

# Parliamentary briefing: Community legal centres in NSW

Thursday, 27 February 2020

# What are community legal centres?

Community legal centres are **independent, community-led organisations** that provide free legal assistance to people going through tough times, mostly in the areas of **civil and family law**.

Community legal centres provide a **safety-net that helps prevent people's legal problems from escalating**. Without early legal advice, families can break down and health problems can worsen, people can be unnecessarily evicted or lose their jobs.

Child protection  
Consumer rights  
Credit & debt  
Discrimination  
Employment  
Family law  
Family violence & sexual assault  
Fines  
Traffic law  
Victims compensation  
Wills

# Our work

Community legal centres support people in need. Most of these people are facing **financial hardship, social disadvantage or discrimination**. The issues they face are complex and take time to resolve.

We provide legal assistance through a combination of **advice, casework and representation**.

Community legal centres take a **holistic approach** to our work. Many centres employ financial counsellors, social workers, community development workers, tenancy officers etc.

We promote access to justice through **community legal education** and **advocacy and law reform** work, including through strategic litigation.

Last year, community legal centres assisted over **53,000 people** across NSW.

We provided **57,000** legal advices, **11,000** legal representations and a total of **190,000** discrete services to individuals.

# Specialist

**Specialist centres** focus on a particular legal issue (e.g. tenancy, financial rights, social security) or a particular constituency (e.g. women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ people, people with a disability). They are the experts in these areas of law and the legal needs of these communities.

# Generalist

**Generalist centres** provide assistance in relation to everyday legal issues within specific geographic catchments that cover metro, rural, regional, and remote NSW — from Shoalhaven to the Tweed, from Broken Hill to the Sydney CBD.

**Community legal centres have been operating in NSW since 1977.**

**There are 40 community legal centres in NSW. Of these, 21 are generalists and 19 are specialists.**

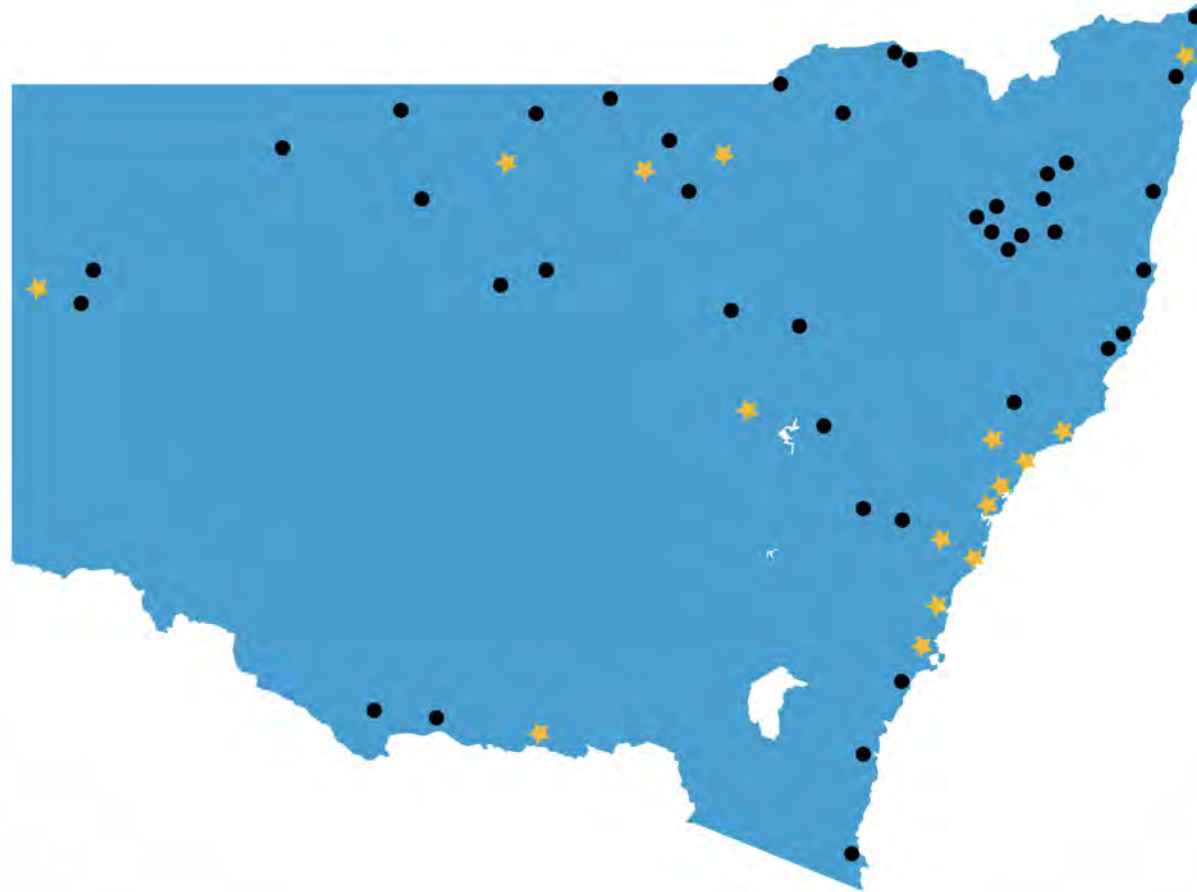
**All centres are unique to the communities they work with.**

# Where are we?



Community legal centre offices across NSW (including multiple offices across the Sydney Metro area)

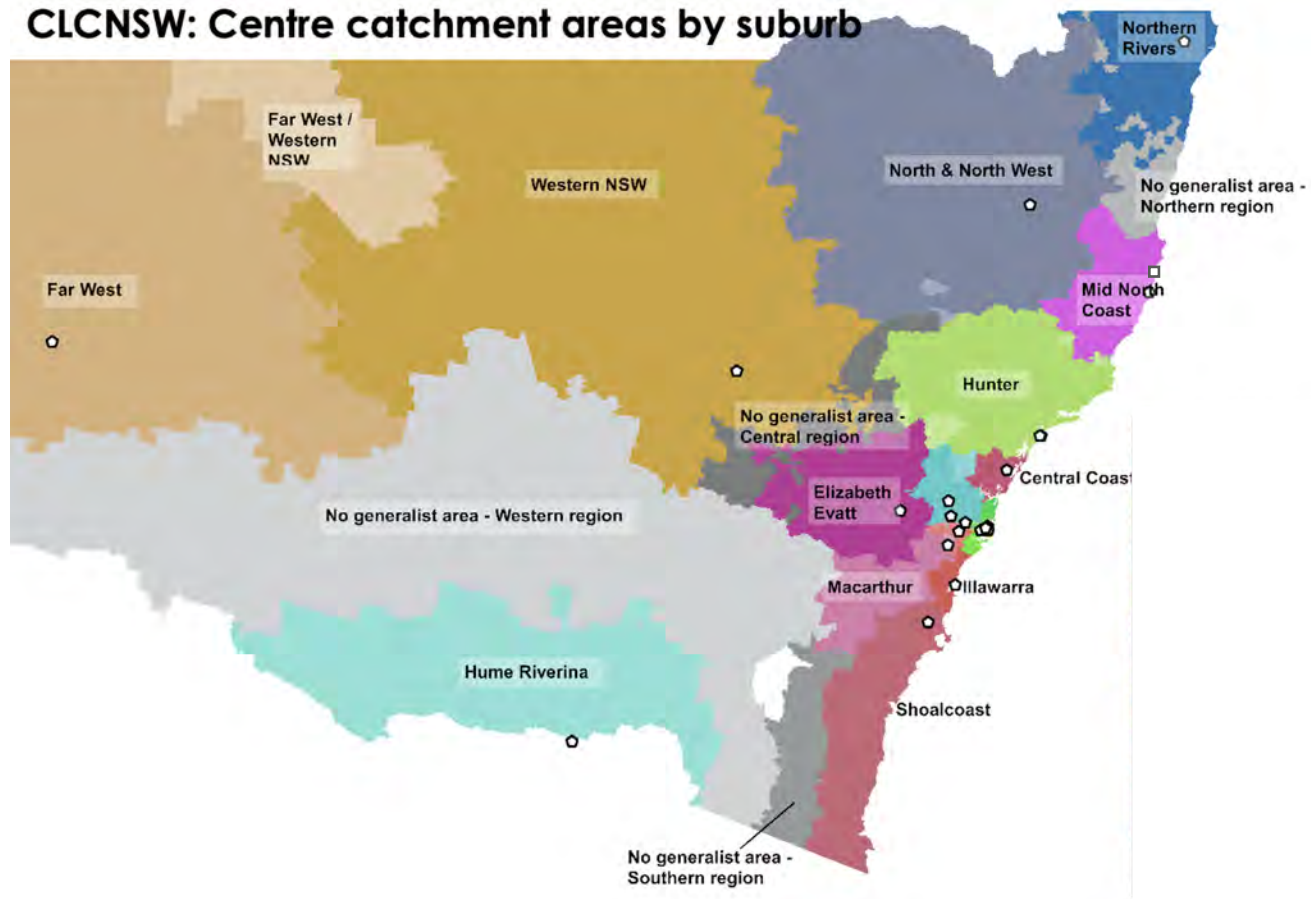
# Where are we?



- ★ Community legal centre offices across NSW (including multiple offices across the Sydney Metro area).
- Outreach service locations across NSW.

# Where are we?

CLCNSW: Centre catchment areas by suburb



# Value of our work

**90% of clients agree or strongly agree that community legal centres listened to them and worked with them to understand and resolve their legal problems.**

*- Community legal centres client satisfaction survey 2017-18*

**'The (community legal centre) sector is supported by strong governance structures and delivers significant benefits to individual clients, the community and to government.'**

**Community legal centres are 'extremely efficient'. They 'play a unique and essential role' in the NSW legal assistance sector at 'very low cost to government.'**

**- Cameron Review of Community Legal Centre Services in NSW (December 2017)**



# Specialist centres

Animal Defenders Office  
Arts Law Centre of Australia  
Australian Centre for Disability Law  
Australian Pro Bono Centre  
Environmental Defenders Office  
Financial Rights Legal Centre  
HIV/AIDS Legal Centre  
Human Rights Legal Centre  
Immigration Advice and Rights Centre  
Intellectual Disability Rights Service  
International Social Service Australia

Justice Connect  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
Refugee Advice & Casework Service  
Seniors Rights Service  
Tenants' Union of NSW  
Thiyama-Li Family Violence Service  
Welfare Rights Centre  
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's  
Legal Service  
Women's Legal Service NSW  
Youth Law Australia

# Community Legal Centres NSW

Visit

[clcnsw.org.au](http://clcnsw.org.au)

Email

[clcnsw@clcnsw.org.au](mailto:clcnsw@clcnsw.org.au)

Tweet

[@clcnsw](https://twitter.com/clcnsw)



# Financial Rights Legal Centre

**Karen Cox**  
CEO



**Insurance law service**

**Mob Strong Debt Help**



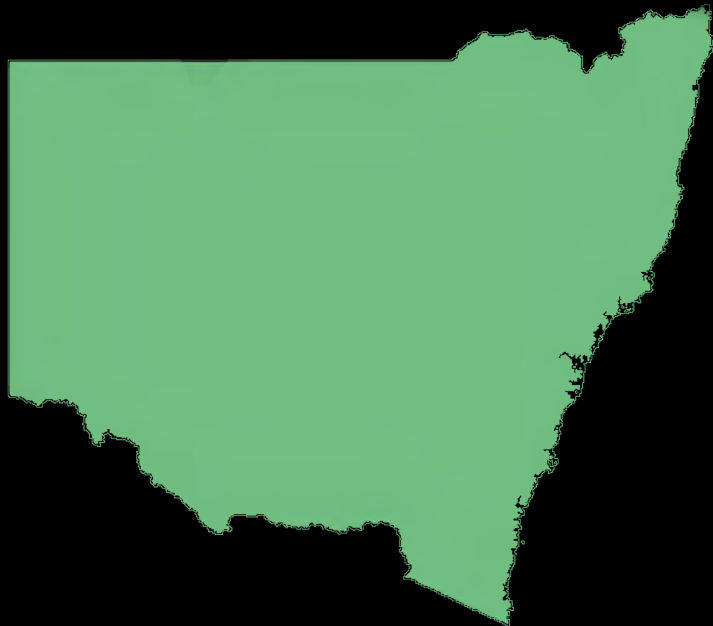
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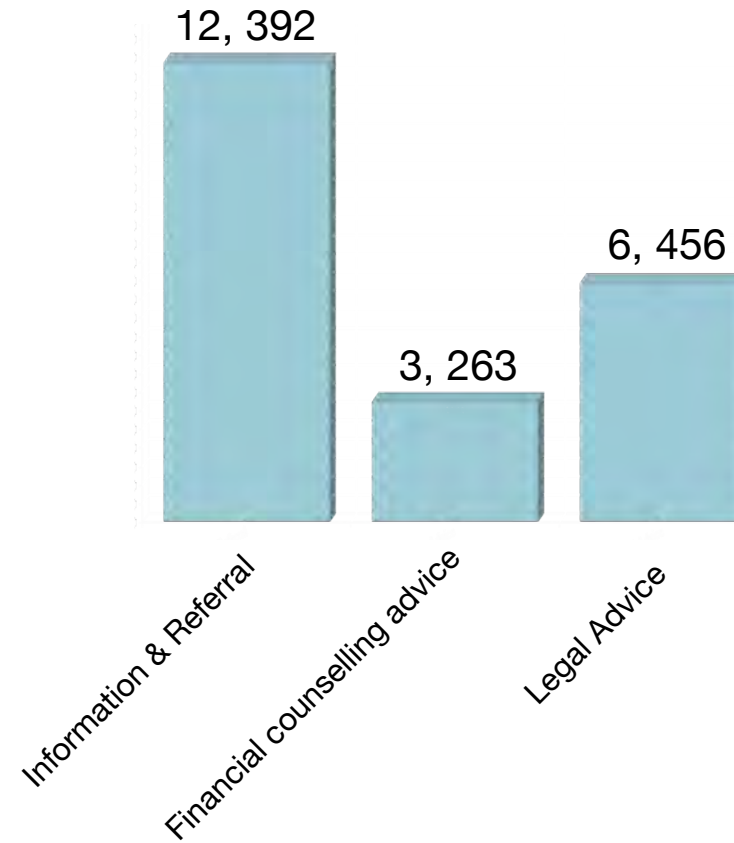
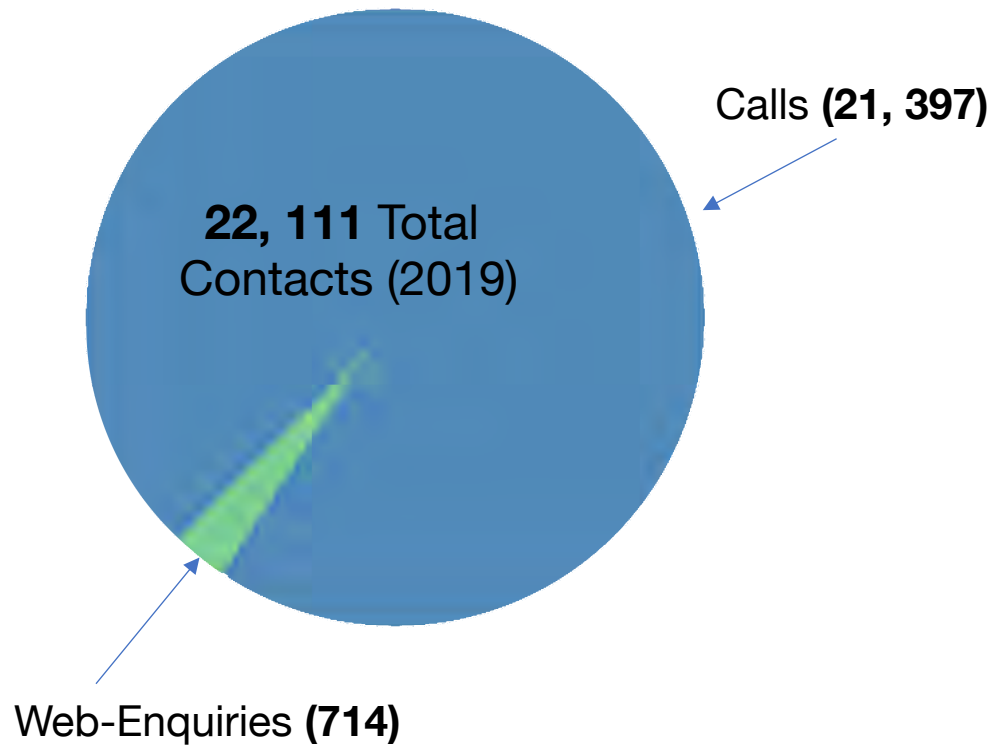
**National Debt Helpline**

**Credit and Debt Legal  
Advice**

**Caseworker Hotline**



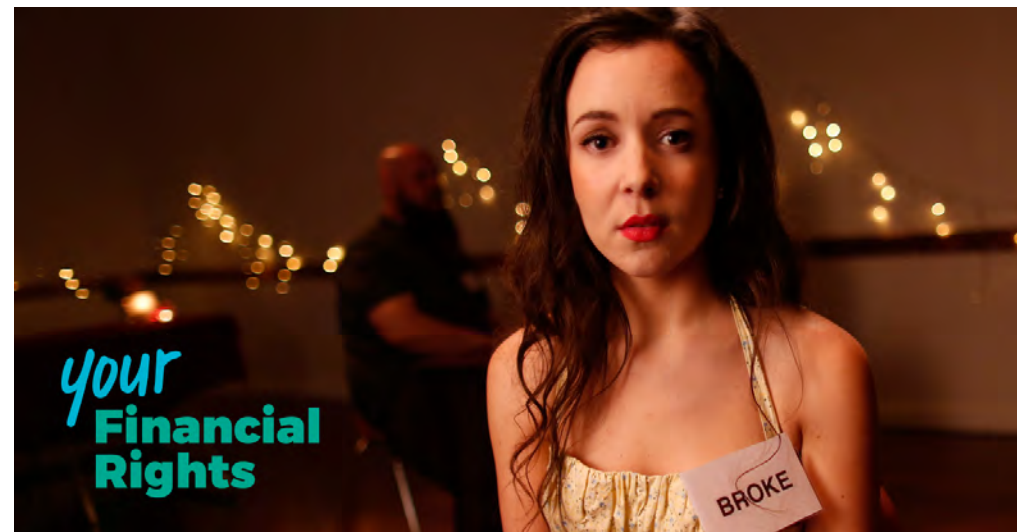




**Overall 76% of contacts are from NSW**

346 Task Assistance

129 Casework Files Concluded











# Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre

**Rachael Martin**  
Principal Solicitor



# Tenants' Union of NSW

**Julie Foreman**  
Executive Director



# Tenant Advocate Regional Conference 2019

Photo by Ashmita Rao



*Captiva*





# Women's Legal Service NSW

**Helen Campbell**  
Executive Officer



## State-wide specialist community legal centre for women

### Telephone

- Women's Legal Contact Line
- Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line
- Indigenous Women's Legal Contact Line
- Working Women's Line

### Face-to-face

- Outreach locations — Women's health Centres - Blacktown, Liverpool and Penrith
- IWLP Outreach locations – Campbelltown and Mt Druitt
- Local Courts - AVO duty solicitor at Blacktown, Mount Druitt and Penrith
- Family Relationship Centres - Blacktown and Penrith
- Women's prisons - Silverwater and Emu Plains

### Online

- Ask LOIS



# Intellectual Disability Rights Service

**Janene Cootes**  
Executive Officer



*Justice · Respect · Persistence*

**State-wide service for people with cognitive disability**

**Community legal centre, Ability Rights Centre and disability advocacy service.**

**Making Rights Real for people with cognitive disabilities**

- Legal help
- Legal advice 24/7 for people with disability under arrest
- Personal support persons in criminal and care and protection matters
- Education about rights and responsibilities
- Capacity building so that mainstream works better
- Systemic issues impacting people with disability
- Support with NDIS appeals & Disability Royal Commission

# Community Legal Centres NSW

Visit

[clcnsw.org.au](http://clcnsw.org.au)

Email

[clcnsw@clcnsw.org.au](mailto:clcnsw@clcnsw.org.au)

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