

Community
Legal Centres
NSW



Strategic Plan 2020-2023

Foreword

Welcome to the Community Legal Centres NSW Strategic Plan 2020-2023.



Our plan reflects contributions from our members, our partners in the justice sector, our staff and volunteers. While ever-growing demand for community legal centre services remains a constant, much else has changed in the legal assistance landscape since our last strategic plan.

As our external environment is reshaped, we are adapting our practices to meet the challenges we face today, and the ones we anticipate in the future.

Community legal centres in NSW do great work and they deserve the best possible support and leadership from their peak. Our strategic plan sets out how we will use our limited resources to get the best outcomes for our members and for the communities we serve.

We retain a focus on social justice outcomes for the people and communities in NSW who lack the same ease of access to justice that others take for granted. We acknowledge our responsibility to contribute to a just society and to work with communities of which we're a part. We recognise our role is to support our members to deliver the services their communities need and value. We commit to operating in ways that reflect our principles.

Community Legal Centres NSW will monitor its performance against this plan and be accountable for the results.

Arlia Fleming
Chair

About Community Legal Centres NSW

Community Legal Centres NSW is the peak representative body for almost 40 community legal centres in NSW.

Our small team based in Surry Hills supports, represents and advocates for our members, and the legal assistance sector more broadly, with the aim of increasing access to justice for people in NSW.

What are community legal centres?

Community legal centres are independent non-government organisations that provide free legal services to people and communities, particularly to people facing economic hardship and discrimination.

Community legal centres provide a safety net to prevent people's legal problems from escalating. Without early legal advice, families can break down and health problems can escalate; people can be unnecessarily evicted and can lose their jobs.

***We acknowledge the Traditional Owners,
Custodians and Elders of the Gadigal
People of the Eora Nation, past and
present, on whose traditional land we
work.***

Our vision

A fair and inclusive NSW with access to justice for all, and a strong and resilient community legal assistance sector.

Our work is underpinned by our commitment to:

- Contribute to justice outcomes for First Nations Peoples.
- Source solutions to problems from the communities experiencing them.
- Work in ways that are collaborative, principled and that strengthen democracy.
- Build the capacity of our members to provide quality services and advance social justice in their communities.

Our values

We are committed to:

- Collaboration
- Cultural safety
- Diversity
- Equality
- Excellence
- Fairness
- Integrity
- Respect

How we achieve our vision

1. We **advocate** for progressive law reform and social justice directly to government and in the broader community.
2. We **provide** high-quality services for our members, which help them to provide high-quality services to their communities.
3. We **support** and build the communities we are part of, to create strong, well-informed and capable communities.
4. We are a **strong, principled and community-led** organisation.



We advocate for progressive law reform and social justice directly to government.


1.

Ongoing activities

- a. Engaging in strategic policy and law reform, particularly in those areas identified as priorities by our members.
- b. Responding constructively to the legislative and policy agenda of government.
- c. Working in close partnership with our members, our peak, the legal and community sectors to strengthen public policy and promote justice outcomes for the communities we work with.
- d. Supporting the advocacy and campaigns of like-minded organisations.

2020-2023 goals

- a. Become a recognised and respected public voice on progressive law reform and social justice.
- b. Support the creation of advocacy networks where they are needed but do not yet exist.
- c. Develop a strategic framework to evaluate our advocacy.
- d. Improve collaborative service planning across the legal assistance sector, based on partnership principles.
- e. Develop and implement a coordinated political engagement strategy.
- f. Agree a new Statement of Cooperation with the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, and encourage the sector to engage with and support the work of the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT and its peak.



We provide high-quality services to our members, which assist them to provide high-quality services to their communities.

2.

Ongoing activities

- a. Advocating for adequate sector funding overall and sufficient funding for individual centres.
- b. Leading and supporting ongoing learning, reflection and evaluation across our sector.
- c. Supporting the internal and external communications of our members, including via digital tools.
- d. Fostering and showcasing creativity and innovation across the sector.
- e. Enabling sharing and learning through providing quarterly networking events and training.
- f. Supporting professional standards, including through the accreditation and public indemnity insurance schemes.
- g. Providing professional financial management services on a fee-for-service basis.
- h. Enhancing our members' relationships with funders, including working with funders to identify effective ways of demonstrating the value of our work, and supporting members with compliance and reporting.

2020-2023 goals

- a. Contribute to the development of a new National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement and improved management of the NSW community legal centres program to deliver sufficient and fairly distributed funding for members.
- b. Foster sector discussion of new and innovative models of legal service delivery, including child care and protection and Aboriginal legal access, promoting these where developed.
- c. Implement a system for regularly giving members the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on our performance.
- d. Expand our Financial Service to ensure ongoing self-sufficiency of the service.
- e. Provide platforms for members to showcase their work and develop their storytelling ability.
- f. Use Phase III changes to the National Accreditation Scheme to encourage understanding of accreditation as a means of quality improvement.
- g. Review quarterly sector-wide meeting practices to maximise the experience of people participating remotely.
- h. Help members reflect on governance strength and provide targeted supports for centres in need.
- i. Provide opportunities for members to discuss sector issues, including workforce issues such as salary parity with Legal Aid NSW.



We support and build the communities we are part of, to create strong, well-informed and capable communities.

3.

Ongoing activities

- a. Increasing awareness of the importance of legal assistance with the public, civil society, and potential funders.
- b. Working collaboratively across various sectors to increase access to justice.
- c. Leading the sector in developing culturally safe and appropriate practices for working with First Nations people and communities.
- d. Supporting First Nations workers in the sector.

2020-2023 goals

- a. Partner with researchers to increase knowledge of access to justice issues and support reforms that generate justice outcomes.
- b. Explore potential to increase and diversify funding sources for the sector.
- c. Review the Aboriginal Cultural Safety Workbook and drive a sector-wide reflection on Reconciliation Action Plan development and implementation.
- d. Evaluate and renew the Community Legal Centres NSW membership program.



We are a strong, principled and community-led organisation.

Ongoing activities

- a. Acting strategically and being guided by our members.
- b. Resourcing an engaged board.
- c. Reviewing and reforming organisational practice to ensure quality improvement across the organisation.
- d. Creating a respectful, supportive and culturally safe working environment.
- e. Having a well-coordinated and principled internship program.
- f. Maintaining strong and respectful relationships with pro bono firms, funders and service delivery partners.
- g. Working to attain enhanced and secure funding for the organisation, ideally from a diversity of sources.

2020-2023 goals

- a. Generate policies and procedures in all areas of work that reflect the standards of our accreditation program.
- b. Develop and implement a new Reconciliation Action Plan.
- c. Develop three-year budgeting to inform organisational planning.
- d. Conclude a new Enterprise Agreement.
- e. Explore alternative funding sources that might be accessed to support the organisation's strategic goals.

Community legal centres in NSW

There are close to 40 community legal centres across NSW. Some provide general legal help in a specific region while other centres provide specialist assistance in areas like tenancy, social security, disability, visas, discrimination, and financial stress.

Generalist centres

Central Coast Community Legal Centre
Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre
Far West Community Legal Centre
Hume Riverina Community Legal Service
Hunter Community Legal Centre
Illawarra Legal Centre
Inner City Legal Centre
Kingsford Legal Centre
Macarthur Legal Centre
Marrickville Legal Centre
Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre
North & North West Community Legal Service
Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre
Redfern Legal Centre
Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre
University of Newcastle Legal Centre
Western NSW Community Legal Centre
Western Sydney Community Legal Centre

Specialist centres

Animal Defenders Office
Arts Law Centre of Australia
Australian Centre for Disability Law
Environmental Defenders Office
Financial Rights Legal Centre
HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (NSW)
Immigration Advice and Rights Centre
Intellectual Disability Rights Service
International Social Service (Australia)
Justice Connect
Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Refugee Advice and Casework Service
Seniors Rights Service
Tenants' Union of NSW
Thiyama-Li Family Violence Service
Welfare Rights Centre
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre
Women's Legal Service NSW
Youth Law Australia

How do community legal centres help?

Community legal centres help in four main ways.

1. **Direct Legal Services:** information, legal advice, and connecting people to other useful services.
2. **Strategic Litigation:** to challenge laws that are unfair.
3. **Advocacy & Law Reform:** for better government and social policy.
4. **Legal Education:** keeping people and communities informed about the legal system, and their rights.

Need legal help?

Call LawAccess NSW on 1300 888 529 for your most appropriate free NSW legal assistance provider.

You can also use our directory online at clcnsw.org.au/directory.

Community Legal Centres NSW

We're the peak representative body for community legal centres across NSW. For legal advice, please contact one of our members.

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Community legal centres

Delivering
access to justice
clcnsw.org.au