



Basic Rights Queensland

Annual Report 2022



Basic Rights
Queensland Inc.
SOCIAL SECURITY & DISABILITY
DISCRIMINATION SERVICES



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SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

We are grateful for the support we receive from former clients, individuals, businesses and organisations

SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

The Electrical Trades Union, QLD and NT Branch sponsor since 2006.

PRO-BONO & LEGAL SUPPORT

Clayton Utz
UQ Pro-Bono Program
Hemmant's List
ATSILS
Colin Biggers & Paisley
Norton Rose
Caxton Legal Centre
King & Wood Mallesons
Griffith Chambers
Peta Willoughby "of counsel"
Benedict Coyne (Barrister-at-law)

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

BRQ received donations from the general public and from former clients. We would like to express our sincere thanks for their support.

FUNDING

Basic Rights Queensland is funded by the Queensland Government Department of Justice and Attorney General, the Commonwealth Government Attorney General's Department, the Queensland Government and Office of Industrial Relations and COVID-19 funding from the Commonwealth Government. We are grateful for their support.

Cover art by Gerard Bargo

Basic Rights Queensland Inc would like to respectfully acknowledge the Turrbal people, the Traditional Owners of the land on which the BRQ office is situated. We pay deep respect to all First Nation's people.



Benedict Coyne | Barrister-At-Law



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WHAT WE DO

Basic Rights Queensland provides a “voice for fairness” for vulnerable members of the community. Our focuses are in the areas of social security (help with Centrelink and employment services), disability discrimination and supporting women at work. Being a state-wide, telephone-based service, BRQ offers the same expert, specialist services to all clients, whether they live in Brisbane or Boulia.

We provide free information, advocacy and legal services on social security, assistance, advice and resources to help resolve disability discrimination matters and free confidential and support service to help vulnerable women with work-related matters.

Social security law is vast, complex and frequently changing, creating confusion and uncertainty for many Centrelink recipients. BRQ cuts through that complexity, helping people to know where they stand and if an incorrect decision has been made and what to do about it.

Disability discrimination is unlawful; it is also often hurtful for the person being discriminated against. With staff possessing both legal and human services expertise, BRQ assists people to understand and protect their rights.

For Queensland women who are seeking assistance about issues at work, we provide information and advice in and around the workplace with a focus on issues such as domestic violence and work, workplace protections, discrimination and harassment, leave and termination of employment.

BRQ has been operating for over 35 years with the support of volunteers, sponsors, donors and pro-bono assistance.



Fairness:

We act with integrity, ensuring our resources are targeted equitably while prioritising people experiencing disadvantage

Access:

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

Expertise:

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

Inclusion:

We embrace and understand diversity

Responsiveness:

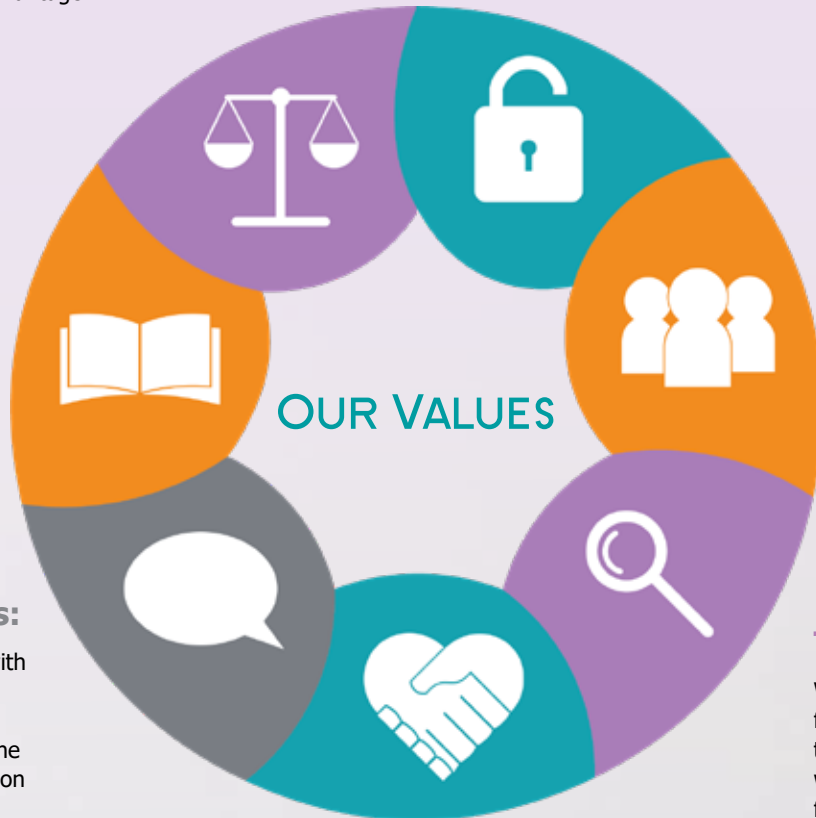
We provide our clients with an objective assessment of their situation while also being empathic to the difficulties of their situation and the challenges of dealing with it.

Respect:

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

Transparency:

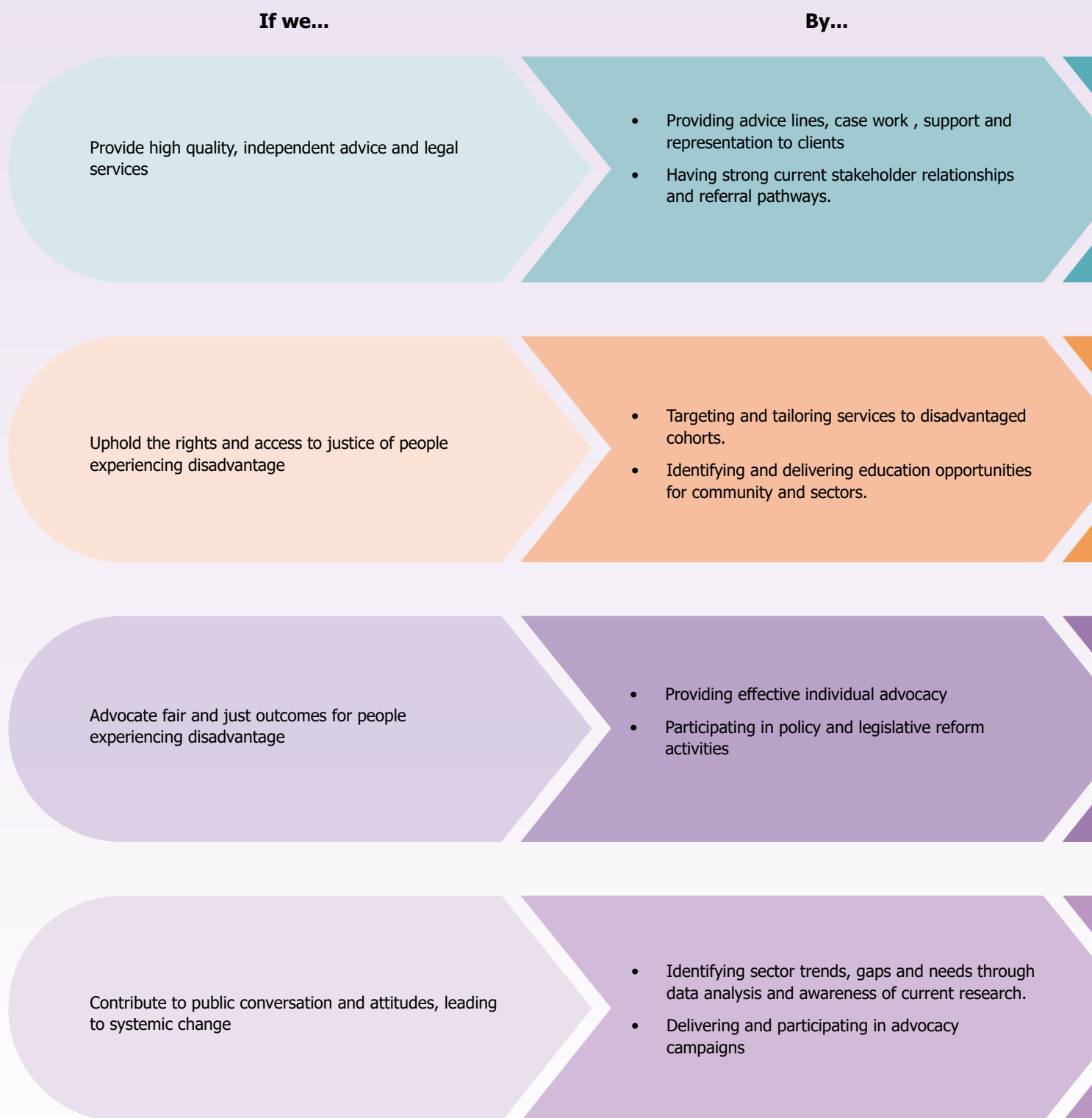
We are clearly accountable for our actions to maintain trust with our clients, the wider community, and funders.



THEORY OF CHANGE

Broad Goals: Improved systems, access to justice and community understanding of disadvantage to create an equitable Queensland.

Long term Goal: Basic rights for a just society



OUR APPROACH

Basic Right Right's Queensland supports peoples fundamental right to social security, gendered workplace equity and freedom from discrimination by providing legal and social services, education, and advocacy. BRQ works collaboratively with community, stakeholders, and decision makers to progress our aim of a just society through structural fairness and individual empowerment. We are informed by the experiences of our clients and data analysis and use our knowledge and influence to create positive change.

Will result in...

- Resolved issues and reduced impacts
- Legal (and other) issues being resolved, prevented or having their severity reduced
- Increased confidence in the legal system

And lead to...

Individual economic security, empowerment, and improved wellbeing.

- Better understanding of legal rights, responsibilities and options
- People seeking help for their legal issues sooner

- Better workplaces, appropriate income support and elimination of discriminatory practices.
- Reduced incidents as individuals, communities and employers are more aware of their rights and responsibilities

- Quick and fair resolutions
- Communities and workplaces have increased awareness of issues impacting BRQ clients
- Decision makers being influenced to improve laws, policies and practices

Better informed and improved legal policy and practice

- BRQ informing and influencing community and sector perception of the legal issues and living context of our clients.
- The community and decision makers are aware of issues effecting our clients
- Solutions developed collaboratively which address systemic issues

Public and civic discourse that incorporates understanding of chronic disadvantage and barriers for people.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Claire Moore

I have had the real joy of working with Basic Rights Queensland (BRQ) over the last year. Firstly, as acting CEO while Fiona was in Melbourne and then as the Chair of the Management Committee when Lurline and Stuart moved on.

Naturally, I knew about the great and important work done by the organisation since last century. Prior to the Working Women's Service (WWS) and Welfare Rights Queensland (WRQ) merging and becoming BRQ I had worked with WRQ while employed by the Department of Social Security and WWS when I was a Trade Union Secretary with the Trades and Labour Council Queensland. Although there have been many name changes since this work, the workers have remained long committed, professional and have continued to provide services to Queenslanders needing assistance and support while working in the welfare and industrial systems.

Perhaps, this was an unusual combination of positions but I can recommend my experience as an effective process to learn about the impressive knowledge, experience and dedication of the people who work at BRQ and the complexities, desperation and disadvantage of so many people across the state who need their help.

This year, there were the extra challenges of COVID on top of our usual work. I did not meet face-to-face with the full team and work from home conventions required the mastery of Microsoft Teams, a task I never really achieved although I did improve. I enjoyed the Annual General Meeting and the Christmas party last year as most people could attend in person and the volume level exploded!

I know that everyone in BRQ worked extremely hard to support clients whose personal experiences often reflected extra stress because of the uncertainty of the COVID situation, the loss of community and insecurity, as well as government systems which seem determined to depersonalise interpersonal communication.

It was particularly rewarding to see the respect that BRQ has earned across the community. The Queensland Attorney General noted our Remote and Regional Programme in her report at the Community Legal Centres Qld launch of their Impact Report for 2021 at Parliament House. It was clear that our peers in Community Services valued the quality of our staff members in supporting vulnerable Queenslanders. Further, when The Queensland Industrial Relations Commissioners visited the office during the Review into the Anti-Discrimination Act, the work and knowledge of the Working Women's Team was acknowledged.

The personal casework which regularly benefits clients financially, provides valuable information which can (and does) impact on policy direction. The current Royal Commission into the horrors of Robo Debt is an example where determined exposure of harmful and illegal process and the impact on clients can force change. BRQ, as a member of Economic Justice Australia, is part of this change.



As always, the constant pressure of working within the government funding process of term contracts makes demands on staff members in terms of providing statistics, justifications and submissions. If only the excitement and joy around a significant result for a client could translate directly to funding! Nonetheless, BRQ has maintained secure funding and we are waiting for confirmation of some grant applications. I know how tough it was for the team through the extended issues of funding but we all know our worth!

Thank you to every member of the BRQ family. I really valued your patience and support to a new acting CEO who never quite got on top of the timesheets nor the new TV and a special thanks to Sam through this period for his support.

Thank you Fiona. We are so fortunate to have you as the CEO. Your professionalism and leadership are at the heart of BRQ. Thank you to all Management Committee members. We have three new members in 2021/22: Connor, Peter and Priscilla, who I welcome wholeheartedly to the team.

So many Queenslanders need and rely on our work.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Fiona Hunt

This year proudly marks my third as Director of Basic Rights Qld (BRQ). In reviewing this time, I have reflected on the changes deliberately crafted and those that have surprised us. BRQ has increased our overall services to clients from 4921 in 2019 to 6506 in 2021. Our focus on reaching Queenslanders living in Rural and Remote regions has improved our proportion of Indigenous clients from 3.8% to 6.5% and Culturally and Linguistically diverse clients from 3.3% to 5.2% in 3 years. People with a Disability are still our main client group, and we now link with a greater proportion of women than men and 22% of our clients have children in their care. The change is incremental but tangible as we seek to extend and improve our ways of working to best serve diverse Queensland communities.

The pandemic again shaped, informed and restrained the work of BRQ in 2021-22. Through the relief and anxiety of the borders finally opening, the inevitable waves of illness that followed we have at last arrived finally to a more stable new normal. Our rural and remote work had to be virtual which, while not ideal did sustain connections that are now able to grow. The pandemic proved we worked well from home and BRQ has fully embraced a hybrid workplace that gives team members the benefits of working from home and coming together with purpose.

The pandemic hurt everyone, but disproportionately affected our clients as people with low incomes, insecure work and health vulnerabilities. This year 14.4% of our clients came to us with no form of income, demonstrating the hardship in the community. Our services are essential in ensuring that all Queenslanders have access to the right income support and/or workplace entitlements. Well done to the BRQ team for their unwavering commitment to our clients and support of each other during these difficult times. Your collective effort has seen us come through as a strong organisation and the client stories in this report demonstrate the impact of our work on people's lives. Thank you everyone.

BRQ has continued to consolidate our financial position with increased grant funding and generous philanthropic donations. We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing support of the Queensland Government and are excited to be recently awarded funding to deliver new Mental Health and Sexual Harassment Legal services with our CLC (Community Legal Centres) and community service partners. In 2021 our extended advocacy for Working Women Qld was successful and we were pleased to receive ongoing specific Commonwealth funding for this work as the first implementation phase for Recommendation 49 of the Respect@Work report. We have worked collectively and tirelessly to achieve this recognition with our sister Working Women's Centers in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Our model was acknowledged and applauded by Commissioner Jenkins in the Respect@Work report, and we look forward to working with the Albanese government and partners to improve the lives of working women across Qld.

On the advocacy front, again we joined with our peak body Economic Justice Australia and the Australian Council of Social Services to advocate for a permanent increase to the Jobseeker payment and were again disappointed that this basic and essential social investment has not been made. Our team participated in national reform advocacy and senate inquiries and used our case studies to illustrate injustices in the system. We are pleased that the Cashless Debit Card has been repealed, that changes are underway to implement the Respect@Work



Photo: Priscilla Lal, Manjula Datta O'Connor (author), Kathryn Rendell and Fiona Hunt

recommendations and the Qld Government is reviewing the decriminalisation of sex work. This year our team members Ellia Guy, Steve Irvine, Maddison Dantu-Hann and Ellen Jones left us to take up new opportunities. We are grateful for all they contributed, wish them all the best and continue to cheer their successes.

Sincere appreciation goes to the wonderful BRQ Management Committee for their diligent governance and outstanding support. Claire Moore despite the self-effacing description given in her report, ably led BRQ as Director whilst I was on secondment and transitioned into our Chair and champion. She is much loved by the team and her expert guidance and steady vision an inspiration to us all. We farewellled Stuart McDowall our treasurer and Wylie Thorpe our secretary this year. Stuart had been our skilled and steady finance force for many years and his good humour, professionalism and commitment were greatly appreciated. Wylie had been integral to the growth of BRQ, had linked us to key networks and provided many hours of expert advice. Thank you for your years of service and the contributions you made.

The future of Basic Rights Qld is bright and focused on collectively changing unfair systems and laws and reaching more chronically disadvantaged Queenslanders. We thank our supporters and are proud to work collectively with people, communities, organisations and governments to create change.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Claire Moore (President)

Claire Moore worked as a public servant in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Social Security (now Centrelink) and was elected Branch Secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). From 1996 to 2001, Claire was Vice-President, Chair of the Women's Committee and Chair of the Arts Committee of the Queensland Council of Unions (QCU). She was elected Senator for Queensland at the Federal Election held on 10 November 2001, representing the Australian Labor Party (ALP).

In 2021, she came to BRQ as our Acting Director in the absence of Fiona Hunt and currently sits as the Director of our Management Committee. With her vast history in Social Services and government she is a fantastic leader and asset to our team.



Connor Wrench (Treasurer)

Connor has extensive experience in financial accounting and advisory services across a variety of industries as well as earning a secondment to the Deloitte Cambridge office in the UK. He has performed various external audits on listed clients in Australia and the United Kingdom, large private companies as well as highly regulated industries such as electricity distribution and not-for profits.

He has received his Chartered Accounting Qualification and has completed several secondments to the Australian Federal Government in the cyber security division of the Department of Human Resources where he has gained experience with SAP as well as budget, forecast and monthly reporting.

Connor currently sits as the Treasurer of the BRQ Management Committee and is a brilliant asset to our team.



Jessica Hodge (Secretary)

Jessica graduated from the University of Queensland in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts/Laws (Hons) and a Masters Degree in Law at the University of Melbourne. She credits her academic achievement to the Australian Veterans' Children's Assistance Trust who generously financially assisted her at university.

Jessica now works in the personal injury team at Hall Payne Lawyers. She assists clients with: workers' compensation claims, reviews to the Queensland Workers' Compensation Regulator, motor vehicle accident claims and public and product liability personal injury claims.

Jessica has been a member of our Management Committee since 2020 and now serves as our Secretary. She brings her extensive background in law and her love of pets to our team.



Janine Aitken

With specialities in Employment Law, Marketing, Property Management and WH&S Janine has brought her vast variety of experience to our Management Committee here at BRQ.

Since graduating with her Bachelor of Laws and Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety, she has been predominately practicing in the areas of Employment Law and Industrial Relations Law as well as her continual involvement in philanthropic work, mainly in the areas of Medical Research and Women's Support services and Disability Services.

Janine joined our Management Committee in 2020 here at BRQ and her contributions and passion for the work we do has been an outstanding asset.



Judith Burton

Dr Judith Burton was a Senior Lecturer and Director of Academic Programs at the School of Public Health and Social Work at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Judith spent 20 years in learning and teaching higher education. She was a member of the Social Work and Human Services discipline with a responsibility for units related to child and family services. Judith's research focused on topics related to children, families and evaluation of human services programs and practices.

Most recently, Judith has brought her passion and in-depth knowledge of the Social Work field to our Management Committee and is now serving as one of our voting members.

Lyndal Sleep

Dr Lyndal Sleep is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland. Her research focuses on social security decision making, technology and women and she is passionate about enhancing the safety and wellbeing for women in situations of intersectional disadvantage.

Lyndal has also tracked technological changes in social security decision making and surveillance. Her current independent research focuses on detailing systems abuse in automated decision making in contexts of domestic violence.

Lyndal has served on BRQ's Management Committee since 2019 and brings an in-depth understanding of Social Security and Women's issues to our team.



Peter Arndt

Peter is one of Brisbane Archdiocese' longest serving social justice advocates and was the recipient of a United Nations award for his work in 2015.

Some of the many groups he has worked with include Aboriginal people, West Papuans, Asylum Seekers and Tamils in Sri Lanka during his years of service as an Executive Officer at the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Brisbane.

In his travels to Cambodia, Sri Lanka, West Papua and the Solomon Islands he gained a deeper insight into what people are dealing with and how he can work with them in a respectful way and support them. He has called these experiences "eye-opening" and emphasised that they have brought a greater understanding of what solidarity means and what it should look like in practise in a respectful way.

Peter joined our team in 2021 and is a great asset, offering deep insights due to his experience working with vulnerable people.

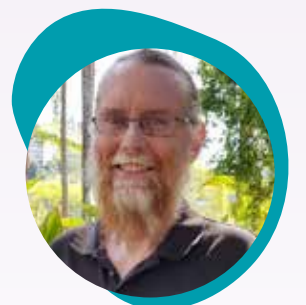


Rodney Holmes

Rodney Holmes is the Senior Policy Advisor at the foundation of Alcohol Research education and has built a community-driven group for Progressive Politics and Policy on social media.

He has studied a Master of Politics and Policy and worked in the social services sector for over 16 years, which has kept him actively involved in Human Rights and Social Justice discussions and forums.

Rodney has been a member of the Management Committee since 2020 and has applied his expertise to decision making and the shaping of policies at BRQ.



Priscilla Lal

Priscilla is a Senior Lawyer, currently practising in dispute resolution and has vast experience resolving general commercial disputes through various mechanisms including arbitration and litigation.

She has worked on a large variety of matters including disputes involving corporate and government sector clients, joint venture disputes, banking disputes, gas arbitrations, disputes in relation to construction of contract clauses, injunction applications and provided advice on insurance and Freedom of Information/Right to Information issues.

Priscilla has been a great asset to our Management Committee this year and has applied her vast understanding of Law to our team.



BRQ STAFF (PERMANENT AND CASUAL)

Haneen Alfadhli – Intake and Administration Officer

Jayne Carter – Industrial Officer, Working Women Queensland

Tamara Chin – Solicitor, Social Security

Leah Clapa – Intake and Administration Officer

Ellie Dalton – Solicitor, Working Women Queensland

Andrew Davison – Principal Solicitor, Social Security

Marie Gabuya - Intake and Administration Officer

Emma Goodwin – Administration Coordinator

Teresa Grahame – Social Worker, Social Security

Terina Hegarty – DFV WorkAware, Intake and Administration Officer

Fiona Hunt – Director, Basic Rights Queensland

Dahye Jung - Intake and Administration Officer

Terri Kempton - Solicitor, Disability Discrimination

Bonnie Kubler Shaw – Law Clerk, Social Security

Syani Linarto – Acting Finance Administrator

Maeve Lu – Paralegal, Working Women Queensland

Paul MacKay – Community Outreach and Training Facilitator

Jack Margaritis – Social Worker, Social Security

Monica Matray – Industrial Officer, Working Women Queensland

Mark McKeon – Finance Administrator

Tim Murray – Principal Solicitor, Working Women Queensland

Kathryn Rendell – DFV Work Aware, Community Outreach and Training Facilitator

Jake Sheehan – Solicitor, Social Security and Disability Discrimination

'Sam' Simon Tracy – Practice Director, Social Security and Disability Discrimination



RESPECT @WORK
SEXUAL HARASSMENT
INQUIRY
RECOMMENDATION (49):
"FUND WORKING WOMEN
CENTRES"
...MR PRIME MINISTER?

SERVICE STATISTICS 2021 - 2022

BRQ Overall



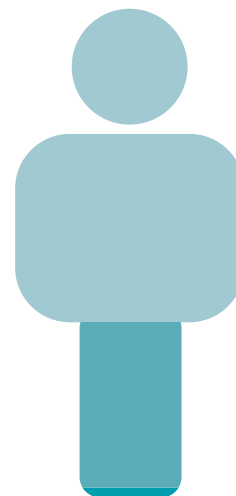
2313
CLIENTS

6506
SERVICES



48%
of clients
were over 50

6.48% of clients were
under 25



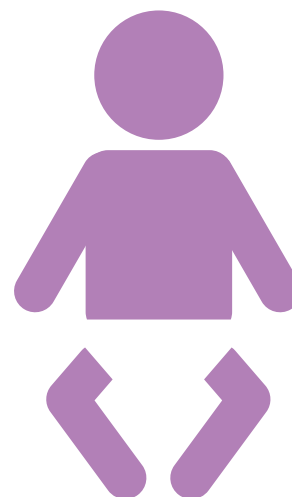
64%
of clients
were female

34% were male



55.38%
of clients
were disabled

(increased by 3.38%)



22.4%
of clients
had children

(increased by 3.5%)

10.64%

OUTER REGION AND
REMOTE

1.6%

HOMELESS

97.88%

FINANCIALLY
DISADVANTAGED

14.4%

NO INCOME

6.83%

DOMESTIC AND
FAMILY VIOLENCE

6.5%

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER CLIENTS
(INCREASED BY 0.5%)

5.19%

CULTURALLY AND
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
CLIENTS (INCREASED BY 1.9%)

WORKING WOMEN QUEENSLAND

Tim Murray, Working Women Queensland
Principal Solicitor

The 2021 – 2022 financial year was a period of expansion and transition for the Working Women Queensland (WWQ) team and the beginning of an exciting new phase for the program.

WWQ has always provided industrial advice and specialised assistance to women in relation to a broad range of workplace issues, including their industrial entitlements, safety and right to a workplace free from discrimination and harassment.

In early 2022, we recruited a principal lawyer and two legal officers to work alongside our industrial officers. The addition of legal staff has positioned us well to deliver additional specialist legal advice, advocacy and support services to victims of sexual harassment in line with recommendation 53 of the Respect@Work Report. The team is expanding further as we plan to commence delivering the additional services in partnership with Caxton Legal Centre.

The additional resources have allowed us to renew our focus on community and stakeholder engagement, including developing pathways for cross-referral and providing community legal education. Our capacity for this work has been greatly enhanced by community engagement officer Kathryn Rendell's depth of experience as a community sector leader in women's safety and domestic and family violence.

The team contributed to a number of law reform initiatives, including Commonwealth government roundtables on the implementation of the Respect@Work recommendations and parliamentary submissions to the Select Committee on Work and Care and Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards.

Advice

In 2021 – 2022 we provided a total of 1696 advices inclusive of both industrial and legal advice and served a total of 637 women. Over 60% of clients served lived in a regional or remote area and 15% of clients were on a temporary visa or recent migrants. Just under 25% of clients identified as experiencing or having experienced domestic and family violence.

Legal advice appointments were provided via both the Working Women Queensland advice line and through the Workplace Advice Service in partnership with the Fair Work Commission. In some cases, clients were identified in triage or later after receiving industrial advice as benefitting from or requiring legal advice, for example, to advise on the complexities of distinguishing between employment and independent contracting when allegations of sham contracting arise.



Specialised Assistance and Casework

The ability to tailor the level and nature of assistance provided to the needs of our clients continues to be a hallmark of our service. We provided specialised assistance or representation to 107 women during 2021-2022. This included representation at tribunals and commissions, advocacy in workplace disciplinary matters and negotiating matters directly with employers. Our industrial officers have a wealth of experience in providing this type of assistance and this was shown in many successful outcomes often maintaining the viability of our client's employment, including successfully negotiated flexible work arrangements and domestic and family violence safety plans.

With the additional capacity and addition of legal officers, we have begun to extend our representation of clients beyond the dispute resolution phase and into the hearing and arbitration phase.

Both our industrial and legal officers negotiated significant settlements in sexual harassment matters. We have focused our efforts on those matters, ensuring that our advocacy reflects recent developments in extending the uplift in damages awards at the federal level to Queensland's state commissions and tribunals. We have also focused on working in partnership with other community organisations to deliver appropriate, multidisciplinary and wrap-around services to clients, wherever they may be located in the state. So far this has seen us partner with organisations in Cairns and Ipswich to ensure that clients are appropriately supported through the litigation process.



WORKING WOMEN QUEENSLAND CLIENT STORIES

(*no real names used to protect clients)

In September 2021, WWQ settled its first double matter lodging both a Sexual Harassment Stop Order (Form 72) along with a General Protections Not Involving Dismissal (Form F8C) for a woman (Maureen*) who experienced sexual harassment and assault in her retail role. WWQ negotiated a compensation payment of 10 weeks wages in the amount of \$12,400 and a further \$4,000 paid as general damages for the hurt and humiliation caused. Maureen* also received a formal written apology and statement of service. The matter resolved prior to parties having to attend a conference set in front of Deputy President Asbury.

In May 2022, WWQ represented a 19-year-old health care worker (Casey*) in her sexual harassment and sex discrimination matter in the QHRC. WWQ negotiated monetary compensation payment of \$10,000 paid as general damages as well as non-monetary compensation, including that a Sexual Harassment and Discrimination policy to be written as well as for management to undertake sexual harassment and discrimination training.

Penelope* had been working a number of years in retail. She went off on maternity leave and when she came back to work, she was still breastfeeding her child. She requested a quiet place to express and at first this was provided (1 day) then it was seen as an inconvenience as the room was the meeting room. It was suggested she express in her car or the toilet. WWQ assisted the client in putting together an email to her employer regarding their rights to express in the workplace and their duty of care in providing a clean and safe environment. As a result, the client was offered an appropriate place to express.

Matilda* worked as professional for the past 2 years. They started to experience issues with another colleague who repeatedly bullied them. They tried to resolve the issue but it became worse and started to impact on their ability to perform their role. A meeting was scheduled by the employer, and one of our WWQ advocates acted as a support person. The employer apologised and suggested the other person receive training.

Grace*(a client in their 60s) worked 16 years in the community sector. They experienced bullying in the workplace and felt they were being forced to resign. Working Women Queensland advised the client on their rights and their options to make a complaint. In the end the matter was resolved and the client was offered \$20,000 in compensation.



VOLUNTEER REPORT

Jack Margaritis, Social Security Social Worker

The year started out with a total of four volunteers engaged in our service. The program continued to see volunteers working closely with our telephone advice workers, providing support with legal research and advice. We were excited to see all volunteers providing advice on Disability Support Pension (DSP) matters under the supervision of our social workers and solicitors. This provided volunteers with the experience to not only dive more deeply into the nuances and complexities of social security law but also presented the opportunity to engage with people with different lived experiences of adversity.

Due to the uncertainty around lockdowns and a return to primarily working from home, we made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend the program. It was decided that once there was more stability regarding lockdowns, social distancing and mask requirements we would review the recommencement of the program. Thank you to Amanda, Haneen, Ruby and Zarin for remaining connected to BRQ throughout this period of uncertainty.





“As a BRQ volunteer, I have had the opportunity to be part of a collaborative team, who were always there to answer all my queries. Through the help of the team, I have successfully been able to develop client interviewing and legal research skills. The most rewarding aspect of the volunteer program is learning how to effectively communicate with vulnerable clients from a range of different backgrounds. I value that BRQ focuses on building these skillsets effectively in each of their volunteers, as they are the foundational skills of a lawyer.”

– Haneen, 2021

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

Sam Tracy, Practice Director, Social Security and Disability Discrimination

In 2021-2022 BRQ provided Community Legal Education to over 200 participants and workers in 16 community legal education and law reform activities. We engaged with community, legal, education and health organisations and participated in sector forums in advocacy and networking. We hosted and presented at targeted community events, expanded our presence in the media, prepared new client resource material and collaborated and made submissions for legislation drafting and review.

Community events and forums provide a great opportunity for BRQ to educate other services, and the general public about legal issues relevant to our services. We participated in events including the Anti-Poverty Network Expos and Homeless Connect, engaging over 50 participants and sector workers.

Our participation in networks, such as the quarterly Community Legal Assistance Forum (CLEAF), allowed collaboration with other service providers and stakeholders and played an important role in the dissemination of information and advancement of referral pathways. BRQ also regularly contributes to Economic Justice Australia's (EJA) advocacy campaigns, attending monthly meetings and assisting in the development of material and submissions on relevant social security issues.

Student placements provide an opportunity to show the value in access to justice, as well as the important role Community Legal Centres play in the lives of disadvantaged people. BRQ has great ongoing relations with Bond University and recently developed a partnership with The University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre for ongoing student participation. Due to Covid restraints, only one student participated in placement with BRQ during the year but we have committed to adapting to the virtual environment for continued commitment to student participation.

This year we participated in several law reform campaigns including consultation and submissions for the independent review of the 'Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld)' and submissions on 'Sex Discrimination and Fair Work (Respect at Work) Amendment Bill 2021 (Cth)'. We also participated in consultation and submission for the Queensland Human Rights Commission review of the 'Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)' and the preparation of the '10 Point Plan for a Fairer Queensland' with the Alliance of Queensland Lawyers and Advocates.

BRQ have continued to develop our resources and materials; fact sheets were created for DSP Cancellations and Medical Exemptions for Jobseekers and we assisted in the development of materials for the social security agreements between New Zealand and Australia. We also continue to advocate on social media, building our online presence for all our programs and participating in collective approaches with other Economic Justice Australia member centres and Working Women's Centres.



SOCIAL WORK

Teresa Grahame and Jack Margaritis, Social Security Social Workers

It has been another busy year with continued demand as usual from clients with queries about Disability Support Pension and Centrelink debts and an increasing number of queries that include reference to the effects of COVID-19.

We continued to work successfully from home throughout the year, utilising Microsoft Teams to support and be supported by our fellow Advisors and our Principal Solicitor. In the second half of last year, we hosted a Social Work student, Hailey, who integrated well in our team and found employment shortly after her 18-week placement at BRQ.

Community Education is an important part of what we do, both at an individual level through advice to clients and other professionals and at a community level via community education sessions. These efforts have a valuable ripple effect.

Jack has been busy providing Community Education sessions to Social Workers and Health Professionals at several hospitals in the Brisbane area and beyond including QEII, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Prince Charles Hospital, Princess Alexandra and Logan. As a result of his valuable work, we have experienced an increase in Disability Support Pension (DSP) related referrals from social workers at Queensland Health.

The vulnerability of our clients in negotiating Centrelink processes has become increasingly apparent as Centrelink's resources have been stretched to cope with the increased demand caused by payments related to COVID-19 and the impact of natural disasters. There is a continued push by Government to move services online and this disadvantages many of our more vulnerable clients who are either unable to use a computer or are unable to negotiate the system when their computer or Centrelink's online system fails.

We have found ourselves increasingly using our Centrelink liaison service to try and reduce the stress associated with our more vulnerable clients, resulting in us forwarding documents and messages on their behalf at times. In the coming year, we will be continuing to focus on how best to engage with and support our most vulnerable clients and support them in communicating effectively with Centrelink to pursue their social security rights.

"I just want to say a massive THANK YOU for fighting so hard for my daughter's Disability Support Pension and my Carer Payment. I am truly grateful for the time you have taken. I was literally ready to give up. Once again, I appreciate all you have done for us, this has changed our lives and we can now get the help that my daughter needs to move forward."



SOCIAL SECURITY

Andrew Davison, Principal Solicitor for Social Security

Despite having three very experienced staff (Steve, Maddison and Ellen) all leave BRQ this year and having several months in which we were under-staffed whilst waiting for them to be replaced by former volunteers (Bonnie and Jake who needed to serve out their notice periods in their previous jobs) we have still managed to exceed our advice targets by 13% and our overall target by 31% this year! This was achieved by the hard work and diligence of our long-term experienced staff and their all helping out to quickly train Bonnie and Jake when they started. We also significantly increased the amount of early intervention work we did with a 30% increase in legal tasks compared to the previous year.

Social Security Advices

In 2021-22, we provided 1980 social security legal advices to clients as well as an additional 811 legal tasks where those clients needed greater assistance with taking further steps. In addition, we provided 181 of the more intensive duty lawyer advice sessions in which we examined the Tribunal file before giving advice on it and regularly tailored letters to doctors etc as part of that service. Often those legal tasks and duty lawyer tailored letters enabled clients to succeed in a new claim or self-represent in their appeals where they did not meet our casework criteria.

Social Security Casework

In 2021-22, we completed 38 casework files for clients of whom we represented 28 in their Administrative Appeals Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support Division) hearing with a positive outcome in 22 of those cases (79%) - a very high success rate! An additional 7 cases resulted in successful outcomes for the clients at an early intervention stage or in negotiation with Centrelink's lawyers at the General Division of the Tribunal. The majority of those cases were DSP rejections, however, we also successfully overturned decisions in special benefit rejections, compensation preclusion period appeals, member of a couple findings, debts and early start date cases. Special mention to Bonnie who did her first AAT1 representation this year and has continued to develop her skills and experience since joining us in January 2022.



SOCIAL SECURITY CLIENT STORIES

Jenny* was referred to BRQ by a domestic violence support service. She had very low employment income and was significantly behind on her rent and utilities, facing imminent eviction. Her ex-partner had trashed the house, and removed all the furniture, leaving her with only the tv and a couch. When we spoke with Jenny, she hadn't eaten in 3 days. She was a small-business owner and had been living on \$100-150 per week for the past year. As a result of COVID, her business suffered greatly. Her work was online and typically paid quarterly, leaving her with little disposable income. Assisted by our contact at Centrelink, we supported Jenny with lodging a new claim. Jenny was consequently paid \$300.00 the next day and the day after was paid \$3,800.00 in arrears after we argued that her claim should be backdated to an earlier date where she had contacted Centrelink. When we told Jenny that she would be receiving over \$4,100.00 arrears, she said this had changed her life and that she would be eating ice cream that night!

Sarah* was referred to BRQ by a worker at a local community centre. By the time BRQ became involved, Sarah had been sleeping in her car for a month and was relying on local community supports for her basic food and hygiene needs. Sarah had received compensation for an injury and was precluded from accessing income support payments for another 2 years. Sarah had applied for Jobseeker Payment and was rejected. BRQ encouraged and assisted Sarah in appealing this decision and worked together with Sarah's support worker to provide evidence of her current financial situation to Centrelink. BRQ assisted in advocating for Sarah with Centrelink's review officer by providing them with relevant information to persuade them to make a favourable decision. Within several days of receiving all required information, Centrelink's review officer decided to waive Sarah's compensation preclusion period back to the date she claimed Jobseeker Payment. With an income, Sarah's support worker will now be able to assist her in accessing housing services.

Greg*'s claim for the Disability Support Pension (DSP) was rejected by Centrelink based on their finding that the combined impact of his knee injury and foot ulcers only met an impairment rating of 10 points on the strict table used to assess lower limb function. However, after hearing from Greg about the severe impact of his ulcers and assisting with gathering medical evidence, BRQ provided advocacy at the AAT, arguing that the impact of Greg's ulcers met the criteria for 20 points on the skin function table, making him eligible for the DSP. BRQ appealed further when the AAT Member decided that the ulcers should be assessed on the lower limb table, where they could only attract a rating of 10 points. Upon considering BRQ's submission, Centrelink's litigation team accepted that Greg met the DSP criteria and settled the matter on this basis.

Ami* is from a CALD background, caring for a 10-month-old child and 2 teenage children living with a disability. Ami was referred to BRQ by a disability advocacy group who has been assisting Ami with a NDIS application for her child. While Ami has been in receipt of Parenting Payment (Single), Family Tax Benefit (FTB) and Carer Allowance, she was still experiencing financial strain due to medical costs for her children. Ami was further experiencing stress as result of Centrelink's requirement for her to participate in ParentsNext and fear that her payment will stop if she misses an appointment. BRQ assisted in communicating with Centrelink on behalf of Ami, obtaining helpful information about Ami's payments. BRQ worked with Centrelink to obtain a 6-month exemption from ParentsNext for Ami and advised Ami on steps she should take in order to be paid her full FTB entitlements. BRQ further advised Ami to test her eligibility for Carer Payment. BRQ continued to communicate with the disability advocacy group so that they can support Ami with these processes. With BRQ's help, Ami now has a better understanding of the steps she needs to take going forward. With the exemption that has been granted, Ami is now able to focus on caring for her children and can test her eligibility for Carer Payment without worrying about her payments being suspended due to missing ParentsNext appointments.

The home Kylie* shares with her partner and young children was one of many affected by Queensland's rain and flooding disaster in February this year. Important furniture was damaged and required replacement, causing financial strain. While her partner's claim for the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment was granted, the application that Kylie submitted for herself and her children was rejected, leaving the family largely out of pocket. BRQ supported Kylie with preparing for her Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearing. We sent the Tribunal a short-written argument about why the damage to Kylie's residence met the specific legal definition of "major damage" required for her to qualify for the payment and explained that this definition differed from the ordinary meaning of the words, making the Payment more accessible to people whose principal residences were affected by the floods. After speaking with BRQ, Kylie had a clear argument to put forward to the Tribunal.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

Sam Tracy, Practice Director Social Security and Disability Discrimination

In 2021-22 we provided advice and representation to various people who believed they have been subjected to unlawful discrimination on the basis of their disability.

Our advisors, Sam and Tim, had some great outcomes for clients in advice, early intervention and representation. A total of 231 advice, task, information or referrals were provided. We provided 5 clients with dispute resolution as well as client representation in Court/Tribunal and other representation.

Issues that resulted in additional service and representation this year included access to facilities in accommodation, the refusal of assistance animals (including accommodation and travel/biosecurity issues) and education issues (regarding treatment of a client requiring a wheelchair).

This year we assisted in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in a disability discrimination matter regarding decision making by a government department. While we regularly advise and represent in this jurisdiction for social security matters, it was a first for disability discrimination where we usually represent in the Queensland or Australian Human Rights Commission. We are very grateful for the help of Benedict Coyne (Barrister-at-law) for his pro-bono assistance in this matter. We were able to assist a settlement in a long-term issue that was having a major impact on our client.

We also contributed to valuable law reform, joining the Alliance of Queensland Lawyers and Advocates working on the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) review being undertaken by the Queensland Human Rights Commission. We advocated for Queenslanders with impairments in our submission of the '10 Point Plan for a Fairer Queensland'.

This year we were pleased to be invited to meet with Terri Butler (former MP for Griffith) for the International Day of People with Disability. We were joined by Management Committee member Peter Arndt and his guide dog and were able to raise awareness and some important issues around certification and access for persons requiring assistance animals.

The disability discrimination service continues to work closely on referrals from the Australian Human Rights Commission and Queensland Human Rights Commission, as well as internally with our Working Women Queensland program in employment disability discrimination matters that cross jurisdiction.

Client thanks:

"Please tell the commission that you have given me back my smile. Canine helpers for the disable are so grateful for the outcome. I hope it will help others with assistance dogs".

Aubrey, a client and assistance animal we represented.





DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE WORK AWARE

Kathryn Rendell, DFV Work Aware and Community Engagement

DFV Work Aware is a project of Working Women's Centres Australia and in Queensland is a service of Working Women Qld.

The project was run in conjunction with The Services Union and was funded by the Queensland Office of Industrial Relations until funding expired at the end of March 2022. Working Women Queensland highly values the work of this project and has continued to support it from donated funds.

The purpose of the project is to increase workplace knowledge and awareness of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) as an industrial issue and to foster best practice workplace responses. A series of resources have been developed to support online and face to face training programs, including a Safety Planning Toolkit, an information booklet, two facts sheets and a DFV Work Aware website. This year two key resources were added: a specific Coercive Control training resource and a new DFV Work Aware 3-hour training. DFV Work Aware continued to develop collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders and to contribute to a joint Community Services Industry Alliance project that will lead to co-designed, more culturally appropriate workplace resources for the diverse domestic and family violence workforce.

Training

Training is a key DFV Work Aware activity, working with leadership teams to build on and improve existing workplace responses and providing the opportunity for general staff to develop knowledge and skills that will assist in recognising domestic and family violence and responding appropriately.

This year DFV Work Aware continued to work in partnership with key stakeholders and provide training for more than 1300 workers from six local government organisations, union delegates across several industries, one federal government agency and 4 networks of community services.

The level of domestic and family violence experienced in the community suggests that only a percentage of those affected access specialist domestic and family violence services. Training helps the workplace to be a place where employees are safe and supported and where key prevention strategies are in place. For some people, the DFV Work Aware training enabled them to make important life changes.



Community Engagement

DFV Work Aware engaged with key stakeholders domestic and family violence prevention and participated in forums to share and further develop relevant knowledge and skills. This year, we were invited to participate in the National Women's Safety and Justice Summit where we provided input to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. Further, we participated in Roundtable events and forums with the Community Services Industry and Alliance and Women's Health and Equality Queensland.

Coercive Control is the subject of government reform and DFV Work Aware ensured we reflected current knowledge and strategies in our training through participation in Coercive Control and Social Entrapment services and a series of Coercive Control network meetings as well as other community services network meetings. We also provided input into a research project of the Qld Centre for DFV Research.

Highlights

- DFV Work Aware and Working Women's Centre South Australia collaborated on an application to formalise approval as a White Ribbon accredited trainer, under the banner of Working Women's Centres Australia.
- Our partnership with the Community Services Industry Alliance has resulted in two successful funding submissions, providing the opportunity to facilitate discussions with diverse stakeholders and to have a role in the development of new resources for the community sector.
- Travelling to local government areas across the state to facilitate discussions about workplace safety and provide access to DFV workplace resources was another highlight of this year.

With a focus on community engagement, and greater resourcing, I look forward to the expansion of our training, our collaborative work and on building new partnerships.

RURAL AND REMOTE PROJECT

Paul Mackay, Community Engagement and Training

The establishment of the BRQ Rural and Remote project during 2020–2021 helped develop relationships with 20 organisations throughout 50 rural and remote communities. This engagement resulted in increased referrals to our telephone-based advice service and empowered organisations in communities to assist their clients.

BRQ's desire to provide the best possible state-wide service was further strengthened during 2021-2022 and the lessons learnt previously underpinned the advice given to all rural and remote referrals. Our focus was with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the far north of the state and the creation of a geographically targeted duty lawyer service in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

An increase in engagement with our partner organisations helped to break down barriers previously encountered in reaching remote service users. In particular, organisations that were a part of the original project who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders facilitated an increase in advice provided throughout this year. Our most productive partnerships were with the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN) in Cairns and 54 Reasons (formally Save the Children).

In 2021, BRQ received additional contingency funding from the Department of Justice and Attorney General to extend face-to-face engagement in outreach trips. This was limited due to weather, COVID restrictions and community circumstances but was planned effectively during this period and is now being delivered in the new financial year.

The establishment of a partnership with University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre has paved the way for law students to get practical experience working with people during these outreach trips. The University's philanthropic fundraising will provide support to enable students to gain experience and assist us in delivering outreach in collaboration with other community legal centres.

The relationships established during the earlier Rural and Remote Project, coupled with the partnership with UQ Pro Bono ensures that the future of our engagement with vulnerable people in rural and remote areas is evolving and growing successfully. BRQ is planning an exciting new phase of remote work with the addition of experienced community engagement officers, which will focus on the development of our 'product' and the way we reach and engage the people that need our service.



Photo: Fiona Hunt (BRQ), Isabel Toby and Pearl Turner (54 Reasons)

FINANCIAL TREASURER REPORT

Connor Wrench

I am pleased to present the Basic Rights Queensland (BRQ) Treasurer's Report for the 2021/22 financial year.

The BRQ Management Committee would like to thank our funders for their financial support.

The current year saw some of our strongest results to date, whereby we have recorded a significant surplus of \$981,237 on the back of generous support from a member of the legal community, who generously donated \$1,000,000. The donor wishes to remain anonymous, however this funding will provide a strong building block for BRQ for years. BRQ are utilising the funding to invest in our people, system and organisational capacity to expand the essential services we offer across social security and disability discrimination, domestic & family violence as well as the working women's centres.

BRQ's ongoing social security and disability discrimination services are funded through the Community Legal Services Program. Program funding is provided by the State Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG). BRQ will receive more than \$5 million CLSP funding over the five-year term of the 2020–2025 agreement.

Queensland's Office of Industrial Relations and the Commonwealth Attorney General provide funding for the Working Women Queensland program and we are pleased to have secured ongoing Commonwealth funding of \$1.1m over a 3-year term towards the implementation of Recommendation 49 of the Respect@Work Report.

Throughout the year, the impacts of COVID have been prevalent and due to this limited travel to rural and remote programs was able to occur. As restrictions have eased, travel and delivery of services face-to-face have recommenced, however delays have occurred, resulting in unspent grant monies as seen in the increase of the contract liability too \$305,668.

The funding environment continues to be challenging. However, the recent change in federal government has led to additional funding being promised or agreed to subsequent to year end, which will enable BRQ to provide additional, much-needed support to our clients. BRQ will continue to pursue additional funding to ensure security in the funding to be provided.

Salaries and staffing costs are BRQ's major expenditure item (\$1.3m).

BRQ has finished the year in a strong financial position and we are confident in our ability to meet our financial commitments in the coming year. Financial sustainability remains a focus for the Director and the Management Committee. BRQ will continue to manage its funding and operations to ensure ongoing sustainability, so we can continue to provide our clients with the services they need.

BRQ's performance and position reflects the contributions made by our talented and invaluable staff and volunteers, who exhibit great passion, energy and innovation in delivering their important work.





Photo taken in Normanton

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Revenue		
Legal Assistance Services Funding grants	998,445	883,320
Commonwealth COVID-19 grants	–	191,316
Ecstra Foundation remote services grants	–	140,000
Working Women's Centre grants	446,282	236,364
Domestic & Family Violence service grants	17,500	232,500
Commonwealth Cash Flow Boost income	–	50,000
Donations	1,003,811	8,788
Services revenue	41,750	63,601
Finance income	1,331	2,009
Other revenue	33,917	11,757
Total revenue	2,543,036	1,819,655
Expenses		
Staff expenses	(1,336,491)	(1,502,493)
Premises costs	(4,177)	(5,664)
IT & communication expenses	(44,169)	(66,757)
Print, postage & document management expenses	(7,351)	(6,871)
Membership, subscriptions & conference expenses	(14,405)	(11,985)
Depreciation and amortisation	(81,421)	(78,025)
Training & workshop consultants	(5,103)	(19,449)
Governance & social marketing consultants	(38,291)	(41,414)
Audit fees	(6,928)	(6,700)
Insurance costs	(4,298)	(4,173)
Travel expenses	(6,546)	(24,375)
Programming & planning costs	(3,793)	(7,282)
Finance expense – Leased property	(361)	(4,811)
Other expenses	(8,465)	(10,886)
Total expenses	(1,561,799)	(1,790,885)
Surplus before income tax	981,237	28,770
Income tax expense	–	–
Surplus after income tax for the year	981,237	28,770
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	–	–
Total comprehensive income for the year	\$981,237	\$28,770

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,885,606	636,744
Trade and other receivables	402	6,880
Contract assets	–	45,000
Prepayments	11,131	8,826
Total current assets	1,897,139	697,450
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	52,610	65,385
Right-of-use asset	16,287	69,903
Total non-current assets	68,897	135,288
Total assets	1,966,036	832,738
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	117,264	135,390
Contract liabilities	305,668	133,367
Employee benefits	187,510	168,130
Total current liabilities	610,442	436,887
Non-current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	–	12,968
Employee benefits	18,894	27,420
Total non-current liabilities	18,894	40,388
Total liabilities	629,336	477,275
Net assets	\$1,336,700	\$355,463
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	1,336,700	355,463
Total equity	\$1,336,700	\$355,463

* Copies of our full audited Financial Report are available via email: brq@brq.org.au



Basic Rights
Queensland Inc.
SOCIAL SECURITY & DISABILITY
DISCRIMINATION SERVICES