

# Annual Report 2016



# Acknowledgements

We acknowledge our funding and pro bono partners, and all of our local businesses and collaborative community sector partners in the Far West NSW and in NSW that have provided financial and in-kind support to FWCLC Inc.

**Ashurst Lawyers**

**Commonwealth Legal Services Program, Commonwealth Attorney General's Department**

**Community Legal Centres Program, Legal Aid NSW**

**Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program, Legal Aid NSW**

**Dennis Roach, Consultant**

**Family and Community Services, Community**

**Far West District Department of Family and Community Service**

**Justice and Community Sector Partners in the Far West NSW & NSW**

**LawAccess NSW**

**Legal Aid NSW – Civil, Family & Employment Law**

**Local Media: 999 ABC Broken Hill, 2BH / HILL FM, BDT and 2DRY FM**

**Safety and Wellbeing Programme Management, Community Safety Branch, Community Safety and Policy Division, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

**Women's Domestic Violence Advocacy Program, Legal Aid NSW**

We respectfully acknowledge the Elders and the Aboriginal people who are the traditional owners of the Far West NSW.

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## **Our Vision, Values and Work**

FWCLC Limited is represented by the following vital-front line services. These four services are committed to providing a responsive service to the most vulnerable and financially and geographically isolated people and communities in the Far West NSW who have the least access to justice.

### **Far West Community Legal Centre (FWCLC)**

The Far West Community Legal Centre was officially opened on 18 July 2000.

FWCLC is committed to providing a responsive service for people in the Far West who have the least access to justice. The Far West Community Legal Centre is funded to provide services to the residents and communities of the Far West Region including Tibooburra, White Cliffs, Wilcannia, Broken Hill, Menindee and Ivanhoe.

FWCLC is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Residents of the Far West region are invited to become members of the company.

The FWCLC is committed to the provision of free and accessible legal services including:

- Legal information and advice
- Advocacy
- Representation
- Education
- Referral
- Law Reform

### **Warra Warra Legal Service (WWLS)**

Warra Warra Legal Service (formerly the Broken Hill Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service) was funded in 2007 by the Commonwealth Indigenous Justice and Community Safety Unit. The funding for this service is governed by the Far West Community Legal Centre Limited.

WWLS aims to provide a holistic, culturally responsive and independent legal and family support program for victims of family violence and sexual assault.

WWLS provides legal advice and assistance in Family Law, Family Violence, Care & Protection and Victims' Compensation matters.

WWLS initiates and facilitates preventative programs for long-term solutions to family violence and sexual assault. By conducting community education programs, WWLS informs people of their rights and conveys to the community that family violence and sexual assault are crimes and not part of our culture.

Services include:

- Legal information and advice
- Advocacy
- Representation

- Education
- Referral
- Family support
- Community development
- Law reform

### **Far West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (FWWDVCAS)**

Far West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service was funded by the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program in 2008. The funding for this program is governed by the Far West Community Legal Centre Limited.

FWWDVCAS is one of 28 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services, servicing 108 local courts in NSW.

FWWDVCAS is a locally-based and independent service for women and children seeking assistance and information about protection from family/domestic violence.

FWWDVCAS provides women and children with support, advocacy, referral and information. FWWDVCAS facilitates women and children's access to legal representation ensuring that women can access the justice system to overcome the violence they have experienced.

### **Staying Home Leaving Violence Broken Hill (SHLVBH)**

Staying Home Leaving Violence was first funded by the Department of Family and Community Services in October 2014 and is one of 23 Staying Home Leaving Violence centres around the state. The funding for this program is governed by the Far West Community Legal Centre Limited.

The SHLV program aims to prevent homelessness by working with the NSW Police to remove the perpetrator from the family home so that women and children can remain safely where they are.

SHLVBH also provides a range of support for victims such as safety planning, improving home security, assistance in managing finances support for children and helping women throughout the complicated legal process.

### **The Far West Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program (FWCLSD)**

The Far West Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program was funded in 2009 by the Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program. The funding for this program is governed by the Far West Community Legal Centre Limited.

The CLSD Program is a regionally-based approach to legal service delivery in NSW. It aims to improve the outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged people by building cooperative and strategic networks of key legal services and community organisations.

The CLSD Program is based on the theory that better coordination and cooperation in the planning and delivery of legal services will enhance the efficient and effective use of scarce resources and thereby improves access to justice for disadvantaged people.

# Board of Directors' Report

The Far West Community Legal Centre has had an incredible year of change, stabilisation and consolidation.

Catherine Farry joined the organisation as permanent CEO in October 2015 after a period in which the position was filled temporarily and then unfilled after Tracey Willow, the last permanent CEO, left in June 2015. It was apparent during this period that a pivotal role in this organisation is that of CEO. During what proved to be a very tumultuous time, the Board is very grateful for the work of our staff, who were able to put the issues to one side and continue to provide exemplary service to the many people in the Far West who need us.

During Catherine's short tenure many changes have occurred, including;

New Principal Solicitor Jillian Heeley was recruited to replace Mariette Curcuruto as the Broken Hill based principal in March 2016. Our thanks must go to Nina Betts for acting in a remote capacity and for continuing to provide services to the FWCLC.

The FWCLC and SHLV services moved from long term offices in the central business district to large offices in Oxide Street. This move came about for several reasons including the size and layout of the SHLV space not being conducive to maintaining client services in a confidential manner and the need to save money on rental costs due to impending publicised cuts to budget. Fortunately we were able to secure the old Skillshare building from Foundation Broken Hill at a rate that will allow rental savings and provide enough space for both services. WDVCS also moved from its premises in the Town Hall Façade to an office in Argent Street which has proven to be more comfortable, more suitable for clients and offers a secure and professional environment for our staff to continue their vital work. WWLS remains in its current premises, which appears to meet all needs of this service.

The Far West Community Legal Service has also gone through the process of changing from a not-for-profit incorporated association to a company limited by guarantee at the request of our funding bodies. Therefore all old board members are now directors engaged for a three year term each. I have been personally thankful and grateful to the small but very stable group of board members who have agreed to remain with the organisation and to be directors of the new Far West .

The Far West Community Legal Centre Ltd. would like to thank Ellen Day, Julie Philp and Colleen Riley for maintaining stability throughout this process. I am also pleased to announce that Dennis Roach has agreed to act as the public officer for the organisation. Dennis was a previous program manager of the Community Legal Centre program for Legal Aid and so has a deep understanding of what we do. He freely admits his "soft spot" for those involved in this sector, and the Community Legal Centre program.

Financially, the services are all managed to provide services within budget- sometimes a seemingly impossible task. We have had to access long standing savings due to unusual staff shortages and one historical mistake with grant funds spent 'inappropriately' to ensure the comfort of our clients at WWLS.

There have been staff changes in the past year and we have lost some people who had been with us for a long time. We have also welcomed many new staff and are intent on working closely with them, providing opportunities for personal and professional growth in order to ensure they enjoy their time with our organisations. We also welcomed two new baby girls this year which was a delightful bonus! Congratulations to both Sophie and Stacey and their families.

We look to the New Year knowing that we have faced many challenges in the past year and have fundamentally changed the organisation for the better. We may have to deal with reduced budgets and increasing need in a community with few resources. Working closely together between our services and the wider community service providers will be of paramount importance.

Our services enjoy substantial community support, including many positive working relationships with services providers, police and the business community. As organisations providing necessary services, we are grateful of those who support us and help us in our challenge to provide much needed care and support to those in our community who need us.

## **The Board of Management, Far West Community Legal Centre Limited**

**Dionne Devlin**

**Ellen Day**

**Colleen Riley**

**Julie-Anne Philp**

**Secretary – Catherine Farry**

## CEO's Report

October of this year marked an end of my first twelve months at the Far West Community Legal Centre and it has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me. Having come into what was for me a brand new sector of which I had little knowledge of prior to my appointment, one thing struck me above all else; the dedication of the staff to helping the clients and the care they have for the communities in which they work.

The Far West Community Legal Centre, along with the other Community Legal Centres is yet again facing funding cuts at the 2016/2017 financial year which will, if it goes ahead, be detrimental to those of our community who are the most vulnerable.

On a positive note, the FWCLC has relocated to provide more space, and importantly in an unpredictable financial climate, lower cost in a building which has in its lifetime been an ambulance station, a skill share building as well as a temporary home for the local Aboriginal Health Corporation while new offices were being built there. It is great that our new home has seen so much service to the community in its various ways and that we are adding to its proud history.

I would like to thank the Board of Management who have supported me in my new role.

Thanks also to Rebecca Boreham who was acting in the Principal Solicitor role when I first began working at the FWCLC, and also to Nina Betts who filled in that role after the New Year until we were able to recruit another full-time Principal Solicitor.

I could not do what I need to without the support of all of the staff through the services, in particular the administration staff at the FWCLC; to Stacey, Simon and Bianca - thank you for your dedication and loyalty to the organisation and for being the rocks through sometimes stormy moments!

Thank you also to high school students Courtney and Georgia who have done work experience with us, and also to Rachel Walker who had placement here as part of her Social Work degree.

**CATHERINE FARRY**

**FAR WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE LIMITED**

## Current Staff at the FWCLC Limited (as of November 2016)

### Far West Community Legal Centre

**Cathy Farry** *Chief Executive Officer (started October 2015)*

**Jillian Heeley** *Principal Solicitor & FWCLSD Regional Coordinator (started March 2016)*

**Stacey Jackson Moroney** *Senior Administration, Information, Referral & Project Officer (2007- 2009, returned September 2011)*

**Simon Hunter** *Information, Referral & Project Officer (April 2016)*

**Bianca Cattonar** *Legal Secretary/ Finance (started February 2011)*

**Matt Sier** *PPF Solicitor (started August 2014)*

**Sophie Angell** *Part-time Solicitor (started September 2015)*

**Nina Betts** *Part-time (started March 2015)*

### Warra-Warra Legal Service

**Shannon Oates** *Manager (started September 2015 as Intake Officer, February 2016 as Manager)*

**Eliza Hull** *Principal Solicitor (started July 2013 at FWCLC, started at WWLS April 2015)*

**Charlotte Buckton** *Solicitor (started September 2015)*

**Prue Sulicich** *Finance Officer (started July 2009)*

**Ann-Maree Payne** *Senior Administration/Resource (started 2009)*

**Lucy Rose Doolan** *Intake and Resource Officer (started May 2016)*

**Bilyara Bates** *Community Engagement Officer (started September 2016)*

### Far West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service

**Loretta Stuart** *Coordinator/Aboriginal Specialist Worker (started April 2008)*

**Narelle Blows** *Coordinator (started September 2009)*

**Susan Marks** *WDVCAS Worker (started July 2009)*

**Racheal Murphy** *LCP Coordinator (started June 2015)*

**Sandra Uhl** *Court Advocate (started July 2009)*

## **Staying Home Leaving Violence Broken Hill (SHLVBH)**

**Fiona Camilleri** *Coordinator (started September 2014)*

**Libby Matthias** *Advocacy Worker (started September 2014)*

**Sophie Angell** *Casual Solicitor (started September 2015)*

**Becky Nunn** *Volunteer (started June 2016)*

### **We Farewell, Thank and Acknowledge**

We wish Mariette, Matt and Donna the best for the future and thank them for their significant contributions to FWCLC Inc.

We also acknowledge our wonderful cleaner Ann-Maree Wilson.

Everyone at FWCLC Inc. makes a difference. Thank you to all of the FWCLC Inc. Staff for making our working lives so much easier; we value and appreciate you.

# Far West Community Legal Centre Report

## Far West Community Legal Centre Report

### **Onwards and upwards.....**

Another year, another set of challenges for our remarkably resilient legal practice! Assuming the role of principal solicitor has been on the one hand stimulating and inspiring, and on the other hand tricky and demanding at times. Through it all, the positives have far outweighed the negatives, and I have had the brilliant support of the cheerful, knowledgeable and charming administrative staff Stacey (briefly), Bianca, and Simon, to educate me in the very professional procedures which make the office run as smoothly as it does. I thank them from the bottom of my heart. And through it all, the unwavering cheerfulness and relaxed approach of our CEO, Cathy, has been inspirational! I have found that five minutes with Cathy can remove all traces of apprehension or anxiety, and put one in a state of Zen.

### **Staff and staff changes**

This past year saw the resignation of the wonderful former principal solicitor, Mariette Cucurato, whom I believe the Centre can thank for its respected reputation in the community. We all wish Mariette every good wish for better health in the very near future, and thank her for her long and dedicated commitment to the Centre's ideals and ideas.

Matt Lyster resigned after shouldering a heavy burden for a time, when the Centre's staffing crisis was at its worst. Matt's work was outstanding, and he is sorely missed. However, our loss is Legal Aid's gain, and we hear that he is enjoying his new life in the northern green belt.

Sophie Angell has also resigned, but has unselfishly agreed to stay with the Centre until she can finish off her litigated matters. In effect, she will be with us only until December, and will leave big shoes to fill when she goes. I thank Sophie sincerely for her matchless work ethic and dedication to her clients. Sophie has developed a strong talent for advocacy, and I wouldn't be surprised to see her at the bar one day!

Our new civil law solicitor, Matt Sier, has leapt off the corporate hamster wheel into the nurturing arms of a more peaceful outback community, which he seems to have taken to like a duck to water. We are indeed lucky to have yet another extremely talented and dedicated young professional in the Centre, and I hope that he will stay with us for a very long time.

Nina Betts is working part time for us remotely, and has been seconded to supervise our clients when I am on leave. We are very grateful for Nina's willingness to assist in this regard.

### **Feasibility Study into a Contact Centre for Broken Hill**

For about 3 months this year we were lucky enough to host Rachel Walker, a social work student from the University of New England, who undertook an in-depth feasibility study into the establishment of a Contact Centre in Broken Hill. This issue has been a burning one for parents in this city for many years, and has been on our Centre's Agenda for a similar time. At present, parents who are ordered to spend supervised time with their children have had in many instances to travel to Mildura to affect their spending time with their children. Judge Kelly, our Federal Circuit Court Judge, advised Rachel that the absence of a Contact Service has influenced her the orders she makes, in some circumstances resulting in no contact time for a parent where the court cannot be satisfied that a child will be safe. Clearly this situation is untenable in the long term. Rachel's work in providing the parameters within which a Contact Centre could work has provided a base from which the Attorney-General's Department and other potential funding bodies can be approached to fund such a service. The setting up costs of the Centre are estimated to be in the vicinity of \$192,000, and it is expected that income/running costs could be derived from subsidised client fees, or alternatively by making the service a full fee-paying service, or applying for Philanthropic Trust or Domestic Violence funding.

A further recommendation of Rachel's report is that her findings be taken up by a community Working Party to further develop the concept. Rachel has prepared a Power Point Presentation on her findings which is available from the FWCLC office for those who wish to see it.

### **Legal Advice and Casework**

There has been a change in our mode of service provision in the last six months, possibly due to the increasing number of clients who are either conflicted out of other local legal services, or who have pressing matters and are unable to fund their own litigation. Another reason for this change may be our increasing practice in Wills and estates, Powers of Attorney and Guardianship matters, as well as our taking on Care and Protection and family law property cases for the first time. Matt Sier has been keen to develop our civil practice in many areas, including debt and employment law, and is taking matters to the appropriate court or tribunal when he feels it is warranted.

We are consequently opening many more case files, with the result that the number of Advices provided has diminished to accommodate this. It is a moot point whether this change is desirable or not, and although the dilemma could be resolved if we had additional

solicitors on staff, it may be that a discussion is needed on the way forward for the practice. There are differing opinions on whether we should maximise the number of advices, and therefore provide minor assistance to more clients, or take on more major assistance and litigation matters, because for those clients the stakes are higher if they do not receive competent long-term assistance.

There has been a marked increase in the number of clients serviced during the last 6 months, which is understandable, taking into account the staff shortages prior to April this year.

A comparison of the Centre Activity statistics for the six months between 7/11/15 and 6/04/16 with the next six months' statistics between 7/4/16 and 6/11/16 shows the following:

1. Number of clients increased from 189 to 299.
2. Total information and advice activities decreased from 712 to 705.
3. Total cases open increased from 165 to 250.
4. Total cases closed increased from 41 to 100.
5. Total cases closed involving Court representation increased from 0 to 39.

It is most gratifying to have been able to assist so many people who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to obtain competent representation.

### **Outreach**

Regular outreach attendance in Menindee and Wilcannia has been re-established, and we have forged a close relationship with the community of White Cliffs, which we are servicing mainly in the areas of Wills and Estates, and diverse civil law matters.

However, we have not travelled to Ivanhoe or Tibooburra, or attended the Broken Hill Correctional Centre, for the last six months. It is intended that we shall establish a regular attendance at the gaol, and visit Tibooburra and Ivanhoe in concert with other services in six-monthly cycles from 2017.

### **Association with SHLV**

We continue to liaise with the excellent and experienced staff at our auspiced service Staying Home Leaving Violence, dove-tailing their domestic violence support with legal assistance from our solicitors, with subsequent benefits for our mutual clients. Thank you to

Fiona, Vicki, Libby and Rebecca for your professional service and your affable approach to our association. May we remain in friendly collaboration for many years to come.

JILLIAN HEELEY

PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR

# Warra Warra Legal Service report

Warra Warra has been working hard this year. Warra Warra continues to demonstrate hard work, dedication and consistency in strengthening the existing service and extending the service to far west communities, including Broken Hill, Wilcannia, White Cliffs, Tibooburra, Ivanhoe, Menindee, Wentworth and Dareton.

I would like to acknowledge the Warra Warra Staff for all the dedication and excellent work that has been done throughout the year within the Far West Region.

Warra Warra continues to provide direct legal and non-direct legal prevention work, which co-exists harmoniously to provide holistic services to our communities. The team work is imperative to the success of Warra Warra. The service continues to work collaboratively, with our solicitors working alongside our support and community engagement workers in order to continue to engage effectively within community.

## **Warra Warra Team Update:**

We acknowledge and farewell Donna Kennedy who was the Manager with Warra Warra. We would like to say a big thank you for all the work and support that Donna contributed to WWLS during her time as Manager. Donna is an amazing strong Aboriginal woman and we Donna well in her future.

Warra Warra thanks Ann Maree Payne for her time as acting Manager. Ann Maree is a reliable and well-rounded employee; we thank her for her time and commitment to the service.

Warra Warra welcomes Shannon Oates as the New Manager who commenced work on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2016. Shannon had been working within Warra Warra as the Intake Resource Worker.

Warra Warra welcomes Lucy Rose Doolan, our new Intake Resource Worker. Lucy is passionate about working with community and displays great empathy and resilience with clients. She has been a great asset to the service and Warra Warra looks forward to continuing working with Lucy on board.

Warra Warra welcomes Bilyara Bates as our new Community Engagement Worker. Bilyara has experience working in Aboriginal Health and support. Warra Warra are very excited to have him on board. Bilyara has already contributed immensely to the service and is currently in the preparation stages for prevention and early intervention programs to begin in the New Year.

Prue Sulicich continues to provide finance and Human Resources Support to the service. Warra Warra thanks Prue for her dedication to the service and commitment to providing quality and efficient support to the team.

We would like to farewell Eliza Hull as our Warra Warra Principal Solicitor. Eliza joined the Warra Warra team in April 2015. Eliza was very passionate about working with our Aboriginal Community and was dedicated to working with survivors of family violence. Eliza will be finishing with Warra Warra on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017. Eliza will be sadly missed by all at Warra Warra, especially missed by our Aboriginal Community.

Charlotte Buckton continues to work with Warra Warra as a solicitor. She is passionate about working in family violence prevention. Charlotte has been an incredible asset to our legal team, she has successfully managed a high case load and recently started litigation work in the Federal Circuit Court, Charlotte shows great skill and compassion. WWLS thanks Charlotte for her commitment over the last twelve months.

Warra Warra continues to provide on the ground prevention and education strategies to assist in overcoming the complexities of Family Violence. This work is created collaboratively within the team. This work is imperative to the service and community. We hope to extend our prevention programs and engagement in the future.

The following are some highlights from this year community engagement and prevention work:

- Donation of a trophy for NAIDOC Week Annual Art Competition
- Aboriginal Strategic Direction Consultation
- Delivering Crossroads and Lovebites programs to high school students
- Taking part in the NCOSS consultation
- Working with WDVCS to provide court support
- Along with other services such as Department of Health and SHLV delivering Lovebites program
- White Balloon day

WWLS has also engaged with the CWP, attending meetings in Broken Hill, Ivanhoe, Menindee, Dareton and Wilcannia

Warra Warra continues to provide regular outreach to Wilcannia, Menindee, Wentworth/Dareton, The Broken Hill Correctional Centre and Catherine Haven, and has participated in events in Wilcannia such as Family Fun Day, Wilcannia Got Talent and Reclaim the Night.

Staff regularly attend training and development programs which this year have included Mental Health First Aid, Love Bites Respectful Relationships Facilitator Training and Cultural Awareness Training. Staff also attended the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services conference in Cairns and the Global Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide in September. The solicitors attended legal training at the Family Law Conference in Melbourne.

Warra Warra is extremely excited about the future and we are working hard and strategically to sustain our already established vital frontline service for the Far West Communities.

Warra Warra has many plans and projects ahead in 2017 which we are so excited about and can't wait to implement. We are pleased to continue our great service for the community

and will continue to provide an efficient, professional and culturally competent legal service offering free, confidential and comprehensive legal information, advice and casework assistance.

We hope we continue with our vital work and implement stronger strategies to empower our Aboriginal communities to continue strong identities and culture.

SHANNON OATES

MANAGER

## **Legal Report - Eliza Hull Principal Solicitor**

The Legal Team has had a busy year with an extensive casework and advice load. I am pleased to report that the Legal Team has successfully increased its case load, referrals and advice over the past 12 months and had significant outcomes in both the Federal Circuit Court and the Care and Protection Jurisdiction.

The Legal Team has been stable since September 2015 with both myself and Charlotte remaining in our roles. I will be ending my tenure as Principal Solicitor at the end of December 2016. I have had a fantastic two years at the Service; it has been both challenging and extremely rewarding. I would like to sincerely thank the staff at Warra Warra for being such a fantastic group to work with.

Warra Warra continues to provide high quality and intensive legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients within the Far West Region.

I acknowledge the non-legal staff at Warra Warra who provides the legal team with backing and assistance in all areas. Both Charlotte and I find the knowledge and assistance from the non-legal staff imperative to providing culturally safe and holistic support to our clients.

### **Legal Advice, Case Work and Referral**

This year we have seen an increase in casework, advices and referrals across all services areas. Our Case and advice work are stable and currently at capacity.

The following statistics represent the periods between 01/10/2015 till 07/11/2016

- Total number of clients in this period: 155, an increase of 34 since this time last year. This represents 64 new clients, 36 repeat clients and 55 existing clients. Last year we saw 14 new clients, this is a dramatic increase and we are pleased to see new clients accessing the service.
- Total Number of Information Activities: 131 (this number is a decrease, however is considered to be reflection of the legal team being able to take on more new matters with less referrals out)
- Total Advices in this period: 812 this is a significant increase and the legal team hope to maintain a high rate of advices provided.

- Total Number of case work: 171 Cases were open, with 70 open cases at the start of the reporting period and a further 101 open during the reporting period, 53 cases were closed during this period with a total of 118 cases remaining open.

During this period the Legal Team had ongoing conduct of at least 16 resources intensive cases, made up for Care and Protections Matters and Family Law Matters, all of which were litigation matters and either appeared in the Federal Circuit Court of the Local Children's Court. These matters were contusive to having at least 5 of the following indicators:

1. Family violence by a current or former domestic partner;
2. Intergenerational family violence
3. Mental health issues
4. Drug and Alcohol Abuse issues
5. Literacy and numeracy issues
6. Financial issues
7. Housing/Accommodation issues
8. Discrimination issues
9. Victimization as a result of other forms of crime [i.e. non family violence related]
10. Links with organised crime

These types of matters are incredibly time consuming, involving significant investment into case management and assistance by the legal practice, and the service generally. The complexity of such matters is only exacerbated by the lack of services in our region and, of course, our distance from metropolitan courts; particularly family law courts. Despite these challengers the services has maintained high quality and efficient legal services.

Additionally, the legal team continually strives to evaluate their cultural awareness. This year following the approval from the Broken Hill Community Working Party, Warra Warra Solicitors now complete an Acknowledgement to Country before any court appearance. This has so far had positive feedback from both clients and community.

### **Community Legal Education and Law Reform**

Warra Warra continues to provide legal education to community within broken hill and outreach locations. Along with education sessions at the Broken Hill Correctional Centre, Women's refuge in both Broken Hill and Wilcannia and CLE for Inc staff, Warra Warra has completed notable Legal education this year including Family Law Road Show and Domestic Violence Forum. Warra Warra continues to work closely with the National Forum in assisting with Law Reform and lobbying to government. Additionally, this year Warra Warra were honored to be part of the Inquiry into preparations for the Stolen Generations in NSW

### **Highlight One: Family Law Road Show**

Warra Warra worked with the Federal Circuit Court and Broken Hill local Court in holding a community legal education day with participants travelling from Wilcannia and Menindee to attend. This was a free day for community to attend to listen to speakers from the courts

and Legal Aid regarding issues faced by the community in relation to family law. The day involved extensive planning and organisation over a couple of months by all WWLS staff and had special guest speakers including Federal Circuit Court Judge Mathew Myers and Federal Circuit Court Judge Charlotte Kelly.

### **Highlight two: Connecting the Dots Family Violence Forum.**

Warra Warra worked collaboratively with Staying Home Leaving Violence, Broken Hill Police, Lifeline and various other services in organising a Family Violence Forum featuring Rosie Batty. Ann Maree attended meetings and worked with services to ensure WWLS would be part of the events.

A dinner was held at the Royal Exchange Hotel on Monday evening 24<sup>th</sup> October. This dinner was attended by those who are involved in the DV sector such as SHLV, FWCLC, Mission Australia, Lifeline, Health, Maari Ma, Salvation Army, WWLS, Probation & Parole, FACS, DV Committee, Mallee Family Care, WDVCS, Mayor Darriea Turley, Magistrate Geoff Dunlevy, Mariette Curcuruto, Emily Goldsmith from DVNSW and Rosie Batty. This evening was a chance for the service providers to meet Rosie and also to network with each service. The Family Violence Forum was held on Tuesday evening at the Musicians Club. This event was held in the auditorium and was full to capacity. It was inspiring to see a blend of service providers, clients of our services and the community all come together to support such an important event. The forum allowed for local experts and outside experts in the field to speak and raise awareness around Family Violence. I was honored to be given the opportunity to speak at the forum and to raise awareness around Aboriginal Family violence.

A panel was held following speeches, this gave me an opportunity to discuss the issues of Family violence with the panel members and community. A significant level of discussion eventuated. The forum provided a platform to raise awareness and discuss issues around Family violence, and inevitably provide education to the community.

### **Highlight three: Inquiry into preparations for the Stolen Generations in NSW**

Warra Warra legal and support staff were invited to attend and sit on the panel for the Inquiry into Reparations for the Stolen Generations in NSW. This was held at council Chambers in Broken Hill and attended by several Members of Parliament, Warra Warra staff and community members. Staff from Warra Warra provided evidence at the hearing a report has now been released. The link is available here:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=1645>

Following on from this, Warra Warra have been able to continue to work with our clients who have been affected personally by this. Warra Warra staff gave evidence for over an hour and discussed both systemic and personal issues faced by their clients as a result of intergenerational trauma experienced by clients as a direct result of the stolen generation and historic government policies.

## **Direct Legal Outreach**

Warra Warra continues to service Broken Hill Correctional Centre, Catherine Haven Women's Refuge, Wilcannia, Wentworth, Dareton and Menindee

The team travel to Wilcannia fortnightly and Wentworth'/Dareton and Menindee Monthly. This year we have completed over 100 advices whilst on Outreach and have around 20 active cases. These cases consist of Victims Support, Family Law and Care and Protection matters.

Warra Warra has been dedicated to attending fortnightly outreach in Wilcannia and both Solicitors and Non-legal staff have made a significant commitment to Servicing Wilcannia. This year we have opened three major family Law cases in Wilcannia and Wentworth and finalised a Care and Protection Matter in Wentworth involving the return of a child to his family. These matters are resource intensive and need consistent outreach attendance to ensure they are dealt with effectively. Additionally, this year we have completed 130 advices across our outreach locations and have worked on 44 Open cases during this period. This is significant increase to pervious outreach work.

Along with increasing our legal outcomes in Wilcannia, the team has been working hard establishing community development strategies and prevention programs. Notably, the team has been working alongside the Safe House and other Wilcannia based services in establishing the Wilcannia Domestic Violence Interagency Committee which is currently meeting on a monthly basis in Wilcannia. The interagency worked together organising Wilcannia Reclaim the Night Event.

The service worked alongside the Wilcannia Central School, Wings Drop Inn Centre and The Wilcannia River Radio in order to run the Desert Pea Media Program.

The service continues to establish a close working relationship with Wilcannia River Radio and has future plans to work with the Radio and Central school to be lead agency in running Love Bites program in Wilcannia.

Although, I am leaving at the end of the year, I have hope for Warra Warra in the future, the service is working extremely well and new funding seems to be on the horizon. There will always been challenges to be faced by the service. I wish the service all the best for the future.

ELIZA HULL  
PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR

# Far West Women's Domestic Violence Advocacy Service Report

2016 has been a very busy and productive year for the Far West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (Far West WDVCAS) and the Local Coordination Point and this will now become more evident with the expansion of the LCP to include Wilcannia and Wentworth/Dareton as part of our Safety Action Meetings.

We have welcomed a new worker this year; Sandra Uhl has joined the service as a Court Advocacy Worker/Intake and Referral. With the expansion of the service to include the LCP we have now gone from a service with three staff to five staff member.

This has required us to relocate to bigger and more modern premises at 188 Argent Street, directly next to Warra Warra Legal Service.

The introduction of the Safer Pathway reforms (LCP) and the new Domestic Violence Justice Strategy on July 1 2015 have seen FWWDVCAS as the lead referral agency for Broken Hill and all the surrounding districts. The NSW police now refer every domestic violence incident to the FWWDVCAS via the Central Referral Point at Victim Services, while this has significantly increased the workload of the FWWDVCAS and LCP; we feel that the first 12 months, while they have been challenging, has been effective and beneficial to our clients and victims of Domestic and Family Violence. This new system sees us contacting every victim that comes through; the first initial contact must be made within 24 hours of the referral. There must be 3 attempts at contact.

***The total number of referrals received through the Central Referral Point for the whole of the Barrier LAC from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 to August 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 has been 669.***

***Each of these referrals has had contact attempted within 24 hours of being received and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> attempts within five working days. Those contacted have been referred out appropriately by consent.***

***The total number of new referrals discussed at SAM's meeting between these dates was 101. These numbers reflect referrals received from within the 2880 postcode.***

***This number is expected to rise significantly with the whole of the Barrier LAC Serious Threat referrals now being considered for the SAM's agendas.***

While we have been successfully implementing these new programs and expanding our service the FWWDVCAS are still very aware that their core business is assisting victims of domestic violence through their court processes and gaining ADVO's for the protection of

clients. We are confident that we have managed the dual roles of both the WDV CAS and the LCP effectively since July 1 2015 and have worked hard to ensure that all clients are represented by our service and their needs addressed. It has always been the goal of the FWWDV CAS (and now the LCP) to assist and allow as many women and children as possible to leave these violent relationships.

We believe that these new initiatives are reaching out to those victims who would have previously gone through these hard times unassisted and alone, not realising that there were services and support networks available to them.

As we do every year we are continually working to maintain our links with the other agencies in the area. With the implementation of the Safety Action Meetings held fortnightly, these relationships are strengthening and are more consistent.

However we are always aware that our court work and being advocates for our clients is our main priority and we focus on this by our constant presence at all the local courts in our district (Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Wentworth). We are always available and easily visible to Court Staff, clients and other Service Providers. We attend court on Tuesdays and Fridays and provide support and referrals to victims of Domestic Violence by offering them a safe and friendly environment to sit and wait in Broken Hill, Wentworth (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month) and Wilcannia (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month).

The FWWDV CAS is involved with community events and participate if we are able. We are aware that being involved in these events not only raises the profile of the FWWDV CAS in the community and with other service providers but also sends the message that Domestic Violence is not acceptable.

The FWWDV CAS have continued to work hard to fulfil their obligations to Legal Aid NSW and have attended Network Meetings and training as required. The service is also represented quarterly at the WDV CAP Workers Forums in Sydney.

We would to acknowledge that we have a solid and collaborative working relationship with the Far West CLC Inc.

As always, we would like to thank the Board of Management for their ongoing support and dedication to not only our service but the organisation as a whole.

Far West WDV CAS wishes the Board of Management, the staff of the FWCLC, WWLS, CLSD and SHLV a very Merry Christmas and Happy and Prosperous New Year.

**NARELLE BLOWS/LORETTA STUART**

**JOINT COORDINATORS**



# Staying Home and Leaving Violence Broken Hill Report

**FACT: Australian police are dealing with 5,000 domestic violence matters a week. That's one every two minutes.**

Violence against women is a serious problem in Australia where:

- Over 12 months, on average, one woman is killed every week as a result of intimate partner violence.
- A woman is most likely to be killed by her male partner in her home.
- Domestic and family violence is the principle cause of homelessness for women and their children.
- Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and ill-health in Australian women aged 15-44.
- One in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by someone known to them.
- One in four children is exposed to domestic violence, which is a recognised form of child abuse.

**SHLV Broken Hill has engaged heavily with the community through educating and encouraging people to report any incidents of Domestic and Family Violence to the police.**

## **Community Events**

So far this year SHLV have participated in many community events such as NAIDOC Week, Purple Ribbon Day, Love Bites Program and Homelessness Week (Awareness Day). SHLV also worked closely with the police to form a collaborative service group named 'Connecting the Dots' which was successful bringing Rosie Batty and Emily Goldsmith to the city to highlight the issues surrounding Domestic and Family Violence.

## **Service Networking**

Fiona has been working closely with NCOSS (National Council of Social Services) and DVNSW, putting together a template for Community Housing providers on how to better support victims of DFV with a newly designed safety checklist to help them assess how safe the home is and how they can improve the home's safety. Another project Fiona is working on with DVNSW is 'Staying Safe'. This is in early stages; it is a project with Bunnings to create a kit of sorts for women staying at home experiencing DFV. Discussions are still being thrown around but we would like to call it 'secure and savvy toolkit' with items that would be useful in this kit. We hope that Bunnings will then donate DVNSW the packs and then distribute these to any services who request them.

## **Training and Information Sessions**

In August SHLV Coordinator attended 'A New Year for Women Summit' by NCOSS with speakers such as Pru Goward MP, Minister for Women, Mike Baird MP, Premier of New South Wales, John Barilaro MP, Minister for Skills, and staff completed training in Children Safe Workshop held at the UDRH. SHLV were also in discussion with Jenny Aitchison MP

(Shadow Minister for the Prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault) at the Broken Hill Domestic Violence Roundtable Discussion to discuss a range of issues of importance to those in Broken Hill and the surrounding regions.

**Current Statistics**  
**Since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016**

Case Managed Clients 40

Case Coordinated Clients 15

Children 124

Information Only and Referrals 31

Closed Clients 65

**Special Thanks**

Special thanks to the Musician Club for their continued generous support, Sturt Club for donations, Bakers Delight for the weekly bread, Share the Dignity providing much needed personal hygiene products and Laurie Pace for the generous gifts for Rosie Batty and Emily Goldsmith

SHLV have worked as a team and provided a high quality service to women and their children in our community and surrounding areas.

Kind Regards,

Fiona Camilleri

**FIONA CAMILLERI**  
**COORDINATOR**

## **CLSD Program**

The Legal Aid NSW Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Program is a regionally-based approach to legal service delivery in NSW. It aims to improve outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged people by building cooperative and strategic networks of key legal services and community organizations.

Matt Lyster took over the CLSD portfolio in June 2015, and the Coordinator's role was transferred to Jillian Heeley when Matt left in August 2016. There has been just one meeting since then, at which there was a disappointing turn-out, due mainly to other service providers being away attending to Outreach obligations. As a result of this, Jillian spoke to Kate Halliday, the new Legal Aid Project officer for CLSD, and it was mutually decided that CLSD meetings would henceforth be held on Thursdays rather than Wednesdays, to avoid a clash with Wednesday Outreach/Wilcannia court day services. The next CLSD meeting is to be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November at 2.30pm in our new Boardroom.

In collaboration with Ashurst Solicitors, a successful relationship has been forged with a large group of White Cliffs residents. A Wills/Powers of Attorney/Enduring Guardianship workshop was held at White Cliffs in June this year, and it was so successful that a second Workshop was requested by the residents. Jillian and Matt Sier travelled to White Cliffs again on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016, and in addition to the requested Wills Workshop, Matt gave a presentation on how to turn your SDO fines into Work Development Orders!

The community is grappling with the prospect of losing the value of their mining licenses, due to a recent Native Title claim having been granted over the White Cliffs region. They have requested the assistance of the FWCLC, and we are considering applying for a grant from CLSD for the provision of legal advice from a Native Title barrister.

ON 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November, again in collaboration with Ashurst solicitors, a Wills/ Powers of Attorney/ Enduring Guardianship/ Living Wills presentation will be made to prospective clients in Wilcannia. CLSD has kindly agreed to fund this new initiative, which will enhance our presence in the town.

The Traffic Law Program is a key CLSD initiative that provides free legal assistance and representation to disadvantaged clients with traffic matters in Broken Hill Local Court. Every Tuesday, and some Fridays, depending on the likely demand, Sophie Angell (together with Matt Sier when he is needed) acts as a Duty Solicitor at the Local Court and takes carriage of any relevant traffic matters where defendants would benefit from legal representation. Approximately 8 clients per month have been assisted through to sentencing, and many more have been afforded minor assistance on their day. Our solicitors have successfully advocated for reduced licence disqualification times, fines, licence suspensions, the dismissal of charges, the quashing of Habitual Traffic Offender Declarations, the withdrawal of charges, and referrals to the MERIT program and Traffic Offender Intervention Program.

Attending Court and having to speak in Court to the magistrate is a very daunting experience for a client. Minor traffic matters, such as low/mid-range drink driving, require a Court attendance, but usually the client does not qualify for legal aid as there is no “real” risk that they will receive a custodial sentence. Clients are relieved when there is an alternative service which can act on their behalf, give advice as to the best possible outcome and speak for them in Court.

Finally, Jillian will be attending a CLSD coordinators’ meeting in Sydney on 6<sup>th</sup> December, at which time future funding of the program and proposals for collaboration will be discussed.

**JILLIAN HEELEY**

**CLSD Coordinator**

# **Financial Report**

## **Far West Community Legal Centre**

We ended the financial year with a surplus of \$82, 214 due to being short staffed for a period of time. The previous year had ended with a surplus of \$11, 401. A request is being made to keep the funding surplus which will be put into service delivery if granted.

Funding in this financial year came from core funding Commonwealth Legal funding, the Care Partner Project, and auspice fees for WWLS, SHLV, WDVCS.

We also received funding from the Public Purpose fund (PPF) which pays the wage of the Junior Solicitor.

We have received our quarterly funding on time and all debts have been paid accordingly.

PAYG Group certificates have all been issued and finalised together with all superannuation guarantee payments. GST payments have been paid and forms lodged up until 30/06/2016

Allianz provides the Service's Workers' Compensation – all payments have been made according to policy and we expect a small premium owing due to wage rises.

In conclusion we would like to thank the FWCLC Inc. Board for their support and commitment throughout the year. We also say a huge thank you to all our colleagues who have been supportive throughout the upheavals during the past year. We acknowledge the Auditors Gardiner Hall & Co.

## **Far West Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program**

Last year the CLSD program was in surplus of \$8,204. Last year the program had a deficit of \$207.

## **Warra Warra Legal Service**

Core funding has been received from Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Warra Warra's funding was all expended to budget on the most part. Warra Warra had some movement of staff in the first part of the financial year which resulted in positions being vacant for periods of time. This resulted in an under-spend in the budgeted amount. One new staff member came to us from out of town and we had expenses for relocation.

We also had a Locum solicitor for four weeks which resulted in an over spend on the line item of Professional fees, however was necessary when our Principal was on leave.

An opportunity to attend The Indigenous Women's conference in September 2016 was presented and we decided to send all of our Female staff members, which resulted in the Staff training to exceed budget. This was all approved and thought to be a worthy conference to exceed expenses. The conference registration was paid in 2015/2016 financial year.

Sundry items consisted of money spent to cover costs of Women's and Children's Groups as well as Staff uniforms.

All financial requirements have been met and have been passed onto our funders. These include the acquittal forms, audited reports and 6 monthly financial reports.

PAYG Group certificates have all been issued and finalised together with all superannuation guarantee payments. GST payments have been paid and forms lodged up until 30/06/2016.

We have an under-spend from this financial year of a total of \$85,791.00. We knew in advance we would have an under-spend and sort pre-approval (prior to the acquittal) to roll over a portion of the funds for an employment position. This was approved. We will also request to retain the remaining amount, for various items, supplies and projects.

Warra Warra's funding has been extended until June 2018. Additionally, recent announcements under the Third Action Plan indicate that further funding will be allocated to services like Warra Warra. We are yet to hear the details regarding this.

## **Far West Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service**

The core funding has been expended and the service has ended the year with a surplus of \$20 951 with last year ending with a deficit of \$10 469. FWWDVCAS has been enhanced this year with additional funding.

PAYG Group certificates have all been issued and finalised together with all superannuation guarantee payments. GST payments have been paid and forms lodged up until 30/06/2016.

## **Staying Home Leaving Violence Broken Hill**

This service has run at a surplus of \$931. Last year it ran at a surplus of \$12695.

PAYG Group certificates have all been issued and finalised together with all superannuation guarantee payments. GST payments have been paid and forms lodged up until 30/06/2016



