS AT 30 JUNE 2012

	NOTE	2012	2011
		\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	4	284,554	385,933
Prepayments		5,259	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		289,813	385,933
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Plant and equipment - at Cost		78,506	74,203
Less: accumulated depreciation		163,426	(58,906)
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		15,080	15,297
TOTAL ASSETS		304,893	401,230
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	5	186,192	220,904
Unspent funds	6	54,517	60,352
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		240,709	281,256
TOTAL LIABILITIES		240,709	281,256
NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)		64,184	119,974
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained profits		64,184	119,974
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS		64,184	119,974

WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2012

NOTE 2 - GRANTS AND FUNDING RECEIVED	2012	2011
Grants received	\$	\$
- DUCDI	-	39,000
- LPTAF	78,139	76,065
Funding received		
- Legal Aid - Crime Funding	582,896	611,806
- Legal Aid - CLIF Project	8,550	10,455
- Other Funding	1,294	3,800
Total grants & funding received	670,829	741,146
NOTE 3 - STAFF EXPENSES		
Salaries and m-mats	586,406	630,148
Staff amenities	741	1,380
Staff training	2,656	1,647
Superannuation	52,084	53,315
Workers' compensation	4,816	5,897
	646,703	692,387
NOTE 4 - CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS		
Cash on hand	209	238
Cash at bank	284,345	385,695
	284,554	385,933
NOTE 5 - CREDITORS AND ACCRUALS		
CURRENT		
Trade creditors	24,816	27,650
Other Payables	30,107	31,254
Provision for employee entitlements	131,269	102,000
	186,192	220,904
NOTE 6 - UNSPENT FUNDS		
Other Income	24,269	25,525
CA Outreach	27,012	34,738
CLIF	3,236	-
Volunteer Grant	-	89
	54,517	60,352

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF
WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE INC.**

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report of Welfare Rights Centre Inc. which comprises the assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June 2012, the income and expenditure statement and cash flow statement for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the statement by members of the committee.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of Welfare Rights Centre Inc. is responsible for the preparation of the financial report, and has determined that the basis of preparation in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Qld) and the needs of the members. The committee's responsibilities also include such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

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

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

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

Opinion

In our opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of Welfare Rights Centre Inc. as at 30 June 2012 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Qld).

LEAF POLARIS

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Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Welfare Rights Centre Inc. to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Qld). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Richard J. A.C. Bryen

Sothertons Brisbane Partnership

11/1/12

**A.C. Bryen
Partner**

Dated at Brisbane this 11th day of October 2012.

Welfare rights Centre Inc.

