

# Annual Report

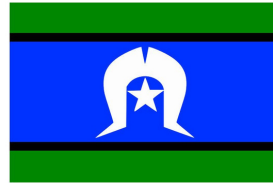
SOUTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE



**SOUTH WEST**

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE INC





SWCLC acknowledges the traditional custodians of the South West of Western Australia, the Wardandi People of the Noongar Nation, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waterways and community.

We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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# ABOUT US

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## South West Community Legal Centre Inc.

South West Community Legal Centre Inc. ("SWCLC") is a not for profit community legal centre which provides legal advice and assistance to disadvantaged and vulnerable clients throughout the South West of Western Australia. Our service commenced in 1989 with a weekly pro bono legal clinic offered by local private practitioners. Our service has continued to grow and today we employ 17 staff across our legal and administrative teams. We deliver most of our services from our Bunbury office. We also undertake outreach services at a number of locations throughout the South West, and provide duty lawyer services at the Magistrates Court and Family Court of Western Australia Bunbury circuit.

SWCLC is a generalist service, providing advice on many areas of law. However, our primary practice areas are family law; including parenting arrangements, child support issues and property settlement, and civil law; including restraining orders, criminal injuries compensation, and consumer and debt issues. SWCLC also regularly presents Community Legal Education to the public, community groups and schools, on topics such as family law, future planning (wills, powers of attorney and powers of guardianship), restraining orders, and legal information for young people.

SWCLC currently receives funding from the Commonwealth and State Governments, and through grants from the Law Society of WA Public Purposes Trust, in addition to one-off grants for smaller projects. SWCLC undertakes a range of projects, and manages the reporting and acquitting of several funding streams, to achieve individual program objectives and client outcomes.



# FUNDERS AND GRANT PROVIDERS

The Board of Management and staff of South West Community Legal Centre Inc. gratefully acknowledge the support of grants and funding from:

Western Australian Department of Justice  
Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department

Legal Aid Western Australia

Family Advocacy & Support Services

The Law Society of Western Australia - Public Purposes Trust

Shire of Capel

Bunbury Zonta Club

Chef's Long Table Luncheon

Lotterywest

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

South West Development Commission

Public Purposes Trust

FAMILY  
ADVOCACY  
& SUPPORT  
SERVICES

The Law Society<sup>®</sup>  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
The voice of the legal profession in Western Australia



# OUR PARTNERSHIPS

We would also like to thank and acknowledge the many agencies we have worked with this year



Waratah Support Centre

South West Refuge Inc.

Advocacy WA Inc.

Legal Aid WA

Community Legal WA

Community Legal Centres Australia

Bunbury Regional Prison

South West Law Society

Volunteer South West

Bunbury Zonta Club

Chef's Long Table Luncheon

Shire of Capel

Maaladjiny



SOUTH WEST REFUGE INC





## **OUR VISION**

Equal Access to Justice for all

## **OUR MISSION**

To empower our community to achieve  
fair legal outcomes

## **OUR VALUES**

Courage, Compassion and commitment

SOUTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE INC.

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2021 - 2024



### **Service Delivery**

To achieve the greatest impact and best outcomes for the clients within our community.



### **Expertise & Influence**

Increase and enhance our reputation as a critical service and leader within our local communities.



### **People & Culture**

To build and retain an engaged, skilled and diverse workforce.



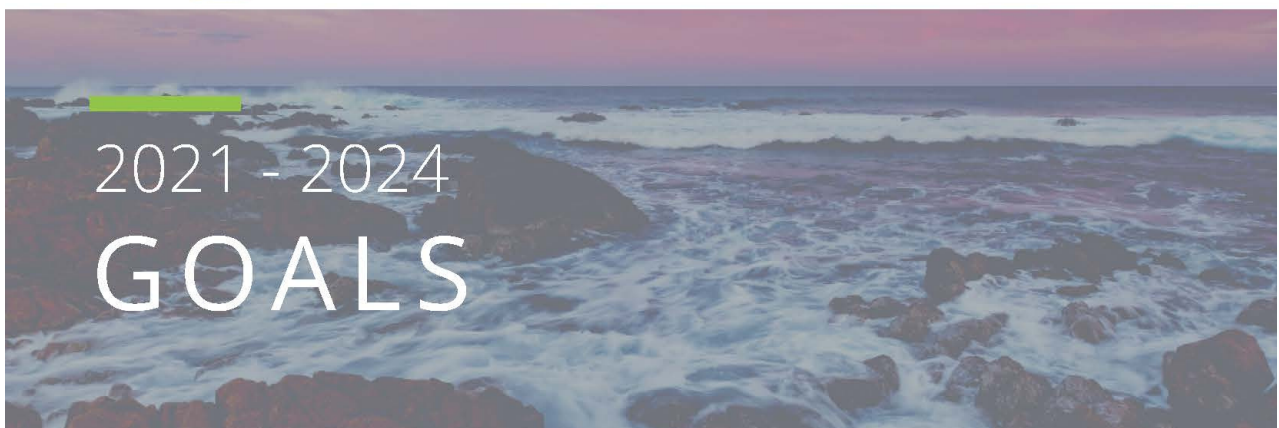
### **Financial Management**

To develop a financial business model that ensures sustainability of the organisation.



### **Governance**

To have effective and transparent governance, led by a diverse, skilled and connected board.



# BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

2020 - 2021

Jenny P  
**Board Chair**



Sue D  
**Treasurer**



Carolyn N  
**Deputy Board  
Chair**



Nadia H  
**Board Member**



Karen M  
**Secretary**



Georgia W  
**Board Member**



Rebecca H  
**Board Member**



Eleanor Y  
**Board Member  
Ex officio**



2020-2021 has been a tumultuous year. As well as COVID, SWCLC has had to handle a major board re-structure, significant staff changes, introduction of a brand new funding model, a pivot to case based work and the relentless continued growth in need for services.

## Board Re-constitution

Within a few months of the start of the year our board situation changed dramatically. All board members (bar three, Nadia, Eleanor, SWCLC's Managing Principal Solicitor, and myself) were overcome by life circumstances and needed to tender their resignations from the board.

It was imperative to replenish the SWCLC board quickly, in order to regain a quorum, and provide stewardship and support for the organisation.

I'm thrilled to say that within a short period of time the Board was fully re-constituted with a rich and diverse group of five new members.

SWCLC managed to attract Carolyn, early into her retirement as a school principal, to act as the Deputy Chair. Carolyn has done a much valued job in that role, in particular guiding the completion and implementation phase of SWCLC's Strategic Plan. SWCLC enticed a former Treasurer, Sue, to return to the board as Treasurer. Sue hit the ground running and remains a force of nature. A board secretarial role is always a demanding job. Karen graciously assumed the role and has become one of our key assets.

SWCLC's 2020 Strategic Plan required SWCLC to develop its inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). How lucky we were to secure Rebecca as a board member. Rebecca works as a consultant, specialising in aboriginal engagement and leadership. With her bespoke knowledge and experience Bec was able to drive the development and conclusion of the RAP process in a timely, knowledgeable and sensitive manner. Our newest board member is Georgia. Georgia is a lawyer who practises in the private sector. Georgia has a heartfelt commitment to social justice and manages her firm's pro bono legal service. We are very lucky to have Georgia join us.

I thank each of the former board members who retired during 2020, as well as the continuing board members (Nadia and Eleanor) and the new board members, for their contribution and dedication to SWCLC and its mission.

## Significant Funding Changes

In an unexpected turn COVID has slightly improved SWCLC's funding position. At an operational level our staff adapted quickly, flexibly and economically to working in a COVID safe way. This has allowed us to direct additional and targeted "COVID funding" to new and innovative service delivery. It has also enabled us to revert to a full, 5 day a week service, from a 4 day a week service.

Until 2020 the Federal and WA State Governments had funded SWCLC indirectly, via Legal Aid, WA. In 2020 we received notice that this funding model would be replaced by a different funding model. The Federal and State Governments decided to fund CLC's via the WA Department of Justice (DOJ), in place of Legal Aid. With in depth knowledge of service demand across WA, DOJ quickly recognised that SWCLC was not one of the better funded community legal centres in the State. We are confident DOJ will move to rectify this situation on an equitable basis. SWCLC is also grateful to DOJ for their preparedness to accept a shift in performance and contract reporting to a client based service delivery model.

## FDV Hub

In 2020 the State Government introduced one metropolitan and one regional FDV "hub". In the lead up to the State election, the State Government committed to establish two more hubs; one in a metropolitan area and one in a regional area.

SWCLC acted quickly to signal its interest in leading or participating in the establishment of an FDV hub for the South-West, based in Bunbury. A letter, supported by the Minister for Disability Services, Innovation and ICT, and Fisheries, the Hon Don Punch, and our key consortia partners, was promptly despatched to the Minister for Child Protection, Women's Interests, Prevention of Family and Domestic, the Hon Simone McGurk, expressing our keen interest.

Given the incidence of FDV across the State we appreciate it will be a competitive task to win the regional FDV hub based in Bunbury. With the support of the City of Bunbury, our key consortia partners and our local Bunbury based Minister, the Hon Don Punch, we are confident SWCLC will be a serious contender.

## Improved Security for Staff and Clients

It's taken time and required targeted fundraising, but I'm pleased to say we have initiated improved security measures for our staff, clients and visitors in the Bunbury office. A new automated security front door, and window screening, will go some way towards reducing the safety risks that our staff and invitees confront when they attend the office.

Particular thanks to Minister Punch for his strong support and funding assistance with the improved security measures.

## Board Highlights

The Board highlights for the 2020-2021 year have been the conclusion of SWCLC's new Strategic Plan and the development of our inaugural RAP.

## Managing Principal Solicitor

Our tumultuous year was handled with grace, calm and significant professional expertise by our Managing Principal Solicitor, Eleanor.

Mid-way through the year Eleanor flagged her intention to take long service and accumulated holiday leave from 1 July 2021. Working in the family law and FDV space takes its toll and Eleanor wisely decided to take some time out to rest and refresh. This necessitated planning for Eleanor's replacement.

Eleanor nominated one of SWCLC's senior lawyers, Lauren, as her acting successor. Towards the end of the 2020-2021 year the Board and Lauren commenced to work together more closely. Lauren has proved to be an accomplished acting MPS. Like Eleanor she brings grace, calm and significant professional expertise to the role.

How lucky we are to have such depth of quality in our professional staff ranks that the change of MPS was achieved so easily.

## Summary

The legal areas that SWCLC specialises in, family law and FDV, continue to grow as family breakdown and domestic violence continue to grow.

Unfortunately containment and reduction strategies are complex, long term commitments. Our legal and support staff work in the here and now and within the constraints of the legal system. Demand for their professional services grows constantly and the level of complexity and trauma their clients experience is ever increasing. FDV and family breakdown is often exacerbated by drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, economic hardship and homelessness.

Our role as a community legal service isn't to contain or prevent the incidence of family breakdown and FDV, rather to advise our clients of their legal rights and assist them to access and navigate the court system, or to access it on their behalf.

Our lawyers provide that service with professional expertise. They also provide service with kindness and care, according our clients the dignity they deserve. Our support staff do too, working hard to link our clients to complimentary emotional, financial, housing, counselling and related services.

The work our staff does inspires the board. On behalf of the board I thank each of them and salute them for their commitment to assist those in need.

I also acknowledge and thank our funders, in particular the Commonwealth and State governments, as well as the various organisations across the South-West who we work in tandem with to protect, defend and support those in need.

*Jenny*  
**Board Chair**



# OUR TEAM

2020 - 2021



Eleanor Y  
**Managing Principal  
Solicitor**



Lauren H  
**Senior Solicitor**



Ginny R  
**Senior Solicitor**



Samantha B  
**Senior Solicitor**



Renée T  
**Senior Solicitor**



Daniel I  
**Solicitor**



Vicky M  
**Senior Bookkeeper**



Jess C  
**Executive Assistant**

# OUR TEAM

2020 - 2021



Amy C  
**Solicitor**



Michelle G  
**Solicitor**



Amanda J  
**Tenancy Advocate**



Inge S  
**Paralegal**



Michael N  
**HR/ Office Manager**



Sarah W  
**Administration  
Officer**



Tahleisha M  
**Administration  
Officer**



Amber S  
**Administration  
Trainee**

# Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

It is our pleasure to report on the progress of the South West Community Legal Centre Inc. ('SWCLC') during the 2020/2021 year. It was a year of many changes both outside our organisation and within. The effects of the coronavirus pandemic continued to ripple through our communities and our centre, and adaptive new practices evolved in its wake.

## Board

2021 brought a new-look Board, an invigorated strategic direction, new faces in our staffing line-up and new funding opportunities.

We would personally like to thank the outgoing Board members, Carol , Maggie , Ntuthoko ("NT"), Rosemary and Jaysen for their incredible, and generous support to SWCLC. They have given wisdom, enthusiasm and leadership to our organisation and we would not be in the strong position we are today without their backing. We also particularly thank Carol, Maggie and Jaysen for their additional service as Board Chair, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.



Carol



Maggie



NT



Rosemary



Jaysen

We are fortunate our industrious Board Chair, Jenny was able to lead a fantastic recruitment drive, sourcing several new, highly qualified and passionate Board Members to join our team. Thank you to Rebecca H, Carolyn, Karen, Georgia and Nadia for joining us in our journey to address disadvantage in the South West. We especially note that Carolyn, Karen and Rebecca have taken on additional duties as Deputy Chair, Secretary and Reconciliation Action Planning Board Member Representative, respectively. We also welcome back Sue, who resumes the role of Treasurer. Sue has a highly developed business acumen and a wealth of experience with accounting roles.

Each of these Board members has gifted our centre with compassion, expertise, commitment, and a passion to address social inequality. As a centre, we are incredibly blessed to be led by such a wonderful, connected fraternity of social advocates. We thank each of you for your service. We also would like to acknowledge the immense efforts of our Board Chair, Jenny. Jenny's quick mind, eloquence, unbelievable memory, burning desire for improvement and mettle to take on challenges has seen her lead by example throughout 2021. Thank you for your invaluable support.

# Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

## Staffing Changes

Sadly, we farewelled long standing staff member, Angela, who begins a new chapter in her career. Angela served SWCLC for 5 years, starting as part of our reception team and eventually training to become a paralegal. Angela's sense of fun, reliability, lateral thinking and ability to 'fix' all our logistical problems are already missed. We wish you all the best on your new career Ang!

We also said goodbye to Priya, who accepted a new challenge to work as solicitor in Aboriginal Family Legal Service's Broom office. In the short time Priya was with us, we all grew fond of her humour, work ethic and supreme cooking skills. Priya is passionate, innovative and hardworking, and we know that she will flourish in the years to come.

Lastly, we farewelled Crystal, who after finalising her studies is developing her career. Crystal was our receptionist, with a keen eye for graphic design. In addition to friendly customer support, Crystal also created or revamped several SWCLC promotional materials. Thank you for your innovation and passion Crystal.



Angela



Priya



Crystal



New funding opportunities and vacancies have enabled us to recruit new faces to the SWCLC team.

We would like to welcome, Amanda Jarvey, who commenced in January 2021 as Tenant Advocate.

Amanda previously held this role whilst working for Accordwest and is a highly competent, knowledgeable and respected tenant advocate. Amanda is a woman of many skills, having recently also completed all necessary qualifications to be admitted as a lawyer to the Western Australian legal profession.

Congratulations and welcome Amanda!

# Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

In October 2020, Daniel, joined our legal team as Solicitor. Daniel has a long affiliation and respected reputation in the South West, having run his own practice in Bridgetown for many years, before working as Senior Case Officer at the Office of the Small Business Commissioner in South Australia. Thanks to the wonders of technology, Daniel was able to join and work remotely for the first couple of months of his tenure, prior to moving to Western Australia and meeting us in person in January 2021.

We were very glad to welcome Ginny to our legal team as a Senior Solicitor in March 2021. Ginny has an astounding level of legal experience, a character that commands respect and a heart that beats for social justice. Ginny has worked for many different legal organisations, including most recently 'knowmore', a not for profit organisation that supports victims of institutional childhood sexual abuse. Ginny is a passionate and fearless advocate for her clients.

In August 2020 we were joined by Michael who commenced in the role of Office/ Human Resources Manager. Michael brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise in human resources, including in large, transnational companies.

Additionally, in March 2021 Rebecca M joined us in the role of Executive Assistant during Jess' period of long service leave. Rebecca has many years experience in legal support services, and an energetic, pro-active approach.

We are very happy to welcome Sarah who joined us in April 2021 as an Intake Officer. Hailing from the UK, Sarah has worked for years with various not for profit organisations, and run a busy home daycare business. Sarah brings a warm manner, diligence and a very quick aptitude for learning new skills and processes.

We also welcomed Amber to our team as trainee Receptionist in November 2020. Amber has a wide and varied skill set, having worked in aged-care, hospitality and for the Busselton airport. We are grateful to Amber for her friendly and engaging manner, her positivity and her willingness to learn new things.

In other good news, we are pleased to welcome back, Amy to the legal team as solicitor. Amy returns to our team after enhancing her career with various roles at the Australian Government Solicitor, City of Mandurah, and the Shire of Dardanup. Great to have you back, Amy!

Lastly, we would like to congratulate Inge, on finishing her paralegal studies and transitioning to the role of paralegal within our legal team. Inge joined our organisation in August 2013 as an Administration officer. Inge is one of the pillars of our organisation, working with compassion, dedication and tirelessness to smooth the running of our service. Inge also excelled in her paralegal studies and has a huge appetite for learning and personal growth.

We would like to welcome all of our newcomers, and to thank our existing staff. 2021 brought many challenges and some uncertainty but each of you has continued to strive to deliver excellence and work for the best of our clients. We thank you for all the hard work throughout the year.

## Tenancy Advocate Service

In January 2021, we officially commenced offering Tenancy services. In consultation with Accordwest and the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, SWCLC was assigned the contract to provide Tenancy Advocacy and Education Services for the South West region. This was a contract formerly held by Accordwest. We would like to acknowledge the kind cooperation of Accordwest in providing support to enable this service to transition to SWCLC, and the encouragement of Nathan Scott in the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. As mentioned, we were excited to poach the incumbent tenant advocate, Amanda Jarvey, to join SWCLC in this same role.

## Smart2Ask Stall

It was a pleasure to continue our support of the Smart2Ask campaign, an initiative of the Chef's Long Table Lunch Committee. On 25th of February 2021 Michelle (pictured below) and Tahleisha, attended this event on behalf of SWCLC. Yet again, this was an extremely valuable event, bringing together over 50 agencies to provide a hub of community support.



## Refuge Rescue

We also thank the Chef's Long Table Lunch for their continued support of our Legal Refuge Rescue program. A program which affords SWCLC the ability to provide legal representation to women residing in the South West Refuge.

## Pro Bono Support

We were very grateful for pro bono support provided by Sparke Helmore, and referrals via Law Access.

In particular, we thank barrister Fraser Robertson for his generosity in providing expert family law advice and support to our legal team. Additionally, we thank Michael Gresham of Iberys Lawyers for his advice on bankruptcy and family law.

## Wills Clinics

In March 2021, we partnered with Sparke Helmore, the Bridgetown Community Resource Centre and Chorus Bunbury to provide two 'Wills Clinics'. In an extraordinary effort, staff from Sparke Helmore saw dozens of clients over two intensive days, and were able to draft wills for people who would otherwise have gone without. This is a momentous success and we thank all of these collective organisations for their support.



# Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

## Law Week – May 2021

Well, we had some fun in Law Week! It was absolute gold to have our Board Members join us to partake in a mock trial adjudicating a highly contentious family violence restraining order. Team line were drawn, characters assumed and legal representation at its most robust. It was a highly engaging, humorous and fun-filled afternoon.



During law week, we were also able to provide legal seminars for other organisations and to join staff and board alike for a First Aid training course and a shared lunch.

## Reconciliation Action Planning

With the support of Kooyar Wongi, SWCLC was able to create an official Reconciliation Action Plan ('RAP') affirming SWCLC's ongoing commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly the Nyoongar community of the South West. Whilst the commitment to reconciliation had long been part of SWCLC's mission, the RAP allows us to move meaningfully with clear markers towards a more culturally open, and welcoming service. We would like to thank Nerilee and Bill from Kooyar Wongi, Ernie Hill from Maaladjiny and board member Rebecca for their support in the early stages of this journey.

## New Strategic Plan

Despite delays brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, we were able to hold a collective Strategic Planning session in September 2020. It was wonderful to have input from so many participants in the crafting of our future strategic direction. The Board heartily welcomed feedback and ultimately finalised the SWCLC Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 earlier this year. SWCLC continues to strive for "Equal Access to justice for all" and upholds the values of Courage, Compassion and Commitment. However, in our new strategic plan, there will be greater emphasis upon providing in-depth services for clients, with a planned transition from an advice-based service model to a case-based model.

Our new strategic plan also reflects the importance of building community connection with clients and collegiate agencies, and enhancing our reputation and influence.

SWCLC's new strategic direction comes at a critical point; the Department of Justice has recently taken over from Legal Aid Western Australia in auspicing our core legal services funding contract. Prior to assuming this role, The Department of Justice conducted an in-depth review of legal need and resourcing in Western Australia. This review has been instrumental in evaluating where additional funding resources should be applied to meet unmet legal need, and how funding systems can be streamlined. We wait with eager expectation to see the positive changes that will come from this analysis and look forward to working with the Department of Justice. We are also proud to announce that the Department of Justice has recently provided SWCLC with a further four year service contract.

We thank Legal Aid Western Australia, and in particular, Leanne Pauletto and Allison Harris, for working alongside SWCLC in previous years.

## Legal Services

SWCLC continues to be a generalist legal service, offering advice across a wide range of legal matter types. Across the financial year, the top 5 areas for which clients sought assistance were parenting matters, restraining orders, property division, tenancy and injuries compensation.

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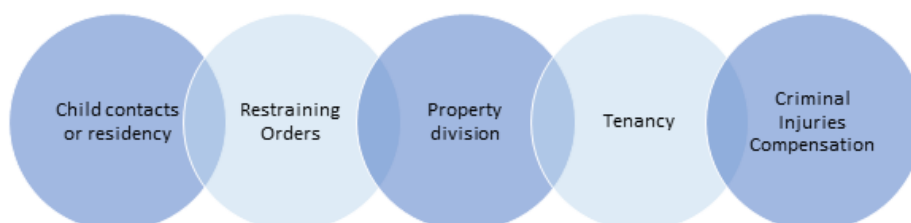
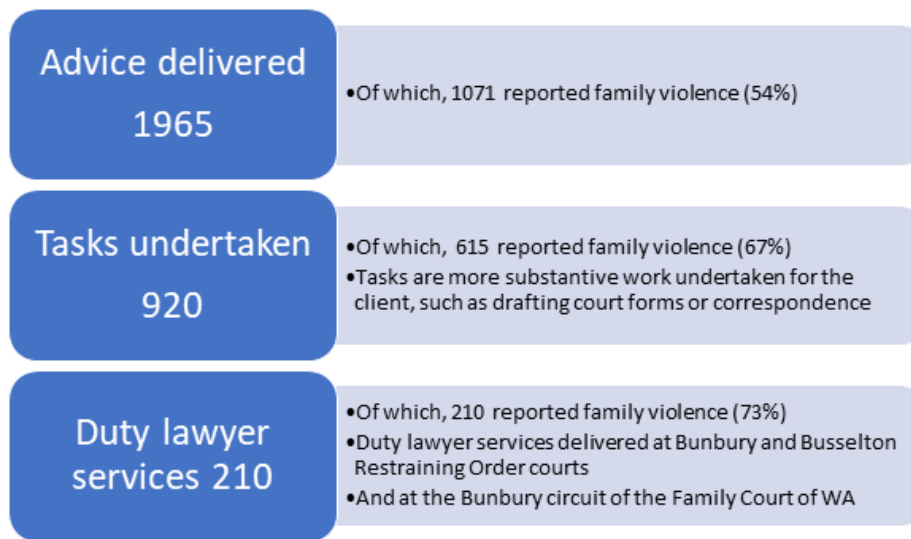


Figure 1 Top 5 areas of law

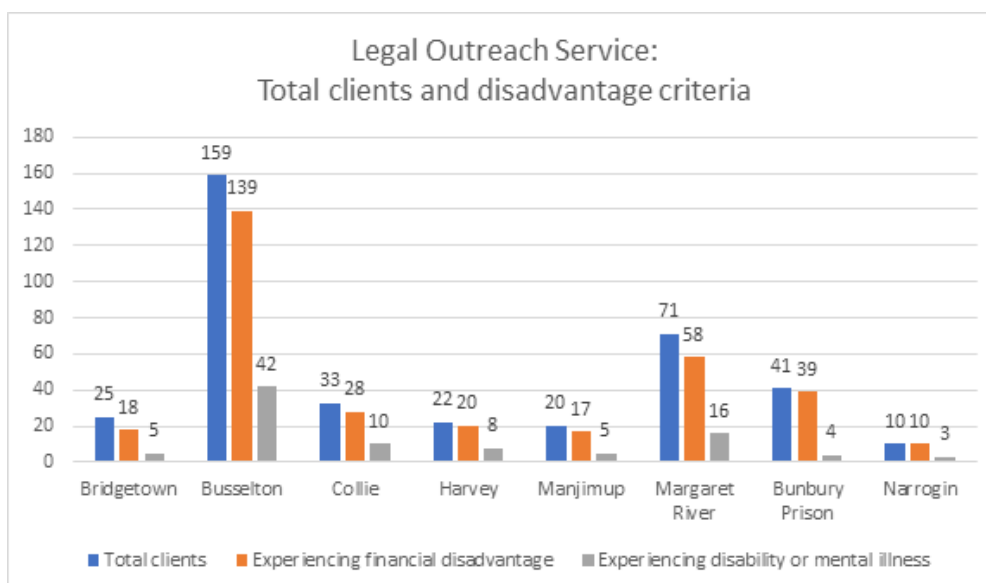
# Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

Across the financial year SWCLC saw a total of 1,067 client, of whom 673 were new clients, and 407 were repeat or existing clients. Our team delivered advice on 1,965 occasions, undertook tasks on behalf of clients on 920 occasions, and provide duty lawyer services on 288 occasions, both in the Magistrates Court for Restraining Order matters, and Family Court of WA matters. Across all service types, family violence was reported in the majority of cases.



## Outreach

Despite some disruption from Covid-19 during the year, our legal outreach service continued to provide face to face advice and assistance to clients throughout the South West, including clients living in rural, regional or remote locations. As shown below, the majority of clients seen on outreach experience financial disadvantage, and a significant proportion experience disability or mental illness. Without our legal outreach service, many clients would not have the opportunity to obtain face to face legal advice.

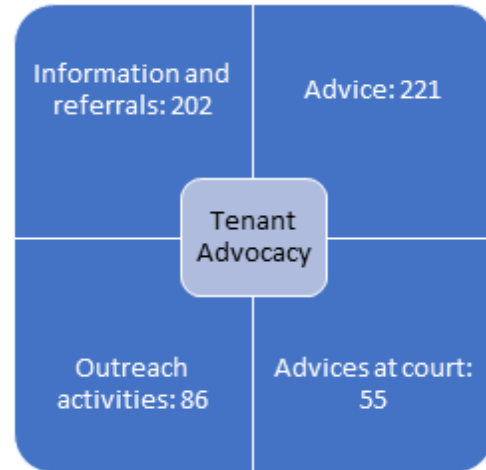


Cont.

# Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

## Tenancy

Our tenancy advocacy service commenced only in January 2021, however Amanda has been busy throughout this period, assisting 121 clients and delivering 276 advices (including 55 advices at court), 86 outreach activities, and 202 information and referral services.



## Community Legal Education ("CLE")

We delivered 17 CLE seminars across the financial year, on topics including Wills and Planning for the future, family law restraining orders, and the "R U Legal presentation" to schools. Feedback included:

*"Great presentation, felt well informed. Thank you very much"*

*"Well presented and well paced"*

*"Very informative thank you"*



Thankyou cards from our clients

# Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

Although 2021 brought a number of challenges, with Covid-19 still lingering in the shadows and service disruption one lockdown away, SWCLC continued to thrive. SWCLC built new opportunities, partnerships and funding sources. We forged a new strategic direction, complemented by a Reconciliation Action Plan and recruited wonderful new team members to join us on our journey.

We are immensely proud of the success of 2020/2021 and give our sincere thanks to all of our supporters. We would like to particularly acknowledge our financial supporters Western Australian Department of Justice, Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, Legal Aid Western Australia, Family Advocacy & Support Services, The Law Society of WA Public Purposes Trust, the Shire of Capel, Bunbury Zonta Club, Chef's Long Table Luncheon, Lotterywest, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, and the South West Development Commission. It is trite but true to say that without your financial support, we would not be able to operate and many people in the South West would be worse for it.

2022 will be our 'Spring' year. Hopefully the sun will begin to shine after the winter of coronavirus, our team will settle and flourish, we will carve our new path, creating new sparks and opportunities along the way. We will push ourselves to create the best client service we can and to uphold the values of our centre- Courage, Compassion and Commitment.

With thanks for your support,

Eleanor and Lauren



Eleanor  
**Managing Principal  
Solicitor**



Lauren  
**Managing  
Principal Solicitor  
(Acting)**

## "Janine"

Janine came to Australia from another country with her partner Gerald. Once in Australia, Gerald became very abusive towards Janine. He began to take hard drugs and became more and more violent. There was a history of severe physical abuse and Gerald had been in jail for serious offences, including a serious offence against another woman. Janine was absolutely petrified of Gerald.

Janine had previously taken out a FVRO, however this was close to expiring. She approached our duty lawyer service at FVRO court. She was very distressed because she had made an application to have her FVRO extended but there was an issue with serving Gerald.

Our duty lawyer assisted Janine with FVRO advice, and the Magistrate made an order for substituted service and adjourned matter for a few weeks. Our duty lawyer spoke on Janine's behalf as she was overwhelmed to go into the court room by herself.

At Janine's next hearing date, our duty lawyer assisted her again. Janine instructed our duty lawyer that she had been advised by the court that Gerald had now been served. Janine was very fearful of Gerald and was petrified of not having protection. Gerald had made threats that he was going to come and find her.

At the hearing, Gerald did not attend. The duty lawyer assisted Janine and suggested she seek an extension to the FVRO of more than two years. In Court, our duty lawyer spoke on Janine's behalf and submitted to the Court that due to the significant history of domestic violence, that the FVRO be extended for five years. Upon reference to Gerald's criminal history and high-risk factors, the Magistrate granted a five-year FVRO. Janine was so relieved, she burst into tears and was shaking uncontrollably.

Had our duty lawyer service not been available, Janine would have significantly struggled to advocate for herself in the courtroom.

## "Louisa"

Louisa is a woman in her 70s who lives in a town that SWCLC attends for outreach. Louisa is on an age pension and suffers from depression. She has basic computer literacy. On one occasion her car broke down which made it difficult for her to travel to appointments.

Louisa sought advice about having contact with her young grandchild, Casey. Louisa was very distressed about not having seen Casey for some time.

*Cont.*

There was a case in the Family Court of WA between Casey's parents Amy and Steve. SWCLC's outreach lawyer assisted Louisa to make an application to the Family Court of WA to be able to spend time with Casey. As Louisa did not have a computer at home, she struggled to participate in the Court proceedings using the Court's online portal. She would need to travel to the library to use the public computers. The outreach lawyer assisted Louisa with accessing the portal and filing documents online. The lawyer also assisted Louisa in communicating with the other parties to try and reach a suitable agreement. This included Louisa having telephone contact with Casey.

Ultimately, the case was settled by agreement and Louisa continued to engage in negotiations with Casey's parents to spend time with him.

Without the assistance of the outreach lawyer, Louisa would have significantly struggled to deal with her legal matter. As Louisa did not have easy access to a computer, completing forms was difficult. Louisa found the process distressing and often became confused and frustrated with the different forms. It was far beneficial for her to have a face-to-face appointment to go over these forms. Additionally, it would have been very expensive and time consuming for her to travel to Bunbury for appointments, and almost impossible when her car broke down.

## **"Mary"**

Mary had separated from her estranged husband Samuel several years ago, and had been the sole carer for their teenage children for a number of years. Mary and the children lived in the former matrimonial home. Samuel was in receipt of income from an investment property, and he and Mary had agreed to apply these amounts to the costs of care of the children, and the mortgage on the home.

Then Samuel moved away, and ceased contributing to the parties joint expenses, or the cost of maintaining the children, though he continued to receive rental income from the investment property. He withdrew funds from a business overdraft for which the matrimonial home was collateral. He sold the investment property and retained the proceeds for himself. Meanwhile, Mary continued to work full time to support herself and the children, and struggled financially.

With the assistance of a private solicitor, Mary applied to the Family Court of W.A. seeking property orders, including orders to prevent Samuel from further depleting the asset pool. Mary was unable to continue to afford the private solicitor fees, and engaged with SWCLC for assistance.

*Cont.*

SWCLC assisted Mary to run her Family Court case, including correspondence with Samuel's solicitor, court documents, orders sought through the court, and documents for the trial. Mary represented herself in the proceedings, though she sought the assistance of the duty lawyer from SWCLC at times.

Ultimately, Samuel ceased to engage in the proceedings, and Mary was given leave to proceed undefended. At the short, undefended hearing, the court made all the orders sought by Mary, enabling her to pay down and refinance the mortgage on the matrimonial home, securing hers and her children's home, and enabling her to restart her financial life. Mary was extremely thankful for the assistance of SWCLC, telling us:

"Thank you so much for your assistance and support for my family legal matter. It's been a long way coming but finally I am able to move forward with my life again."

## **"Sian"**

Sian had a complex Family Violence Restraining order matter involving various members of her family. The matter was particularly sensitive as one of the respondents was a child.

The SWCLC Duty Lawyer was able to represent Sian (the respondent being represented by Legal Aid WA) and negotiate on her behalf. A Conduct Agreement Order was entered into, which avoided the need for either party to attend a trial which would have caused further trauma for both parties.

## **"Bella"**

The SWCLC duty lawyer assisted Bella with her application to protect her children against the respondent, Shaun. Bella had previously been granted a lifetime FVRO protecting her from Shaun, under the mandatory sentencing provisions of the Restraining Order Act. Shaun was represented by a barrister at the mention hearing, who had previously contacted Bella directly to request a reduction in the protections offered by the interim FVRO. Bella was unrepresented and did not have the financial means to engage a private lawyer.

The SWCLC duty lawyer service was able to provide legal advice Bella on the day of court, to negotiate with Shaun's barrister on Bella's behalf and appear for her in court, therefore reducing the power imbalance that otherwise would have been present due to Bella's lack of financial resources.

I am pleased to provide the Treasurer's Report for the financial year ending 30 June 2021. Members will notice a break-even in funds for the combined statement of profit and loss for the financial year. This is in due to \$126,000 unspent Grants carried forwards to 2021/22 financial year to give a break-even result overall, a great result for the 2020/21 year.

A "Unexpended Grants" liability of \$126,000 has been brought to account as at 30 June 2021, recognising that these funds are to be carried forward to the subsequent financial year, and expended in accordance with grant funding requirements.

The total revenue for the year was \$117,000 above budget (If you add back the unspent funds of \$126,000) this is the result of receiving an additional \$44,000 payment from the State Government in December last year, receipt of Tenancy Funding from 1 January 2021, and also a \$36,000 ATO cash boost.

We have been fortunate to have an increase from funding bodies in funding from 2019/20 year to 2020/21 of 21%.

The expenses were \$10,000 under budget, the main area of the surplus is attributable to lower rent, training, IT & telecommunications, partly offset by higher traineeship costs and payroll liability clearing account.

The Balance Sheet is in line with Budget with a member's funds of \$205,000.

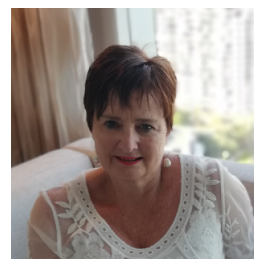
The Auditors have given the Audit report in respect to the financial statement the comments as follows:

i) giving a true and fair view, in all material respects, of the financial position of South West Community Legal Centre Inc. as at 30 June 2021, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended; and

ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1 Associations Incorporation Act (WA) 2015 and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013.

Our Managing Principal Solicitor Eleanor followed on by Lauren and the team have done a wonderful job in the 2020-21 year and they should be praised for excellent financial and operational results.

*Sue*  
**Treasurer**



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# FINANCIAL REPORT

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Please see attached document.

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## Service Information



**Hours of Operation:** Monday to Friday 9am - 4pm

**Address:**

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South Bunbury WA 6230

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