

Annual Report

2023-2024



Mackay Regional
Community
Legal Centre Inc.

C O N T E N T S

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OUR BACKGROUND

The Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc. (MRCLC) was established in 2003 in response to the demand for a free, quality and accessible legal service. It was officially opened on 10 December 2003 by The Honourable Rod Welford. Initially, MRCLC operated from within the George Street Neighbourhood Centre (now the Neighbourhood Hub) and relied on volunteers to deliver its legal services. In July of 2005, MRCLC received modest funding from the Queensland Government to employ solicitors and support staff to deliver its legal services. On 18 August 2006, MRCLC officially opened its office in the City Court Arcade at 80 Victoria Street, Mackay.

Today, we deliver free legal services under seven different funding programs, employ eight staff members and operate from a larger office at The Dome, 134 Victoria Street in Mackay. The MRCLC provides legal assistance to financially disadvantaged people primarily in the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac regions, as well as delivering community legal education sessions. The main areas of law covered by the centre are family law, residential tenancy, employment, domestic violence, neighbourhood disputes, elder abuse, mental health law and consumer disputes.

We continue to grow and adapt to best suit the needs of our community.



ACCESSIBILITY



COMPASSION



JUSTICE



PROFESSIONALISM



RESPECT

OUR REGION

Our organisation services the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac Regional Council local government areas, a large and geographically diverse area. Our service area spans 90,140 square kilometres. Parts of our service area are classified as regional (Mackay Regional Council areas), with parts classified as very remote (Whitsunday Regional Council and Isaac Regional Council areas)*.

The population of our service area is as follows:

- Mackay Regional Council: 121, 691
- Whitsunday Regional Council: 37,152
- Isaac Regional Council: 22,046

TOTAL population: 180,889



AREA PROFILE

The average age is **37.3** years old

52.6% of residents are male. **47.4%** are female

5.76% of residents identify as First Nations

8.23% of residents speak a language other than English at home

* Data sourced from 2021 Census (ABS).

R E C O N C I L I A T I O N

Our reconciliation journey commenced in 2022, with the launch of the MRCLC's first Reconciliation Action Plan, our Reflect RAP, in November 2022. Our first RAP was launched by the President of our Management Committee, who is also a committed member of our RAP Working Group.

After the completion of our Reflect RAP, our RAP Working Group continued on with our reconciliation journey with the creation of an Innovate RAP early this year. We were proud to have had our RAP launched on 15 May 2024 by Aunty Patsy from Yuwi Corporation, a local First Nations group. We used the knowledge we developed by working through our Reflect RAP to inform our Innovate RAP, with a view to building better relationships with our local First Nations people. We hope to build these relationships with First Nations people on an individual level, but also to build better working relationships with local First Nations organisations. We also anticipate that it will help us to continue to improve access to justice and achieve better legal outcomes for First Nations people.

We held a stall at the 2023 NAIDOC Family Fun Day on 7 July 2023 to promote our services to the local First Nations community. Our staff undertook cultural safety training with Evolve to better understand Australia's First Nations history and the implications it has had on its people.

We continued to proudly wear our First Nations shirts, which contains artwork by Aboriginal artist Lani Balzan. MRCLC commissioned this artwork to represent our diverse and unique service area, which is home to the Barada Barna, Birri (Birriah), Gia, Jangga, Jagalingou, Ngaro, Wangan, Widi and Yuwi (Yuibera and Yuwibera) peoples.

Looking forward, the MRCLC is eager to continue our journey and achieve the goals we have set ourselves in our Innovate RAP. These include:

- Engaging in more cultural safety training to ensure that our organisation is culturally safe for all stakeholders, including clients, staff and volunteers.
- Arranging staff visits to local First Nations sites and culturally significant areas.
- Educating our leaders and management committee on the importance of reconciliation and cultural safety, so that the organisation's decisions are directed towards strategic goals around reconciliation and considering impact of decisions on First Nations people.
- Provide greater opportunities to First Nations people, particularly in relation to employment within our organisation and engaging with First Nations businesses.

We thank our RAP Working Group for their commitment to reconciliation and improving outcomes for both internal and external First Nations people. Particularly, we are grateful to Mulum, who continues to be an invaluable source of knowledge for our RAP Working Group.

MANAGER AND PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR'S REPORT



I am immensely proud of the work we have been doing at the MRCLC.

Our compassionate staff continue to provide high quality advice and assistance to our clients in a wide range of areas of law. This range includes family law (parenting and property), family and domestic violence, residential tenancy, employment, consumer disputes, neighbourhood disputes, debt and elder abuse. I would like to see us providing representation outside of the specific programs of the Mental Health Review Tribunal representation service and the Domestic and Family Violence Duty Lawyer service, however due to resource constraints we focus on where we can provide the greatest amount of impact for all people requiring our assistance. It is unsurprising that there remains a large gap in unmet demand. The cost of living crisis and homelessness crisis has only exacerbated this.

I ran a two year project with Bravehearts delivering community legal education on important changes to the criminal law requiring adults to report sexual offences against children unless certain limited exceptions apply. This unique partnership for the MRCLC commenced in July 2022 with the aim to help protect children from sexual abuse. Bravehearts was able to talk about the practical aspects for service providers, while I was able to discuss the changes in the law. I thank Bravehearts for their invaluable knowledge and collaborative support throughout this project.

Since September 2022 we have been operating the Queensland Workplace Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Service, the only community legal centre north of Brisbane to have received this funding. Rikki built this program initially until December 2023, when she decided to take a well-deserved break to travel. Aman Grewal then commenced with our service in January 2024, providing advice under this program. Aman decided to leave for a cooler climate in June. In July 2024 Esmeralda Reasbeck then rejoined our service, having previously advised in family law and domestic violence, with Rikki rejoining shortly beforehand working remotely in this and other programs. This program is due to end on 30 June 2025. We hope we will be able to continue to offer this important program.

Although remote working has occurred sporadically by necessity or convenience in the past, this is the first time it has been a permanent arrangement and has been working well for mutual benefit.

We have endeavoured to increase our cultural awareness to ensure that we are providing the most appropriate service that we can to our First Nations and Australian South Sea Islander community. This continued with the launch of our second RAP, an Innovate RAP, which was launched by Aunty Patsy from Yuwi Corporation on 15 May 2024. I thank her for her time and wisdom that she relayed at the launch. We intend for this document to guide the actions of the MRCLC and our staff, and not just remain 'on a shelf'. We hope the implementation of

the RAP will help us to continue to build relationships with First Nations people and organisations, as well as to improve access to justice and achieve better legal outcomes for First Nations people.

An upcoming challenge will be technological, with our community legal centre, along with nearly all others, being required to transition our current CLASS database to a new Client Management System. We have begun what I believe will be a tedious and time consuming process, and plan on that project being completed by April 2025. Additional funding from the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General is much appreciated to assist with us the significant cost and time required to undertake this transition.

Finally, I would like to thank our management committee, and in particular our President Justine Sturgiss, Treasurer Mark Armstrong and Secretary Karen Bonham. Mark's financial experience has been invaluable to me and the MRCLC.

I sincerely thank all staff, who every day provide a high level of expertise and compassion within an often challenging environment.

I thank our volunteers who have provided advice at our Legal Advice Evenings, resulting in the MRCLC being able to provide more legal advices to our community than we otherwise would.

Being the only generalist community legal centre servicing the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac regions, and currently the only one with a staffed office, our services are in high demand. The statistics contained within this report demonstrates the ongoing need for a free, accessible and quality legal service in the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac regions. This is particularly the case in the remote pockets of our service area, where disadvantage is amplified. There are still people being turned away or not able to gain the assistance and support they need due to service demand.

Nevertheless, the MRCLC was able to significantly assist our community through the provision of community legal education, 1,658 advices, 108 legal tasks, 186 D&FV duty lawyer services, 14 community legal education sessions and by working on 43 ongoing casework files. We will continue to provide these services to ensure that the most vulnerable have access to justice.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President

Justine Sturgiss

Treasurer

Mark Armstrong

Secretary

Karen Bonham

Management Committee Members

Kim Back (from June 2024)

Damon Boswell (from September 2023)

Lucy Guye

Jason Kirkpatrick

Daniel Lane (until May 2024)

Jasmine Rekowski (until September 2023)

Ruth Wegner

We thank our management committee for their continued support and their dedication to the effective management of our service.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

STAFF

Manager and Principal Solicitor

Jessica Brake

Solicitors

Simone

Aman (January 2024 to June 2024)

Maria

Vanessa

Rikki-Anne

Administration Staff

Janice

Katie

VOLUNTEERS

Solicitors

Kim Back (Wallace and Wallace)

James Bailey (Wallace and Wallace)

Connor Boccalatte (Wallace and Wallace)

Damon Boswell (Macrossan and Amiet)

Laura Clout (McKays Solicitors)

Jenna Cruikshank (Maurice Blackburn)

Lucy Guye (Macrossan and Amiet)

Grace Harrison (Statewide Family Law)

Emily Lawson (Taylors Solicitors)

Ryan Pollard (Maurice Blackburn)

Narada Sirichaivachakul (Macrossan and Amiet)

Justine Sturgiss (Wallace and Wallace)

Dannielle Woodward (Wallace and Wallace)

Isabelle Wright (Statewide Family Law)

Other – Law Student

Rohan Ferricks

P R E S I D E N T ' S R E P O R T



As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense gratitude and pride for the incredible team at the Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre (MRCLC). Our achievements and continued service to the community would not be possible without the unwavering dedication and hard work of our staff, volunteers, and committee members.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Manager and Principal Solicitor, Jessica Brake. Jessica's continued leadership and dedication to her role have been instrumental in guiding the centre through another successful year. Her commitment to excellence and her tireless efforts ensure that we provide the highest quality legal assistance to those in need.

I also want to acknowledge all the staff members for their relentless hard work and dedication. Your efforts do not go unnoticed, and it is your commitment that allows us to make a meaningful impact in our community. As anyone who has been reading my reports for the past few years knows, I love a good quote – for the staff members of the MRCLC this one is for you: “The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.” – Coretta Scott King. Thank you for being compassionate and assisting our community each and every day. You are greatly appreciated.

Our volunteers at the community advice evenings also deserve special recognition. Your willingness to give your time and expertise is invaluable, and we are deeply grateful for your contributions. As we look to the future, we recognise the growing need for our services and the importance of expanding our team. We invite passionate and dedicated individuals to join us as volunteers and/or committee members. Your time and expertise can make a significant difference in the lives of those we serve. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact our office for more information on how you can get involved.

To our committee members, your support and dedication are the backbone of the MRCLC. I would like to highlight the exceptional contributions of:

- Mark Armstrong, our dedicated Treasurer, who always goes above and beyond in preparing reports and ensuring we are in strong financial stead. We often say this, but I truly think our committee would struggle without your expertise and guidance.
- Karen Bonham, our Secretary, who despite facing a challenging year, has continued to provide support where she can and always maintains an upbeat, positive attitude.
- Lucy Guye, a newer member who has remained dedicated, even dialling into meetings when unwell, just so we have a quorum.
- Damon Boswell, who despite moving to Brisbane earlier this year, continues to dedicate his time to meetings via Teams.

- Jason Kirkpatrick, a member who dedicates his time amidst being a new parent.
- Ruth Wegner, one of our longest-standing members, who despite many health challenges, continues to show her support where she can.
- Kim Back, our newest member, who is an exciting new addition to the team with an unwavering dedication to attending meetings and whom we all look forward to working with.

I would also like to thank our departing member, Daniel Lane, for his contributions.

This year, we were able to utilise funding to purchase the MRCLC's very first vehicle! This purchased has greatly assisted the staff in providing outreach to the Isaac and Whitsunday communities and was certainly an exciting new addition to the team.

The centre will undergo a major change as all Community Legal Centres transition to a new Client Management System (CMS). This transition comes with increased costs, and while some funding has been provided, it is not enough to cover the entire transition. The transition will be challenging I am sure, however, I am confident in the ability of the staff to continue providing the best possible service they can while managing this transition period.

We received contract renewals for service contracts with Tenants Queensland for the residential tenancy service and the Domestic and Family Violence Duty Lawyer Service with Legal Aid, which provides some certainty with funding being provided until June 2028 and 2027 respectively.

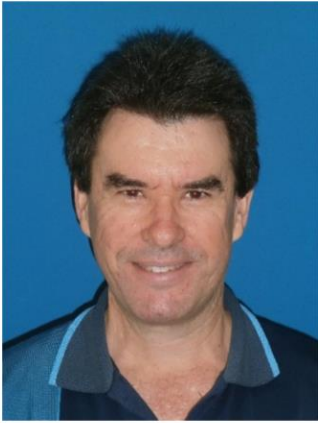
The centre also launched our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which was endorsed in April this year. You can find our Innovate RAP on our website and on Reconciliation Australia's website. Our Innovate RAP is our continued dedication to ensuring that we continue to work towards reconciliation.

This year has not been without its challenges. The continuing cost of living pressures have remained a constant struggle in balancing the services we provide. Despite these financial constraints, we have persevered and continued to deliver essential legal services to our community. It is a testament to the resilience and dedication of our entire team.

In closing, I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone involved with the Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre. Your hard work, dedication, and unwavering support are what make our centre a beacon of hope and assistance in our community. Together, we will continue to navigate these challenges and strive for excellence in all that we do.

Thank you.

TREASURER'S REPORT



The financial performance and financial position of the Centre were sound and in accordance with strategic and operational plans. Grants/subsidies were increased for all contractual programs; however, in recent years, they have been consistently below corresponding changes in the Consumer Price Index and associated operational costs of the Centre. These programs included Community Legal Services Program (CSLP) and Queensland Statewide Tenant Advice and Referral Service (QSTARS), which continue to erode the operational capacity of the Centre in real terms. Additional funding for the Queensland Workplace Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Service (QSHADS) was also received by the Centre.

The organisation was solvent throughout the year and all expenses were paid as and when they fell due. Grants funding and contract revenue were up to date and recorded in the accounts. All compliance activities were completed, including superannuation and taxation payments, bank reconciliations and funding acquittals.

Government funding (Commonwealth and State) for recurrent CLSP activities increased by more than \$18,000 (3.8%) and amounted to approximately \$503,000 (51% of total revenue). Some of this funding was carried forward into next financial year, which was approximately \$40,000 (4.0% of total revenue). Contractual funding from QSTARS increased by almost \$12,000 (5.6%) and amounted to almost \$222,000 (22% of total revenue). Income from Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) and Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer (DVDL) programs decreased by about \$11,000 (19.1%) and amounted to approximately \$45,000 (4.5% of total revenue).

Total revenue (earned income) of the Centre increased by more than \$140,000 (16%) and amounted to more than \$995,000 in total. The main change in revenue over the past 12 months pertained to the continuing QSHADS program funded by the Commonwealth, which increased by almost \$99,000 to about \$192,000 (19% of total revenue). The CLSP program funded jointly by Commonwealth and State governments had increased earnings of about \$22,000 and amounted to more than \$489,000 (49% of total revenue). Income for the QSTARS program funded by Tenants Queensland increased by approximately \$18,000 to almost \$225,000 (23% of total revenue).

Total expenditure increased by approximately \$127,000 (15%) in accordance with available funding, which was applied proportionately to deliver the services of each program and amounted to almost \$967,000. The main change in costs related to increased employee costs to achieve contractual service obligations, which rose by approximately \$126,000 (20%) and was more than \$759,000 in total (79% of total expenses). Accommodation costs including rent and premises reduced by about \$2,000 (2%) and amounted to about \$89,500 (9% of total expenses).

At the end of June 2024, the Centre held total cash holdings of approximately \$483,000 and delivered an operating surplus in the region of \$28,000, having successfully delivered on our programs and improving business processes throughout the year. The cash holdings were partially committed to liabilities of approximately \$259,000 which related to employee entitlements (\$101,000) and other creditors (\$158,000).

Nett current assets were approximately \$268,000, which included current liabilities of around \$220,000 that were expected to be paid in the forthcoming year. Non-current liabilities of about \$39,000 related to long service leave entitlements that were expected to be paid beyond the next 12 months. Nett assets and members' funds amounted to approximately \$270,000 and equated to about 3.4 months of operating expenses.

Financial Risk Management

The Centre undertook to provide reliable and accessible legal services that were delivered professionally. Supporting business processes were designed to deliver quality outcomes and minimise business risks. Key risk areas that could result in significant financial impacts included accidental injury, property access/usage, business operations, legal advice, association arrangements, electronic business systems and motor vehicle ownership. Accordingly, insurance policies were held to manage those risks:-

- WorkCover accident;
- Voluntary worker's personal accident;
- Property loss/damage and business interruption;
- Public liability and products liability;
- Professional indemnity;
- Association liability;
- Cyber operations and interruption; and
- Motor vehicle.

Financial Governance

Financial reports were prepared by an independent professional bookkeeping business, Blitzin Books and reviewed against operational plans each month by the Manager/Principal Solicitor and Management Committee. Financial transactions were processed in accordance with delegations of authority that were clearly defined in the Centre's policies and procedures. Business operations were underpinned and supported by a comprehensive framework of internal control which included effective segregation of financial duties and reconciliations of accounts. The financial systems, processes and organisation of the Centre continue to provide a high level of financial assurance to stakeholders.

Organisational Governance

The Centre is governed by a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures that clearly articulate the organisation's objectives, structure, roles and responsibilities, professional standards and operational requirements including business continuity arrangements. They were originally developed from a framework of generic policies and procedures at the time of incorporation in 2003 and later restructured into the current more

comprehensive suite in 2016. All policies and procedures are systematically reviewed and updated by the Management Committee throughout the year to ensure they continue to be relevant and appropriate.

The higher-level scope of key policies and procedures include:- organisational purpose, structure and relationships; code of ethics and conduct; professional standards; managing records and information; external communications; and cultural safety.



Mark Armstrong
Treasurer

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

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For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

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Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

Income Statement For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Income		
Commonwealth CLSP income	212,338	198,097
Less: Unexpended grant funding CLSP	(40,242)	(21,834)
DV duty lawyer	20,630	21,935
Interest income	17,259	2,231
MHRT program	23,991	33,250
Other grant income	26,968	29,782
QSHADS Program income	261,876	157,803
Less: Unexpended grant funding QSHADS	(69,450)	(64,376)
Other income	386	50
State CLSP income	317,030	291,094
QSTARS income	224,608	209,739
Less: Unexpended grant funding QSTARS	-	(3,061)
	995,394	854,710
Expenditure		
Communications	7,480	9,521
Computer expenses	16,444	13,010
Depreciation and amortisation expense	4,512	5,733
Finance, audit and accounting fees	21,408	20,440
Insurance	4,854	5,002
Library, resources and subscriptions	23,003	20,349
Low value assets immediate write off	264	1,044
Office overheads	4,091	4,863
Oncosts	19,260	(6,021)
Other premises costings	16,871	20,421
Committee expenses	249	12
Programming and planning	8,496	11,635
Recruitment costs	1,099	-
Rent	72,786	71,306
Repairs and maintenance	410	-
Salaries	666,933	578,238
Staff training	13,240	12,277
Sundry expenses	197	238
Superannuation contributions	72,832	60,431
Travel	12,397	11,480
	966,826	839,979
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus after income tax	28,568	14,731

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

As at 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	483,286	456,164
Prepayments	3	4,760	3,563
Total current assets		488,046	459,727
Non-current assets			
Plant and equipment	4	41,113	8,264
Total non-current assets		41,113	8,264
Total assets		529,159	467,991
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	5	38,025	29,550
Provision for annual leave	6	61,983	47,588
Other liabilities	7	120,197	104,593
Total current liabilities		220,205	181,731
Non-current liabilities			
Provision for long service leave	6	38,867	44,740
Total non-current liabilities		38,867	44,740
Total liabilities		259,072	226,471
Net assets		270,087	241,520
Members' funds			
Retained surplus	8	270,087	241,520
Total members' funds		270,087	241,520

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Basis of Preparation

The financial statements cover Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc as an individual entity. Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc is a not-for-profit Association incorporated in Queensland under the *Associations Incorporation Act (QLD) 1981* (as amended by the *Associations Incorporations and Other Legislation Amendment Act (QLD) 2020*) ('the Act'). The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historical costs modified, where applicable, by the measurement at fair value of selected non-current assets, financial assets and financial liabilities.

Significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are presented below and are consistent with prior reporting periods unless otherwise stated.

(a) Income Tax

The Association is exempt from income tax under Division 50 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*.

(b) Revenue and other income

Revenue is recognised when the amount of the revenue can be measured reliably, it is probable that economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Association and specific criteria relating to the type of revenue as noted below, has been satisfied.

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is presented net of returns, discounts and rebates.

Grant revenue

Government grants are recognised at fair value where there is reasonable assurance that the grant will be received, and all grant conditions will be met. Grants relating to expense items are recognised as income over the periods necessary to match the grant to the costs they are compensating. Grants relating to assets are credited to deferred income at fair value and are credited to income over the expected useful life of the asset on a straight-line basis.

Interest revenue

Interest is recognised using the effective interest method.

Rendering of services

Revenue in relation to rendering of services is recognised depending on whether the outcome of the services can be estimated reliably. If the outcome can be estimated reliably then the stage of completion of the services is used to determine the appropriate level of revenue to be recognised in the period.

If the outcome cannot be reliably estimated, then revenue is recognised to the extent of expenses recognised that are recoverable.

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

(b) Revenue and other income

Subscriptions

Revenue from the provision of membership subscriptions is recognised on a straight-line basis over the financial year.

(c) Goods and services tax (GST)

Revenue, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST), except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). In these circumstances, the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payable in the statement of assets and liabilities are shown inclusive of GST.

(d) Property, plant and equipment

Each class of property, plant and equipment is carried at cost or fair value less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation and impairment.

Items of property, plant and equipment acquired for nil or nominal consideration have been recorded at the acquisition date fair value.

Depreciation

Property, plant and equipment, excluding freehold land, is depreciated on a reducing balance basis over the asset's useful life to the Association, commencing when the asset is ready for use.

Leased assets and leasehold improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or their estimated useful life.

The depreciation rates used for each class of depreciable asset are shown below:

Fixed asset class	Depreciation rate
Office Equipment	37.5%
Computer Equipment	37.5% - 100%
Leasehold improvements	2.5%

At the end of each annual reporting period, the depreciation method, useful life and residual value of each asset is reviewed. Any revisions are accounted for prospectively as a change in estimate.

(e) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprises cash on hand, demand deposits and short-term investments which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

(f) Accounts receivable and other debtors

Accounts receivable and other debtors include amounts due from members as well as amounts receivable from donors. Receivables expected to be collected within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets. All other receivables are classified as non-current assets.

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

(g) Employee benefits

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee benefits that are expected to be wholly settled within one year have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

Provision for long service leave includes accruals for all employees from their date of employment and as a result the liability includes amounts that the Association has no legal obligation to pay.

(h) Contract Liabilities

Contract liabilities represent the association's obligation to transfer goods to a customer or complete services for a customer and are recognised when a customer pays consideration, or when the company recognises a receivable to reflect the unconditional right to consideration (whichever is earlier) before the company has transferred the goods to the customer or completed the specified services for the customer.

(i) Accounts payable and other payables

Accounts payable and other payables represent the liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the association during the reporting period that remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amounts normally paid within 30 days of recognition of the liability.

2 Cash and cash equivalents

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Cash at bank	24,957	37,341
Short-term deposits	458,329	418,823
	<u>483,286</u>	<u>456,164</u>

3 Other assets

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Current Prepayments	4,760	3,563
	<u>4,760</u>	<u>3,563</u>

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

**Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024**

4 Property, plant and equipment

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Motor vehicles		
At cost	33,836	-
Accumulated depreciation	(1,046)	-
	32,790	-
Office equipment		
At cost	9,434	9,434
Accumulated depreciation	(7,630)	(7,037)
	1,804	2,397
Computer equipment		
At cost	48,337	44,811
Accumulated depreciation	(41,818)	(38,944)
	6,519	5,867
Total property, plant and equipment	41,113	8,264

5 Trade and other payables

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Current		
Trade payables	1,886	3,785
GST payable	33,751	23,922
Portable LSL payable	2,389	1,843
	38,025	29,550

6 Employee benefits

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Current		
Provision for annual leave	61,983	47,588
	61,983	47,588
Non-current		
Provision for long service leave	38,867	44,740
	38,867	44,740

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

7 Contract Liabilities

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Current		
Government income received in advance	120,197	104,593
	120,197	104,593

8 Retained surplus

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year	241,520	226,789
Net surplus/ (deficit) attributable to members	28,568	14,731
Retained surplus at end of the financial year	270,087	241,520

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

ABN: 70 166 231 202

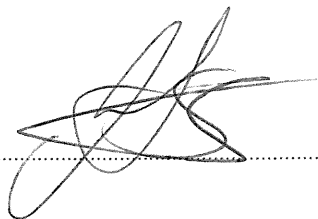
Statement by Members of the Committee

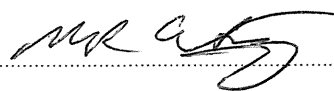
The committee has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the committee the financial report as set out on pages 1 to 7:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc as at 30 June 2024 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

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

President.....


Treasurer.....


Dated : ~~09/09/2024~~ 19/09/2024

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

**Independent Auditor's Report to the members of Mackay Regional
Community Legal Centre Inc**

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report of Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc (the Association), which comprises the statement of assets and liabilities as at 30 June 2024, the income statement for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the statement by members of the committee.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of the Association for the year ended 30 June 2024 is prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act (QLD) 1981.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

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

Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 of the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist the Association in meeting the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act (QLD) 1981 (as amended by the Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Act (QLD) 2007). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our report is intended solely for the Association and should not be distributed to or used by parties other than the Association. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Mackay Regional Community Legal Centre Inc

**Independent Auditor's Report to the members of Mackay Regional
Community Legal Centre Inc**

Responsibilities of Committee

The Committee is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act (QLD) 1981., and for such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the committee is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the committee either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The committee are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Hinton'.

Paul Hinton - CA
Director

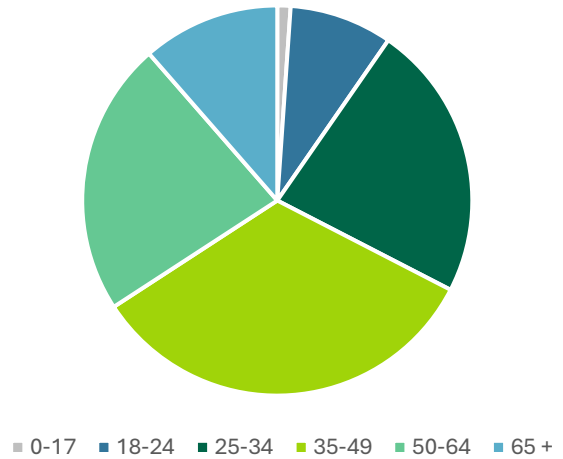
Date: 9/9/2024

OUR CLIENTS

67.6% of our clients were female. **32.4%** of our clients were male.

28.9% of our clients identified as having a disability.

Client's Age



Income scale



■ Nil ■ Low ■ Med ■ High

Nil: no income

Low: below \$26,000 per annum

Medium: between \$26,000 and \$52,000 per annum

High: above \$52,000 per annum

14.2% of our clients identified as First Nations.

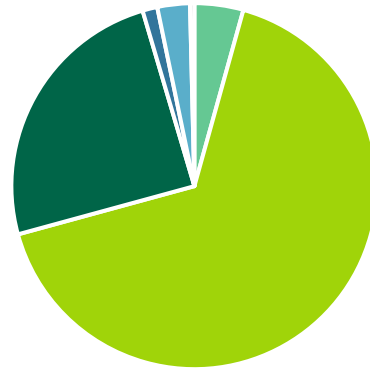
80.8% of our clients were found to be experiencing financial disadvantage.

OUR SERVICES

We delivered **6,786** services to clients in the 2023-24 financial year.

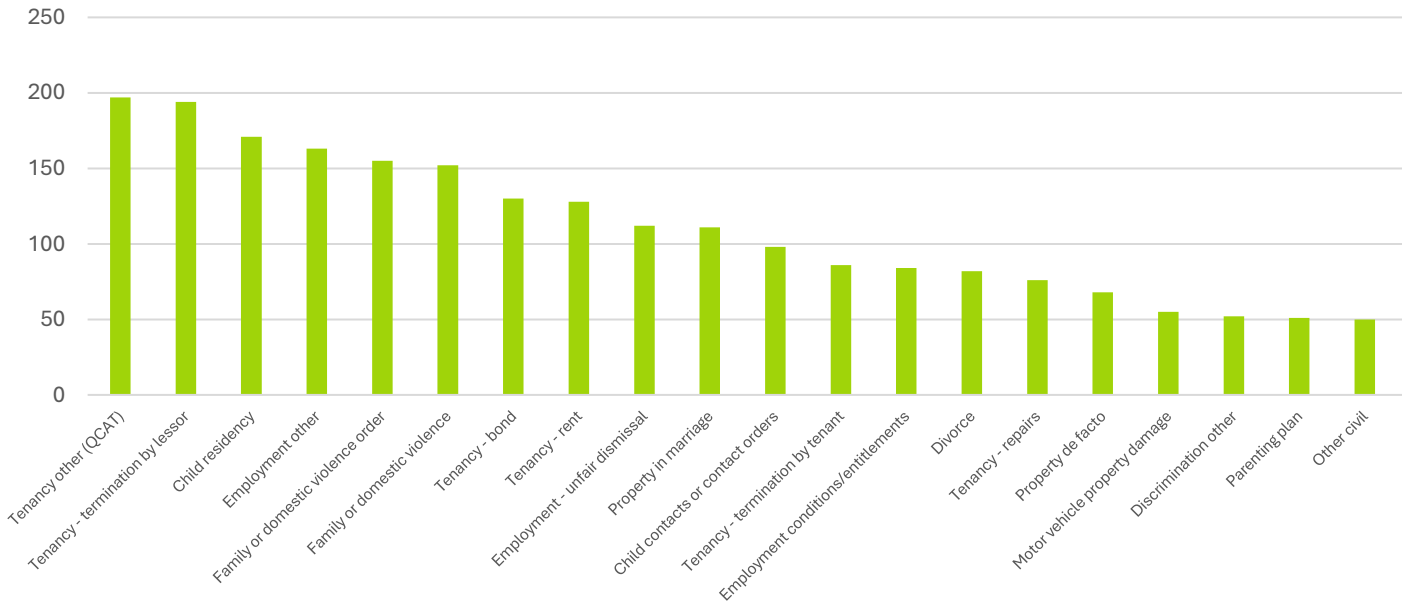
This is an **8.8%** increase from the **6,189** services delivered to clients in the 2022-23 financial year.

Service Delivery



- Informations
- Legal advices
- D & FV Duty Lawyer
- Referrals
- Legal tasks
- Closed cases

Top Problem Types (all programs)

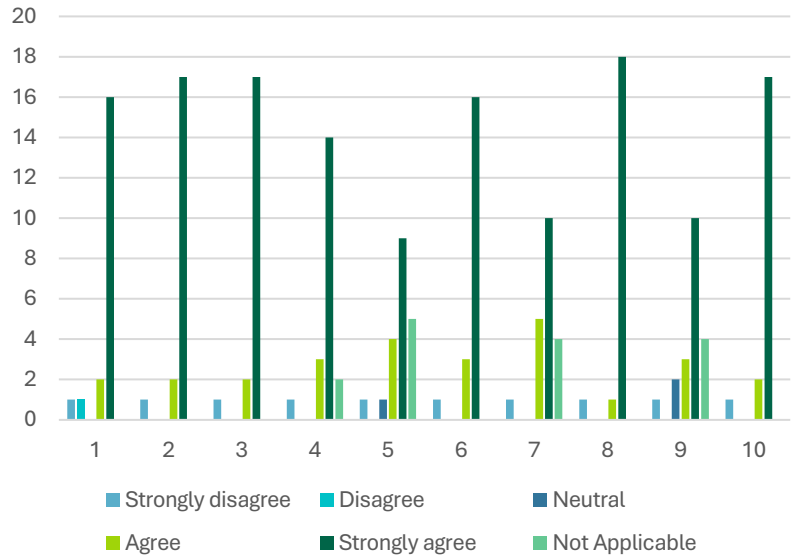


SURVEY FEEDBACK

In May 2024, the MRCLC undertook a client survey as part of its 2020-2025 NLAP funding agreement requirements. Clients that had received assistance from the MRCLC by way of a **legal advice**, **legal task**, or a **representation service** were asked to participate. **Twenty clients** agreed to provide feedback about their interactions with our organisation, our staff, and about our service delivery.

1. It was easy to access the legal centre when I first needed help.
2. The legal centre staff listened to my legal problem in a respectful manner.
3. The legal centre staff helped me understand how to deal with my legal problem and provided me with options.
4. The information and resources I received from the legal centre staff were useful.
5. I am very likely to access the other services(s) that I was referred to by the legal centre.
6. I feel confident in the ability of the legal centre staff to help me.
7. I am satisfied with the resolution of the matter I received assistance for.
8. I know where to get help if I have another legal problem in the future.
9. The legal centre was able to meet my specific or cultural needs.
10. I would recommend this legal centre to other people.

2024 Client Survey Results



MRCLC received the following positive comments from survey participants:

“Very helpful and lovely to speak with. Felt heard and understood”.

“I am very happy with the help”.

“Will use more in the future”.

“The staff I had contact with were exceptional with their politeness and empathy to my situation. Can’t thank them enough”.

“Very understanding. Not judgmental (which helps).”

OUR PROGRAMS

Community Legal Services Program (CLSP)

The CLSP is the Centre’s main funding program. Under this program, the MRCLC operates its generalist legal program, providing legal advice and assistance across a broad range of topics including family law, domestic violence, neighbourhood disputes, wills and estates, guardianship and administration, debt matters and other miscellaneous matters.

MRCLC also delivers Community Legal Education on these subject matters to the general community and to the staff of organisations. Clients residing in rural, regional or remote areas can access face to face legal assistance at our outreach locations or can receive legal advice via telephone or videoconferencing appointments.

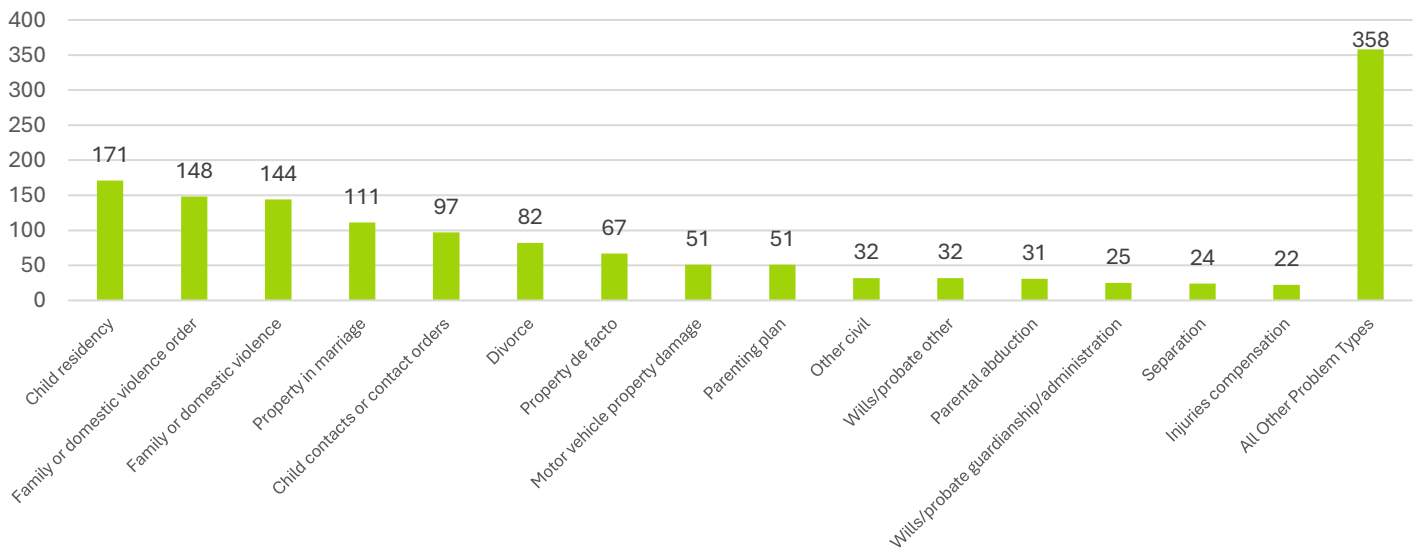
The CLSP is administered under the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP). The current NLAP will end in June 2025. The core purpose of the NLAP is to provide free and accessible legal services to those that cannot afford the services of a private solicitor. This program is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department and Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General. We are grateful for their continued funding of the CLSP.

MRCLC assisted **577** clients under this program

We delivered **3,209** CLSP services

We provided **827** CLSP advices to clients

Top 15 Problem Types (CLSP)



OUR PROGRAMS

Queensland Workplace Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Service (QSHADS)

Under the QSHADS program, MRCLC provides free legal advice to eligible people all over Queensland on workplace sexual harassment and discrimination. The QSHADS program is an extension of MRCLC’s existing NLAP CLSP Service Agreement. MRCLC is one of four Community Legal Centres in Queensland that delivers legal services under this program to affected workers. We deliver legal advice and taskwork, including the preparation of documents to be filed in the Fair Work Commission.

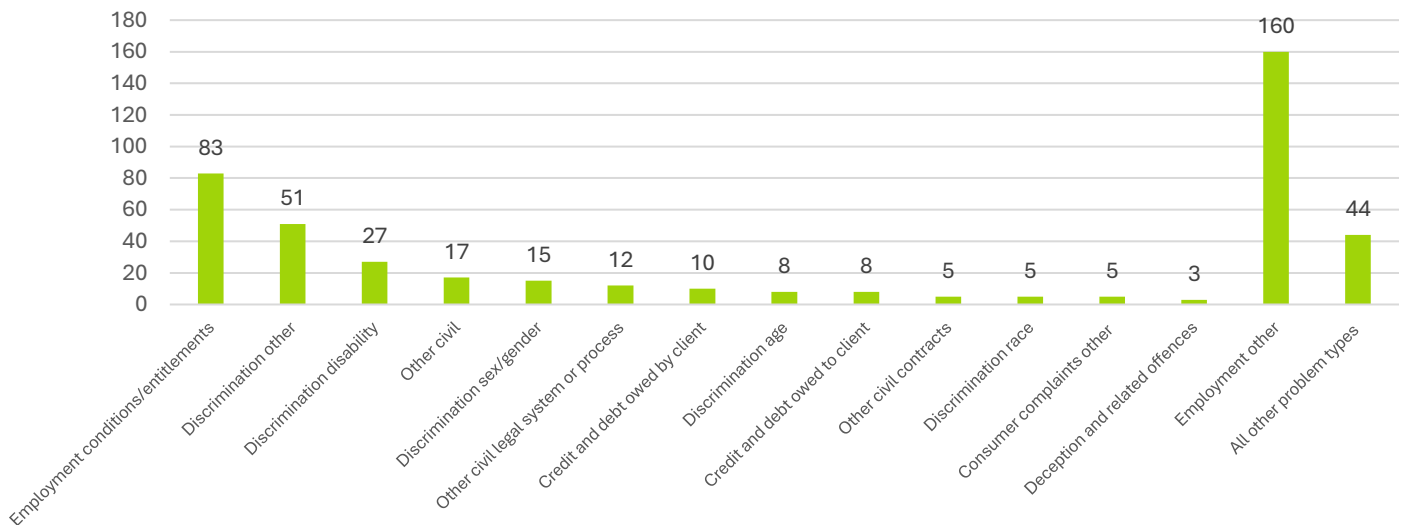
MRCLC has also utilised this funding to deliver Community Legal Education to people in the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac Regional Council areas on relevant employment law topics, particularly unfair dismissal and general protections matters. We intend to broaden community legal education to the Townsville region early next year.

MRCLC assisted **172** clients under this program

We delivered **1,303** QSHADS services

We provided **274** QSHADS advices to clients

Top 15 Problem Types (QSHADS)



OUR PROGRAMS

Queensland Statewide Tenant Advice and Referral Service (QSTARS)

The QSTARS program aims to provide a free, quality and accessible legal service around Queensland residential tenancies and rooming accommodation to tenants and residents. The QSTARS program is run by Tenants Queensland, who aim to protect and improve the rights of tenants in Queensland. The MRCLC is primarily referred matters by Tenants Queensland. We provide advice, assist clients to advocate for themselves, discuss rent ledgers, provide guidance on how to remove TICA listings where that option is available and assist with Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) documents.

The goals of the QSTARS program are to:

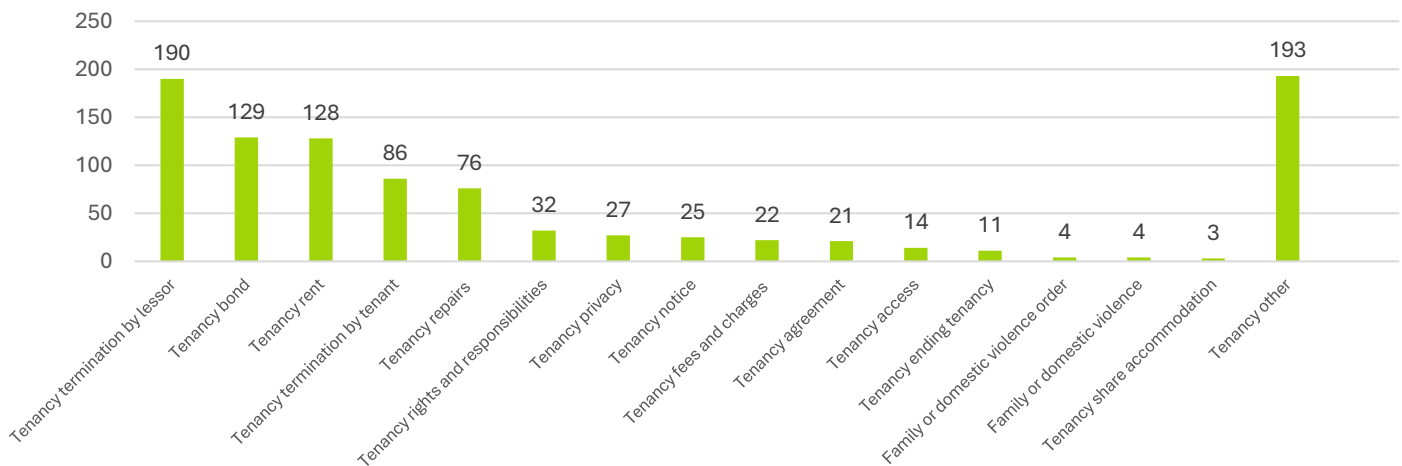
- enhance the knowledge of tenants in Queensland, particularly in relation to common tenancy issues, and how to exercise their rights and responsibilities to address these issues.
- equip and empower tenants with the tools and knowledge to address their own tenancy issues.
- increase the capacity of renters to sustain their tenancies with a view to reducing the risk of homelessness
- tailor service delivery to the specific needs of the tenant, ensuring that the most vulnerable receive more intensive support.
- provide and maintain a network of QSTARS service providers to assist tenants throughout Queensland.

MRCLC assisted **317** clients under this program

We delivered **1,347** QSTARS services

We provided **550** QSTARS advices to clients

Top 15 Problem Types (QSTARS)



O U R P R O G R A M S

Elder Abuse Prevention and Support Service (EAPSS)

The EAPSS program is an initiative by Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ). MRCLC provides legal assistance to seniors at risk of or experiencing elder abuse, or to people that have concerns about an elderly person. RAQ refers seniors they are assisting to our service for legal advice on elder abuse matters. People may also book directly with us.

MRCLC also provides Community Legal Education on matters relevant to elder abuse, including wills and estates, enduring power of attorneys, guardianship and administration and other miscellaneous matters. MRCLC also attends the Mackay Seniors Expo and other events to increase awareness for seniors about our service and the assistance that we can provide them.

In the 2023-24 financial year, MRCLC provided **23** legal advices and **3** legal tasks under the EAPSS program to **19** clients.

Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS)

The Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS) is a program administered by Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ). It provides an opportunity in certain limited circumstances for those with urgent family law legal matters, whether property or parenting matters, to access free legal advice, assistance and initial representation. Family and domestic violence must be a factor for them to access assistance under FASS.

MRCLC is able to accept referrals from Legal Aid Queensland or take on these urgent family law matters but where we are not able to assist within required timeframes, the matter is referred to FASS.

A legal issue is considered urgent when it requires that some kind of action be undertaken within the next 72 hours. For example:

- A parent intends to take a child overseas to relocate permanently and currently has possession of the child's passport.
- A person to a former de facto/marital relationship intends to sell an asset that is in their sole name, e.g., the matrimonial home.

O U R P R O G R A M S

Domestic and Family Violence Duty Lawyer

The MRCLC, alongside Legal Aid Queensland and other law firms in Mackay, provides a duty lawyer service for clients with domestic and family violence matters in the Mackay Magistrates Court. MRCLC has been providing these services since the Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer Service began operating in Mackay in 2015.

This service ensures that people who cannot otherwise afford a private solicitor have access to free legal assistance. The most vulnerable clients can receive court representation on the day, or where appropriate, be assisted to negotiate with the other party.

MRCLC provides assistance to both respondent and aggrieved parties as part of the Domestic Violence Duty Lawyer program, however currently predominantly assist the aggrieved as DFV duty lawyer. Solicitors can identify any complementary legal issues and provide referrals to holistically address the client's legal issues.

In the 2023-24 financial year, MRCLC provided **195** services under the DVDL program to **99** clients.

Mental Health Review Tribunal

The MRCLC has been providing representation services in the Mental Health Review Tribunal since 2017. As a preferred supplier of Legal Aid Queensland, we accept referrals for matters in the Mental Health Review Tribunal where clients are on a Forensic Order, subject to an application to perform Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT), or under 18 and on a Treatment Authority.

The purpose of this program is to ensure that vulnerable members of the community who are experiencing a mental health condition have access to a free and independent legal service. Clients referred under this program can express their views, wishes and preferences to the MHRT themselves or through the solicitor representing them. Where people lack capacity to provide legal instructions, this program ensures that the best interests of the client are independently advanced at the hearing.

In the 2023-24 financial year, MRCLC provided **23** services under the MHRT program to **17** clients.

CASE STUDIES

CLSP – Carjacking

Harold* came to our office for assistance with two separate legal issues stemming from the same incident. He is an elderly man living outside of the Mackay area and consequently accessing legal assistance to help him with his legal problems is difficult. Harold lived in one of the towns of our outreach locations and was able to access our services at an appointment there.

Harold was carjacked by two young people. His car was damaged and then abandoned in a cane paddock. Harold's personal belongings were also thrown out of the car. Harold was also assaulted in the carjacking when the perpetrators forcibly removed him from his car. He sustained injuries to his arm where it had been beaten with a metal pole and from his shoulder being dragged out of the car onto the ground.

When he attempted to make a claim on his motor vehicle insurance, the response from his insurer was unsatisfactory.

MRCLC assisted Harold by contacting his insurer on two separate occasions to advance his claim. We also assisted by completing and lodging an application with Victim Assist Queensland (VAQ). His insurer agreed to pay out his claim and his car was repaired. He also received a special recognition payment from VAQ for \$9,000.00. VAQ also agreed to pay \$350 for additional medical expenses incurred by Harold.

Without the assistance of the MRCLC, Harold's car would not have been repaired. He is an aged pensioner and the cost to repair his car was significant. Public transport is limited, and as an 85-year-old man, often difficult to navigate. He would also not have been able to afford his costly physiotherapy treatments, which were necessary for his rehabilitation.

QSHADS – Sexual Harassment

Diana* was referred to the MRCLC for assistance with a workplace sexual harassment and discrimination matter. Diana worked and stayed on a mine site. During her employment, Diana experienced sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace, including but not limited to comments of a sexual nature about her body, intrusive questions about her personal life, unwanted sexual advances, disparaging jokes about women and other comments and jokes of a sexual nature that made her feel humiliated.

MRCLC advised Diana about potential legal options available to her, including:

- a complaint in the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC)
- a complaint in the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
- A General Protections application, to be lodged with the Fair Work Commission (FWC)

As Diana had also suffered a psychological injury in the workplace, we strongly recommended she seek urgent advice about her personal injuries matter.

Ultimately, Diana chose to lodge a complaint in the QHRC. MRCLC assisted her by drafting the QHRC Complaint form, which Diana then lodged. MRCLC provided the advice and assistance in a suitable manner having regard to the sensitive nature of the client's situation.

Unfortunately, Diana's experience of sexual harassment in the mining industry is not isolated. MRCLC is close to many mine sites, which is one of the industries where sexual harassment and discrimination is identified as being more prevalent.

QSTARS – TICA Listing

Rebecca* was referred to us through the QSTARS program for assistance with her tenancy matter. Rebecca resided in the greater Brisbane area, and received assistance from MRCLC over the telephone and via email.

Rebecca had been listed on TICA due to unpaid rent arrears. TICA is a national tenancy database containing information about tenants' rental history. Rebecca had been renting a property with her ex-husband and their five children. Rebecca was forced to flee their home with their five children due to domestic violence perpetrated by her ex-husband.

Her ex-husband failed to pay the rent, and consequently, their rent fell into arrears. As Rebecca was still on the lease, she was jointly liable for the rent, which allowed the real estate agent to list her on TICA. Because of the listing, Rebecca was unable to secure a new rental for her and her five children. They had been residing in a temporary domestic violence refuge.

MRCLC assisted Rebecca by completing a QCAT Application and corresponding submissions to have her name removed from TICA on the basis that the listing resulted in adverse consequences. That is, because of the listing, she could not find a rental for her and her children.

Rebecca was successful at QCAT. QCAT made an Order to have Rebecca's name removed from TICA. The removal of the listing made it much easier for Rebecca to secure a rental.

Rebecca was very grateful for MRCLC's assistance. Without the assistance of the MRCLC, Rebecca would have struggled to find stable and long-term accommodation for her and her family.

* real names not used.

SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

OUTREACH

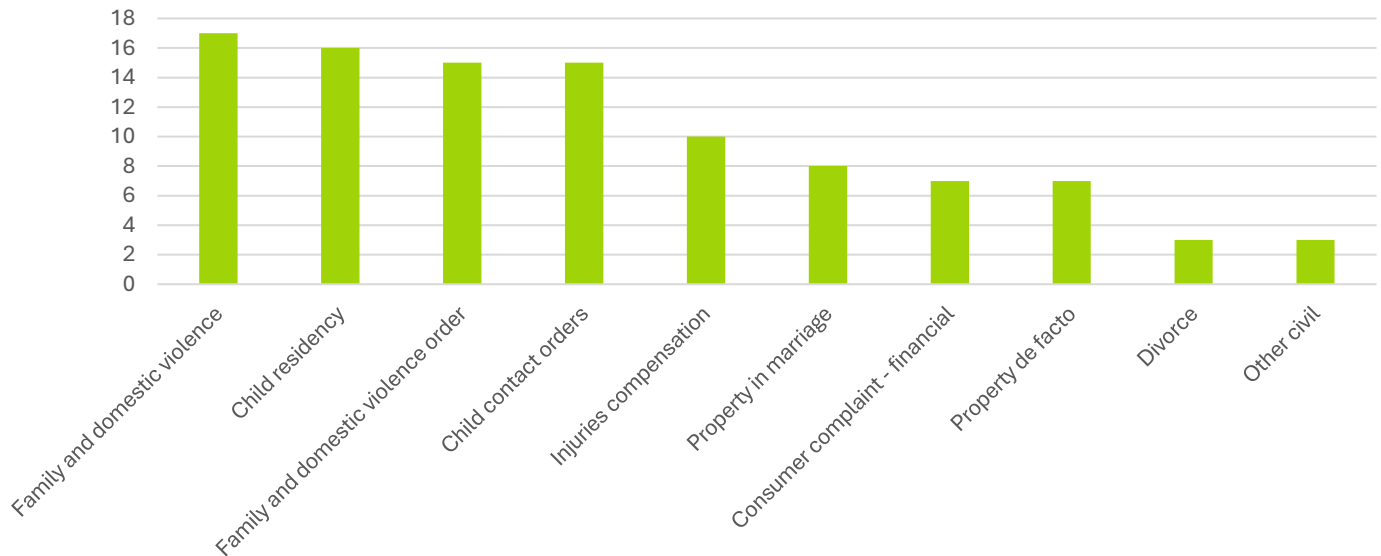
In the 2023-24 financial year, MRCLC continued to travel to the following locations to deliver legal services to its residents:

- Bowen (Bowen Neighbourhood Centre)
- Cannonvale (Whitsunday Counselling and Support)
- Moranbah (Moranbah Youth and Community Centre)
- Proserpine (Proserpine Community Centre)
- Sarina (Sarina Neighbourhood Centre)

MRCLC assisted **61** individual clients across its five Outreach locations.

MRCLC delivered **85** services in total to these clients.

Top 10 Problem Types (Outreach)



SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION

MRCLC continued to deliver Community Legal Education (CLE) to educate the public on a wide range of legal issues. MRCLC delivered CLE to both staff members of local organisations and to people residing within the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac local government areas.

Some of the CLE sessions the MRCLC delivered in the 2023-24 financial year include:

- 25/7/23 – Rikki delivered a CLE session on employment law matters to staff at Whitsunday Counselling and Support
- 9/8/24 – Jessica delivered a CLE on the mandatory reporting laws (sexual offences against children) at the Mackay Women’s Centre
- 29/11/23 – Vanessa delivered a CLE on domestic violence at The Neighbourhood Hub
- 29/2/24 – Simone delivered a CLE on Enduring Power of Attorneys at The Neighbourhood Hub
- 14/6/24 – Aman delivered a CLE on human rights matters in conjunction with QCOS
- 18/6/24 – Simone delivered a CLE on Advanced Health Directives to staff at Wellways

MRCLC delivered Community Legal Education to **189** people in the 2023-24 financial year.

A total of **14** Community Legal Education sessions were delivered by our staff.

CLE: Mandatory Reporting

In 2022, the MRCLC was successful in its application to Legal Aid Queensland for funding to deliver a community legal education sessions on the mandatory reporting by adults of sexual offences against children. The funding received was to deliver sessions over a two-year period, ending on 30 June 2024. We delivered a total of **eight** CLE sessions on this topic, primarily by Jessica Brake, and developed **five** CLE resources to supplement the sessions. Nearly all sessions were delivered in partnership with Bravehearts who provided their own additional comprehensive resources.

The 1.5 – 2 hour presentation was delivered together with Bravehearts to the following organisations: at the Moranbah Youth and Community Centre, Whitsunday Counselling and Support, The Neighbourhood Hub in Mackay, Mackay Family Relationship Centre/Catholic Care, Mackay Women’s Centre, Connected Beginnings and Marabisda.

As this project has come to an end, we wish to thank Legal Aid Queensland for the funding to enable us to deliver these sessions.

SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We continued to attend community events to promote our organisation and the services that we offer. We use these events to inform the public of the availability of our services. Community events allow us to speak to people that might not otherwise approach our service.

Our staff continued to attend Interagency meetings to inform other local service providers about the MRCLC and to promote our programs, and to learn about new services or programs to assist our clients.

Community Events

MRCLC attended a number of community events, which included in the 2023-24 financial year:

- NAIDOC Family Fun Day (7 July 2023)
- Mackay Regional Council Disability Support Expo (4 August 2023)
- Queensland Government Seniors Expo (15 August 2023)
- Mackay Regional Council Seniors Expo (10 October 2023)
- Mackay Community Cabinet (3 April 2024)
- Mackay Homelessness Expo (6 June 2024)



MRCLC attended the 2023 NAIDOC Family Fun Day

Interagency Networks

We attended interagency meetings to promote our service and remain up to date with other organisations and agencies in our service area, these included:

- Whitsunday Interagency Meetings
- Binbi Tok Olgeta Interagency Meetings
- Moranbah Interagency Meetings
- Mackay Interagency Meetings
- Dysart Interagency Meetings
- Lowanna House Committee Meetings (an MRCLC staff member is on their management committee)