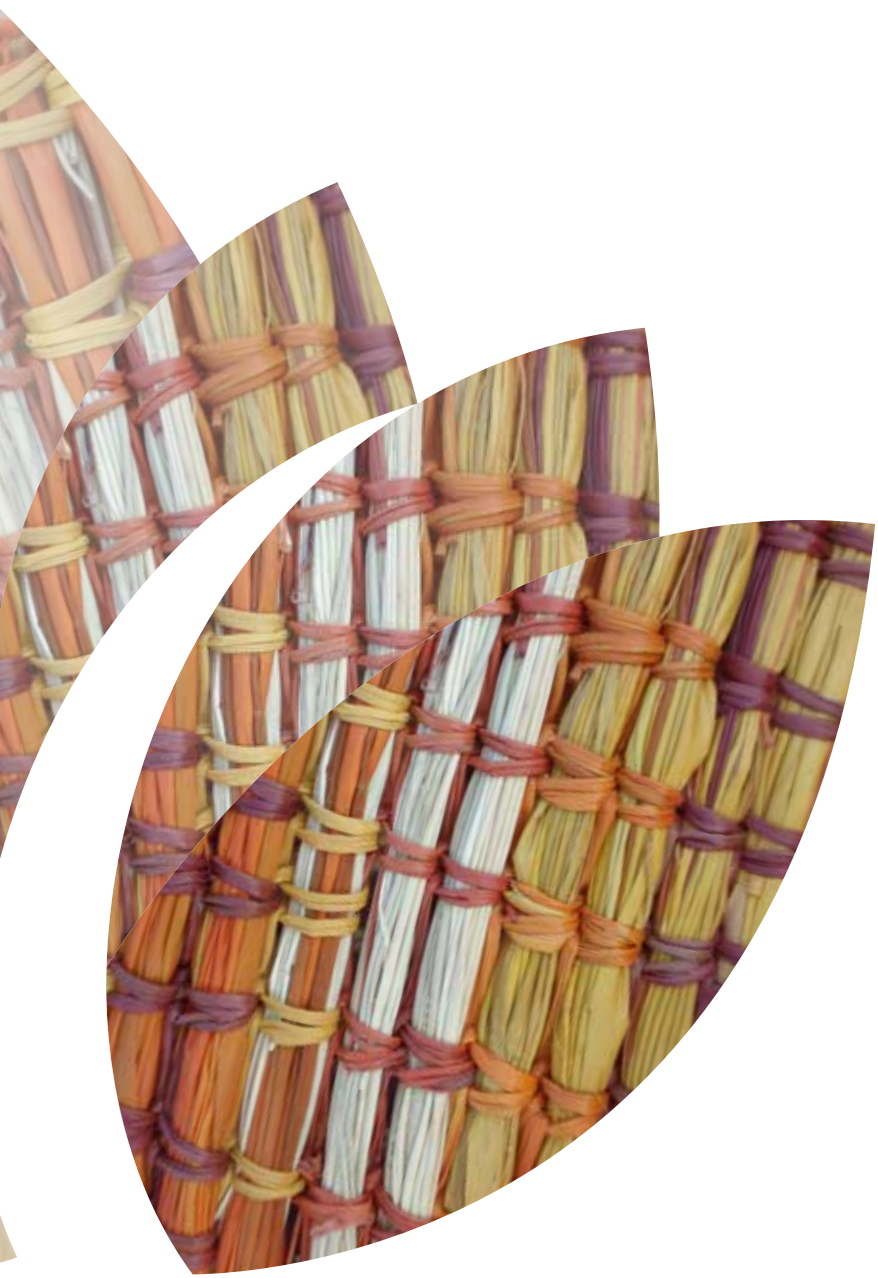
Annual Report 2014 /2015

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission



Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

The Hon. Johan Elferink MLA
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Parliament House
State Square
DARWIN NT 0800

Dear Attorney-General

I am pleased to present the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission's Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2015.

The achievements of the Commission are many, and contained in this report is a picture of a vibrant and functioning organisation, capably led by the Director, Suzan Cox QC. It is staffed by professional and committed people, who are making an exceptional contribution to the ability of the Northern Territory community to access high quality legal representation and assistance.

Yours faithfully

Elizabeth Morris

Elizabeth Morris
Chair
Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

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Commission Offices

Darwin
9-11 Cavenagh Street, DARWIN NT 0800
Locked Bag 11, DARWIN NT 0801
Fax (08) 8999 3099

Palmerston
Shop 6, Goyder Centre, 25 Chung Wah Terrace,
PALMERSTON NT 0830
Fax (08) 8999 4747

Katherine
20 Second Street, KATHERINE NT 0850
PO Box 145, KATHERINE NT 0851
Fax (08) 8973 8551

Tennant Creek
Shop 3, 163 Paterson Street,
TENNANT CREEK NT 0860
PO Box 794, TENNANT CREEK NT 0861
Fax (08) 8962 2439

Alice Springs
77 Hartley Street, ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870
PO Box 969, ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Fax (08) 8951 5378

Legal Aid Helpline:
1800 019 343

Office hours:
Monday - Friday 8.00 am - 4.30 pm

Website address:
www.ntlac.nt.gov.au

Email address:
info@ntlac.nt.gov.au

Director's Report

This year the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission celebrated 40 years of providing legal assistance to Territorians. We have grown the Commission over the years in response to our increasing population and the emerging legal needs of our community. In addition to our initial offices in Darwin and Alice Springs, we now have offices in Palmerston, Katherine and Tennant Creek. We have sought to assist and represent those who are most in need but who do not have the ability to purchase or access legal assistance. As always there is more work to do both as an organisation and as a community to ensure all people living in the NT can address their legal concerns. Over the reporting year there have been two areas of need dominating our legal landscape. The first is the long overdue recognition that as a community we have to stand up to domestic and family violence. The second is children and young people in conflict with the criminal justice system.

Responding to Family Violence

In 2003 our specialist domestic violence unit was established within our Family Law Practice. This evolved into what is now the stand alone Domestic Violence Legal Service ("DVLS") in 2009, situated at Nichols Place in Darwin. The Commission is extremely proud of the work of the DVLS as detailed in this report and the important role it has in identifying key emerging issues and making detailed submissions to Government.

In addition, the Commission also assists people experiencing family violence in a range of other ways through the Legal Aid Helpline, the Community Legal Education Unit and the Family Dispute Resolution Conference program, as well as family law advice and representation services through our Family Law Division.

The NT Government has prioritised the development and implementation of its Domestic and Family Violence Strategy; Safety is Everyone's Right 2015-17. The Commission has prioritised its involvement in each phase of this development and its implementation, including attending consultations, nominating on the regional reference groups and participating in the Review of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*.

Throughout this reporting year the Commission has become concerned about the increase in the demand for services provided by the DVLS, including a 64% increase in applications for assistance in domestic and family violence matters. We hope that the service can be expanded in the coming year to meet the increase in demand it currently experiences. We will be approaching the NT Government for assistance in this regard.

Responding to Children and Young people in conflict with the Criminal Justice System

The number of young people we represented in the Youth Justice Court ("YJC") increased by 23% over the year. A significant percentage of youths represented by the Commission are in the care of the Department of Children and Families and the percentage of these youths we represented increased by 160%. Our YJC solicitors have, in addition to providing legal advice and representation, been involved at all levels to try and address the causes of youth in conflict with the criminal law, the issues involving their detention and providing policy submissions for a collaborative, therapeutic and restorative justice solution. The work undertaken in this space is referred to in our Criminal Legal Practice.

Summary of Service Achievements

- We have responded to the growth in demand in NT law matters, in particular in the areas of criminal law, youth justice and the care and protection of children.
- We have made numerous policy submissions this year including: To the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee into Access to Legal Services; to the Family Matters Court on Care and Protection Draft Practice Directions; to the Department of Attorney-General and

Director's Report (continued)

Justice on the Correctional Services Bill and the Evidence (National Uniform Evidence) Amendment Bill; to the NT Parliamentary Inquiries into Action to Prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and 'Ice'; to the Department of Children and Families on the Response to the Reform of the Adoptions of Children Act Information Paper , to the Review of Youth Detention in the NT; to the Family Law Council on the Intersection of Child Protection and Family Law; and to the Australian Productivity Commission on Access to Justice.

- The Commission has been involved in the development of the National Partnership Agreement on legal assistance services which will bind the States, Territories and Commonwealth legal service delivery for the 2015-2020 period. We welcome an increase in our Federal funding under the new Agreement. The five year agreement and increased funding will allow us to plan for the next 5 years. The Commission participated in consultation with both the NT and Federal Governments regarding the content of the Agreement, reporting requirements, the new suite of data standards and other requirements that will be run concurrently with the Agreement. The Commission is committed to improving the standards of data collection to assist in building an evidence base in relation to national and jurisdictional legal needs so as to secure adequate funding in the future.
- We are guided by our Strategic Plan and this year our priority was the development of an Information Technology Strategy to ensure the Commission remains efficient and maintains pace with the rapid rate of change in technology.
- The the Commission was pleased to host the second NT Community Legal Education ("CLE") Professional Development Workshop in May as part of Law Week. The workshop was a valuable opportunity for people from legal and non-legal services to share ideas and strategies for effective CLE. The Commission's CLE Strategy places a high priority on legal education for young people. The Commission has developed a range of innovative resources for young people including the "Judgement Day" Program and Youth Justice League and delivered them in conjunction with other youth services.
- The Commission received funding for a further year under the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Advancement Strategy to continue to provide vital outreach legal service to vulnerable Indigenous people in remote communities in the NT.
- The Commission's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Project has continued to build momentum throughout the year. The Commission has focussed on delivering a number of key resources and services to the community, together with building on existing strong relationships.

Unmet Legal Needs

Our biggest disappointment was to have to close down a much valued and used service, the Minor Assistance Civil Service ("MACS") which had been established with 2 year funding. The service was defunded prematurely before the end of the first year due to a change in the Federal Government priorities. The Commission has continued to advocate for the reinstatement of this service during the year as it was providing a diverse range of services to vulnerable people. The increase in Federal funding under the NPA over the next 5 years of the agreement will enable us to again establish a civil law assistance service to meet these growing unmet legal needs.

Increasing Demand and Financial Sustainability – the future outlook

The demand on our services has increased:

- The number of criminal applications approved for 2014/15 was 18% more than in 2013/14 and 34% more than 2012/13 levels, this is the highest number of criminal

Director's Report (continued)

matters approved in the last 10 years. This was despite amending our Guidelines to generally exclude representation on traffic matters.

- The number of family applications ended the year 5% over 2013/14 levels;
- The Legal Aid Helpline continues to increase year to year and increased by 30% from the 2013/14;
- The number of legal advice sessions provided also ended the year 4% higher than 2013/14 levels;
- And the number of duty solicitor services also increased by 15%.

Although we welcome the increase to our Commonwealth funding over 2015-20, we have continued, throughout the year to raise our concerns about our inadequate NT funding with the NT Government. We have kept the NT Government informed about our increase in service demand and the insufficient funding to meet that demand. We have foreshadowed a need to reduce our services in respect to NT law matters and have notified our stakeholders that this is a real risk. Over the next year we will continue to work with the NT Government to increase our ongoing baseline funding so as to support our frontline service delivery into the future.

The Commission acknowledges the incredible dedication and hard work of the private profession in assisting clients under a grant of legal aid and recognises that a sustainable mixed model of legal aid service delivery requires an increase in solicitor and counsel rates. The Commission sought the views of the Law Society of the NT and the NT Bar Association about an appropriate increase in fees and hopes to address these concerns through an increase in funding in the 2015/16 financial year.

Thank you

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Chair of the NT Legal Aid Commission, Elizabeth Morris, and to each of our Commission members, to the private profession and our community and justice sector partners for their time and enthusiastic support for our clients over the last year.

I also thank the Attorney-General of the NT, The Honourable (John) Johan Wessel Elferink and the Attorney-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, The Honourable Senator George Brandis QC, for their ongoing commitment to legal aid.

Finally, I thank the staff of our Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs offices without whom we would not be able to provide our service to the Northern Territory community.

Suzan Cox QC
Director
Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Our Services

Our charter is to ensure that people in the NT, particularly those who are disadvantaged, understand and have access to help to protect and enforce their legal rights and interests.

We do this by providing a range of services, including:

- information and referral
- community legal education
- legal advice, assistance and advocacy
- dispute resolution
- duty lawyer and
- legal representation

Where possible, we endeavour to provide policy and law reform advice to government with the aim of advising of the impacts that law and policy may have on disadvantaged people.

We work co-operatively with the community and with other service providers to ensure that people know about and have access to appropriate services, including our services and other services that can assist them to resolve underlying problems that contribute to their legal problems.

Duties of Commission

The Commission is established under the *Legal Aid Act* (NT) 1990 as amended.

Section 8 of the *Legal Aid Act* provides that the Commission shall:

- ensure that legal assistance is provided in the most effective, efficient and economic manner;
- ensure that its activities are carried on consistently with, and do not prejudice, the independence of the private legal profession;
- liaise and co-operate with, and if the Commission considers it desirable to do so, make reciprocal arrangements with professional bodies representing private legal practitioners and other bodies engaged or interested in the provision of legal assistance in the Territory or elsewhere;
- liaise with professional bodies representing private legal practitioners in order to facilitate the use, in appropriate circumstances, of services provided by private legal practitioners;
- make maximum use of services which private legal practitioners offer to provide on a voluntary basis;
- encourage and permit persons who are not legal practitioners to participate, so far as the Commission considers it practicable and proper to do so, on a voluntary basis, under professional supervision, in the provision of legal assistance by officers;
- provide officers and agencies of the Commonwealth or a State concerned in the provision of legal assistance with such statistical and other information as they reasonably require;
- make its services available to persons eligible for legal assistance by establishing such local offices, and by making such other arrangements, as it considers appropriate within funding limitations;
- determine priorities in the provision of legal assistance as between different classes of persons or classes of matters;
- arrange for the provision of duty lawyer services at sittings in the Territory in such courts as it considers appropriate as funding may permit;
- endeavour to secure the services of language interpreters, marriage counsellors and other appropriate persons to help persons in connection with matters in respect of which they are provided with legal assistance: and
- initiate and carry out educational programs designed to promote an understanding by the public (and by sections of the public having special needs in this respect) of their rights, powers, privileges and duties under the laws in force in the Territory

Legal aid agreements

In July 2010 Commonwealth funding for the period 2010/11 to 2013/14 financial years was established and is set out in the National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. This Agreement was extended until 30 June 2015. A further National Partnership Agreement was signed by the Prime Minister on 23 June 2015 for the period 1 July 2015-30 June 2020.

A funding agreement between the Commission and the Northern Territory Government was signed on 29 June for 2015/16.

The Commissioners

Commissioners' Role

Commissioners are appointed in accordance with section 6 of the *Legal Aid Act*

Elizabeth Morris

Chair

Appointed as a Magistrate in April 2010, formerly being the Deputy CEO of the Department of Justice. Her previous positions include the Executive Director of Racing, Gaming and Licensing, and the Deputy Coroner for the Northern Territory. Her earlier legal career included nine years at the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission. Elizabeth first came to the Territory in 1990 to work as an Associate to then Chief Justice. Bachelor of Arts (with honours), a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Sydney, and a Graduate Certificate in Public Sector Management.

Suzan Cox Qc

Graduated from UNSW with BA, LLB, 1978; LLM (Criminal Law) NYU 1985. 1980-90 Solicitor, Office of the Public Solicitor, Port Moresby, Senior Criminal Solicitor, CAALAS, Senior Criminal Solicitor, NAALAS (now NAAJA) and practised at the Melbourne Bar. From 1990 until 2002 at NTLAC as Senior Solicitor, Family Law Practice, Senior Counsel, Criminal Law Practice, Deputy Director, Acting Director, Director from July 2002 and appointed Queens Counsel in August 2002.

Eileen Terrill

Graduated University of Adelaide with LLB in 1976. Commenced practice in the Northern Territory in 1977. From 1977 to 1985 employed as a solicitor in local Darwin firms. From 1985 to 1986 Manager of the Family and Civil Law Section of the Australian Legal Aid Office, Darwin. From 1986 to 1990 Director of the Australian Legal Aid Office, Darwin. From 1991 to present, Principal of a small Darwin based legal practice. Councillor of Law Society of the NT from 1993 to 2003. On Executive Committee of the Northern Territory Law Society, 1997 to 2003. Appointed by the Northern Territory Attorney-General, on the nomination of the Law Society. Originally appointed 29 October 1997.

Anne Bradford

Anne joined the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice in July 2008, as the Deputy Chief Executive. Previous appointments were held in Defence, Attorney-General's Department, Health and Aged Care and the Education (Secondary) sector. Anne holds a Master of Education (Professional Practices), a Bachelor of Education (Secondary), a Diploma in Training and Assessment Systems and a Diploma of Management. She is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and a chartered member of the Australian Human Resources Institute.

In 2012 Anne was appointed Chair of both NT Procurement Review Boards and a member of the Government Procurement Council. In 2010 she was appointed Chair of the NT Community Benefit Fund and a Commissioner of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission. In 2006 Anne won the National Telstra Women's Hudson Award for Community and Government and the Northern Territory Telstra Business Woman of the Year award. Anne was awarded the Professional Manager of the Year (Public Sector) for the NT in 2003.

Samantha Byrne

Samantha joined as a Legal Aid Commissioner in May 2013 as the Treasurer's nomination. Samantha is a long standing public servant with experience in financial management, policy development, procurement and governance. Samantha has undertaken strategic and operational roles and is currently the Director of Economic Policy with the Department of Treasury and Finance. Samantha holds a Bachelor of Business, is a Certified Practising Accountant and an Associate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Russell Goldflam

Russell Goldflam was appointed as a Commissioner in April 2014 following his election as the staff representative on the Board. He has been a lawyer with the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission since 1997, and in charge of the Commission's Alice Springs office since 2001. Between 1981 and 1991, Russell worked at the Institute for Aboriginal Development, where he was closely involved in the establishment of accredited Aboriginal interpreter programs and the first Aboriginal Interpreter Service in Central Australia. In 1993 he commenced his legal studies as an external student with Macquarie University. On completion in 1995, he was awarded the University Medal for Law. He has served on various governance and advisory bodies, including the Alice Springs College of TAFE Board, the Alice Springs Youth and Accommodation Service Board, 8-CCC Community Radio Board, the Alice Springs Alcohol Reference Panel and as a member of an Inquiry conducted by the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee. Since 2011 he has been President of the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory. Russell is also a Centre Associate of the Indigenous Law Centre of the University of New South Wales, and a White Ribbon Ambassador.

Kenton Winsley

Territory born, Kenton Winsley, left high school mid-year in grade 10 and worked with the Belyuen Community through the Community Development Employment Program as the health centre cleaner and community liaison. Over the years Kenton worked in different roles within the Health Centre. Kenton then trained as an Aboriginal Health Worker and afterwards was awarded a traineeship with St John Ambulance and became a qualified paramedic. Kenton worked briefly as the team leader for the Remote Child Protection and Family Support Service before returning to the Department of Health and is currently the Director of Aboriginal Health Practitioners. Kenton has also been involved in the Royal Darwin Hospital as a board member, served on the Aboriginal Ethics Committee Menzies School of Health Research and the Indigenous Child Health Advisory Committee. Kenton is also a current board member of the North Australian Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service.

Strategic Plan 2014 - 2017

Our Vision

To be a leader in a fair justice system.

Our Purpose

To ensure that people in the NT, particularly those who are disadvantaged, understand and have access to quality services to protect and enforce their legal rights and interests.

Our Values

Social Justice: Fairness and equity valuing diversity

Integrity: Performing our functions with respect, dignity, compassion and honesty

Professionalism: Committed to the rule of law, ethical standards, innovation, and continuous review and improvement to ensure quality service

Accountability: Accountable for actions and decisions

Our Services

We do this by providing a broad spectrum of services, including:

- Legal representation in courts and tribunals – including criminal law, family law, child protection, domestic violence and mental health
- Duty lawyer services – in criminal, family and civil law
- Early intervention – legal advice and minor assistance over the phone or face-to-face
- Lawyer assisted dispute resolution – for families experiencing separation
- Preventative legal services – community legal education, and information and referrals through our website, telephone information service and customer service counters
- Policy and law reform advice – including impacts and consequences

Our Environment

The Commission strives to meet the continuing challenges of the NT, in the Australian context, whilst also taking into account our location in northern and central Australia. The diverse and isolated population and geographical remoteness present challenges to rural and regional service delivery.

The issues, risks and challenges of our environment include:

- The impact of policy decisions made by governments, alliance partners, and broader economic and social factors
- Changing demographics and subsequent changes to client demand and services required
- Balancing the need to meet demand for services with the need to invest in our people and systems
- Rapidly changing information technology capability and expectations
- Legislative response and priorities at Commonwealth and Territory levels
- Delivering quality services across a large geographic area with a dispersed population

Our Goals and Strategies

1. Service Delivery

Goal statement: Ensure that our services are of high quality and appropriately targeted.

Strategies for 2014-2017:

- Maintain and continue to improve effective service delivery, quality and accessibility for our clients
- Identify barriers to accessing services and identify unmet legal need
- Develop collaborative solutions with our preferred providers and stakeholders

2. Reputation and Influence

Goal statement: Maintain and build our reputation as a trusted organisation with governments, partners, the community, and clients.

Strategies for 2014-2017:

- Maintain relationships with the Attorney-General and other key stakeholders, including the Treasurer, the Commonwealth, the legal profession and judiciary
- Participate in legal and public forums on matters relevant to the Commission's business
- Inform the development of legislation and policy
- Promote the work of the Commission to the community
- Maintain the ability to provide evidence and supporting data around legal issues affecting disadvantaged people

3. Partnerships

Goal statement: Work with other agencies and stakeholders to ensure the best use of all available resources.

Strategies for 2014-2017:

- Explore opportunities to partner with others to share legal expertise, information and resources
- Continue to improve our referral pathways
- Ensure partnerships with other stakeholders are kept viable and responsive
- Initiate and continue to participate in key activities and forums
- Partner with preferred suppliers where possible to ensure quality services

4. Innovation

Goal statement: Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement across the Commission.

Strategies for 2014-2017:

- Develop and implement an IT strategic plan to deliver services more efficiently, effectively, ethically and broadly
- Enhance data collection and reporting to enable meaningful evaluation of program activities
- Actively seek the ideas of staff, stakeholders and clients to challenge and improve established systems, processes and practices

5. Organisational Capability and Culture

Goal statement: Develop organisational capability and a culture that enables the Commission and employees to realise their full potential.

Strategies for 2014-2017:

- Maintain a positive and professional team environment based on equity, good governance and transparency
- Ensure comprehensive training and professional development for all staff, including orientation, supervision and performance review
- Prioritise the quality of management and governance
- Create and maintain a healthy and safe work environment
- Support staff in managing and prioritising workloads for a healthy work life balance
- Improve business support systems and technology

Our Committees

Northern Territory Contingency Legal Aid Fund

The Northern Territory Contingency Legal Aid Fund (CLAF) was established in accordance with section 44 of the *Legal Aid Act* on 1 March 1993 with a seeding grant of $200,000 from the Law Society Public Purposes Trust.

CLAF is available to provide financial assistance to eligible persons to enable them to bring or defend civil proceedings. Financial assistance is available from CLAF to cover the reasonable cost of disbursements and out of pocket expenses that are necessarily incurred during the course of litigation including such items as stamp duty, service fees, expert witness reports, travelling expenses and expert witness Court attendance fees. CLAF does not pay for solicitors' or barristers' professional costs or general office expenses such as photocopying, telephone charges or facsimile charges. The financial position of CLAF appears in Note 15 of the Financial Statements.

Contingency Legal Aid Fund Committee

Committee's Role

To determine whether or not to grant applications for assistance under the Contingency Legal Aid Fund.

Membership of the Committee

Director
Deputy Director

Law Society Nominees:

A. Young
D. McConnell
E. Terrill
P. Cheong
S. Lee
C. Spurr
M. Spazzapan
G. McMaster
J. Stirk
J. Stewart

Commission Appointees:

A Messell

Statistical Information

The demands on the fund have been:

Applications	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Received	21	20	28	12	12
Approved	17	15	21	9	10
Withdrawn	1	2	6	1	2
Refused	2	2	1	2	0
To be Decided	1	1	0	0	0

Review Committee

Committee's Role

To review decisions referred to the Committee under section 35(3) of the Legal Aid Act. Under section 35 of the Act, persons who feel they have been adversely affected by decisions taken on their application for legal aid may seek reconsideration or review of those decisions.

During 2014-2015 the Review Committee met on 5 separate occasions to review 5 client requests. The outcome of their deliberations was that 0 decisions were varied in favour of the applicant, and 0 decisions pending.

Membership of the Committee

(Members Participating during the Financial Year 2014 -15)

Private Legal Practitioner

T. Pritchard	M. Johnson	B. Piper	P. Elliott
K. Norrington	R. Lawford	T. Marris	
B. O'Loughlin	J. Adams	D. Story	

Independent person with relevant experience

C. Perry	P.Timney	G. McDonald
D. Kelly	P. Collins	W. Morton
J. Sharp		

Officer of the Commission

S. Cox QC	I. Read SC	A. Abayasekara
J. Palavra	F. Hussin	F. Kepert
N. MacCarron	C. McConnel	A. Hey
S. Bolton	S. McMaster	C. Wyatt
S. Balakrishnan	H. Bond	M. Sgarbossa
C. Snell		

Secretary to Committee A. Messell

Overview of Operations

The provision of legal services by the Commission is governed by the *Legal Aid Act*.

The Commission is independent of the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments. Section 27 of the *Legal Aid Act* specifically allows the Commission to provide assistance to a person in relation to a proceeding or matter where the interests of the person are, or may be, adverse to the interests of the Territory, the interests of an authority or body established for a public purpose by or under a law of the Territory or in the interests of a body corporate in which the Territory or such an authority or body has an interest.

The services provided by the Commission take the form of legal information and referral, legal advice, help from one of our duty lawyer services, or legal representation, information and assistance.

Legal Information and referral

Free legal information and referral to other appropriate services is available from the Commission's Legal Aid Helpline.

Legal Advice

Free legal advice is available in relation to criminal, family and civil law matters through legal advice clinics and referrals to private solicitors.

Duty Lawyer Services

The Commission provides free duty lawyer services to such sittings of those Courts and Tribunals in the Northern Territory as the Director considers appropriate.

Duty lawyers provide legal advice and, may, provide limited representation.

During this year, duty lawyer services were available as follows:

- To persons experiencing domestic violence through the independent Domestic Violence Legal Service.
- To sittings of the Family and Federal Circuit Courts.
- To people appearing before the Mental Health Review Tribunal.
- In criminal law matters at Magistrates Courts in locations where the Commission has an office.

Legal Assistance

Legal assistance may be provided in accordance with section 26 of the *Legal Aid Act* if:

(a) a person is in need of that legal assistance by reason that she or he is unable to afford the cost of obtaining from private legal practitioners the legal services in respect of which legal assistance is sought; and

(b it is reasonable in all the circumstances to provide the legal assistance.

The assistance may be provided free or on condition that the assisted person contributes to part or all of the cost of providing legal assistance. The majority of clients are required to pay a contribution.

Assistance is provided in accordance with the Commission's guidelines which are published on the Commission's website.

Commission Guidelines

The Commission is required by section 12 of the *Legal Aid Act* to determine, and make known to the public, guidelines to be applied in considering applications for legal assistance and in making decisions as to other specified matters involving the exercise of discretion.

The guidelines are available on the Commission's website.

Contributions and Recovery of Costs

Client contributions are collected in accordance with section 29 of the *Legal Aid Act*. Initial contributions, of $110.00, are usually imposed. Interim and final contributions may also be imposed, especially where a legally assisted person's financial circumstances have improved during the currency of a grant of aid.

Where an assisted person is successful, the Commission may recover some or all of the costs incurred in representing the client.

Client contributions are an important part of the Commission's funding base.

Reconsideration and Review of Decisions

An applicant for legal assistance may request that an unfavourable decision be reconsidered or reviewed in accordance with Part VI of the *Legal Aid Act*.

Where a decision is confirmed or varied following reconsideration by an officer of the Commission, the person affected may request that the decision be referred to a Review Committee for review.

The Review Committee consists of an officer of the Commission, a private legal practitioner and an independent person with relevant experience.

Legal Practices

The Commission conducts legal practices which include criminal law, family law, dispute resolution and early intervention and prevention. It also auspices an independent Domestic Violence Legal Service.

Locations

The Commission maintains offices in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, and provides limited services to other regions by utilising either its own staff or private practitioners. Office locations and contact numbers are detailed at the beginning of this annual report. The Commission also conducts outreach services outside of these offices, including the courts, prisons, community organisations and remote communities.

Our Offices and Principal Functions

Darwin Office

Located within the Darwin office are the following divisions:

- Executive;
- Corporate Services;
- Criminal Law;
- Family Law;
- Grants Section;
- Early Intervention and Prevention;
- Family Dispute Resolution Program;

Financial management, financial and statistical reporting, accounting, information technology, human resource services and grants are centralised in Darwin.

The Darwin office auspices the Domestic Violence Legal Service which operates as an independent service at Nichols Place.

Palmerston Office

The Palmerston office assists with operation and supervision of the Darwin switchboard and is the main location for the Legal Aid Helpline call centre. Legal advice clinics are conducted throughout the week to assist clients with civil, criminal and family law matters. The Domestic Violence Legal Service also conducts a weekly legal advice clinic from these premises.

Katherine Office

The Katherine office provides legal services in criminal law. Duty Lawyer services and legal representation in criminal law matters are provided at the Katherine Courthouse and courts in the region as required. Free legal advice sessions in criminal law, are conducted from the Katherine office. Legal advice is provided in family and civil law matters from other offices of the Commission bytelephone or video conferencing link.

Alice Springs Office

The Alice Springs office provides legal services in criminal, family and civil law in the southern region of the Northern Territory.

Lawyers attend the Alice Springs Courthouse and provide free advice and duty lawyer representation to persons requiring assistance. In addition, free legal advice sessions are conducted at the office three days per week and telephone advice is provided to callers from remote areas.

Solicitors also attend at the Alice Springs prison and hospital to provide advice and representation as required.

Tennant Creek Office

The Tennant Creek office provides duty lawyer services and legal representation in criminal law matters at the Tennant Creek Courthouse. Free legal advice sessions in criminal law and civil law are conducted from the office. Legal advice is provide in family law matters from other offices of the Commissionby telephone or video conferencing link.

The office conducts outreach activities including community legal education programs on issues that are relevant to the residents of Tennant Creek and the Barkly Region.

Central Australian Women's Legal Service ('CAWLS') visit Tennant Creek once a month. The Commission has entered into an MOU with CAWLS to use an office in the Tennant Creek office, while they are in town.

Organisational Objectives, Activites and Functions

The Directorate

Overall Objective:

- In consultation with the Board of Commissioners, manage and provide direction to the operations of the Commission.

Corporate Services

Overall Objective:

- Provide support and infrastructure within the Commission so that services are provided to the people of the Northern Territory in an efficient and effective manner.

Criminal Legal Practice

Overall Objective:

To provide assistance in relation to criminal matters under Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislation.

Legal Advice and Duty Lawyer Services

- Concise initial advice to members of the public in respect of their rights and obligations at all offices
- duty lawyer services at Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs Courts
- a duty lawyer service at the prisons each week

Representation of adults

Where legal aid has been granted:

- representation in pleas of guilty, hearings in contested matters and committals in Courts of Summary Jurisdiction
- representation including for pleas of guilty, trials on indictment, applications in respect to mental impairment, extensions of non-parole periods (for prisoners serving mandatory life sentences) and indefinite sentences for violent offenders and serious sex offences
- referrals from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services to assist clients in cases of conflict of interest including attending Bush Courts in remote communities
- Representations to the NT Parole Board.
- Appeals to the Supreme Court, Court of Criminal Appeal and High Court.

The Youth Justice Court ("YJC")

- Duty lawyer service in the YJC

Where legal aid has been granted:

- representation on pleas and contested hearing
- sentence reviews
- appeals to the Supreme Court

The Commission Youth Justice practice in both the Darwin and Alice Springs Youth Justice Courts is conducted by our dedicated lawyers specializing in youth justice. The practice involves proceedings in the YJC and the Supreme Courts' original and Appellate jurisdiction. Particular skills are required for Youth Justice Advocates who provide children in conflict with the law, a holistic approach to resolving their legal, social and family issues.

This year the YJC solicitors have been active in the following:

- The Youth Justice Court Forum
- Meeting with Executives from Department of Justice in relation to the Youth Justice Framework
- A joint statement issued in response to the Department of Corrections using Berrimah Prison for Youth detention
- A joint submission with NAAJA and CAALAS in respect to the Youth Justice Framework
- A letter to Minister of Correctional Services in respect of the Youth detention facilities

- Meeting with Amnesty International in respect to the Youth Detention Report
- Joint Submissions with NAAJA and CAALAS in respect to the Youth Detention Review
- Meeting with Relationships Australia to progress Diversion
- Youth Advocacy Network Meetings (with Community Legal Centres across Australia)
- Meeting with Department of Children and Families in respect to fines for children in care
- Meeting with the Children's Commissioner
- A letter to the Minister for Correctional Services in respect to Youth Detention Facilities
- Email to Children's Commissioner in respect to issues with Police Facebook page
- Meeting with Children's Commissioner / Taskforce Neo
- The launch of Youth Boot Camp

The Commission recognises that we need to keep youths out of the criminal justice system wherever possible. We will continue to be represented on the Youth Justice Advisory Committee ("YJAC"), the Youth Detention Reform Advocacy Group ("YDRAG"), the Central Australian Youth Justice Coalition ("CAYJ") and the Youth Action Group ("YAG") and to provide community legal education to youths in detention as well as in high schools.

Criminal Policy

Our crime solicitors are active in contributing to submissions and commentary on proposed policy initiatives and legislative changes involving criminal law issues. This is an important part of our work and our lawyers are well qualified for this role. In addition, lawyers in the Criminal Law Practice are involved in community legal education initiatives, particularly with children, young people and people from a refugee or migrant background.

Funding Pressures

The Criminal Practice continues to service the increasing demand for our services. We also have the cases referred from NAAJA and CAALAS due to conflicts as well as expensive cases which NAAJA refers due to the cessation of the Expensive Indigenous Cases fund.

The increase in demand in our Criminal Practice is not sustainable without a commensurate increase to our base line funding by the NT Government. As at 30 June 2015 the funding of NT criminal law matters will have to be reduced with the result that criminal trials may well be stayed due to lack of representation.

Family Legal Practice

Who we are, what we do, who we help and who we do it with.

The Family Law Practice provides a comprehensive legal assistance service to people Territory wide through the provision of legal advice clinics, duty lawyer and legal representation in Federal and Territory courts including the NT Civil Administrative Tribunal.

Our broad practice covers areas of family law (parenting and property disputes; child support and parentage declarations); child in need of protection, domestic and family violence and mental health. We act as Independent Children's Lawyers for children in family law cases to assist the Court in determining their best interests.

We work in tandem with the Commission's Family Dispute Resolution Program by chairing or representing parties in negotiating outcomes of their parenting or property disputes at Family Law Conferences.

Our team comprises of 6 dedicated and dynamic in-house family lawyers (5 based in Darwin and 1 in Alice Springs) supported by an equally dedicated and dynamic administrative/paralegal team.

We strive to provide effective and quality legal assistance to financially and socially disadvantaged / vulnerable clients (including children), who are unable to otherwise access legal services. This ranges from initial point of entry at clinic or a duty service to representation as solicitor-advocate at final hearings.

The year has also seen our team make significant contributions towards policy and law reform at both Territory and national levels. Submissions included changes to the Care and Protection of Children's Act, the Local Court Family Matters jurisdiction Practice Directions, Legal Representation of Children Guidelines and to the Family Law Council first round Discussion Paper: "Families with Complex Needs and the Intersection of the Family Law and Child Protection Systems".

We've also been active in the development of and provision of legal information. Our web-based Family Law Guide went live on our web-site and we continued to partner with the Family Relationship Centre to provide free legal information at the Kids Come First parental education sessions.

Our continued engagement with our partners and allied stakeholders (such as the Federal Circuit and Local Courts, Domestic Violence Legal Service, Dawn House, NAAJA, CAALAS, CAAFVLU, the Central & Top End Women's Legal Services, the Department of Children and Families, Department of Human Services – Child Support, Family Relationship Service Providers and of course, other family lawyers), enables us to forge stronger collaboration and provide better outcomes for our clients.

Family Law Section – in-house services

- Commenced the weekly Mental Health Review Tribunal duty lawyer service in January 2014. In-house lawyers attend at the Tribunal and assists clients involuntarily detained and those on Community Management Orders with applications before the Tribunal.
- Provides legal advice and representation in the areas of family law, such as disputes about arrangements for children, property division and spousal maintenance. Legal representation includes lawyer assisted family dispute resolution and proceedings in the family law courts with an emphasis on early intervention and dispute resolution during court proceedings. In-house lawyers have helped families link-in with support and other services to assist them in their family law journey.
- Represents the best interests of children as Independent Children's Lawyers in court proceedings to assist the Court and parents in deciding what is in the children's best interests.
- Legal advice service aims to provide initial assistance, early intervention and referral for clients experiencing difficulties in understanding and navigating the legal system or following breakdown of relationships and needing legal representation.
- Assist separated couples to resolve their property disputes without needing to go through lengthy and costly court proceedings by participating in lawyer assisted mediation. In-house lawyers have advised and assisted clients in negotiating property settlements and writing up and filing Consent Orders in Court.

- Provide legal advice and representation to parents who have had their children removed by the Department of Children and Families.
- Provide legal representation to people who face court proceedings relating to domestic violence applications and are not able to represent themselves due to particular vulnerabilities
- Provide weekly legal information sessions on the Family Law Act, family dispute resolution and court processes at the Family Relationships Centre to parties who are about to undertake family dispute resolution mediation.
- Contribute to policy and law reform in the areas of family law on a national level and child protection in the Territory.

This year the following submissions were made:

- Care and Protection Draft Practice Directions.
- NT Parliamentary Select Committee on 'Ice'.
- Response to the Care and Protection of Children Information Paper.
- The Family Law Council on the Intersection of Child Protection and Family Law.

Grants Section

Overall Objectives:

- Provide grants of aid to the in-house legal practice.
- Provide grants of aid to clients with private solicitors where:
  - applications are received directly from private practitioners;
  - the Commission is conflicted; or
  - the Commission does not have capacity in-house.
- Provide grants of aid to clients referred from the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Legal Services.
- Administer review and reconsideration process where grants are refused and applicants appeal decision.
- Administer the Family Dispute Resolution conferencing program.

Workload in the Grants Section has increased. There was an 14% rise in applications received compared with 2013/14 and all processing has been centralised in the Darwin office where previously regional offices dealt with their own applications and extensions. The Grants Section has continued to work with private stakeholders and internal staff to ensure its practices are consistant, accountable and efficient.

The Commission has updated its means test to reflect changes to the cost of living in the NT. The Commission recognises that the rates it pays to private practitioners are too low and this is a threat to the sustainability of the legal aid 'mixed mode' model. The Commission has been working hard to raise concerns about this with Government and argue for an increase in funds to enable ongoing adjustments to private practitioner rates to keep in line with CPI increases.

The section would like to acknowledge the considerable work put in by both internal and private lawyers to comply with our processes and assist clients. We acknowledge that work is often performed without adequate remuneration. Without this many clients would go without representation and advice.

Early Intervention and Prevention Practices

Overall Objectives:

- Pursuant to the National Partnership Agreement provide a legal assistance system that is integrated, efficient and cost effective for disadvantaged Australians in accordance with Commonwealth legal aid service priorities:
- Early resolution of legal problems;
- Targeted assistance to those at risk of social exclusion; and
- Cooperation and collaboration between legal assistance providers and other service providers.

Legal Information and Referral

The Legal Aid Helpline operates under the Commission's Information and Referral Strategy.

The Legal Aid Helpline provides information assistance to people who have a legal problem, or may be unsure whether they have a legal problem. The service operates during business hours. Callers to the Helpline can speak with paralegal staff to discuss their problem and obtain information, be referred to other helpful services and, if required, make an appointment to obtain free legal advice. The service is continually engaging in professional development training for staff, and developing on-line resources to provide information and assistance to callers. The number of callers to the service continues to expand its volume of service delivery with 10,943 callers being provided with assistance during 2014-2015, an increase of 30% from the previous year.

Community Legal Education

Introduction

The Community Legal Education (CLE) program at the Commission continued to innovate responses to the unique needs of Territorians in line with the 2014-17 CLE strategy. The objective of CLE is:

"To improve understanding of the law, people's rights and the processes for preventing, minimising or solving legal problems."

The CLE strategy actions the Commission's strategic plan by prioritising the focus of CLE on youth, service providers, remote communities not already serviced and other vulnerable groups such as homeless, mental health and disability, and newly-arrived refugees.

Key strategies are:

1. Deliver CLE on multiple channels.
2. Produce effective community legal information resources.
3. Use innovative communications to grow community understanding of the law.
4. Build CLE capability across the NT legal assistance sector.

1. Deliver community legal education on multiple channels

The Commission integrates face-to-face education sessions for community members with training for service providers, online and print publications, audiovisual material, outreach activities, networking, community engagement and information / referral. Community members - and in particular those most disadvantaged - best receive legal education and information when messages are reinforced through a range of media. Our main 'channels' are *Face-to-face education* and *Engaging with community networks* to identify legal education needs and disseminate information.

Face-to-face education sessions were delivered across the NT by CLE staff, outreach teams, lawyers and paralegals - in conjunction with other agencies.

Examples include:

- Regular presentations by the CALD project to Adult Migrant English Program students and service providers using What's the Law? Australian Law for New Arrivals and Australia and My Family, What Are the Laws?
- Regular presentations by Indigenous outreach teams to remote communities on police powers, motor vehicle laws, cybersafety, domestic violence, alcohol protection, paperless arrest, consumer rights, credit and debt, employment rights, and other topics identified by the communities using the Commission DVDs Family Problems, Romgu Dhukarr Dhiyal and others.
- Information sessions to accompany tools for service providers to deliver legal messages such as Cop This, What Age Can I, Got a Fine, Family Problems, Australia and My Family, What Are the Laws?, What's the Law?
- Understanding the legal system training for service providers, including how to identify legal problems and make appropriate referrals, the information resources available and the Legal Health Check process.

John Jablonka and Thomasin Opie, present to foster carers on child protection matters.

- A partnership with Foster Carers Association NT to educate carers in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs about Child Protection Matters, civil law and their responsibilities.
- The Judgment Day program in partnership with the NT Supreme Court, enables high school students to learn about the criminal justice system through a half-day simulation with police, legal aid and the courts, drawing on Cop This & Going to Court.
- The Young Justice League project in partnership with Multicultural Youth NT run in both 2014 and 2015, involves a 2-day education and moot court exercise, and this year focussed on a family law case using Family Pathways films and the new online Family Law Guide.

Engagement with community networks, to understand legal education needs, is integral to ensuring we design relevant responses to reach the right people. Through active networking - and in many cases taking the lead - the Commission has advanced awareness of the law and a number of projects. Commission representatives attended networks for DV services, indigenous services, youth, Mental Health, Family support, homelessness and housing, alcohol and drug services, family law pathways, and groups in Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Darwin.

The Commission leads the NT-wide CLE Network which enhanced its impact through:

- Extending the network to include a wider range of people involved with legal education across the NT to maximise information sharing.
- Holding meetings monthly with bimonthly NT-wide linkups and alternate month local meetings in Darwin and Alice to balance local and NT-wide exchange.
- Testing innovative tools to share information and keep abreast of current issues.
- Facilitating professional development for CLE practitioners.

A family lawyer mentors young people in mock Family Court proceedings during the 'Young Justice League' project, youth week, April 2014.

The NTLAC website is scheduled to be updated in 2016.

- Hosting an NTCOSS preconference workshop with legal assistance services and community sector agencies to explore effective referrals and the Legal Health Check.
- Organising the second annual CLE professional development workshop in May 2015
- The working group on Respectful Relationships CLE developed programs for remote Indigenous youth to understand laws of consent, held a workshop for service providers to identify good practice guidelines, collaborated with NAPCAN to seek pilot program funding and jointly delivered workshops out bush.
- The Digital Legal Information Working Group obtained funding for a 12 month project to link vulnerable Territorians to online legal information and help.

2. Produce effective community legal information resources

The Commission continued the review and evaluation of publications commenced 2013-14 to refine how it designs, produces, maintains and disseminates publications including online information and education kits to ensure these are relevant, current, accessible and integrated with other activities.

Information was disseminated through offices, staff outreach, online and increasingly using social media - Facebook and YouTube. A total of 53,105 hard copy publications were distributed during the year the most popular items being helpline materials and information on family law conferencing, drink driving and youth rights. The most exciting new product was the Commission's first

online publication the *Family Law Guide* launched March 2015 which consolidated and updated - in a flexible format - a number of print booklets. This was produced in-house by the CLE team, Helpline and Family Law section and provides comprehensive answers to many common questions on family law including links to self-help, online forms, key sites and contacts for assistance. It also enables our clients to access information before, during and after appointments to better absorb information and advice. It has been widely promoted to family relationship services and the community.

The Commission's website is scheduled to be updated in 2016 presenting opportunities for more online publishing. Significant benefits will be shared by the NT CLE Network's project to develop a plain language legal information online portal, hosted by the Commission.

The Commission continues to use the NT Legal Aid Facebook page to share local, national and international information. On the Commission's YouTube channel, a wide range of films have been hosted including many produced by partner organisations. These are now arranged in themed playlists to enable people to learn more about topics of interest. Our partner services access a range of resources and community members can view films in NT Aboriginal languages on topics ranging from police rights to night patrol issues, family dispute resolution, family violence, law and culture.

Snapshot of information and publications 2014-15

Website hits	10435
Facebook hits	889
Views	849
Facebook post reach	9250
YouTube views	5,054 (3512 Aust)
YouTube minutes watched	10, 644 (8,123 Aust)
Publications distributed (hard copies)	53105
Legal information including publications delivered electronically	
Viewed online	756
-Helpline electronic information provision *(70% of all Helpline calls have emails sent with a publication and or link to legal information attached Helpline calls totalled 8420 in 2013-14)*	7660

Helpline's Bronwen at NTLAC's stall, NT Supreme Court Open Day 2014.

3. Use innovative communications to grow community understanding of the law.

The Commission's communications and social media strategies were aligned with the CLE strategy to use a range of tools including digital media to improve community understanding of the law, with priority given to flexible, low-cost and effective messaging.

Methods include:

- In addition to legal messages, the Commission promotes good news stories and activities, contacts and web links on Facebook.
- The Commission's YouTube channel now has a brief welcome film for new viewers providing plain language information on Commission services. It also has a film produced by Palmerston City Council for its public TV, with the Commission's Director, Suzan Cox, explaining services in detail.
- Outreach to service providers and community continues to play a key role.
- Information stalls at community events such as Welcome to Australia, Law Week, Human Rights Day, Supreme Court Open day, and CDU student orientation week.
- Distribution of flyers, and posters.
- Participation in a range of networks continues to support communications strategies through maintaining strong relationships with partners.

4. Build CLE capability across the NT legal assistance sector.

To deliver effective CLE, the legal assistance sector needs skilled educators, clear and up to date information and appropriate education tools. The Commission's size and footprint enabled it to support good practice of CLE across the NT, linked to national circles through a number of activities in 2014-15. The Commission built relationships with communities; developed collaborative partnerships with other agencies; promoted strategic and innovative delivery of CLE; and shared learning through evaluation.

The Commission coordinated information sharing by convening the NT CLE network with regular weekly updates by email, and monthly meetings including bimonthly NT wide meeting and on alternate months, local meetings held in Darwin and Alice.

Together with NAAJA and CAWLS staff, the Commission presented at the NACLCs conference held in Alice Springs in August 2014 outlining unique context and approaches for CLE in the NT.

The NT CLE Professional Development workshop was held for the second year running in May 2015 with over 50 participants attending 30 different topic sessions. This two-day event shared skills and tools in planning, delivery and evaluation of community the Commission's legal education programs as well as updates in hot topics. As a law week activity supported by the Law Society NT, this event enabled the development of skills directly relevant to the NT context and population that will improve the quality of CLE.

During Law Week a public forum was held in Darwin on Effective Law Reform – where people shared experiences of successful law reform activities and principles for achieving change.

The Commission was active in National Legal Aid's CLE working group to share good practice, ensure coordination and develop national responses. The NT initiated a national project to produce a factsheet in 10 languages outlining legal rights of asylum seekers on Bridging Visas.

The Commission continued to support the CLEAR database which shares community legal education, advocacy and law reform projects by Australian agencies. Commission projects can be found there and the CLE network actively encourages members to lodge their work so Territorians have access to the range of innovative tools developed to understand legal rights.

Sall Forrest chairing a session at the CLE workshop

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD)

Overall Objectives

The CALD Project is a small team of a part time Multicultural Educator and part time Coordinator and Solicitor.

Overall Objectives:

- promote increased understanding about the Australian legal system among CALD communities by developing and delivering targeted community legal education and information about the law to CALD communities and professional development with service providers;
- promote increased understanding of how to access legal rights and fulfill legal responsibilities within the Australian legal system among CALD communities;
- advocate and work for access to justice for CALD communities in the NT using a range of preventative legal education and policy strategies;
- engage with a range of CALD community groups to deliver targeted information and legal education sessions;
- work in partnership with other agencies servicing CALD communities; and
- participate in CALD community activities and events to educate and promote access to the Commission's services.

Community Legal Education and Professional Development

This year the CALD project delivered 26 CLE sessions to a total of 420 participants. The project targeted CLE delivery to promote NTLAC CLE resources at sites where newly arrived CALD communities engage and interact with services at the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) at Charles Darwin University, Melaleuca Refugee Centre (MRC) and the Interpreter Service of the NT (ISNT).

The workshops at AMEP introduced CALD Project staff to students in all of the different levels of English learning classes to promote how to access the Commission for legal assistance. Each workshop would then focus on a particular area of law using the National Legal Aid resource Whats the Law, in conjunction with students learning legal vocabulary leading up to the workshop to assist in better discussion about the legal issues. These generally covered family law, family violence, child protection, driving laws and police powers. The CALD participants at these classes were from very diverse backgrounds including East Timor, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Cambodia, Iran, Mexico, Vietnam (and many more).

In partnership with MRC the CALD Project ran professional development training for its staff and CLE workshops for community and cultural leaders, newly arrived refugees on humanitarian visas in both the settlement orientation program and the Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) program. The CALD Project continued to focus on developing skills of MRC staff and cultural leaders working with MRC programs to be more confident in using the Commission CALD resources to enable community members and

staff to engage more deeply in the materials in their own time and at their pace. This allowed more efficient use of CALD project staff to attend for shorter complex Q&A discussions as part of the full day FICT program sessions that are run on weekends and after hours. The professional development and CLE workshop sessions focused on promoting existing NTLAC Family Harmony and the Law resources with the settlement team, counselling staff, and newly arrived Congolese, Iranian, Korean and Burmese cultural groups.

The CALD Project also conducted a series of workshops for new and existing interpreters from a diverse range of backgrounds to learn more about the legal system and key legal concepts. Many of the interpreters are also significant leaders and contact points for their communities and are therefore a good target to disseminate legal information to the broader community. The workshop topics have included the Australian legal system, family law, child protection and family violence.

Community Engagement and Networking

The CALD project continued to maintain strong relationships with CALD communities and with key services and networks by regularly participating in the following:

- Department of Human Services' Multicultural Services Advisory forum (quarterly)
- Refugee Support Network (quarterly)
- Asylum Seeker Support Network (bi-monthly)
- Department of Immigration's Quarterly Settlement Planning committee meetings
- Community events such as the Harmony Day Football Festival, where we collaborated with the Anti Discrimination Commission to set up a services stall.
- Department of Immigration Community Consultative Group about issues arising with people in immigration detention (quarterly)
- Ministers Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs Community Education Working Group (quarterly).

Networking, sharing information on legal options and advocacy in these forums ensures that community services supporting newly arrived migrants and refugees and the communities themselves, know how to prevent legal problems arising or escalating, and gain legal assistance when needed. It also enables policy issues and gaps in service delivery to be identified and strategies put in place to address these.

The CALD Project also worked on joint CLE projects with young people, conducted some limited outreach visits at CDU and held a stall with other legal services at the Harmony Day Festival. Professional development sessions on best practice in working with CALD clients were provided to staff.

Seranie and staff from Melaleuca at the Harmony Day Festival in Palmerston, March 2015.

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)

Overall Objectives:

- Provide Family Law Conferences (FLCs) in parenting and/or property disputes for eligible families;
- Evaluate the FDR program on a continuous basis and explores opportunities to improve service delivery to reach more Territorians; and
- Monitor performance of conference chairpersons and family law practitioners involved in FLCs,
- Encourage a child focus in conferences, by offering a child-inclusive FDR process where appropriate.

The FDR Program administers, coordinates and promotes the FDR services of the Commission, providing FLCs in parenting and/or property disputes for eligible families. The Program is staffed by a Supervising Legal Practitioner who is a qualified Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner ('FDRP') and Family Lawyer, and the Family Dispute Resolution or 'Conference' Coordinator.

The FDR Program liaises strongly with the Family Law and Grants Sections of the Commission, as well as external related agencies such as the Family Relationship Centre, to provide a holistic service and minimise the number of family law disputes that go to court.

The FDR Program assesses every application for a grant of legal aid in family law matters to consider whether it could appropriately mediated prior to court action. The Program also considers the suitability of conferencing a matter part way through litigation in some cases. The Program provides court-ordered (or 'late-litigation') conferencing.

There are many benefits of early FDR in family law matters, in addition to substantial cost savings in legal aid grants compared with resolution through the court system. There is an increase in client acceptance and satisfaction with outcomes negotiated at FDR compared to court resolution.

FLCs are facilitated by a chairperson who is a qualified FDRP and a lawyer or psychologist. The model is "lawyer assisted" which means that at least one party to the conference will have a grant of aid, and therefore a lawyer supporting them at the conference. We do encourage both parties to seek legal advice at all important stages.

Feedback is sought from parties via client satisfaction surveys and from chairpersons through formal reports.,

The Program has implemented measures assist in ensuring the success of the conference on the day, allowing higher settlement rates and less instances where conferences have to be cancelled or postponed. In 2014-2015 the Program put considerable focus into ensuring parties come to their conference well-prepared, primarily by utilising an additional oral intake for high conflict parenting matters and requiring early and full disclosure of assets and debts for property matters. In non-high conflict parenting matters we now have four child psychologists who can assist us to provide child-inclusive FDR.

Indigenous Outreach Project

The Indigenous Outreach Project ('the Project') provides a range of effective, quality legal services to facilitate access to justice for disadvantaged and vulnerable Indigenous people in regional and remote areas of the NT. The Outreach team collaborates with other legal services to avoid duplication by targeting the service to regional and remote areas that were not visited by bush court circuits and therefore have limited or no engagement with the legal system. This collaborative approach ensures greater scope for resolving legal issues in a culturally appropriate, timely and sensitive way to prevent escalation and contribute to increased understanding and awareness about the law and legal processes that empower individuals and communities to take action and resolve legal issues.

The Outreach team services communities in the Top End region (Warruwi and Minjilang), and in the Katherine region (Binjari, Manyallaluk, Jilkminggan and Minyerri). In Tennant Creek town services were provided to the Barkly Work Camp, Tennant Creek High School, Barkly Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group, and Anyingini Men's and Women's Centres.

The Outreach team provided a range of legal services to Indigenous people in the following ways:

- Legal advice and minor legal assistance to clients with additional legal needs beyond one-off advice that does not extend to ongoing case work or representation in courts or tribunals, and is approved in accordance with newly developed guidelines.
- Develop and deliver community legal education and information.
- Conduct meaningful referrals for Indigenous people requiring assistance beyond the scope of the Outreach services.
- Develop strong relationships with individuals, groups and service providers through community engagement.
- Network and liaise with other agencies and community based services to determine and continually review community needs and interests.
- Participating in interagency visits to communities where specific needs have been identified to promote better understanding and engagement with services on those particular issues.

In addition to providing high numbers of legal advices to individuals, a total of 47 CLE information sessions were delivered in the Tennant Creek area to a total of 527 participants, and 29 remote communities were visited in the Top End and Katherine regions.

The CLE topics included:

- Promotion of NTLAC services and Outreach
- Alcohol Protection Orders
- Conflicts of interest and lawyers' duties
- Introduction to custody, guardianship and parental responsibility in Family Law
- Introduction to the Legal System and Legal Language
- Life cycle of an assault charge
- Love Bites Workshops – respectful behaviour in teenage relationships
- Domestic Violence Orders
- Wills & Deceased Estates
- Role of Child Psychologists & Family Report Writers in Family Court parenting proceedings
- Alcohol offences and laws about alcohol
- Drugs, Sniffing & the law
- Housing and tenancy law
- Mandatory sentencing, Sale and supply of alcohol, and
- Employment law
- Criminal Law processes and Crimes Victims Compensation
- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Child Protection and Child Abuse
- Legal Interventions for Elder Abuse
- Types of Compensation
- Anti-Discrimination Law
- Cyber safety and bullying
- Tips for purchasing motor vehicles

Collaboration with Police and other Services

The Top End Outreach team travelled to Minjilang with a Community Engagement Police Officer (CEPO) on the Police Air Wing to work collaboratively with the police delivering CLE workshops and information about the law. The team and CEPO visited the school and the clinic to discuss a range of issues, and delivered sessions on cyber safety to groups of school children. The sessions were interactive and included a mini basketball quiz game.

The Top End Outreach Team were also involved in the Minjilang Healthy Lifestyle week in June 2015 in collaboration with the Heart Foundation. The Outreach Team got involved in a community cook up competition, ran "legal health checks" with community members and ran another legal basketball quiz with school children. The festival involved a community concert with singing and dancing about the community and the Outreach Team were thrilled to be invited to participate and connect with the community.

Case Study – Car Loan Debt

A woman from a remote community outside the NT bought a car jointly in 2010 with her then partner, taking out a loan for $20,000 with a finance company. She then later separated from the partner in 2011, and moved to the NT. The ex-partner stopped paying for the car loan, and she was on Centrelink Parenting Payment struggling to pay the full loan. The car was then repossessed for $5,000 in 2012 by the debt collectors. The Top End Outreach Team met this woman early 2015. She was at that time required to pay $500 per month in repayments, and the outstanding debt amount was almost $13,000. The Team assisted her to complain to the debt collectors, as she was on a Centrelink Parenting Payment income at the time of taking out the loan and the finance company had failed to accurately assess her income and expenses. A debt waiver was pursued based on the inaccurate Credit Assessment, and the company's unconscionable conduct in failing to act as a prudent and diligent banker in assessing the credit application. Other factors contributing to this complaint were that the concept of interest was not explained to her, nor did she fully understand the contract, and she was considered a vulnerable consumer as an indigenous person living in a remote community. The finance company decided to recover the debt from the debt collectors, cease collection activity and waived the debt in full. The complaint was also sent to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) and the Credit and Investment Ombudsman, who also put pressure on finance company to resolve the matter in the client's favour.

Rebecca and CEPO
Paul Keightley at Minjilang

Top End Outreach Team
Rebecca and Shelley with
student volunteer Matthew
Cummings in Manyallaluk

Top End Family Law Pathways

Network

The Commission is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department as the auspice agency for the Top End Family Law Pathways Network ('Network'). The Network:

- Facilitates regular meetings of service providers working in the family law sector;
- Distributes sector relevant information to Network members across the Territory about a wide range of services, training, events, policies and procedures; and
- Produces a Calendar of Programs for Families, which provides information on programs to support all members of a family group, which is updated regularly.

The following major projects were completed during the year:

Training

The Top Network collaborated with the Alice Springs Family Law Pathways Network to bring Vincent Papaleo, child psychologist, to Alice Springs and Darwin to deliver a full day of work shops. Attendees in Darwin included Network members from a range of professions including Family Court Consultants, counsellors, family dispute resolution practitioners, domestic violence and legal professionals (family lawyers and independent children's lawyers). Topics covered over the day: Child Development Issues in Family Law Disputes; Child Sexual Abuse Allegations in Family Law Disputes and When a Child Rejects a Parent: Parental Alienation. In Darwin Mr Papaleo also provided a case studies session with a number of Independent Children's Lawyers.

Family Law Pathways Information Kiosk Trial

The trial of this project commenced following the relocation of the Federal Circuit Court and Family Law Courts Registry in June 2015.

Information kiosks have been running in various Family Court locations for several years. The service meets the overarching aim of the Network to improve collaboration and coordination between organisations operating in the family law system to help separating and separated families or other family law court users to obtain appropriate services.

The trial is to run until the end of 2015 calendar year with the kiosk operating at the Federal Circuit Court on the dates that the Court has a 'duty list'. It will be staffed on a rostered basis amongst the major agencies involved in services for separating families – the Commission, Anglicare Resolve, Relationships Australia NT and Catholic Care NT.

Family Dispute Resolution through a Trauma Informed Lens – training.

The Network collaborated with Relationships Australia NT and the Commission to bring trainers from the Institute of Specialist Dispute Resolution, Libby Watson and Jon Graham, to Darwin to deliver this 2 day training package in August 2015. The organisation for the event was carried out in May and June 2015 and funding from the 2014/15 year was allocated towards the event.

Staffing of the Commission

Director

As at 30 June 2015 the following persons were employed:

Director	Suzan Cox QC, BA LLB, LLM
Personal Assistant	Jodie Bawden
Deputy Director	Fiona Hussin, LLB

Darwin

Criminal Law Practice

Managing Solicitor	Ambrith Abayasekara BCom LLB
Senior Counsel	Ian Read SC, LLB BEc
Solicitors	Chrissy McConnel LLB
	Shane McMaster LLB
	Thomas Kaye BA, LLB, GDLP (Leave w/o Pay)
	Nicola MacCarron BA (Hons) MA LLB GDLP
	Caroline Snell BA, LLB GDLP
	Julia Ker LLB (Hons) BSc
	Sheetal Balakrishnan BBus LLB
	Alison Crouch BInstSt LLB GDLP
Crime Section Supervisor	Haley Richardson
Legal Secretary	Mark Wright

Family Law Practice

Managing Solicitor	Jaquie Palavra Dip of law (SAB)
Solicitors	Sally Bolton BA LLB (Hons)
	Anneleise Hey B.Sc/LLB (Hons) (Leave without pay)
	Maurice Sgarbossa BA, BSW (Dis), LLB, GDLP
	Hugh Bond BDevS LLB GDLP
	Mathew Kamarul, BA LLB
	Aditi Srinivas LLB GDLP MJS
Legal Secretaries	Kristina Fuderer (on parental leave)
	Jacqueline MacDonald
	Amy Dargan
Administrative Support	Lucia Vorrasi

Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Community Legal Education Officer	John Jablonka BA
Multicultural Educator	Satu Chad

Indigenous Outreach Services

Manager	Seranie Gamble BSocSci, LLB, Mst
Outreach Solicitor	Shelley Alvarez BA LLB MHRLP
Outreach Solicitor (Tennant Creek)	Position vacant
Indigenous Community Liaison Officer	Rebecca Wanganeen

Grants Section

Supervising Solicitor	Fiona Kepert LLB (Hon)
Grants Manager	Tina Baylis
Administrative Support	Ashton Messell
	Samantha Work
	McGregor Cookson

Family Dispute Resolution

Supervising Solicitor	Claire Wyatt BA LLB
Conference Coordinator	Emma Schluter
	Chloe Coleman-Harty (Parental Leave)

Library Services

Library and Information Coordinator	Helen Edney BA Lib&InfoSc

Corporate Services

Finance Manager	Barbara Lelli CPA
Human Resource Manager	Leeanne Morris BBus
Administrative Support	Karen Markos
	Amanda Bamford
	Randall Manoharan BSBA
	Marios Fitirikkos
IT Engineer	Robert Goldsmith Dip IT
Darwin Registry	Bianca Aloisi
Administrative Support	Sue Reddy
	Sarah Carbone
	Anthony McDevitt
	Gabriella Cameirao

Minor Assistance Civil Service

Managing Solicitor	Alison Hanley BA, LLB (leave without pay)

Family Duty Lawyer Service

Solicitor	Natalie Scattini LLB

Palmerston

Manager - Information and Referral Services	Melinda Schroeder
Administrative Support	Melissa Kirstenfeldt
Legal Aid Helpline	Bronwen McLauchlan
	Monica Settele Dip Lib Tech
	Kobie Dickson

Katherine

Managing Solicitor	Thomasin Opie BA LLB
Solicitor	Sall Forrest BA Coms LLB (Hons) GDLP
Legal Secretaries	Cassie Lamb
	Nicole Malpass

Tennant Creek

Managing Solicitor	Kevin Banbury BDip LLBG
Administrative Assistant	Mickayla Giezendanner

Alice Springs

Managing Solicitor	Russell Goldflam BA BLEGS (Hons), Grad Dip E
Solicitors	Carly Ingles BA LLB (Hons)
	Rennie Anderson BA LLB
	Clement Ng BA LLB, Grad Dip LP
	Alexandra Wright BA LLB
Legal Secretaries	Anne Coleman
	Wendy Vismans
Administrative Support	Kristin Schindler

Domestic Violence Legal Service

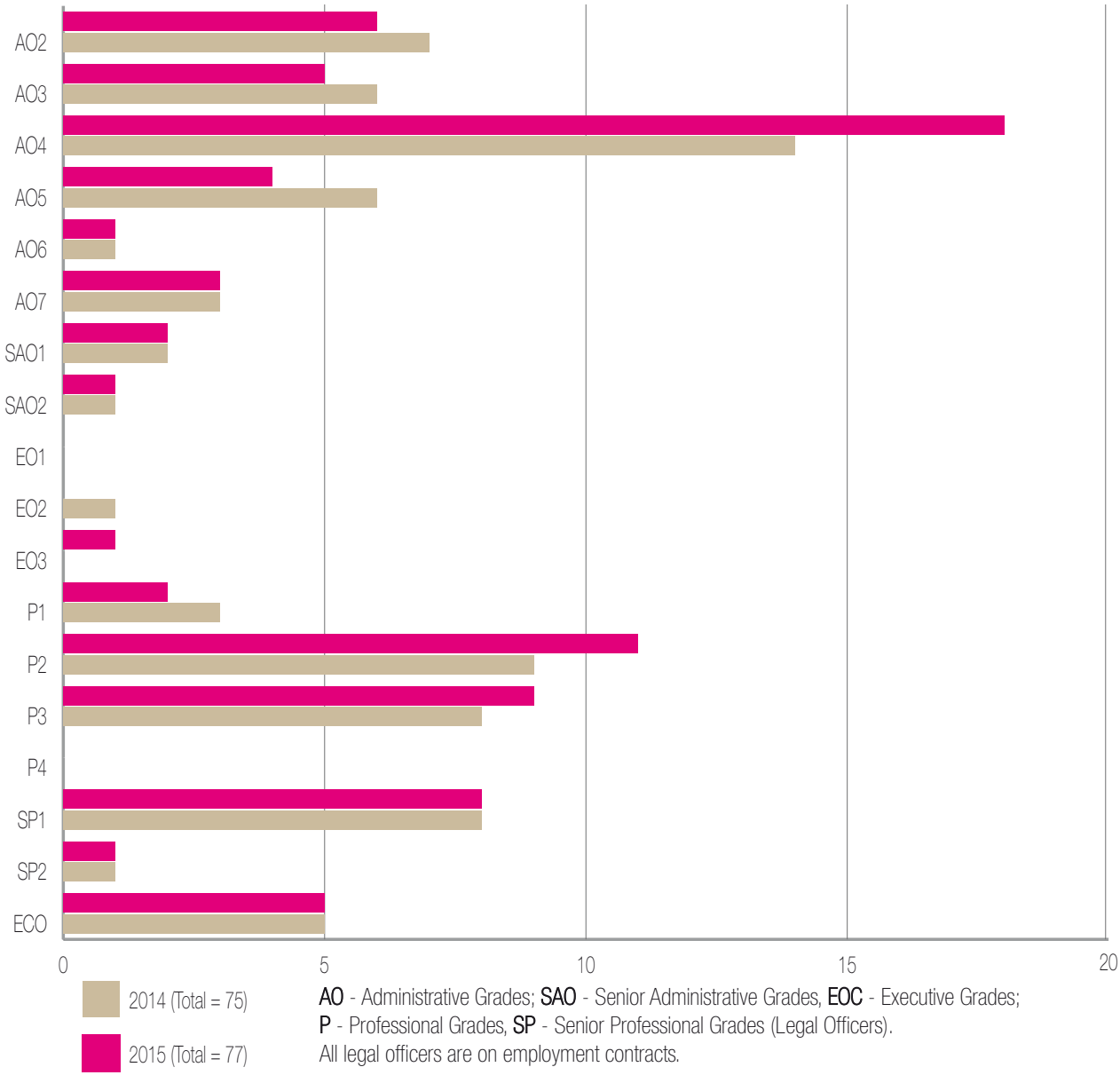
Managing Solicitor	Sue Phoo LLB BSc (on leave)
	Annabel Pengilley BA LLB
Solicitors	Carol Smith LLB GDLP
Legal Secretary	Denise Oliver

Volunteers

Under section 8 of the *Legal Aid Act* (NT) 1990 the Commission shall encourage persons who are not legal practitioners to participate, as far as is practicable, in a volunteer capacity whilst under professional supervision. During the year the Commission hosted 19 volunteers.

Staffing Levels

Staffing Levels as at 30th June 2015 were:



AO - Administrative Grades; **SAO** - Senior Administrative Grades, **EOC** - Executive Grades;
P - Professional Grades, **SP** - Senior Professional Grades (Legal Officers).
All legal officers are on employment contracts.

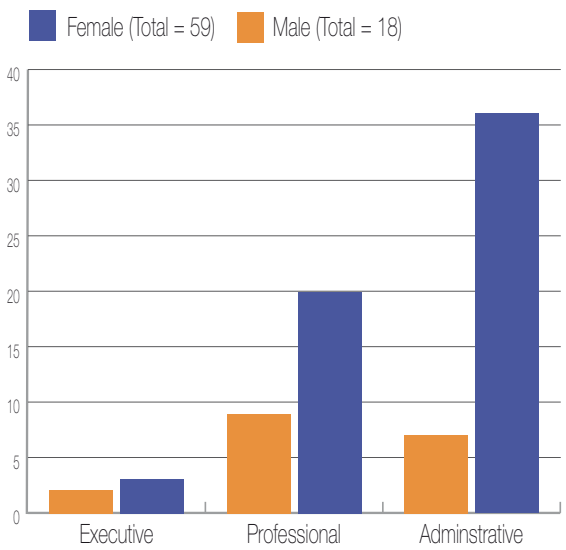
Resignations/Leave Without Pay

During the year 17 people left the Commission's employment.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The Commission has a range of initiatives to ensure that to employees of the Commission have equal employment opportunities.e

Distribution of the sexes is as follows:



Northern Territory Community Involvement

During the year members of staff, in their own time, contributed to the development of their respective professional associations, as well as:

- Alcohol Advertising Review Board - Panel member
- Australian Law Council – Indigenous Legal Issues Advisory Committee - Member
- Australian Lawyers for Human Rights - Member
- Barkly Regional Arts – Board Member
- Community Visitor Program – Panel Member
- Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory - President
- Darwin YWCA - Vice Chairperson
- Indigenous Law Centre (UNSW) - Associate
- Lightning Basketball Club Committee – Member
- Law Council of Australia – Indigenous Issues Committee - Member
- NT Department of Health and the Menzies School of Health Research, Human Research Ethics Committee – Member (Lawyer)
- NT Indian Cultural Society - Assistant Secretary
- NT Law Society - Councillor
- NT Law Society - Social Justice Committee - Member
- NT Law Society Council - Young Lawyers Representative
- NT Law Society CPD committee – Member
- NT Law Society Family Law Committee member
- NT Law Society Reconciliation Action Plan Subcommittee- Member
- NT Law Society Social Justice Committee - Member
- NT Women Lawyers Association - Executive (Mentorship sub-committee chair).
- NT Young Lawyers Committee - President
- Peoples Alcohol Action Coalition – Member
- Relationships Australia NT – Board member
- Tennant Creek - Barkly Regional Council – Local Authority
- Tennant Creek Women's Refuge – Board Member
- Territory Housing Appeals Board – Deputy Chairperson
- Top End Women's Legal Service – Board - Member
- WHAT RU4 NT? - Coordinator
- White Ribbon Campaign - Ambassador

Staff Development

During the year various members of staff were involved in staff development programs. The nature of the programs included conferences, workshops, seminars and training courses. The programs included:

- Aboriginal Interpreter Training
- ALLA Conference
- Appellate Advocacy
- Australasian Parole Authority Conference 2014
- Australian Advocacy Institute Family Law Advocacy
- Beyond Conflict
- Business Admin - Cert III
- CLANT Conference
- CLE Workshop
- Conducting Debrief Conversations
- CPD - 21st Century Legal Practice
- CPD - Authority & Change in Madayin
- CPD - Can Two Laws Come Together
- CPD - Can two laws come together?
- CPD - Case Advocacy: Effective Evidence in Chief
- CPD - Collaborative Law
- CPD - Complaints against Police & Alcohol Protect
- CPD - Continuing Your Firm's Risk Health Check
- CPD - Courtroom Etiquette
- CPD - Cross Examination of Expert Witnesses
- CPD - Effective cross-cultural communication for lawyers
- CPD - Ethics: Balancing Autonomy & Beneficence
- CPD - How to Become A Rock star Lawyer
- CPD - How to best represent your client
- CPD - Identification Evidence Under the Uniform
- CPD - Indigenous Protocols for Lawyers
- CPD - Lets Talk About Slaves
- CPD - One Day Intensive
- CPD - Prosecuting a Criminal Offence in Some Jurisdictions
- CPD - Risk Management Health Check for Lawyers
- CPD - Small fish in the Forfeiture Net
- CPD - Technology & Sexual Offending
- CPD - Australian Constitution & recognition of indigenous people
- Cross Cultural Training
- Current Challenges in the US Asylum System
- Dealing with Difficult Behaviours
- Dealing with Difficult People
- Developmental consideration in FL Disputes
- Dili Conference 2014 - Common Issues
- Divorcing the Assets - Tax and Family Law
  EASA- Customer Services
- • EASA - Dealing with Difficult People
- EASA - Getting your message across - Key Communication skills
- EASA - Mindfulness & Managing Stress
- EASA - Resilience & the art of Bouncing Back
- Excel Spreadsheet Risks & ABC - Webinar Series
- Facebook as a Forensic Tool
- Family Law Conference 2015
- Family Law Pathways - Network Project Officers Conference
- Family Law Pathways - Vincent Papaleo Workshops
- FAST - Travel Request Information Process System
- Fire warden & Extinguisher Training
- First Aid Course - Red Cross
- FOI Identifying & negotiating
- Four Wheel Drive/Defensive Driving
- FRC Information Session - Alice Springs
- Getting your Message Across
- ICLS: Honouring the Role
- Incidental Counsellor
- Insight - Suicide Prevention Training
- Intensive Mediator Training Program
- Love Bites Facilitator Training
- National CLCs Conference 2014
- Not-for-Profit conference - online
- NSW Law Society - Specialist Accreditation
- NTBA - Traps in Criminal Procedures
- NTCOSS Conference 2015
- Office Training
- Porn, Young People and Sexuality
- Preventing Child Abuse
- Red Cross - CPR Refresher
- Respectful Relationships - CLE Workshop
- St John Ambulance - Provide First Aid
- Suicide Prevention Training
- Trailblazing Women in the Law Project
- Trauma & Domestic Violence Training
- Trauma Basics
- Trial Advocacy: Effective in Chief
- Working with CALD people & Community

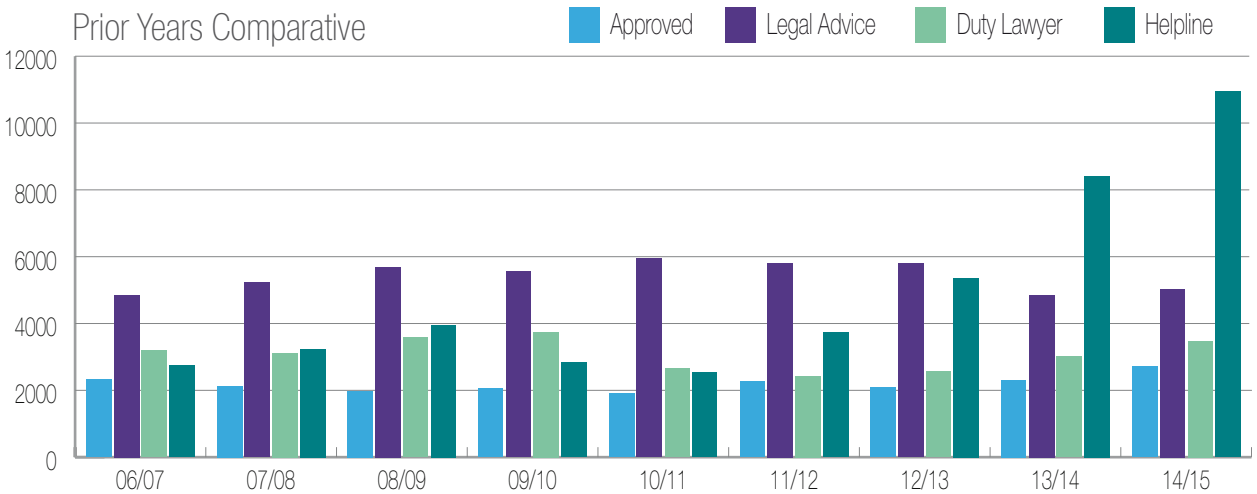
Occupational Health and Safety

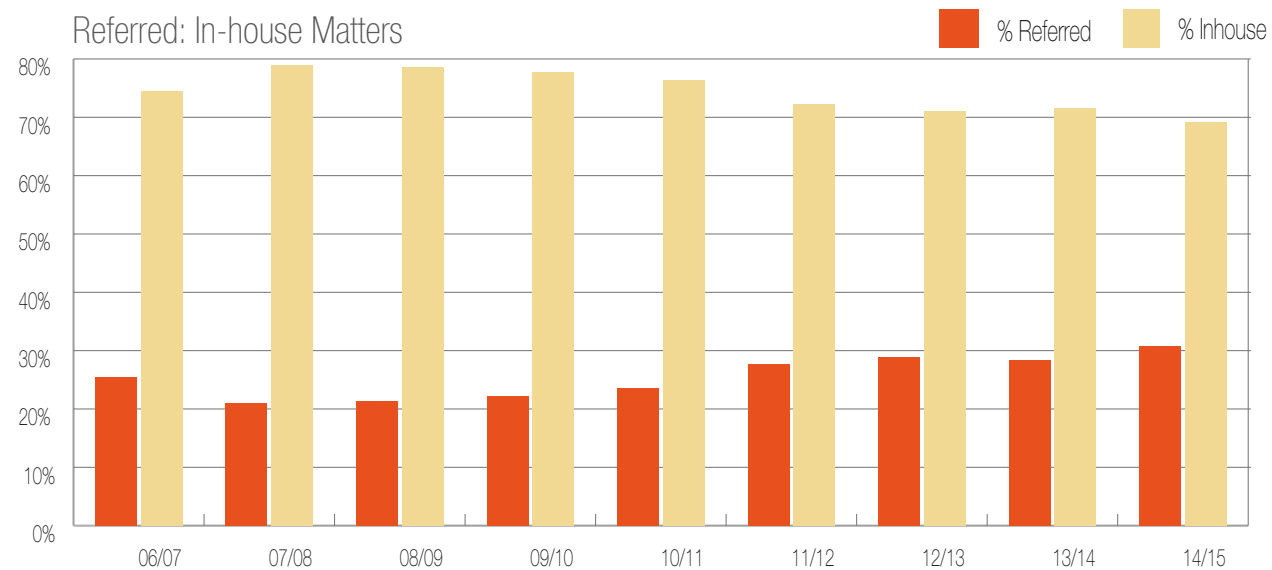
Employees are encouraged to adopt safe working practices. The Commission encourages and promotes a healthy work-life balance.

Achievements

During the year:

- 2,977 applications for aid were received.
- 2,714 applications for aid were approved.
- 836 approved applications for aid were referred to private practitioners.
- 1,878 approved applications for aid were handled by Commission Staff
- 5,038 persons received free legal advice.
- 3,479 persons received advice and/or were represented by Duty Lawyers.
- 10,943 persons accessed the free telephone Legal Aid Helpline





Performance

Performance Indicators 2010-2015

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Population	229, 200	233, 300	237,800	243,700	244,300
Estimated No. of Clients	13,037	14,230	15,807	18,605	22,174
Per 1000 head of population					
Legal Advice Provided	25.94	24.90	24.37	19.91	20.62
Duty Lawyer Services	11.58	10.41	10.79	12.39	14.24
Applications for Legal Aid					
Received	9.35	10.95	10.20	10.98	12.52
Approved	8.29	9.73	8.77	9.73	11.41
Refused	1.04	1.17	1.40	1.24	1.08
Telephone Legal Information Clients	11.07	15.95	22.54	34.55	44.79
Estimated Clients	56.88	60.99	66.47	76.34	90.77

Output Statistics

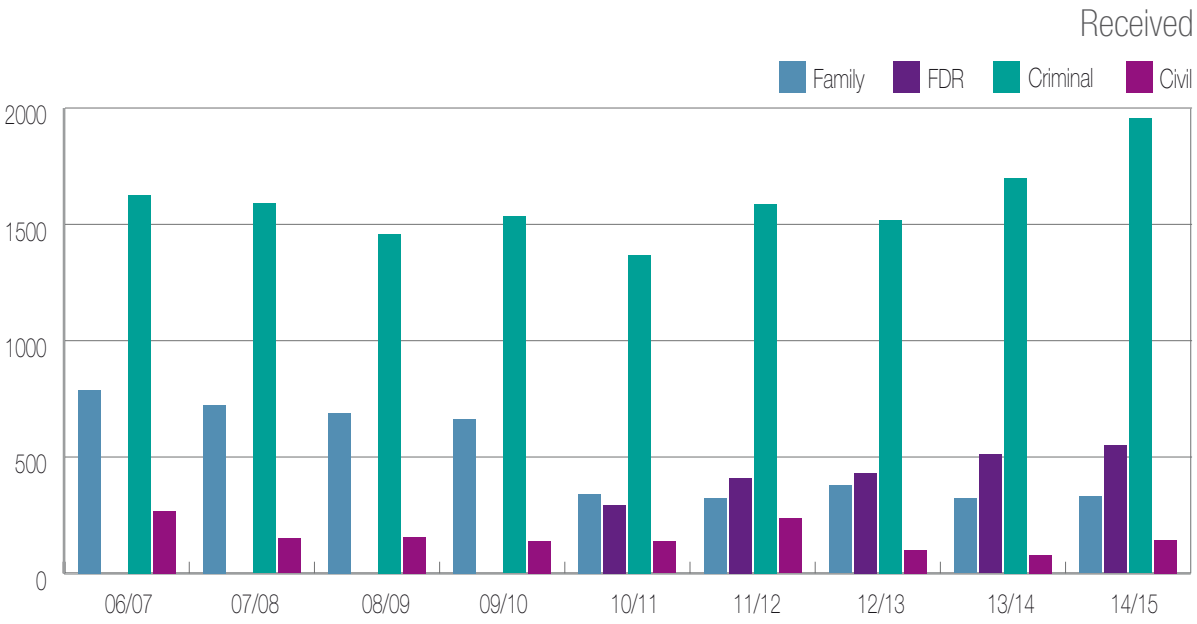
Summary of Major Activities

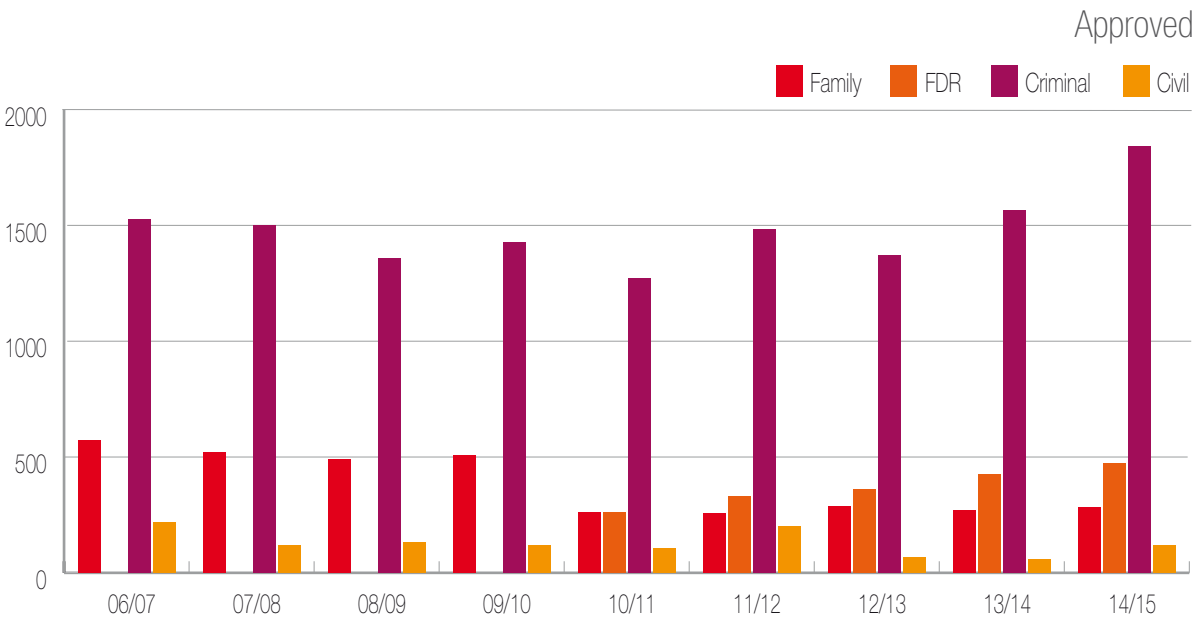
	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Legal aid service					
Applications for Aid:					
Received	2,142	2,555	2,425	2,612	2,977
Approved	1,899	2,271	2,086	2,314	2,714
Refused	239	273	332	294	256
Free Legal Advice Sessions	5,946	5,809	5,795	4,851	5,038
Duty Lawyer Services	2,654	2,428	2,565	3,020	3,479
Telephone Information Clients	2,538	3,722	5,361	8,420	10,943
Payments to private practitioners (includes disbursements)					
Referred Cases					
Family	477,985	571,692	498,417	625,256	594,487
Criminal	124,815	633,012	1,053,354	832,476	799,648
Civil	218,107	294,631	196,057	120,920	152,616
Domestic Violence	0	0	0	0	0
Duty Solicitor	143,000	114,000	112,675	65,200	13,866
Locums	127,681	143,825	80,861	68,270	48,930
Conflict Advice	38,848	37,170	36,617	48,345	63,490
Disbursements on inhouse cases					
Family	49,055	48,768	63,822	33,672	39,309
Criminal	434,329	219,791	213,156	93,722	245,009
Civil	23,026	44,095	441,572	161,792	0
TOTAL	1,897,979	1,443,090	2,512,880	2,267,167	1,957,356

Summary of Major Activities (continued)

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Applications approved and referred to private practitioners					
Family	137	141	149	145	172
FDR	165	202	209	230	278
Criminal	98	203	200	230	276
Civil	49	84	46	52	110
TOTAL	449	630	604	657	836
Applications approved and handled by commission staff					
Family	124	115	138	124	110
FDR	96	129	153	193	196
Criminal	1,174	1,281	1,170	1,335	1,565
Civil	56	116	21	5	7
TOTAL	1,450	1,641	1,482	1,657	1,878
Free advice sessions					
Family	1,174	1,774	1,954	1,676	1,732
Criminal	2,319	1,855	1,888	1,446	1,361
Civil	1,903	2,180	1,953	1,729	1,945
TOTAL	5,946	5,809	5,795	4,851	5,038
Duty lawyer services					
Family					
Advice Only	8	15	17	18	24
Advice and Representation	200	237	112	130	217
Other	1	0	4	4	2
Criminal					
Advice Only	109	84	183	431	373
Advice and Representation	2,277	2,071	2,241	2,367	2,728
Other	14	11	5	5	14
Civil					
Advice Only	1	2	0	0	0
Advice and Representation	44	8	3	65	119
Other	0	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	2,654	2,428	2,565	3,020	3,479

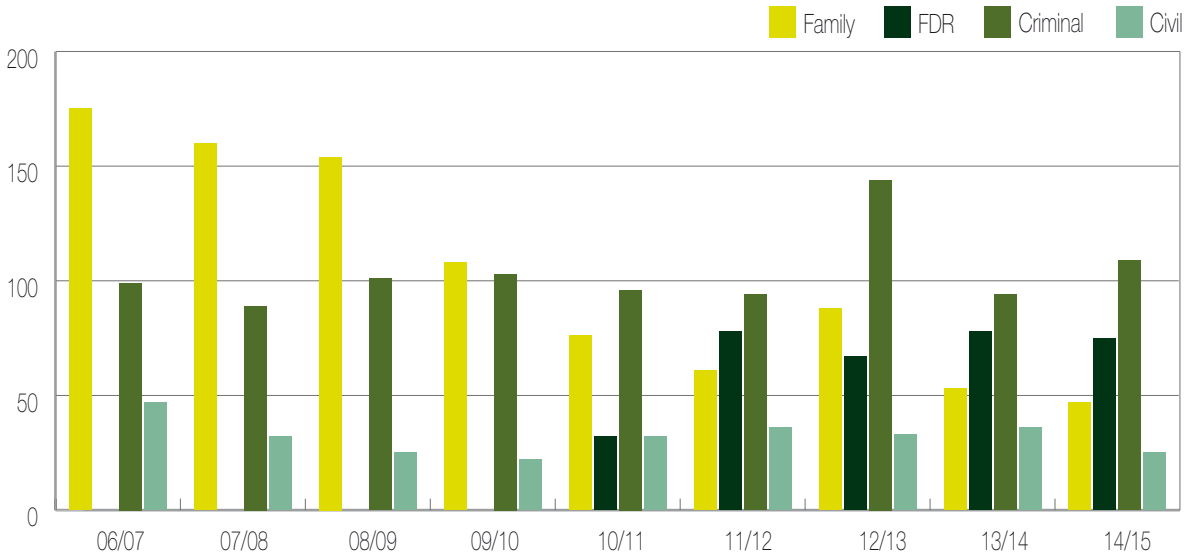
Applications for Aid



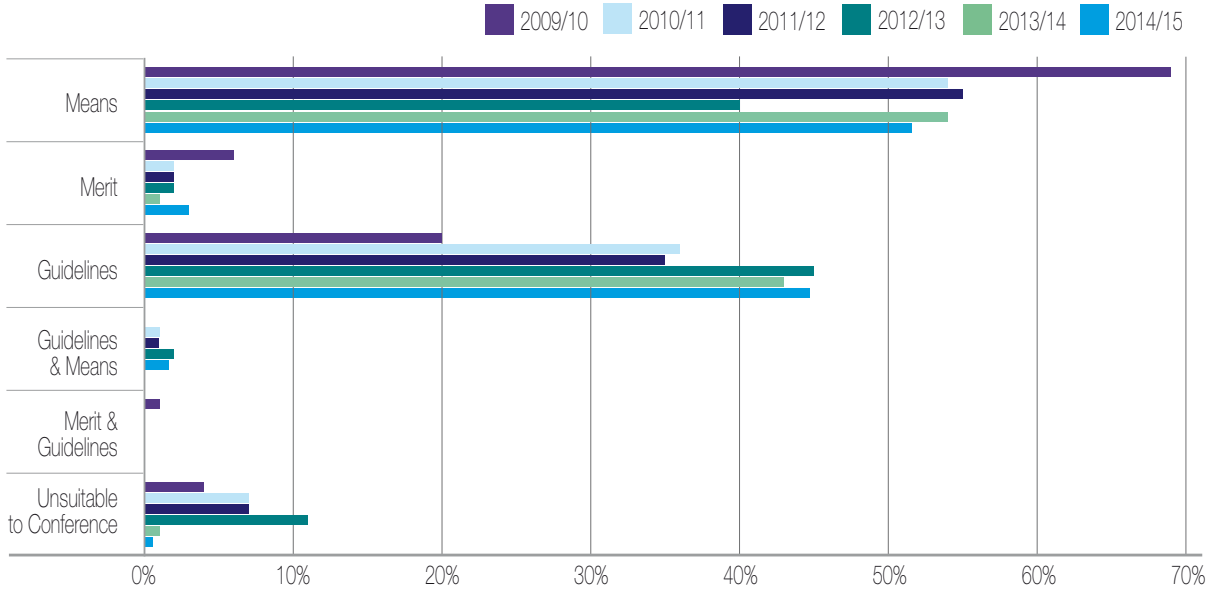


Applications for Aid

Refused



Reasons for Refusal



Information Act 2003 (NT)

The following information is held by the Commission:

Publications information	Personal information	Other information
NTLAC Guidelines and Scale of Costs	Client	Financial
NTCLAF Guidelines	Personnel	Statistical
Community Legal Education		Policies
Booklets (various topics)		Manuals
Pamphlets (various topics)		Administration
Annual Reports		Law Reform

Publications are available upon request free of charge.

Access to information other than personal information or published information must be made on the appropriate application form obtainable from and returnable to:

The Information Officer
Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
6th Floor, 9-11 Cavenagh Street, Darwin

Postal: Locked Bag 11, Darwin NT 0801

Phone: 1800 019 343

Fax: (08) 8999 3099

NB: Applications must be accompanied by proof of identity (eg. Passport, Drivers' Licence etc). To facilitate the identity check, applications may be lodged in person at any of the Commission's offices listed below. The Application form will be forwarded to the Information Officer in Darwin, if the local office is unable to assist.

Darwin
6th Floor, 9-11 Cavenagh Street

Palmerston
Shop 6, Goyder Centre, 25 Chung Wah Terrace

Katherine
20 Second Street

Tennant Creek
Shop 3, 163 Paterson Street

Alice Springs
77 Hartley Street

Fees

Access to or correction of personal information ..... No fee
Access to published information ..... No fee
Access to information other than personal information or published information ..... A $30.00 fee and a 60¢ per page charge for photocopying of documents of more than 20 pages may apply

Domestic Violence Legal Service

Since April 2009 the Northern Territory Government has funded the Commission to operate, outside of its family law practice, a separate independent Domestic Violence Legal Service (DVLS), with a further 3-year funding provided by the Territory in 2013. The DVLS managing solicitor is provided with guidance, support and supervision by the Deputy Director of the Commission as required. To avoid conflicts the Service maintains its own client database independent of the Commission's client database.

With a staff of two solicitors and the office coordinator, DVLS provided over 1900 services by way of referrals, advice clinics, duty lawyer and/or legal representation to people experiencing or at risk of domestic violence during the reporting period. In addition, 880 people were provided with information on DV law and processes and referral information through the Commission's Legal Aid Helpline. Reflecting this high level of service, feedback from clients and stakeholders during the period was extremely positive, though a common theme was a need for more staffing.

As a member of the Darwin Domestic and Family Violence Network, DVLS made a significant contribution to the development and implementation of the NTG "Safety is Everyone's Right" Domestic and Family Violence Reduction Strategy 2014-17, including participation in the Family Safety Framework Local Area Reference Groups.

As part of its advocacy and law reform, DVLS developed a resource for DV workers on responding to internet-based domestic violence, made a significant submission to the NTG ICE Select Committee enquiry, a submission to the review of section 19 *Evidence Act*, and provision of material to the Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence. Community Legal Education was provided to wide range of services working in domestic violence related areas.

Output Statistics

Summary of major activities

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Total services provided					
Applications for Aid:					
Received	124	149	152	115	189
Approved	124	149	148	114	189
Refused	0	0	4	1	0
Free Legal Advice Sessions	515	497	556	621	611
Duty Lawyer Services	398	575	532	371	267

Financial Performance

This year the Commission's operations resulted in a deficit of $46,967.
The table below shows the percentage distribution of expenditure incurred and revenue earned from 2006-2014.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Expenditure								
Personnel Costs	47.41	52.53	54.51	56.71	56.52	57.72	58.28	60.36
Administration Costs	22.13	22.19	22.24	22.52	19.80	19.85	20.11	19.96
Legal Costs	25.12	20.91	19.26	17.39	21.06	19.86	18.54	16.44
Minor Assets	2.66	1.47	1.40	1.23	1.20	1.18	1.38	1.51
Depreciation	2.68	2.90	2.59	2.15	1.42	1.39	1.69	1.73
Total Expenditure	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Revenue								
Commonwealth	40.00	41.17	41.34	42.74	35.39	34.37	42.51	38.88
NT Government	37.47	39.27	39.41	39.28	42.72	42.08	48.28	54.00
Commonwealth Other	13.85	11.13	10.03	9.52	13.32	6.67	4.90	1.02
NT Government Other	2.72	3.77	4.50	4.48	3.83	10.49	1.18	2.14
Total Government Funding	94.04	95.34	95.28	96.02	95.26	93.61	96.87	96.04
Contributions and Recovered Costs	2.82	2.26	3.31	2.00	3.2	5.30	2.21	2.99
Interest Earned	2.85	2.09	1.21	1.33	1.08	1.02	0.90	0.78
Other	0.29	0.31	0.20	0.65	0.46	0.07	0.02	0.18
Total Self-Generated	5.96	4.66	4.72	3.98	4.74	6.39	3.13	3.96

Financials 2014 /2015

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Statement of Cash Flows 56

Statement of Changes In Equity 57

Notes to the Financial Statements 58-76

Auditor-General

Independent Auditor's Report to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

I have audited the accompanying financial report of Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2015, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the certification of the financial statements by the Director.

The Director's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Director of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and for such internal control as the Director determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that I comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Director, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit.

Opinion

In my opinion the financial report gives a true and fair view of the financial position of Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission as at 30 June 2015, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

Julie Crisp
Auditor-General for the Northern Territory
Darwin, Northern Territory

25 November 2015

Level 12 Northern Territory House 22 Mitchell Street Darwin 0800 Tel: 08 8999 7155

Statement by Directors

In the opinion of the Directors of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission:

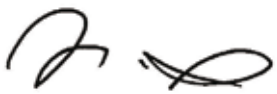
(a) the accompanying general purpose financial statements of the Commission present fairly the Commission's financial position as at 30 June 2015, and its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements;

(b) at the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Commission will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable; and

(c) at the time of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances that would render the particulars included in the financial statements misleading or inaccurate.

Signed in Darwin this 24 November 2015.

Suzan Cox QC
Director



Fiona Hussin
Deputy Director

Statement of Profit or Loss and other Comprehensive Income

For The Year Ended 30 June 2015

	Notes	2015 $	2014 $
Revenue	2	12,028,008	10,823,690
Depreciation Expense		(200,508)	(184,836)
Salaries and Employee Benefits Expense		(6,928,715)	(6,389,151)
Legal Expense		(1,901,642)	(2,032,025)
Administration Expense		(1,272,111)	(1,228,030)
Other Expenses		(1,211,589)	(1,128,894)
Total Expenses	3	(11,514,565)	(10,962,936)
Net income (loss) for the period		513,443	(139,246)
Other comprehensive income			
Revaluation of property plant and equipment		0	0
Total comprehensive income (loss) for the period		513,443	(139,246)

Total comprehensive income (loss) for the period is attributable to the owner.

The Statement of Profit or Loss Comprehensive Income is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Statement of Financial Position

At 30 June 2015

	Notes	2015	2014
		$	$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	2,293,552	1,385,355
Trade receivables	5	108,347	235,324
Investments	6	500,000	500,000
Other receivables	7	204,441	207,085
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		3,106,340	2,327,764
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	8	972,753	1,087,070
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		972,753	1,087,070
TOTAL ASSETS		4,079,093	3,414,834
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	395,407	331,237
Provisions	10	1,169,080	1,113,371
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,564,487	1,444,608
Non-Current Liabilities			
Provisions	10	371,698	340,761
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		371,698	340,761
TOTAL LIABILITIES		1,936,185	1,785,369
NET ASSETS		2,142,908	1,629,46
Equity			
Retained Earnings	17	1,076,028	352,893
Reserves	16	1,066,880	1,276,572
TOTAL EQUITY		2,142,908	1,629,465

The Statement of Financial Position is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows

For The Year Ended 30 June 2015

	Notes	2015	2014
		$	$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities			
Cash Receipts in the course of operations		508,764	342,111
Interest received in the course of operations		94,377	97,622
Grants received in the course of operations		11,550,981	10,353,123
Cash Payments in the course of operations		(11,159,725)	(10,722,818)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) OPERATING ACTIVITIES	13	994,397	70,038
Cash Flows from Investing Activities			
Payments for property, plant and equipment		(86,200)	(137,188)
Net (Payments)/Receipts for investments		0	750,000)
NET CASH FLOWS (USED IN)/FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		(86,200)	612,812
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		908,197	682,850
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		1,385,355	702,505
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	4	2,293,552	1,385,355

The Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Statement of Changes in Equity

For The Year Ended 30 June 2015

	Notes	Reserves	Retained Earnings	Total
		$	$	$
Balance at 30 June 2013		**1,201,723**	**566,988**	**1,768,711**
Loss for the year		0	(139,246)	(139,246)
Other comprehensive income		0	0	0
Total comprehensive income		0	(139,246)	(139,246)
Transaction with owners in their capacity as owners:				
Reversals of reserves for property, plant and equipment acquired		(195,794)	195,794	0
Additional reserves for future acquisitions of property, plant and equipment		188,164	(188,164)	0
Transfer from Reserves		82,479	(82,479)	0
Balance at 30 June 2014	16 & 17	**1,276,572**	**352,893**	**1,629,465**
Profit for the year		0	513,443	513,443
Other comprehensive income		0	0	0
Total comprehensive income		0	513,443	513,443
Transaction with owners in their capacity as owners:				
Transfer to/from Reserves		(209,692)	209,692	0
Balance at 30 June 2015	16 & 17	**1,066,880**	**1,076,028**	**2,142,908**

The Statement of Changes in Equity should be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

1. Summary Of Significant Accounting Policies

The Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission (the "Commission") was established on 11 June 1990 by the Legal Aid Act 1990. The function of the Commission is to provide legal assistance in accordance with this Act. The Commission commenced its activities on 1 July 1990. The Commission is considered a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes.

a) Principal place of Business

The Commission holds its principal place of business at Level 6, 9-11 Cavenagh Street, Darwin.

b) Number of Employees

The Commission had 77 employees as at 30 June 2015 (2014 – 75 employees).

c) Basis of accounting

The financial report is a general purpose financial report which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Australian Accounting Standards issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board that apply for the reporting period.

The accounting policies used in the preparation of this report are consistent with previous years and are described below:

(i)
The accounts, except for the cash flow information, have been prepared using the accrual basis of accounting applying the historical cost convention and the going concern assumption. The Commission will continually review its operations, levels of service and monitor increased service demands to enable it operate within its funding parameters.

(ii)
Cost in relation to assets represents the amount incurred or the fair value of the asset given in exchange adjusted to recoverable amount where necessary. In determining recoverable amount the expected net cash flows have been discounted to their present value.

(iii)
Where necessary, comparative information has been reclassified to achieve consistency in disclosure with current financial year amounts and other disclosures.

(iv)
The financial report is presented in Australian dollars and all values are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Standards and Interpretations affecting amounts, presentation and disclosure reported in the current period

No accounting standard has been adopted earlier than the applicable dates as stated in standard.

New standards/revised standards/interpretations/amending standards issued prior to the sign-off date applicable to the current reporting period did not have a financial impact on the Commission and are not expected to have future financial impact on the Commission.

Future Australian Accounting Standard Requirements

The following new standards/revised standards/Interpretations/amending standards were issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board prior to the sign-off date, which are not expected to have a material financial impact on the Commission for future reporting periods:

		Operative Date
AASB 9	Financial Instruments - December 2014	1 Jan 2018
AASB 15	Revenue from Contracts with Customers – December 2014	1 Jan 2015
(Principal)	1 Jan 2017	1 Jan 2014
AASB 2010-7	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 9	1 Jan 2018
AASB 2015-1	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Annual Improvements to Australian Accounting Standards 2012–2014 Cycle [AASB 1, AASB 2, AASB 3, AASB 5, AASB 7, AASB 11, AASB 110, AASB 119, AASB 121, AASB 133, AASB 134, AASB 137 & AASB 140]	1 Jan 2016
AASB 2015-2	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Disclosure Initiative: Amendments to AASB 101 [AASB 7, AASB 101, AASB 134 & AASB 1049]	1 Jan 2016

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

It is expected that there will be no material financial impact from the application of these standards as they are primarily disclosure related.

d) Government appropriation and grants

Government appropriation and grants are recognised in the Statement of Profit or Loss at the time of their receipt. All revenue is stated net of the amount of Goods and Services Tax (GST).

e) Cash

For the purposes of the Statement of Cash Flows, cash includes cash on hand and in banks, and money market investments readily convertible to cash within two working days.

f) Financial Assets

The Commission classifies its financial assets in the following categories:

- 'financial assets at fair value through profit or loss';
- 'held-to-maturity investments'; and
- 'loans and receivables'.

The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition. Financial assets are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

Effective interest method

The effective interest method is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial asset and of allocating interest income over the relevant period. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset, or, where appropriate, a shorter period. Income is recognised on an effective interest rate basis.

Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

Financial assets classified as held for trading are included in the category "financial assets at fair value through profit or loss". These are classified as held for trading if they are acquired for the purpose of selling in the near term with the intention of making a profit. Gains or losses on financial assets held for trading are recognised in profit or loss and the related assets are classified as current assets in the balance sheet.

Held-to-maturity investments

Non-derivative financial assets with fixed or determinable payments and fixed maturity dates that the Commission has the positive intent and ability to hold to maturity are classified as held-to-maturity investments. Held-to-maturity investments are recorded at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment, with revenue recognised on an effective yield basis.

Loans and receivables

Trade receivables, loans and other receivables that have fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market are classified as 'loans and receivables'. They are included in current assets, except for maturities greater than 12 months after the balance sheet date. These are classified as non current assets. Loans and receivables are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment. Interest is recognised by applying the effective interest rate to the relevant balances.

Impairment of financial assets

Financial assets are assessed for impairment at each balance date.

Financial assets held at amortised cost - If there is objective evidence that an impairment loss has been incurred for loans and receivables or held to maturity investments held at amortised cost, the amount of the loss is measured as the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate. The carrying amount is reduced by way of an allowance account. The loss is recognised in the Income Statement.

g) Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are classified as either financial liabilities 'at fair value through profit or loss' or 'other financial liabilities.' Financial liabilities are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

Financial liabilities at fair value through profit or loss

Financial liabilities at fair value through profit or loss are initially measured at fair value. Subsequent fair value adjustments are recognised in profit or loss. The net gain or loss recognised in profit or loss incorporates any interest paid on the financial liability.

Other financial liabilities

Other financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value, net of transaction costs.

Other financial liabilities are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, with interest expense recognised on an effective yield basis.

The effective interest method is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial liability and of allocating interest expense over the relevant period. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments through the expected life of the financial liability, or, where appropriate, a shorter period.

Supplier and other payables

Supplier and other payables are recognised at amortised cost. Liabilities are recognised to the extent that the goods or services have been received (and irrespective of having been invoiced).

h) Contingent Assets and Liabilities

Contingent Assets and Contingent Liabilities are not recognised in the Statement of Financial Position but are reported in the relevant schedules and notes. They may arise from uncertainty as to the existence of an asset or liability or represent an asset or liability in respect of which the amount cannot be reliably measured. Contingent assets are disclosed when settlement is probable but not virtually certain and contingent liabilities are disclosed when settlement is greater than remote.

i) Acquisition of Assets

Assets are recorded at cost on acquisition except as stated below. The cost of acquisition includes the fair value of assets transferred in exchange and liabilities undertaken.

j) Property, plant and equipment

Freehold land and buildings on freehold land are measured on a fair value basis, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses. Revaluations are performed at least every 5 years. All other classes of property, plant and equipment are measured at cost. Cost is determined as the fair value of the asset given as consideration plus incidental costs in getting the asset ready for use.

Any revaluation increase arising on the revaluation of such land and buildings is credited to the asset revaluation reserve, except to the extent that it reverses a revaluation decrease for the same asset previously recognised in profit and loss, in which case the increase is credited to profit and loss to the extent of the decrease previously charged. A decrease in carrying amount arising on the revaluation of such land and buildings is charged to profit and loss to the extent that it exceeds the balance, if any, held in the asset revaluation reserve relating to a previous revaluation of that asset.

The carrying amount of property, plant & equipment is reviewed annually to ensure it is not in excess of the recoverable amount of these assets. The recoverable amount is assessed on the basis of the expected net cash flows that will be received from the assets employment and subsequent disposal. The expected net cash flows have been discounted to their present values in determining recoverable amounts. Property, plant and equipment purchased for less than $10,000 during the year have been expensed.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

k) Depreciation and amortisation of fixed assets

Property, plant and equipment, including buildings and leasehold property but excluding freehold land, are depreciated / amortised over their expected useful economic lives using the straight line method and are measured at cost.

Assets are first depreciated or amortised in the year of acquisition or, in respect of internally constructed assets, from the time an asset is held ready for use. The depreciation rates used for the major class of depreciable assets are:

Fixed Assets	2014	2015
Buildings	30 years	30 years
Plant & Equipment	5 years	5 years

Leasehold improvements are depreciated over the life of the assets or term of the lease, whichever is shorter.

l) Employee benefits

Provision is made for the Commission's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to balance sheet date. Employee benefits expected to be settled within one year together with entitlements arising from wages and salaries and annual leave have been measured at their nominal amounts based on remuneration rates which are expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

The liability for long service leave is recognised in the provision for employee benefits and measured as the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date. Consideration is given to expected future wage and salary levels, related on costs, experience of employee departures, and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using market yields at the reporting date on national government bonds with terms to maturity and currencies that match, as closely as possible, the estimated future cash outflows.

m) Superannuation arrangements

Contributions made by the Commission to employee superannuation funds are expensed.

Employee's Superannuation entitlements are provided through the NT Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme (NTGPASS) and non-government employee nominated schemes for those employees commencing on or after 10 August 1999.

The Commission contributes 9.50% on behalf of the majority of employees. Any liability for superannuation is met directly by the NT Government and the entity has and will continue to have no other direct superannuation liability.

n) Income tax

The Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission is a public authority within the definition of Section 50-25 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 and its income is exempt under the provisions of that Act.

o) Reserves

The Commission maintains reserves that are funded by cash and investments. The fund reserves are as follows:

- Property, Plant and Equipment Reserve
  This reserve is used to record funds set aside for the purchase, replacement and maintenance of the Commission's property, plant and equipment which includes information technology.
- Assets Revaluation Reserve
  This reserve is used to record increments and decrements on the revaluation of non-current assets. The reserve may also be adjusted as a result of asset impairment adjustments.
- Commonwealth Reserve
  This reserve is used to recognise any unexpended funds from Commonwealth Government funding during the period. The reserve is adjusted when the unexpended grant is used.

p) Revenue recognition

Revenue is recognised to the extent that it is probable that the economic benefits will flow to the entity and the revenue can be reliably measured. The following specific recognition criteria must also be met before revenue is recognised:

Rendering of services

Where the contract outcome can be reliably measured, control of the right to be compensated for the services and the stage of completion can be reliably measured. Stage of completion is measured by reference to labour hours incurred to date as a percentage of total estimated labour hours for each contract.

Where the contract outcome cannot be reliably measured, revenue is recognised only to the extent that costs have been incurred.

Interest

Interest revenue is recognised when control of the right to receive the interest payment passes.

q) Leases

Leases are classified at their inception as either operating or finance leases based on the economic substance of the agreement so as to reflect the risks and benefits incidental to ownership.

The Commission enters into operating leases for office accommodation. Rentals payable under operating leases are charged to the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income on a straight-line basis over the term of the relevant lease. Benefits received and receivable as an incentive to enter into an operating lease are also spread on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

r) Goods and Services Tax

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST except:

- Where the GST incurred on a purchase of goods and services is not recoverable from the taxation authority, in which case the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense item as applicable; and
- Receivables and payables are stated with the amounts of GST included.

The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included as part of the receivables and payables in the statement of financial position.

Cash flows are included on the Statement of Cash Flows on a gross basis and the GST component of cash flows arising from investing and financing activities, which is recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority, are classified as operating cash flows.

s) Critical accounting estimates and judgements

Estimates and judgements incorporated into the financial report are based on historical knowledge and best available current information. Estimates assume a reasonable expectation of future events and are based on current trends and economic data, obtained both externally and within the Commission.

t) Economic Dependence

The Commission is funded predominantly by annual funding from the Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth Government to meet proposed cash expenditure on both operational and capital items in the current financial year. These financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis in the expectation that such funding will continue.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

2. Revenue

		2015	2014
		$	$
Grant revenue from	- NT	6,495,000	5,226,000
	- Commonwealth	4,676,320	4,601,320
	- Others	380,523	657,409
Rendering of services revenue	- Client contributions	128,763	139,601
	- Recovered costs	231,187	99,499
Other revenue	- Interest	94,377	97,622
	- Others	21,838	2,239
		12,028,008	10,823,690

3. Expenses

		$	$
Depreciation expense		200,508	184,836
Salaries and employee benefits expense		6,928,715	6,389,151
Administration costs		1,272,111	1,228,030
Legal costs		1,901,642	2,032,025
Other expenses	- Minor assets	174,242	151,798
	- Operating lease expenditure	1,037,347	977,096
		11,514,565	10,962,936

4. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	$	$
Cash on hand	1,450	1,450
Cash at bank	2,282,102	1,373,905
Advance account	10,000	10,000
	2,293,552	1,385,355

5. Trade Receivables

	2015	2014
	$	$
Current		
Trade Debtors	17,512	132
Less Provision for Doubtful Debts	0	(132)
	17,512	0
Recoveries Receivable	91,104	175,350
Less Provision for Doubtful Debts	(269)	(34,079)
	90,835	141,271
GST Receivable	0	94,053
	108,347	235,324
The aging of the receivables are as follows:		
- up to 3 months	75,670	146,047
- 3 to 12 months	21,735	31,590
- 1 to 2 years	10,942	91,242
- 2 to 4 years	154	546
- more than 4 years	115	110
	108,616	269,535
The aging of provision for doubtful debts are as follows:		
- 3 months to 2 years	0	33,555
- 2 to 4 years	154	546
- more than 4 years	115	110
	269	34,211
Movements of Provision for Doubtful Accounts are as follows:		
Beginning balance	34,211	592
Reinstatement of accounts previously written-off	0	33,719
Amount written off	(33,942)	0
Ending balance	269	34,211

6. Investments

Current		
Term Deposits	500,000	500,000
The term deposits and bank bills are held with commercial banks.	500,000	500,000

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

7. Other Receivables

	2015	2014
	$	$
Prepayments		
- Insurances	86,577	90,337
- Rent	73,569	78,684
- Salaries	9,056	0
- Other	32,299	35,987
Accrued revenue	2,940	2,077
	204,441	207,085

8. Property, Plant and Equipment

Freehold land at fair value	350,000	350,000
	350,000	350,000
Buildings – at fair value	700,094	700,094
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(261,638)	(217,790)
	438,456	482,304
Leasehold improvements – at cost	790,067	730,282
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(781,776)	(679,003)
	8,291	51,279
Plant and equipment – at cost	371,641	525,365
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(195,635)	(321,878)
	176,006	203,487
Total property, plant and equipment – net book value		
Cost	1,161,708	1,255,647
Fair value	1,050,094	1,050,094
	2,211,802	2,305,741
Accumulated depreciation	(1,239,049)	(1,218,671)
	972,753	1,087,070

8. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

	2015	2014
	$	$
(a) Reconciliations Reconciliations of the carrying amounts of each class of property, plant and equipment are set out below:		
Freehold Land		
Carrying amount at beginning of year	350,000	350,000
Net amount of revaluation increments	0	0
Carrying amount at end of year	350,000	350,000
Buildings		
Carrying amount at beginning of year	482,304	513,000
Net amount of revaluation decrements	0	0
Additions	0	0
Depreciation	(43,848)	(30,696)
Carrying amount at end of year	438,456	482,304
Leasehold Improvements		
Carrying amount at beginning of year	51,279	155,785
Additions	59,785	4,800
Disposals	0	0
Depreciation	(102,773)	(109,306)
Carrying amount at end of year	8,291	51,279
Plant and Equipment		
Carrying amount at beginning of year	203,487	133,320
Additions	26,415	132,388
Disposals	(9)	(17,387)
Depreciation	(53,887)	(44,834)
Carrying amount at end of year	176,00	203,487

(b) Valuations

The fair values of freehold land and buildings have been determined by reference to direct valuations, based upon independent valuations obtained from the Australian Valuation Office dated 27 June 2012.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

9. Trade and Other Payables

	2015	2014
	$	$
Current		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	395,407	331,237
Total Payables	395,407	331,237

10. Provisions

Current			
Employee benefits	- Annual Leave	438,010	466,276
	- Long Service Leave	533,319	480,661
	- Leave Loading	90,163	89,630
		1,061,492	1,036,567
Fringe Benefits Tax		48,826	22,423
Super contribution and others		58,762	54,381
		1,169,080	1,113,371
Non-Current			
Employee benefits	- Annual Leave	317,309	270,301
	- Long Service Leave	54,389	70,460
		371,698	340,761

11. Superannuation Commitments

Employees' superannuation entitlements are principally provided through the Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme (NTGPASS). Benefits from these schemes are supplemented by an additional "3% productivity" benefit from the Northern Territory Supplementary Superannuation Scheme (NTSSS).

Employee contributions for NTGPASS members are based on an elected rate of 2% to 6% salary. NTSSS benefits are entirely employer funded and do not require employee contributions. As at 30 June 2015 total superannuation expended amounted to $607,341 (at 30 June 2014 - $523,462).

From 10 August 1999, new employees are unable to join the above funds and must nominate their own fund into which contributions will be paid.

12. Trust Accounts

The Commission operates a solicitor's trust account and the funds are not used in the achievement of its objectives. Therefore these monies are not brought to account in the financial reports but are disclosed by way of note. The trust account is maintained for verdict and settlement monies held on behalf of legally aided persons. The Commission may recover some costs upon finalisation of these matters. As at 30 June 2015 the trust account had a balance of $104 (2014 - $6,641).

	2015	2014
13. Cash Flow Statement	**$**	$
Reconciliation of net cash used in operating activities to operating profit		
Operating profit/(loss)	**513,443**	(139,246)
Depreciation	**200,508**	184,836
Loss on disposal of assets/assets donated	**9**	17,387
Provision for (recovery of) Bad debts	**0**	0
Increase/(Decrease) in provisions	**86,646**	(14,218)
Increase/(Decrease) in creditors	**64,170**	52,113
Decrease/(Increase) in receivables	**126,977**	(26,228)
Decrease/(Increase) in prepayments (non-capital)	**2,644**	(4,606)
Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities	**994,397**	70,038
14. Expenditure Commitments		
Building lease expenditure commitments		
Operating leases (non-cancellable)		
- not later than one year	**925,458**	913,053
- later than one year but not later than five years	**2,412,190**	218,327
Grants In Aid	**711,631**	364,445
Aggregate lease expenditure and Grants in Aid contracted for at balance date but not provided for	**4,049,279**	2,481,216

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

15. Contingency Legal Aid Fund

Under Section 44 of the Northern Territory of Australia Legal Aid Act 1990 the Contingency Legal Aid Fund was established towards the end of the 1992/93 financial year. The funds are not used in the achievement of the Commission's objectives. Therefore these monies are not brought to account in the financial reports but are disclosed by way of note. The fund is available to provide financial assistance to eligible persons to enable them to bring or defend civil proceedings. It was set up with a seeding grant from the Law Society Public Purpose Trust. The details of the funds are as follows:

		2015	2014
		$	$
As at 30 June the financial position of the fund which is managed by the Commission was as follows			
Opening balance		928,863	811,981
Income:	Interest earned	24,069	23,603
	Client contributions	660	440
	Cost recovered	67,858	182,956
	Contingency fees	3,609	15,208
		96,196	222,207
Expenditure:	Disbursements	29,809	105,311
	Bank charges	8	14
		29,817	105,325
Cash balance at year end		995,242	928,863
Less - Clients/grants approved but not paid at year end		(157,312)	(44,198)
Net funds available		837,930	884,665

16. Reserves

Property, Plant & Equipment Reserve	190,049	192,370
Asset Revaluation	436,154	436,154
Commonwealth Reserves	440,677	648,048
	1,066,880	1,276,572

16. Reserves (continued)

	2015	2014
	$	$
Movements in reserves:		
(a) Property, Plant & Equipment Reserve (funded)		
Balance at the beginning of the year	192,370	200,000
Transfer (Redistribution) from Accumulated funds	(2,321)	7,630
Balance at the end of the year	190,049	192,370
(b) Asset Revaluation		
Balance at the beginning of the year	436,154	436,154
Revaluation increments on revaluation of:		
- land	0	0
- buildings	0	0
Balance at the end of the year	436,154	436,154
(c) Commonwealth Reserve		
Balance at the beginning of the year	648,048	565,569
Transfer (Redistribution) from Accumulated funds	(207,371)	82,479
Balance at the end of the year	440,677	648,048

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

17. Retained Earnings

	2015	2014
	$	$
Equity at beginning of year	352,893	566,988
Net Income (Loss)	513,443	(139,246)
Net transfer (redistribution) from Reserves	209,692	(74,849)
Equity at end of year	1,076,028	352,893

18. Financial Instruments

A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Financial instruments held by the Commission include cash and short-term monetary investments, receivables and payables. The Commission has limited exposure to financial risk as described below.

Credit Risk

Credit risk represents the loss that would be recognised if counterparties failed to perform as contracted. The credit risk on financial assets of the Commission that have been recognised on the balance sheet is the carrying amount net of any provision for doubtful debts. The Commission has a minimal concentration of credit risk as it undertakes transactions with a large number of customers and counterparties. There are no major concentrations of credit risk on trade debtors due from customers within particular industries. In respect of any dealings with organisations external to Government, the Commission has adopted a policy of dealing with credit worthy organisations and obtaining sufficient collateral or other security where appropriate, as a means of mitigating the risk of financial loss from defaults.

Liquidity Risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Commission will not be able to meet its financial obligations as they fall due. The Commission's approach to managing liquidity is to ensure that it will always have sufficient liquidity to meet liabilities when they fall due. The maturity profiles of undiscounted financial liabilities are as follows:

	1 year or less $'000	> 1 year and < 5 years $'000	> 5 years $'000	No term $'000	Total $'000
30 June 2015					
Trade and other payables	395	-	-	-	395
30 June 2014					
Trade and other payables	331	-	-	-	331

Interest Rate Risk

Interest rate risk is the risk of financial loss and/or increased cost due to adverse movements in the values of financial assets and liabilities as a result of changes in interest rates. The Northern Territory's Legal Aid Commission's exposure to interest rate risks and the effective interest rates of the financial assets and financial liabilities, both recognised and unrecognised at the balance date, are as follows:

Financial Instrument	Floating Interest		Non-Interest Bearing		Total Carrying Amount as per the Balance Sheet		Weighted Average Effective Interest Rate	
	2015 $'000	2014 $'000	2015 $'000	2014 $'000	2015 $'000	2014 $'000	2015 %	2014 %
Financial assets								
Cash	2,294	1,385	-	-	2,294	1,385	2.36%	2.50%
Receivables - trade (net)	-	-	108	235	108	235	-	-
Term Deposits	500	500	-	-	500	500	3.43%	3.59%
Other Receivables		-	204	207	204	207	-	-
TOTAL FINANCIAL ASSETS	2,794	1,885	312	442	3,106	2,327	-	-
Financial liabilities								
Accounts payable and accruals	-	-	395	331	395	331	-	-
TOTAL FINANCIAL LIABILITIES	-	-	395	331	395	331	-	-

The Commission has no fixed interest financial instruments.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

18. Financial Instruments (continued)

Interest Rate Risk Sensitivity Analysis

The following table demonstrates the Commission's sensitivity to movement in interest rates in relation to the value of interest bearing financial assets and liabilities.

	Profit or Loss and Equity	
	100 Basis Points Increase $'000	100 Basis Points Decrease $'000
30 June 2015		
Financial Assets - Cash and cash equivalents	23	(23)
Financial Assets – Short-term investments	5	(5)
Net sensitivity	28	(28)
30 June 2014		
Financial Assets - Cash and cash equivalents	14	(14)
Financial Assets – Short-term investments	5	(5)
Net sensitivity	19	(19)

Fair Market Value

The different levels of the fair value hierarchy are defined below:

Level 1 – the fair value is calculated using quoted prices in active markets.

Level 2 – the fair value is estimated using inputs other than quoted prices included in Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly (as prices) or indirectly (derived from prices).

Level 3 – the fair value is estimated using inputs for the asset or liability that are not based on observable market data.

The fair values of the Commission's financial assets have been calculated using the market interest rates. The carrying amount of cash and cash equivalents, trade and other receivables, investments, and creditors approximate their fair value due to their short term nature.

The Commission determines fair value for its non-financial assets using the level 2 and 3 inputs in the fair value hierarchy. The following table disclose the fair value at 30 June 2015 and the valuation techniques used to derived its fair value:

Fair value measurement - Valuation technique & Input Used for Non-financial Assets				
	Fair value $	Category	Valuation Technique	Input Used & Range
Non-financial assets Land and Buildings Freehold land	350,000	Level 2	- Market based valuation of a direct comparatives	
Building on freehold land	438,456	Level 2	- Capitalisation on an assume income based on comparative properties	
Infrastructure Plant and Equipment				
Plant and Equipment	176,006	Level 3	- Market comparables (Motor vehicles) - Depreciated replacement cost	- Market buying / selling price - Useful lives of 5 years - Replacement cost based on comparable price of modern equivalents
Leasehold improvements	8,291	Level 3	- Depreciated replacement cost	- Useful lives of 2 to 6 years - Replacement cost based on comparable price of modern equivalents
Total Non-financial Assets	972,753			

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year Ended 30 June 2015

Fair Market Value (continued)

The fair value of the Commission's owner occupied property as at 30 June 2015 has been determined and approved by the Board on the basis of an independent valuation carried out at that date by the Australian Valuation Office, with relevant experience in the valuation of property in Darwin. The independent values provide the fair value of the property every 5 years.

The fair value measurement for the freehold land and building has been categorised as Level 2 fair value based on the valuation technique noted above.

For those leasehold improvements and plant and equipment that are carried at cost, their cost approximates their fair market value.

19. Segment Information

The organisation operates in one industry segment and one geographic location, being the provision of legal services in the Northern Territory of Australia.

20. Contingent Assets/Liabilities

There were no known contingent assets or contingent liabilities of a significant nature at 30 June 2015 (2014 – $nil).

21. Additional Disclosures

(i) Commissioners

The Commissioners of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission during the financial year were:

- S Cox QC
- E Morris
- S Byrne
- R Goldflam
- E Terrill
- A Bradford
- K Winsley

(ii) Transactions with Commissioners

During the year, surplus legal work has been allocated to legal firms in which some Commissioners also hold Executive positions. These transactions are considered to be on an arm's length basis under normal terms and conditions.

22. Remuneration of commissioners

The following sitting fees were in respect of the year ended 30 June 2015:

- K Winsley $95
- E Terrill $297

23. Auditor's Remuneration

The auditor of the Commission is the Auditor-General for the Northern Territory.

	2015	2014
	$	$
Amounts paid, or due and payable to the NT Government for services provided by the Northern Territory Auditor-General for: • Audit of the Commission financial statements	22,827	23,038
	22,827	23,038

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