

# Annual Report 2023

## Basic Rights Queensland



Painting by Gerard Bargo

**WWQ**  
WORKING WOMEN  
QUEENSLAND

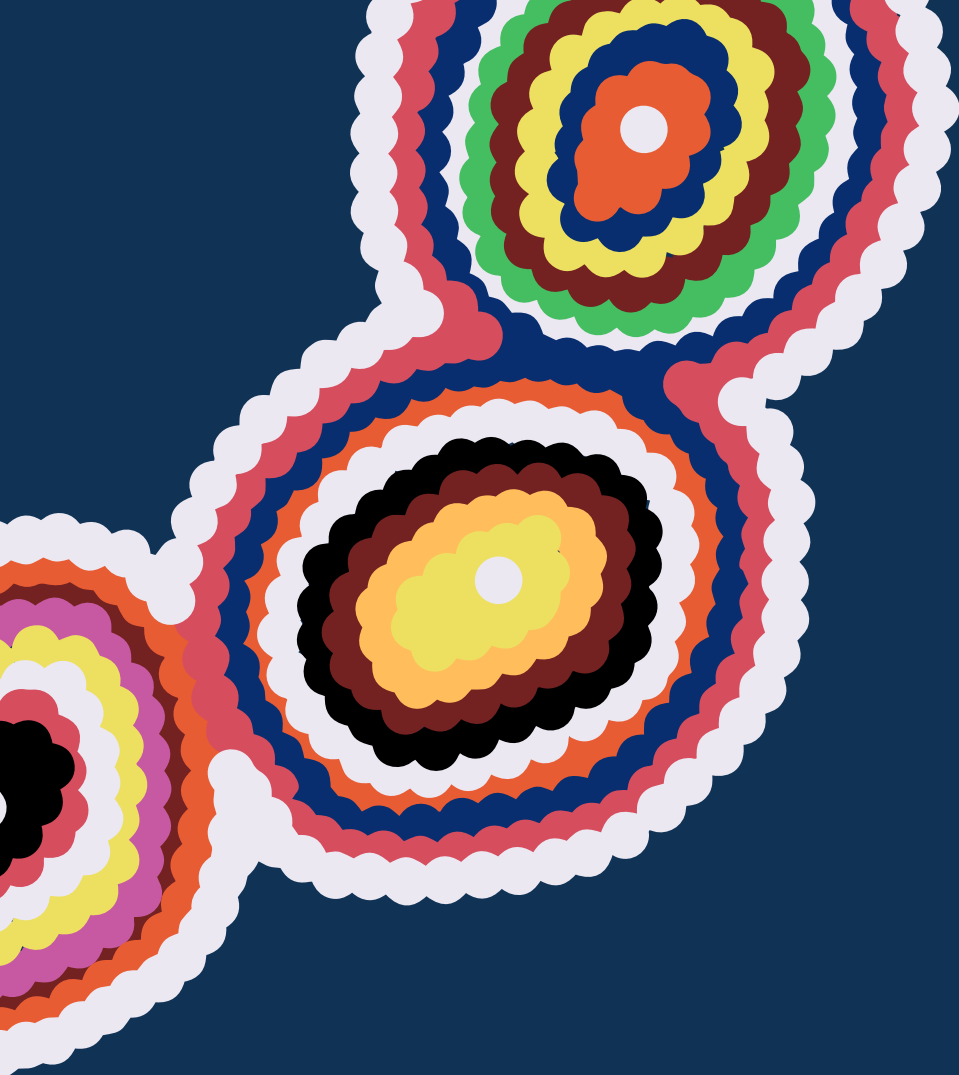
**BR** Basic Rights  
Queensland Inc.











## Acknowledgement to Country

Basic Rights Queensland acknowledges and pays respects to Queensland's past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders, and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples right across our nation.

We also pay our respects specifically to the Turrbal and Jagera nations who own the land on which we work in Meanjin (Brisbane).

Basic Rights Queensland acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonisation and is committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to challenge disadvantage and discrimination and create a just and equal society.

As an organisation, Basic Rights Queensland support an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and supports the Yes campaign.

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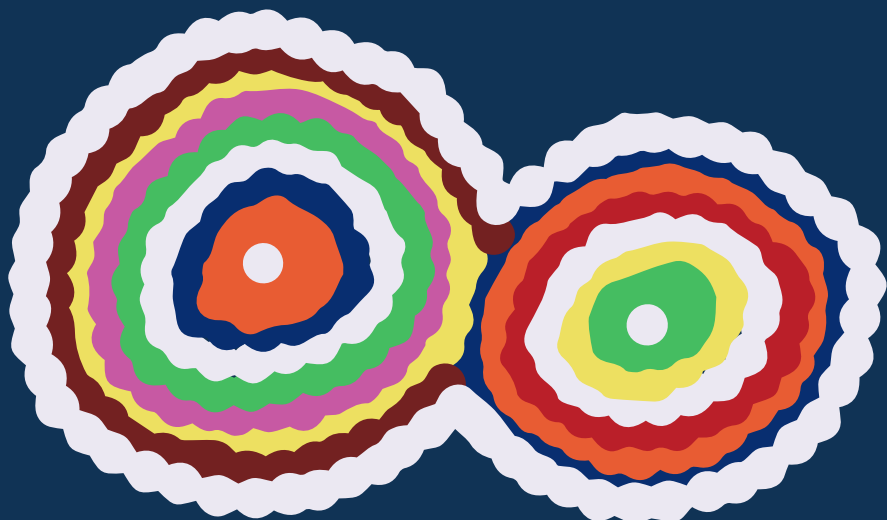


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Social Security, Disability Discrimination  
or Working Women's telephone advice  
Monday - Friday 9am - 4pm

Freecall 1800 358 511  
PO Box 469. Brisbane Qld 4001  
[admin@brq.org.au](mailto:admin@brq.org.au)  
[brq.org.au](http://brq.org.au)





# 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, and 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 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. 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.

# Our Values.

## Fairness

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

## 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.

## Transparency

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

## Expertise

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

## Respect

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

## Access

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

## Inclusion

We embrace and understand diversity.

# Our Organisational Impact.

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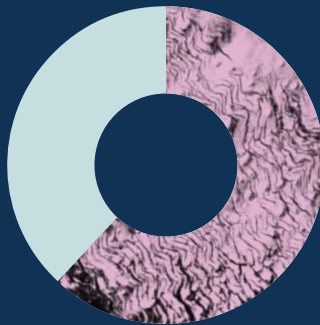
individual clients

7659

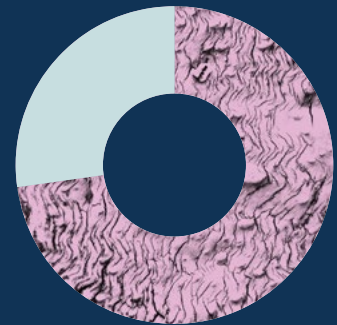
services provided



Nearly 40% of our clients present with a disability



62% of those with a disability have a psychological disability



73% of our clients are women





***“Thank you Working Women QLD,  
because of you, I have had success  
and had a positive outcome and  
I owe it all to you, I have been  
reminded by you also to have a  
voice not be afraid.”***

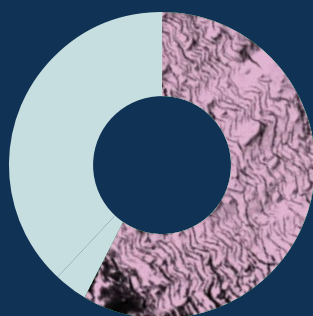
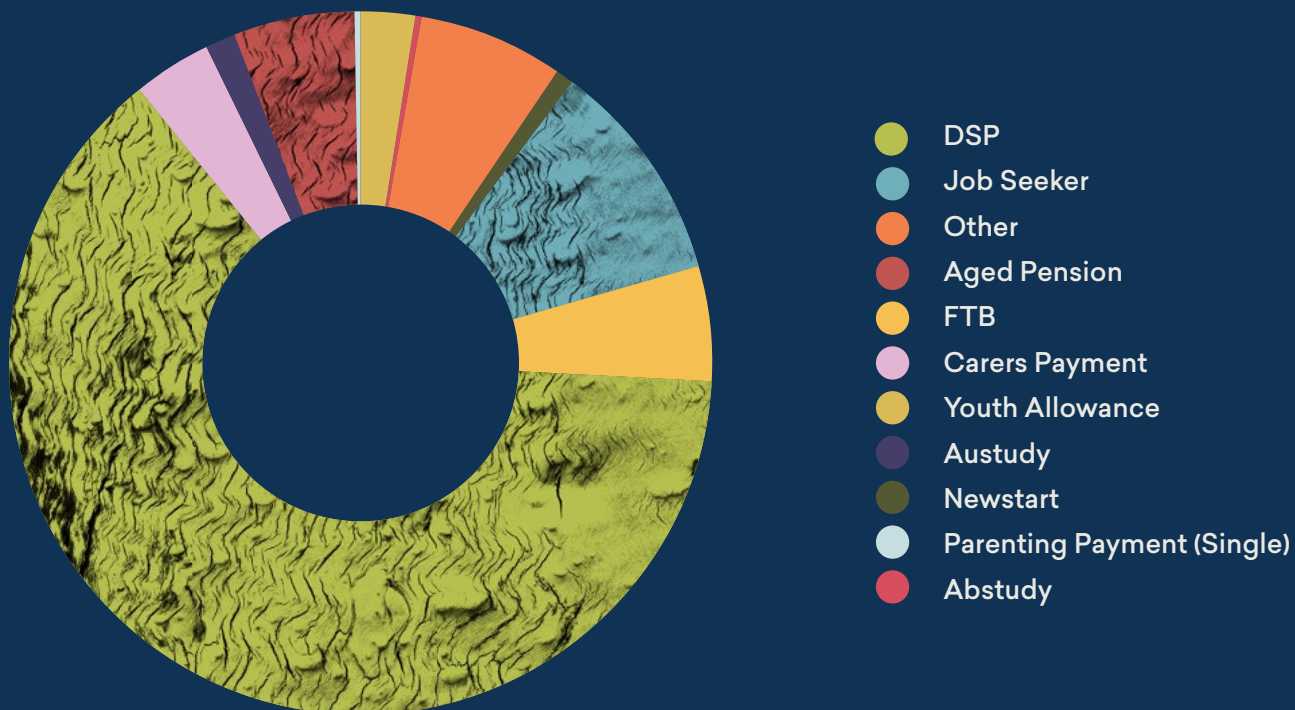
***“Thank you, Thank you,  
Thank you! I wouldn’t have been  
able to do this without you!!  
You truly are amazing and I am  
so thankful for you!”***

***“I would just like to say  
a huge thank you to you for  
all of your assistance. It is  
greatly appreciated.”***

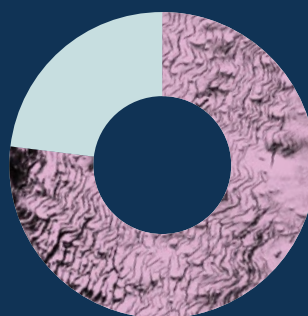
***“I received a payment  
and am able to help my  
daughters with school supplies  
and excursions! Thank you for  
guiding me through this process.  
Sorry for getting emotional.”***

***“Sorry I forgot to enclose the  
letter from Centrelink. Here it is,  
again my sincerest thanks and  
gratitude to you for all the support  
accorded to me and I will  
cherish this in my whole life.”***

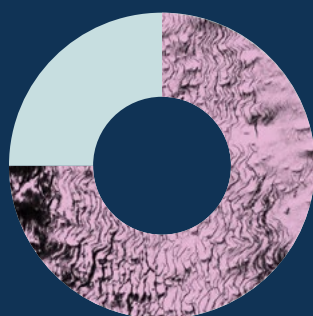
# Centrelink issues we help with



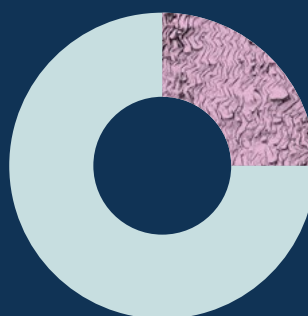
Nearly 60% of people accessing the Disability Discrimination program have a combined income of less than \$67,000 per annum



77% of clients accessing Social Security Advice were seeking assistance about eligibility



75% of our outreach work in the Rural and Remote Program is to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders



Nearly a quarter of all Social Security clients also had children



*"Thank you for reaching out, I did receive an email but I wasn't sure if I was reading it right but sounds like I am wow, this is so amazing so they have ruled for the DSP and for the back pay component as well is this correct? I'm so super grateful for all your worker has done to help me through this I would never have gotten through this stressful process without her help she is one amazing person."*

*"My WWQ worker was brilliant and the only reason I am here right now is because of her"*

*"I was scared, confused and stressed when I contacted you but you soon put my mind at ease and for that I will forever be grateful."*

*"I just don't know how I could have made it through this stressful and difficult time without your professional guidance support. Forever grateful."*

*"I am writing to express my sincere and heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for your highly professional and competent services, provided in both a friendly and professional manner."*

*I would have never been confident enough if I didn't have you guiding me through making some really difficult decisions."*

# Our Impact for Working Women Queensland.

30% of WWQ clients have experienced or are experiencing DV at the same time as seeking workplace advice



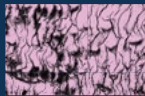
30%

6% of women identify as Aboriginal/TSI (First Nations)



6%

17% of women are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds



17%

18.5% of women were unemployed and at significant risk of financial disadvantage when they reached out for support



18.5%

Over 40% of WWQ clients are from Regional and Remote locations in Queensland



40%

77% of workers are disadvantaged either financially or socially



77%

30% of clients at WWQ were over 50 years of age



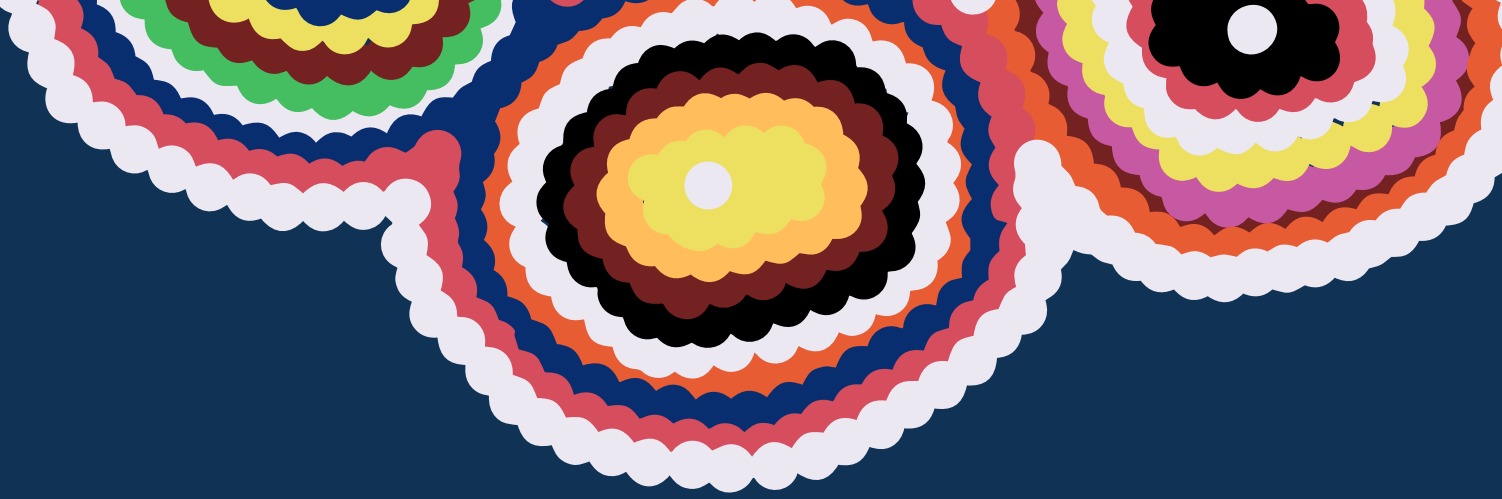
30%

Just under 10% are under the age of 25 years



10%





over  
**\$725,000**

back to the pocket of working women in the form of damages, wages and other financial compensation or entitlements in 2022/23 through representation alone

over  
**1/3**

of women workers have children who are dependent on their mum's income

**1251** clients

an expansion of nearly double the number of clients from 2021/22

**30**

Community Legal Education sessions to community, workers across the state, and small businesses

**68**

engagements with key and strategic stakeholders to advocate for women's employment rights

**19**

law reform submissions or participation in strategic policy reviews

**9**

resources created



# President Report.

As little as a few years ago Centrelink recipients were often depicted poorly in the media but when Robodebt and Covid came along – suddenly the real issues and the real stories of people on Centrelink payments were front and centre in the media. We have been pleased to see a little of that stigma started to fade and to be part of the shifting of the narrative in the public spotlight in our lobbying, law reform and community engagement.

Over 95 per cent of people we help face financial disadvantage and stress in the rise of living costs. Our work helps people to hasten their issues with Centrelink or challenge disability discrimination; it is often a lengthy complicated process that makes a huge difference to their lives.

This year we have consolidated our commitment to people all across Queensland. Importantly this includes the towns and regional centres we service in our rural and remote project, including four aboriginal communities where we advise regularly in community. As half of the people we help have mental health conditions, this year the successful Mental Health Legal Support tender has enabled us to help our clients in a tailored and targeted way, expanding our reach, building relationships and our presence in health justice initiatives.

Our reach in Queensland is across all programs, with 40% of women accessing our employment services from regional and remote Queensland.

Our Working Women's Queensland program has strengthened with significant growth in team numbers, helping nearly double the number of disadvantaged women in employment during 2022/23. The growth is specifically Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination.

We are still needing to secure base funding for this program. With the suite of legislative industrial changes, brought about by the Fair Work Act and in the Australian Human Rights Commission we are at the forefront of helping women who are most disadvantaged.

One of the strengths of Basic Rights is sharing and educating the community. We have been active in demanding Queensland workplaces are free from Sexual Harassment, sharing with at risk and emerging workers.

My thanks go to every member of the BRQ family, our staff, management committee and volunteers for making BRQ such a wonderful organisation. Special thanks to outgoing CEO Fiona who guided our organisation over the last four years and a special welcome to our new CEO Kara Cook – we are excited for what the next year brings!

**Claire Moore – President**





# CEO Report.

As the incoming CEO of Basic Rights Queensland I must first acknowledge and thank outgoing CEO Fiona Hunt for her years of dedicated service to our organisation. It is through Fiona's leadership that Basic Rights Queensland saw significant growth over the past 4 years whilst also navigating the impact of the pandemic on our workforce and clients.

I was delighted to join BRQ in June 2023 and have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know not only the organisation but the dedicated staff, management committee and volunteers whose commitment to the values and ethos of BRQ shines through our work every day.

I express my sincere appreciation to the President of our management committee, Claire Moore who has led from the front and ensured diligent governance and vision to ensure the core values of our organisation remain in clear sight. I have personally appreciated her frankness and support in these first few months as the new CEO.

To our two practice Directors, Sam Tracy and Jill McKay – thank you for your patience and support as we have transitioned to new systems, processes and a rapid pace of change in just a few short months. I look forward to all we can achieve together to ensure BRQ is able to help as many vulnerable Queenslanders as possible.

This last year at BRQ we supported a record number of clients with legal advice, social work, community education, advocacy and law reform.

We collaborated with colleagues from the community legal, homelessness and social services sectors to ensure holistic responses to client issues and targeted law reform and advocacy.

It has been very rewarding to see first-hand the breadth of work undertaken by BRQ and I am particularly proud of the work that has gone into ensuring we are a truly statewide service with outreach to remote First Nations communities.

With constant pressure on resourcing and demand for our services it is also critical to target services to support the most vulnerable in our community. Over the last twelve months BRQ has undertaken outreach to the homeless drop-in clinic at 3rd Space and in the new financial year will commence at Emmanuel City Mission providing on-site targeted support to those who need it most.

Providing economic security particularly for women has seen our Working Women Queensland programs go from strength to strength despite a challenging funding environment. Now more than ever providing specialist employment advice services delivered by women for women is critical given the growth in Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination claims.

The future of BRQ is filled with possibility and I am excited to lead a team that is focused on delivering a voice for fairness.

Kara Cook – CEO

# Our 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).



## 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.

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.



## Connor Wrench Treasurer

Connor has extensive experience in financial accounting and advisory services across a variety of industries.

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.



## Janine Aitken

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.





## 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. Judith's research focused on topics related to children, families and evaluation of human services programs and practices.



## 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.



## Dr Geoffrey Woolcock

Dr Geoff Woolcock is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Southern Queensland's Institute for Resilient Regions, and Adjunct Associate Professor at University of the Sunshine Coast and Griffith University. Geoff is an experienced social researcher with considerable expertise in social and community service planning and evaluation, including social impact assessment and project evaluation, social capital and community capacity building.



## Peter Ardnt

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.



## 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.



# Social Security Disability Discrimination Mental Health Legal Hub.

This year cost of living increases have placed increasing pressures on our client group and have exacerbated vulnerability and distress. We have continued to prioritise the most urgent, and those whose outcomes we are most likely to significantly change.

Our Social Security, Disability Discrimination and Mental Health teams exceeded our yearly targets, prioritising legal tasks, cohort targeted duty lawyer sessions and early intervention with a success rate of over 90% in those cases who we represented in hearings.

Social Security cases in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal were primarily Disability Support Pension rejections, however, we also successfully overturned decisions in special benefit, compensation preclusion periods, member of a couple findings, Austudy cancellation, Youth Allowance rejection, and debts. Disability Discrimination cases including in the Human Rights Commissions and Queensland Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal included for accommodation, education, provision of goods & services and employment; and an important test case in assistance animal legislation.

This year we introduced our Mental Health Legal Hub, our first cohort centred funding that spans across our services. We have introduced a dedicated phone line, with workers trained in mental health first aid and trauma informed practices. Our community engagement has built a new strong presence across the state via our rural and remote partners, community legal centres, neighbourhood centres, community organisations, government, universities and health facilities.

We continue to work closely on systemic issues with our social security peak body Economic Justice Australia, Centrelink and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. We contributed to reviews of the Disability Support Pension, the new DSP Impairment Tables, the redesign of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Robodebt Royal Commission. We also assisted EJA's Human Rights Act submissions and co-presented at Community Legal Centre Australia Conference in Hobart.

Our Disability Discrimination and Mental Health teams have worked closely with students in the University of Queensland Social Sciences research project on the experiences of handlers of assistance animals – an issue we plan to work on law reform with the Disability Ministers later in the year.

With all this busy work we still managed to continue our rural and remote project. We provided over a hundred legal services including in Aboriginal communities Doomadgee, Wujal Wujal, Mornington Island, and Hopevale. We continued to maintain our strong relationships with organisations throughout Queensland including indigenous councils and traditional owner groups, neighbourhood centres, financial counsellors, Centrelink agents and health providers.



**Sam Tracy**  
Director  
Social Security, Disability Discrimination  
and Mental Health







# Social Security Success.

## Eve\*

Our client Eve\* dated another person for a brief time before they moved in together. They separated soon after. However, for family and financial reasons, they decided to lease a house together. Centrelink accepted they were separated even though they were living together. Eve began to receive income support and family assistance payments for herself as a single person. This arrangement continued until several years later, when a change in circumstance was reported to Centrelink, and a review of their relationship status was triggered.

Centrelink determined that our client was a member of a couple with this man and should have been paid a partnered rate of payment dating back to when they first started renting a house together. BRQ represented Eve in an appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal where they concluded that the decision made by Centrelink was incorrect. Eve was found to be qualified for payments as a single person, and the debt raised by Centrelink for an amount exceeding \$50,000 was also found to be incorrect.

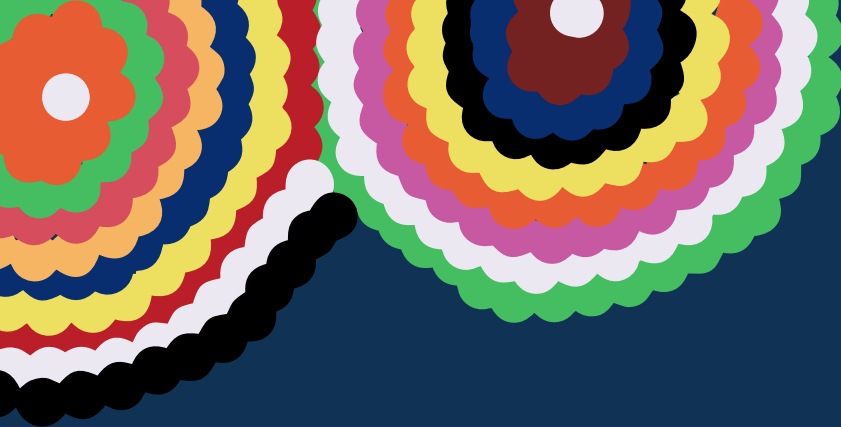
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## Connie\* and Irving\*

Our clients were Australian citizens who had been permanent resident visa holders for over a decade. They had moved from their home country to live in Australia with their children, and quickly took steps to establish roots, learning English and engaging in work. However, their social security payment claims were rejected because Centrelink considered that they did not meet the definition of “Australian residents” for the requisite period. Centrelink pointed at periods of time that Connie and Irving had spent outside of Australia and said that these absences prevented them from being treated as

Australian residents. BRQ represented Connie and Irving at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and submitted that their strong connections to Australia were consistent with a finding that they were Australian residents, despite some periods of absence, which had occurred due to circumstances outside of their control. The Tribunal were satisfied that Connie and Irving were Australian residents within the meaning of the Social Security Act from their arrival in Australia, and Centrelink were directed to reassess their claims on this basis.





## Jonah\*

Our client, Jonah experienced both mental and physical impairments but had received multiple rejections for Disability Support Pension. Jonah had submitted a large volume of evidence to Centrelink. Unfortunately, a minor detail of this evidence did not support our client. Centrelink highlighted this detail which was detrimental to Jonah's claim at the expense of weighing other evidence. BRQ was able to provide Jonah with advice about appeal options. Although the client found the appeal process highly distressing, overwhelming, and difficult, the BRQ advocate

was able to provide the ongoing support and advice that Jonah needed to engage with and persist through the appeal and tribunal process. The BRQ advocate requested and obtained further evidence from the client's psychologist and general practitioner, highlighting the reasons that the detrimental evidence should not be given disproportionate weight. BRQ worked with medical professionals to update the evidence and provide the support Jonah needed through the tribunal process to succeed in appeal of rejection of the Disability Support Pension.

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## Leticia\*

Leticia was an Aboriginal client with significant mental health and personal challenges that contacted us just outside of time to appeal her cancellation of her Job Seeker payment. BRQ successfully appealed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal arguing that, based on her Centrelink records (which evidenced ongoing and numerous interactions with her employment service throughout the cancellation period and

further, by using the postal rules in the evidence act) she should be paid full arrears for the 15 weeks she was off payment. The arrears were then withheld due to a debt which we successfully argued should be overturned due to her mental health impairments. The debt was waived in full and she finally received the arrears which she needed to begin repaying a housing commission debt accrued whilst she was cancelled.

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## Konstantin\*

Konstantin suffered from long term chronic mental health issues and a debilitating spinal condition. She received extensive ongoing advice and support from BRQ from her first contact in mid-2022 when she was in the process of appealing her DSP rejection. BRQ provided specific advice about what would be needed for her to succeed in her appeal and managed her expectations around the outcome given the existing evidence. BRQ continued to support

and guide Konstantin as she collected further evidence for a new claim and ultimately the claim, she lodged in early 2023 was successful. Konstantin was grateful for the support and direction she received from BRQ across several months stating, "I finally got approved! I can't thank you enough for your help and encouragement. I would not have gotten over the line without you and am so very grateful for your help."

\*names have been changed for confidentiality



# More Social Security Success.

## Jedda\*

In September 2022, BRQ set up an outreach legal clinic in Doomadgee, a remote Aboriginal community in far northwest Queensland. Jedda, a young mother attended the clinic requesting support with her Centrelink payments. At the time, Jedda was supporting herself and her 6-month-old son solely on her Youth Allowance payment of approximately \$450.00 per fortnight. This was despite lodging claims for both Parenting Payment Single (PPS) and Family Tax Benefit (FTB) seven months earlier. Recognising the urgency of the situation, BRQ immediately contacted Centrelink to further investigate the

situation. BRQ advocated that her PPS and FTB claims should be processed immediately and argued that Jedda should be paid arrears from the date she claimed the payments. Within an hour, both claims were granted, and she was paid arrears totalling approximately \$8,000.00. This financial support had an immediate and positive impact on Jedda's life, providing stability and relief. Jedda's case exemplifies how place-based legal clinics can make a tangible difference in individuals' lives, addressing systemic issues, advocating for rights, and fostering positive change in remote communities.

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## Molly\*

Molly had contacted the organisation with support of her father, following her exclusion from a high school event that was particularly important to her. We offered to assist Molly in drafting a letter to the school that we could give to the school before her graduation, outlining the effects the exclusion had on Molly and Molly's proposed solutions for how the school could be more inclusive going forward. In correspondence with the school, we were able to empower Molly to reach an agreement with

the school to provide a formal apology in writing, that various staff involved in the conduct would undertake unconscious bias training and that the school would incorporate progressive policies to promote active participation for students with disabilities. These changes assured that Molly left behind a positive legacy following graduation and that her experiences would not be repeated following the adoption of her suggestions in school policy.



## Josta\*

Josta 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, and was 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 Josta, 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 regular, disposable income.

Assisted by our contact at Centrelink, we supported Josta with lodging a new claim. Josta was consequently paid \$300.00 the next day, and the day after was paid \$3,800.00 arrears after we argued that her claim should be backdated to an early contact she had made with Centrelink. When we told Josta 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.

\*names have been changed for confidentiality

# Working Women Queensland.

Working Women Queensland has achieved significant progress over the past 12 months, marked by a dedicated focus on expanding our resources and programs. Our commitment to serving disadvantaged Queensland women remains unwavering, ensuring they have access to vital advice and representation, ultimately empowering them to secure quality employment and speak out against workplace harassment.

In the wake of the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'Respect@Work' report and legislative changes in Fair Work, we have seized the opportunity to enhance our initiatives. This has translated into increased structural support for women seeking workplace safety. We are proud to introduce social work support alongside our employment law and industrial advice team, allowing us to provide trauma-informed and woman-centred service delivery.

The year 2022/23 has posed considerable challenges for women workers, as the burden of rising living costs has taken a toll. Many in our community are grappling with economic participation, with working women facing a persistent wage gap of approximately 14% less per annum than their male counterparts. The importance of retaining employment, securing fair wages, and accessing flexible work arrangements cannot be overstated in ensuring women's wages move towards pay equity, and ultimately gender equity.

The expansion of programs supporting working women goes beyond the pursuit of equality; it represents a strategic move that benefits the entire Queensland community. Increased economic and social participation by women contributes to a more robust and vibrant Queensland economy. Furthermore, as we strive to eliminate domestic and family violence within a generation, it is imperative that gender

discrimination and sexual harassment find no place in our community, particularly within the workplace, which plays a central role in shaping societal expectations.

At the heart of our approach lies community engagement. We have fostered strong collaborative partnerships with organisations such as Caxton Legal Centre, Women's Legal Service, and Circle Green in Western Australia. Our outreach efforts have extended to various regions, including Chinchilla in Western Queensland and the Domestic Violence Action Centre in Ipswich, where we provide monthly clinics. Additionally, we have conducted online webinars in collaboration with CLCQ and QCOS. We are committed to serving culturally and linguistically diverse communities, exemplified by our partnership with the Immigrant Women's Support Service and our sessions targeting potential new workers in Australia through TAFE Qld's Australian English Migrant Program.

Our enduring relationship with our sister Working Women Centres in South Australia and the Northern Territory has allowed us to work collaboratively on critical submissions for law reform. While we await further guidance on ongoing secure funding under Recommendation 49 from the 'Respect@Work' Report, we remain enthusiastic about our continued collaboration and eagerly anticipate successful outcomes in 2023 through our partnership with the Department of Employment Workplace Relations.

Working Women Queensland's commitment to supporting and empowering women in the workforce remains steadfast. We are dedicated to fostering gender equality, economic growth, and a safer working environment for all women in Queensland. Our journey continues, and we look forward to making even greater strides in the coming year.

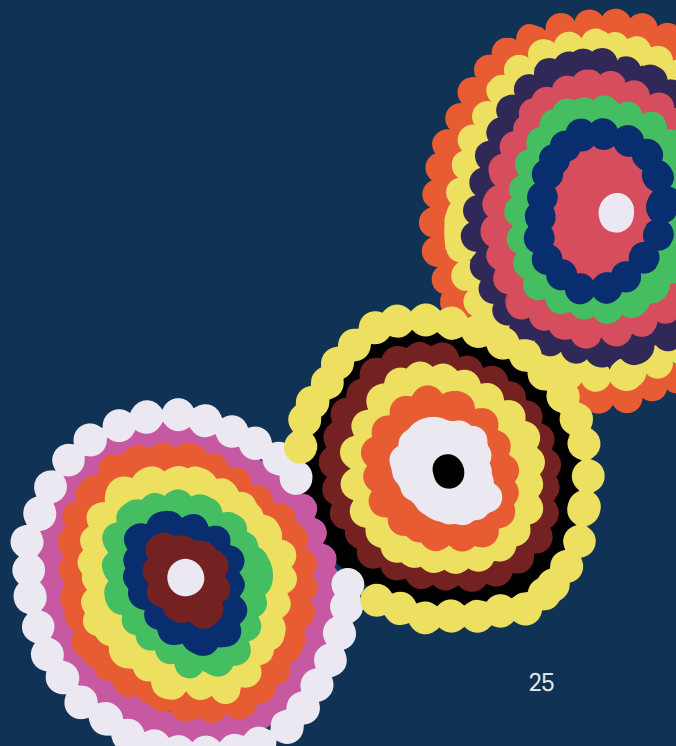




As always, the best and final thanks must be extended to the exceptionally talented women who make up the WWQ team. Each team member demonstrates care, compassion, drive and expertise focussed on changing the outcomes for women at work in Queensland.



**Jill McKay**  
Director  
Working Women Queensland



# Working Women Success.

## Upholding Rights and Dignity in the Face of Race Discrimination

### Issue: Race Discrimination

Maria\*, a First Nations woman in her 60s facing financial hardship, briefly worked as a casual disability support worker. She experienced racial discrimination in her workplace and reported it to her manager. In response, her manager questioned her suitability for the job and her place in the organization, leading to her termination. Determined to stand up against this injustice, Maria sought advice from WWQ just before the limitation period for a General Protections application was due at Fair Work.

Maria faced racial discrimination at her workplace and her employer took adverse action against her by terminating her employment after she reported the discrimination.

WWQ provided Maria with guidance on her options, which included filing a racial discrimination claim with the QHRC and AHRC or pursuing a general protections dismissal application with the Fair Work Commission (FWC). Due to her financial hardship, Maria chose the FWC for a swift resolution.

WWQ filed a general protections application on Maria's behalf, leading to a pre-conciliation resolution. Maria received \$7,000 in compensation, a statement of service, a written apology, and the opportunity to resign her employment. Additionally, the employer committed to cultural competency training. Maria's bravery in confronting discrimination has paved the way for a more inclusive workplace.

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## Empowering Sarah\* to Overcome Workplace Sexual Harassment

### Issue: Workplace Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Sarah\*, an individual with an impairment, a history of family and domestic violence, and financial difficulties, worked as a casual support worker through a labour hire agency. She faced sexual harassment and sexual assault at her workplace but struggled to get her employer to act.

Sarah endured significant sexual harassment and assault in her workplace, and her complaint resulted in significant harm at work and victimisation.

When Sarah reached out to WWQ, she was still employed but determined to seek justice. WWQ discussed various options, including filing a sexual harassment complaint with the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC) or the Australian Human Rights Commission

(AHRC) and applying to Workcover Queensland. Sarah chose to file a complaint with the QHRC to hold her employer, host employer, and the individual accountable.

The QHRC prioritized Sarah's case, and it was resolved swiftly. She received a significant settlement, an apology, and non-monetary terms that aimed to create a safer workplace for future employees. Sarah's determination and WWQ's support have contributed to a more secure and respectful work environment.

Without free employment legal support Sarah would never have been able to get access to justice.

# Empowering Vulnerable Workers Against Sexual Harassment

## Issue: Workplace Sexual Harassment

Elena\*, an international student working as a casual employee with limited English proficiency, faced sexual harassment from her manager at a small business. When she reported the harassment, her employer dismissed her complaint, leaving Elena without work and in financial hardship.

Elena experienced workplace sexual harassment and suffered further victimisation when she reported the incident.

Elena sought a prompt resolution. WWQ provided her with options, including filing a complaint with the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC) or the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and an application with the Fair Work Commission (FWC). Elena chose to file a complaint with the QHRC.

WWQ lodged the complaint with the QHRC, pushing for a swift resolution. The matter reached conciliation within two months of lodgement, resulting in a significant settlement for Elena. Additionally, the employer committed to implementing a workplace sexual harassment policy and ensured that both the manager and employer completed mandatory sexual harassment training delivered by the QHRC. Elena's courage, combined with WWQ's advocacy, has created a safer workplace and provided her with the support she needed during her challenging journey.

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# Empowering Jane\* to Stand Against Impairment Discrimination

## Issue: Impairment Discrimination

Meet Jane\*, a resilient young woman living with a visual impairment in a remote region. Jane had been a dedicated part-time employee when her workplace underwent a restructuring. Unfortunately, the changes negatively impacted her role, and her new management refused to provide reasonable accommodations for her disability. To make matters worse, she was placed on a discriminatory performance improvement plan, leading to emotional distress and economic loss during a period of unpaid leave. Jane attempted internal resolution, but her concerns fell on deaf ears. Feeling powerless, she reached out to WWQ for guidance on her rights and options.

Jane faced both direct and indirect impairment discrimination in her workplace. Her employer refused to implement reasonable accommodations, and discriminatory comments were made against her.

Jane expressed her desire not to return to her workplace. As a woman with a disability, she wanted to challenge the unjust behaviour and set a precedent for future employees. She also sought a swift resolution to relieve the burden. WWQ discussed her options, including filing a disability discrimination claim with the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC) and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), pursuing constructive dismissal, lodging a Workcover application, and negotiating a fair separation with her employer.

Jane chose to pursue a Disability Discrimination claim with the QHRC. WWQ acted swiftly, getting the case listed as a priority. They helped draft her complaint and represented her through the conciliation process. Jane received \$25,000 as general damages, a statement of service, an apology, and ensured the employer provided anti-discrimination training to staff. Jane's courage has left a lasting legacy for others facing similar challenges.

\*names have been changed for confidentiality



# More Working Women Success.

## Paving the Way for Equality in a Male-Dominated Industry

### Issue: Gender Discrimination and General Protections

Sadie\*, a female apprentice in a male-dominated industry, faced gender-based discrimination as male tradespeople refused to sign off on her TAFE workbooks. She was also subjected to degrading tasks and derogatory remarks. The employer expected unpaid overtime, which Sadie refused, leading to the tradesmen withholding her workbook signatures. The stress of this situation forced Sadie onto sick leave, and she did not return to work.

Sadie was treated unfairly due to her gender, enduring humiliating tasks and derogatory comments. Additionally, her employer took adverse action against her by withholding her workbook signatures.

Sadie simply wanted to complete her apprenticeship and work as a tradesperson.

WWQ discussed her options, including escalating her workplace grievance internally, pursuing a gender discrimination complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) or Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC), and exploring general protections claims in the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

Sadie chose to initiate the internal disputes procedure, supported by WWQ. During this process, the employer agreed to review Sadie's logbooks. However, the discovery of an alleged safety breach made Sadie uncomfortable remaining employed with the business, prompting her resignation. With the help of her training provider, Sadie found a new employer willing to take over her apprenticeship and sign off on her training.

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## Ensuring Fair Treatment for a Pregnant Diamond Buyer

### Issue: Pregnancy Discrimination

Lisa, a diamond buyer in the jewellery industry, had been employed for 12 months after being headhunted for her role. After announcing her pregnancy, she was made redundant, jeopardizing her access to paid parental leave entitlements.

Upon learning of Lisa's pregnancy, her employment was terminated, depriving her of the opportunity to access paid parental leave.

A General Protections dismissal dispute in the Fair Work Commission (FWC) as the quickest course of action.

Lisa filed a General Protections application in FWC with WWQ's guidance. During conciliation, WWQ represented her, resulting in a negotiated settlement of \$30,000 in general damages. Lisa's determination has ensured that she is not denied her rights due to pregnancy discrimination.



## Empowering Jodie\* to Confront Sexual Harassment

### Issue: Sexual Harassment

Jodie, a professional woman in a male-dominated industry, experienced a traumatic incident during a work Christmas party when she was groped by a colleague. Her immediate response was to confront the perpetrator, who reacted aggressively. Fearing for her safety in the workplace, Jodie reported the incident to her employer, who took steps to ensure her safety, including allowing her to work from home.

Jodie faced sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace, which profoundly affected her sense of safety.

WWQ discussed Jodie's options, including pursuing a stop sexual harassment order, filing

a complaint with the AHRC or QHRC for sexual harassment, and seeking compensation for the breach. Sarah, uncomfortable returning to work with her employer, opted to negotiate an exit from the business. WWQ provided guidance throughout the negotiation process, assisting Jodie in drafting correspondence to her employer. Jodie represented herself in meetings and negotiations with the employer, with WWQ providing behind-the-scenes support.

With WWQ's assistance, Jodie negotiated a substantial separation payment of \$130,000 and successfully resolved the matter to her satisfaction within a mere six weeks.

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## Standing Against Racial Discrimination

### Issue: Racial Discrimination

Jasmine, an Aboriginal woman, worked for a large employer for two months. During her brief tenure, her supervisor consistently made derogatory comments about Aboriginal people, including offensive jokes, and referring to Jasmine and other Indigenous workers inappropriately. Feeling humiliated, Jasmine resigned and sought help from WWQ.

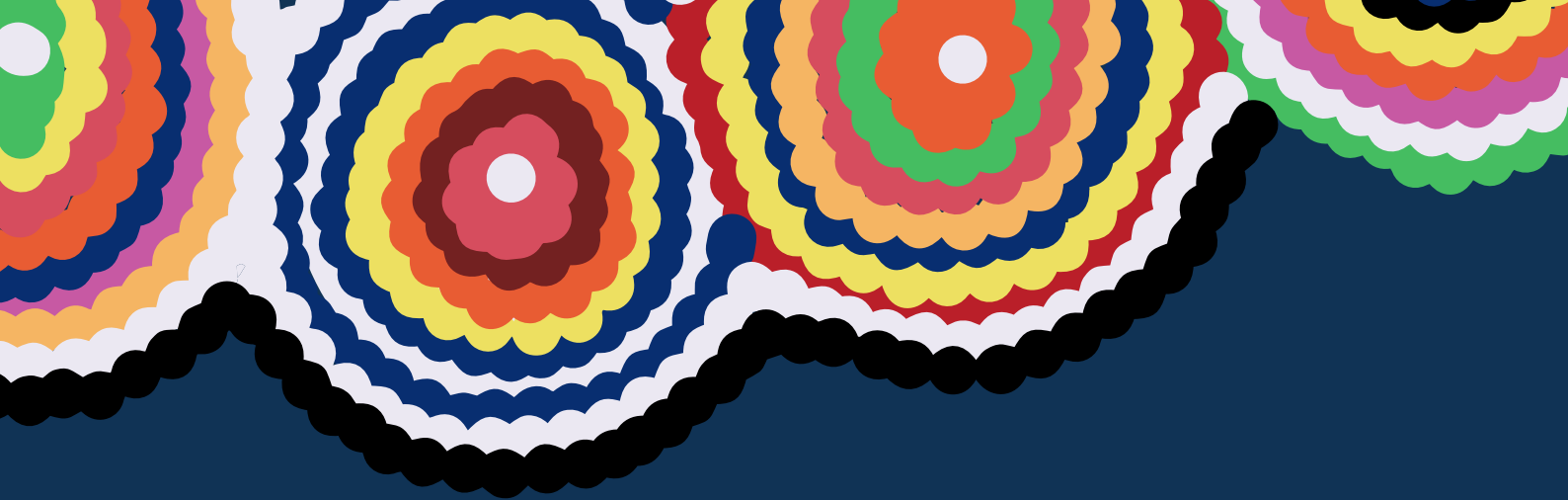
Jasmine experienced racial discrimination in her workplace.

WWQ advised Jasmine to pursue a discrimination complaint with the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC).

WWQ prepared the application on Jasmine's behalf. Although it took 12 months for the case to be listed for conciliation, the mere notice of listing prompted the employer to seek a resolution.

The employer agreed to settle, providing Jasmine with \$50,000 in general damages and contributing \$5,000 to an Aboriginal education charity. Jasmine's courage has helped combat racial discrimination and promote equality in the workplace, encouraging employers to address such issues promptly.

\*names have been changed for confidentiality



# Treasurer Report.

I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for the 2022/23 financial year.

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

Grant revenues brought to account in 2022/23 were 80% up on 2021/22:

- We received new funding for Mental Health Support and Workplace Sexual Discrimination services from the Commonwealth Government through the State Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG). BRQ will receive more than \$4 million funding for these services over the three-year terms of these funding agreements.
- We continue to receive funding for the social security and disability discrimination services through the Legal Assistance Services Funding program. This funding is provided by the Queensland and Australian governments through DJAG. BRQ will receive more than \$5 million LAS funding over the five-year term of the 2020–2025 agreement.

- Queensland's Office of Industrial Relations (through DJAG) and the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations again provided funding for the Working Women Queensland program. Current funding agreements for this program finish in 2024.

BRQ's rural and remote program continued. We are grateful for the support of DJAG and our other funders, which has again assisted us in making a difference to clients in rural and remote communities, and extending our referral network in these areas.

Delays in funding and commencement of the Mental Health Support and Workplace Sexual Discrimination services resulting in unspent grant monies, as seen in the increase in contract liabilities to \$684,234.

We thank the Electrical Trades Union for their regular sponsorship since 2006 and to those who provided donations this year. These funds are of assistance in our work to provide specialist legal advice, information and advocacy to the community.





The funding environment continues to be challenging. BRQ has continued to work towards additional funding in order to provide additional much-needed support to our clients, and we continue to look to the Commonwealth and State governments to fully implement Recommendation 49 of the Respect@Work Report.

Salaries and staffing costs are BRQ's major expenditure item (\$2.4m).

BRQ has again 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 CEO 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 is a reflection of the contributions made by our talented and invaluable staff and volunteers, who exhibit great passion, energy and innovation in delivering their important work.

**Connor Wrench – Treasurer**

# Financial Reports

## Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
<b>Revenue</b>		
Legal Assistance Services Funding Grants	1,148,650	998,445
Mental Health Support service grants	321,680	-
Working Women's Centre grants	636,517	446,282
Workplace Sexual Harassment service grants	525,646	-
Remote travel and other grants	9,091	17,500
Donations	6,947	1,003,811
Services revenue	1,500	41,750
Finance income	34,228	1,331
Other revenue	32,475	33,917
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>2,716,734</b>	<b>2,543,036</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Staff expenses	(2,394,298)	(1,336,491)
Premises costs	(18,426)	(4,177)
IT & communication expenses	(68,566)	(44,169)
Print, postage & document management expenses	(6,099)	(7,351)
Membership, subscriptions & conference expenses	(29,458)	(14,405)
Depreciation and amortisation	(85,517)	(81,421)
Training & workshop consultants	(3,451)	(5,103)
Governance & social marketing consultants	(19,923)	(38,291)
Audit fees	(7,742)	(6,928)
Insurance costs	(4,953)	(4,298)
Travel expenses	(49,199)	(6,546)
Programming & planning costs	(8,033)	(3,793)
Finance expense – Leased property	(1,296)	(361)
Other expenses	(13,376)	(8,465)
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>(2,710,337)</b>	<b>(1,561,799)</b>
<b>Surplus before income tax</b>	<b>6,397</b>	<b>981,237</b>
Income tax expense	-	-
<b>Surplus after income tax for the year</b>	<b>6,397</b>	<b>981,237</b>
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>\$6,397</b>	<b>\$981,237</b>

## Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June

	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,410,695	1,885,606
Trade and other receivables	5,624	402
Prepayments	18,448	11,131
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>2,434,767</b>	<b>1,897,139</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	63,463	52,610
Right-of-use asset	14,700	16,287
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>78,163</b>	<b>68,897</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>2,512,930</b>	<b>1,966,036</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	152,259	117,264
Contract liabilities	684,234	305,668
Employee benefits	293,995	187,510
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>1,130,488</b>	<b>610,442</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables		
Employee benefits	39,345	18,894
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>39,345</b>	<b>18,894</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>1,169,833</b>	<b>629,336</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>\$1,343,097</b>	<b>\$1,336,700</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Accumulated surplus	1,343,097	1,336,700
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>\$1,343,097</b>	<b>\$1,336,700</b>

\* Copies of our full audited Financial Report are available via email: [admin@brq.org.au](mailto:admin@brq.org.au)



# Thank you to our sponsors.

Basic Rights Queensland extends a huge thank you to all of our funders, sponsors and partners who enable us to undertake our work. We are also incredibly grateful for the support we receive from former clients, individuals, businesses and organisations both financially and in-kind.

## Special thanks to:

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Queensland Department of  
Justice and Attorney-General

COLIN  
BIGGERS  
& PAISLEY  
LAWYERS

Queensland Department of  
Industrial Relations



Australian Government  
Attorney-General's Department



Australian Government  
Department of Employment  
and Workplace Relations

CLAYTON UTZ



HopgoodGanim  
LAWYERS



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

UQ Pro Bono Centre



