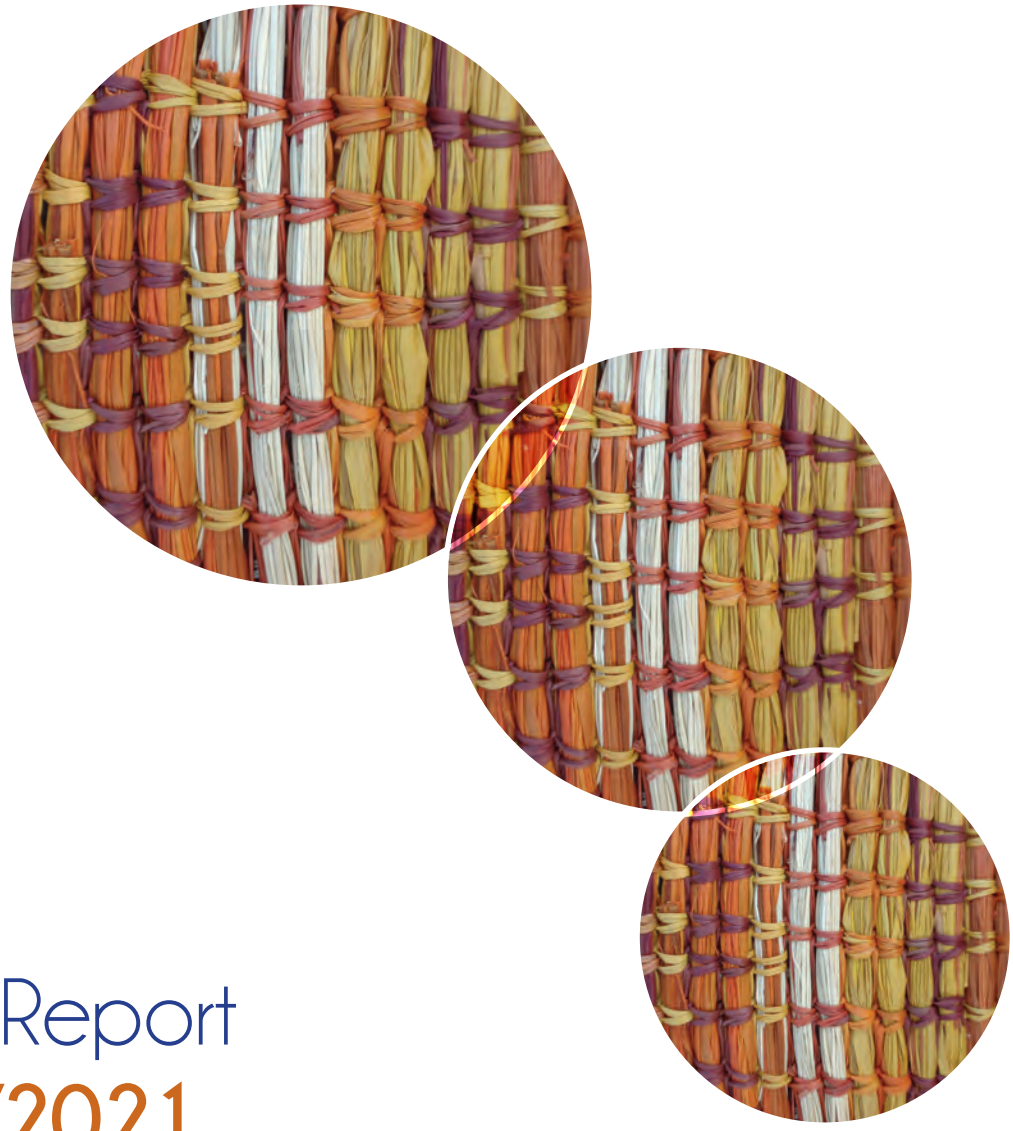

Annual Report 2020/2021

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

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

Dear Attorney-General

I am pleased to be able to deliver my second Annual Report of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission.

The Commission continues to deliver vitally needed services across the Northern Territory with the support of the Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth. Some of the specific programs which the Commission has been able to deliver in the past year include:

- Legal Help through phone and online platforms
- Legal Advice and assistance in Family, Civil and Criminal law
- Duty Lawyer assistance in a range of courts
- Outreach to a range of locations, including communities and detention centres
- Continued work with our vital partners across the NT and developing new partnerships with Danila Dilba and Wurli-Wurlinjang Aboriginal Health Services to expand our reach to some of the NT's most vulnerable
- Trialling a financial counselling service to provide more holistic assistance to our clients experiencing significant financial stress
- Frontline initiatives in response to demand arising from COVID, including an increase in legal help for people experiencing domestic and family violence.

We continue to experience great demand and pressure on legal aid services for frontline court matters, including expensive criminal trials. Through short-term arrangements with the Department of Attorney-General and Justice we have been able to resume bush court services but it remains a challenge to build in certainty and continuity to these services under the current funding arrangements. As I have discussed with you, the recent signing of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement provides a unique opportunity to develop a master-planned court and corrections service across the Territory, instead of the ad-hoc system currently operating.

It remains the Commission's strong desire to achieve budget certainty for NT Government funded services by entering into a 5 year funding agreement. We are encouraged by the commitment you have expressed to achieving that outcome between the Commission and the NT Government in the longer term.

Sadly, August this year marks the retirement of long serving Director, Suzan Cox QC. Suzan is only the second Director in the history of the Commission and has dedicated her life's work to the legal aid sector and the principles of access to justice. Suzan will be sorely missed at the Commission as it embarks on its next chapter.

Once again, I wish to acknowledge the extraordinary work undertaken by the dedicated staff of the Commission, who have given so much of themselves to their work and to ensuring the Commission fulfils its charter. They are the unsung heroes of the justice sector. Their work is especially challenging while also considerably less well-resourced than most.

I commend the activities of the Commission to the Government. It is an essential element of a properly functioning justice system, which continues to face immense and unique challenges in the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely
Duncan McConnel
Chairman

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Director's Report

It is with sadness, pride and optimism that I write this report. Sadness, because it will be my last as Director, having decided to retire from my position at the end of August this year. I have loved coming to work every day since I joined the NT Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC). Pride, because I look at the organization today and am so very proud of it. The people who make up the staff are professional, caring and exceptionally good at what they do each day.

Each and every one of the administrative staff, lawyers, social support workers, community legal educators, IT experts and accountants who work here take pride in their work as part of an organization which is on the front line every day: in the courts and tribunals, at the prisons and detention centres, at the hospitals and medical centres providing legal advice, information, referrals, minor assistance and representation across the NT. My optimism is based on the strength of the organization, the calibre of its people and a belief that both the NT and Federal Governments recognize that a properly resourced legal aid system is essential for a fair justice system and as a basis of civil society.

This year we spent a significant effort implementing the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) through which we will receive Federal funding over five years to ensure our services under this framework are valuable, responsive and of high quality. Through the NLAP we are able to fund our family law and family dispute resolution services, legal task assistance in civil law matters, preventative legal services and our social support workers as well as legal information and help through our Helpline.

We welcomed the announcement of increased Federal funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department in the May 2021 Budget. We look forward to hearing more detail about how these much needed funds will be applied to the legal assistance sector in the NT.

In my last annual report I wrote that we had been unsuccessful for a third year in a row at receiving an increase in our NT funding. This year we received an increase of just over $3,000. This would be laughable if it was not so very serious. Our expenses continue to grow and the pressure will be on our NT funded services: representation in child protection and criminal law matters. If there is not an increase by the NT to our base funding we will necessarily have to start cutting these services. We run a lean machine but we are not magicians. We are thankful that the arrangement by the NT to reimburse our expensive cases and expenditure for attending remote courts continues. The services in remote courts are vitally important to people living in these communities.

NTLAC auspices the Domestic Violence Legal Service (DVLS) and this service operates in Darwin to assist victims of domestic and family violence to obtain much needed protections under the *Domestic Violence Act*. DVLS has been operating very successfully for many years. Over the last year we have seen the number of domestic and family violence lodgements and listings increase to a record high number in the Darwin Local Court.

We have advocated for a number of years for a review of the funding for and scope of this service. Such a review at this time would ensure that the service is well placed to continue to provide vital, high quality and appropriate services into the future.

Operating during COVID- 19 has been problematic at times. We continued to be agile and technologically ready to work from home in case of sudden lockdowns. During the pandemic we have experienced an increased demand for our services from women experiencing domestic and family violence. The Federal Government provided funding to assist us to respond and we utilised this funding to set up the following:

- We partnered with Danila Dilba to develop the "Legal Health Mob", an integrated service through which we have co-located one of our family lawyers at Danila Dilba to work with an Indigenous Client Services officer to improve access to legal services for First Nations people in the greater Darwin region. This is a 12 month project adopting a unique approach and is already increasing the connection which this vulnerable group has to legal help.

- A financial counselling service for clients who are experiencing domestic and family violence. We employed a financial counsellor to establish this service. It is early days but the uptake has clearly shown that this was an unmet need in our previous service provision.

- A project officer to work for 12 months to develop a "Family Violence Safer Effective Practice" for the whole of NTLAC to ensure that our services are responsive to the needs of people experiencing domestic and family violence.

- We introduced a chat function to the NTLAC and DVLS website to trial and explore the enhanced access that may be provided to people experiencing domestic and family violence.

We acknowledge the support of the NT Government for our utilization of this Federal funding for these initiatives.

We remain very lucky in the NT to have been free from the direct impacts of COVID that have been experienced in other Australian states and territories. We have had short periods of lock down and have managed to continue to provide our legal services. We are very pleased to see that the vaccination rate in the NT is high and we have encouraged our staff to be vaccinated. We are, of course, on the front line with vulnerable clients in the communities and the prisons. We remain resilient and prepared for the challenges which we are likely to face as the country prepares to "live with" COVID into the future.

Youth Justice continues to be an area of great concern. We opposed the reforms to the bail legislation which the Government passed in May 2021. The number of children in detention is far too high and it is our view that these unacceptable numbers will only increase. We continue to have real concerns about the conditions in which children and young people are kept in detention and we have worked with the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency to raise our concerns with the Acting Children's Commissioner, as well as senior representatives of government, including at Ministerial level.

Over the years I have been dismayed at the increasing incarceration of our First Nations people and the inability of us, who work in the justice system, to be able to have any positive or discernable impact on incarceration numbers. It is with guarded optimism that I welcome the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA), to which I hope many people will add their signatures early in the 2021-22 year. I say "guarded" because for the AJA to succeed it will require dedicated and realistic funding and resourcing.

The AJA acknowledges that the appalling rates of incarceration of First Nations people is harmful and unsustainable. We welcome the promise in the Agreement to engage and support Aboriginal Leadership, together with the commitment to challenging systemic racism within the justice system. In my many years as a lawyer in the NT criminal justice system the AJA is the most positive development to date. It will, however, require ongoing support and commitment by ensuing NT governments for it to succeed. The Board and staff of the Commission thank Russell Goldflam for representing the Commission on the AJA Committee and we congratulate all those who worked on the draft AJA.

We have had a changing of the guard this year with the departure of Ian Read SC after almost 20 years with the Commission. Ian

Director's Report (continued)

has been an invaluable Senior Counsel and I thank him for all his hard work representing our clients over many years. We wish him well. Following Ian's departure we decided to create the position of Senior Public Defender and Ambrith Abayasekara was successful in being appointed as our first Senior Public Defender at NTLAC.

NTLAC has continued to have strong input into Government policy and legislation. Although we are often unsuccessful in having our views accepted by government, it is important to continue to voice our concerns. I look forward to our continued work in the Barkly region following the launch last year of the Access to Justice in the Barkly Report which provided a road map to redress unmet legal need in this very disadvantaged area of the NT.

We hope to pursue the very real issue of homelessness and overcrowding in Tennant Creek and surrounding communities and how this impacts on the incidents of domestic violence and the ability to build a stable, functioning family life. NTLAC has long advocated against the Territory's unfair and discriminatory sentencing laws and we are particularly pleased to see that the NT Government has now released the NT Law Reform Committee's report on mandatory sentencing, as well as its report on the recognition of Aboriginal Customary Law.

At the time I was appointed Director in 2002 we had a staff of approximately 44 people and occupied one floor of this building housing our Darwin office. Over the years, with a wonderful team of enthusiastic and visionary colleagues, the capacity and reach of the organization has been built. We now occupy 4 levels of our Building. We opened offices in Palmerston and Tennant Creek. We established the Domestic Violence Legal Service next to the Local Court in Darwin. We now have 112 employees. We have social support workers embedded throughout our legal practice and are able to provide a better, more holistic service to our clients, who continue to be the most marginalised.

NTLAC is a professional legal practice but also operates to intervene and prevent legal problems before they arise. In our policy and strategy work we look beyond the particular case we are dealing with to address underlying and structural causes of criminal offending, domestic violence, civil law concerns and family breakdown.

The organisation looks at the big picture while providing individual client care and services. It is for these reasons that I believe NTLAC will continue to be a leader in the NT legal assistance sector.

I have been very fortunate over the years to have had the support of wonderfully supportive Chairs of the Board of NTLAC: the late David Farquhar, Chief Judge Elizabeth Morris and now, Duncan McConnel, current president of the NT Bar Association.

I have also been very fortunate to have had the privilege of having Board members who have cared about the work we do and how we can best deliver services, albeit within a tight budget. I thank the current Chair and each of NTLAC's Board members.

I also thank those in the private profession who continue to do our work despite the low remuneration.

Finally, I thank each and every one of the staff of the Commission. An organisation like NTLAC is only as good as the people who work for it and I have been very fortunate to have worked over the years with tremendous people. My executive management team: Deputy Director, Fiona Hussin, Corporate Services Manager, Barbara Lelli and Human Resource Manager, Leeanne Morris deserve a special thank you from me. We have worked closely together over many years and I am deeply and sincerely

grateful for their support and great work. I must also thank Haley Richardson, who has worked almost as long as I have in the criminal law section where the work is relentless and Haley's corporate knowledge is invaluable.

Finally, I thank my executive assistant, Bianca Aloisi, whose professionalism, executive support and unfailing courtesy to my, at times, demanding clients, has always been so appreciated by me. Although I am of course sad to leave, as I said at the beginning of this report, I am proud of the organisation and optimistic that it will continue to deliver access to justice.

Suzan Cox QC
Director
Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Performance Highlights

The Community we assisted

47%

Received Government Benefits

5%

Lived outside a major city/town

51%

Identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders

7%

Were under the age of 18

5%

Were over the age of 65

18%

Were born overseas

21%

Were serving a sentence of imprisonment

12%

Were provided with assistance from an interpreter

The percentages include clients who may have accessed more than one service. The percentages do not include clients who sought assistance from the Legal Aid Helpline, website or community legal education services.

The Services we provided

The Commission provided a total of 35,162 services in 2020-21 (33,471 in 2019-20)

7%

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

11%

DUTY LAWYER SERVICE

14%

LEGAL ADVICE PROVIDED

68%

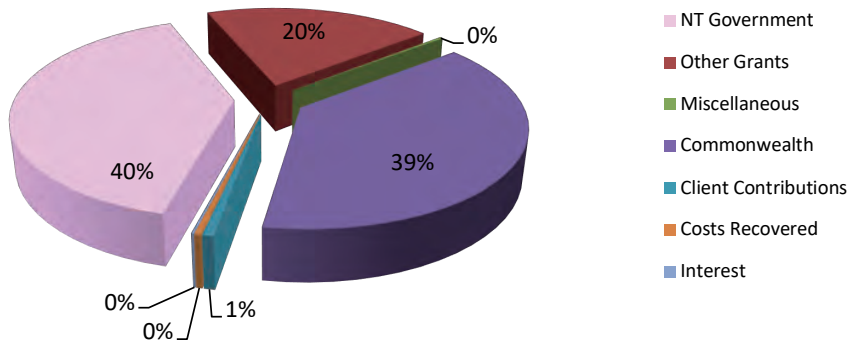
LEGAL INFORMATION & REFERRAL

These percentages represent the distribution of total services provided during 2020-21.

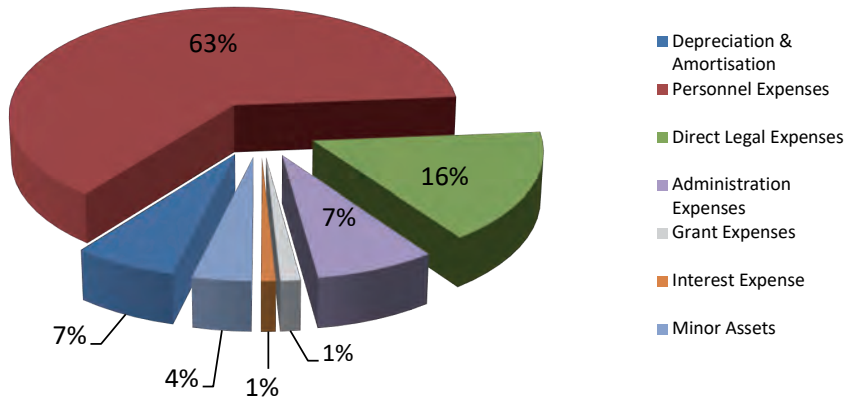
Performance Highlights (continued)

Financial Summary

Operating Revenue



Operating Expenses



Snapshot of information and publications 2020-21

119,813

Visits to our website

6,143

Social media users reached by our Facebook posts

8,900

Views to our Youtube channel

8,906

Legal publications we handed out

294,764

Legal Information accessed through the Northern Territory Law Handbook website

12,022

Plain language legal information accessed through the LawInfont website

The Commissioners

Commissioners' Role

The role of the Board of Commissioners is to provide overall strategic guidance for NT Legal Aid and effective oversight of management. The Commissioners are appointed in accordance with section 6 of the *Legal Aid Act.*

Duncan McConnel

Chair

Duncan McConnel was appointed as the Chairman of the Commission in November 2019, following the appointment of the former chair, Judge Elizabeth Morris as Chief Judge of the Local Court.

Mr McConnel practices as a barrister at William Forster Chambers in Darwin. He was admitted to practice in 1994 and practised as a solicitor in private practice, including as a partner and managing partner of private firms in Darwin. He was called to the bar in 2009. In 2015, Mr McConnel became only the second legal practitioner from the Northern Territory to be elected the President of the Law Council of Australia. In the course of his presidency, Mr McConnel brought national attention to the issue of Indigenous imprisonment and was successful in ensuring Indigenous imprisonment became a standalone target in the Closing the Gap report of the national government.

Mr McConnel practices in a wide range of areas of civil law in Northern Territory Courts.

Suzan Cox OAM QC

Suzan has been the Director of NTLAC since 2002 and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2004. Suzan has been practicing law since 1979 and previously worked as a criminal lawyer for CAALAS (now NAAJA) in Alice Springs and NAALAS (now NAAJA) in Darwin. Suzan holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of New South Wales and a Master of Laws in Criminal Justice from New York University. Suzan read at the Victorian Bar, is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Charles Darwin University Fellow and is the NT Director for the Board of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

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 Senior Director of Economic Policy and Commercial with the Department of Treasury and Finance. Samantha holds a Bachelor of Business, is a Certified Practising Accountant and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Ali Nur

Originally from Somalia, Ali has lived in the Northern Territory since 1985. Ali holds a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Sydney and a Bachelor of Medicine & Surgery from Somali National University.

Ali has worked extensively throughout Australia with Indigenous Australians, the aged, people with disabilities and people from refugee backgrounds. He has over 20 years' experience developing policy and programs for the Department of Health in the Northern Territory; specialising in services for the aged and people with disabilities. Ali spent time working with Indigenous communities in Central Australia and served as the Director of Melaleuca Refugee Centre.

Ali has also worked with OXFAM's Humanitarian Emergency Responses Team in East Timor; the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat (India) and the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka.

Ali is the Secretary on the Board for the Refugee Council of Australia and a member of its Governance and Finance Subcommittee.

Tessa Czislowski

Tessa was appointed Legal Aid Commissioner in October 2017 on the nomination of the Law Society NT. Tessa primarily practises in family law and works for local Territory firm, Ward Keller. Tessa was admitted to practise in the Northern Territory in 2011 having attained a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) from Charles Darwin University. Tessa is the current Chair of the Law Society NT Family Law Committee, having been appointed to the Committee in 2015. Tessa also holds a Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution and works as a Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner.

Hugh Bond

Hugh was appointed as a Legal Aid Commissioner in April 2021 following his election as the staff representative to the board. He first joined NT Legal Aid in 2014, and after an extended period away from the organisation (firstly in private practice, and then teaching in China), he returned in 2020 and currently works in the Family Law Section. Hugh holds a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Development Studies from the University of Adelaide, and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from the Australian National University. Hugh has previously served as the President of the Northern Territory Young Lawyers Committee in 2015 and 2016, and currently serves as a Director on the board of Darwin Community Legal Service

Our Staff and Development

Our Employees

As at 30 June 2021 the following persons were employed:

Directorate

Director ..... Suzan Cox OAM, QC
Executive Assistant ..... Bianca Aloisi
Deputy Director ..... Fiona Hussin
Policy Officer ..... Russell Goldflam
Project Coordinator ..... Justine Mickle

Criminal Law Practice

Darwin

Managing Solicitor ..... Vacant
Senior Public Defender ..... Ambrith Abayasekara
Solicitors ..... Nicola MacCarron
..... Catherine Voumard
..... Clement Ng
..... Katherine Paterson
..... Tashi Klose
..... Eleanor Martin
..... Joshua Bach
..... Jacob Henderson
..... Fiona Kepert (On Extended Leave)
..... Myles Brown
Junior Trial Assistant ..... Brooke Houen
Youth Justice Worker ..... Rebecca Naylor
Social Support Worker ..... Jacqueline MacDonald
Crime Section Supervisor ..... Haley Richardson
Legal Secretary ..... Mark Wright
Administrative Support ..... Christine Salaa
..... Position Vacant

Katherine

Solicitor ..... Claire Hockin
..... Marie-Clare Tabuteau
Social Support Worker ..... Tammy Frean
Legal Secretary ..... Cassie Lamb
Administrative Support ..... Terry Dunt

Tennant Creek

Managing Solicitor ..... Kevin Banbury (On Extended Leave)
..... Kate Bremner
Administrative Support ..... Melissa Bremner

Alice Springs

Managing Solicitor ..... Noah Redmond
Solicitors ..... Prue Healy
..... Maclaren Wall
..... Karina Curry-Hyde
..... Melinda Smith
Social Support Worker ..... Position Vacant
Legal Secretary ..... Emma Hohn
..... Sheree Butters
..... Anne Coleman
Administrative Support ..... Karren Lau

Family Law Practice

Darwin

Managing Solicitor ..... Jaquie Palavra
Solicitors ..... Annette Murray
..... Hugh Bond
..... Shannon Coetzee
..... James Lowrey
..... Benjamin Fernandez
..... Norah Fahy
..... Ryan Bocock
DDHS Project Manager ..... Emma Cook
Family Support Case Worker ... Bethwyn Lovell
Legal Secretary ..... Roshelle Dell
(On Parental leave)
..... Sarah Carbone
..... Chloe Stoddart
(On Parental leave)
..... Kanessha Elber
..... Lauren Creevey
Administrative Support ..... Position Vacant

Alice Springs

Solicitor..... Position Vacant

Family Dispute Resolution

Supervising Solicitor..... Claire Wyatt
Solicitor..... Aditi Srinivas
Conference Coordinator..... Emma Schluter
Administrative Support ..... Nabila Majid

Civil Law Practice

Darwin

Managing Solicitor ..... Alison Hanley
Solicitors ..... Leah Siebert
..... Hollie Clark
..... Corinah Batt
..... Dominic Illidge
..... Alexandra Wirth
YSDLS Solicitor ..... Joanna Laidler
REALS Solicitor..... Candace Gordon
REALS Litigation
Support Worker ..... Position Vacant
Indigenous Community
Liaison Officer..... Robert Hale
Legal Secretary..... Melissa Kingham
(On Parental leave)
..... Taylor Jones
..... Kellie Klonaris
Administrative Support..... Yohanna Lindon
..... Alexandra Habets

Katherine

Managing & HJP Solicitor ..... Thomasin Opie
Administrative Support..... Karen Cooke

Alice Springs

Outreach Managing Solicitor.... Asta Hill
Solicitors ..... James Krumrey-Quinn

Our Staff and Development (continued)

Corporate Services

Corporate Services Manager ... Barbara Lelli
Human Resource Manager..... Leeanne Morris
Corporate Support ..... Karen Markos
..... Amanda Bamford
..... Randall Manoharan
..... Jacinta Lacey
IT Systems Engineer ..... Robert Goldsmith
IT Support Officer ..... Billy Tarrillo
Administrative Support..... Sally Hunter
..... Lucia Vorrasi
..... Position Vacant

Grants Section

Supervising Solicitor..... Sue Phoo
(On Extended Leave)
..... Natalie Scattini
Grants Manager..... Tina Baylis
Administrative Support..... Ashton Messell
..... Kayla Drysdale
..... Daniella Danzeisen
..... Position Vacant

Library Services

Library and Information
Coordinator..... Helen Edney

Preventative Legal Services

Palmerston

Manager - Preventative
Legal Services ..... Melinda Schroeder
Legal Aid Helpline Team Leader Monica Settele
Helpline Paralegal..... Anthony McDevitt
..... Jessica Hill
..... Flora Redecki
Financial Counsellor ..... Serena Staines
Administrative Support..... Melissa Kirstenfeldt

Darwin

Community Legal
Education Team Leader ..... Shelley Alvarez
CLE Educators ..... Sherinald Shwe
..... Kvitka Becker
Administrative Support..... Nunuk Andayani

Domestic Violence Legal Service

Managing Solicitor ..... Esther Nambiar
Solicitors ..... Hanna Daych
..... Zara O'Sullivan
Project Solicitor ..... Lara Hayek
Safety & Wellbeing Coordinator.. Sachini Gamage
Legal Secretary ..... Denise Oliver
Administrative Support..... Siobhan Wolsey

Volunteers

Under section 8 of the *Legal Aid Act* NT Legal Aid 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 NT Legal Aid hosted 6 volunteers.

Occupational Health and Safety

In 2020-21 NT Legal Aid continued to promote work health and safety.

During the year the most significant workplace health and safety initiatives were:

1. training and information;
2. emergency procedure drills and inspections;
3. staff wellbeing strategy, including action plan;
4. COVID-19 safety plan;
5. a flu vaccination program available to all staff;
6. employee assistance programs; and
7. flexible working conditions including working from home provisions and entitlements.

NT Legal Aid has a commitment to work and safety with no notifiable incidents this year.

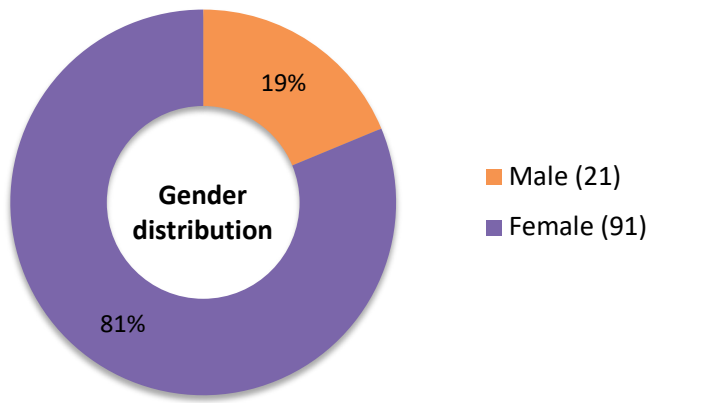
Resignations

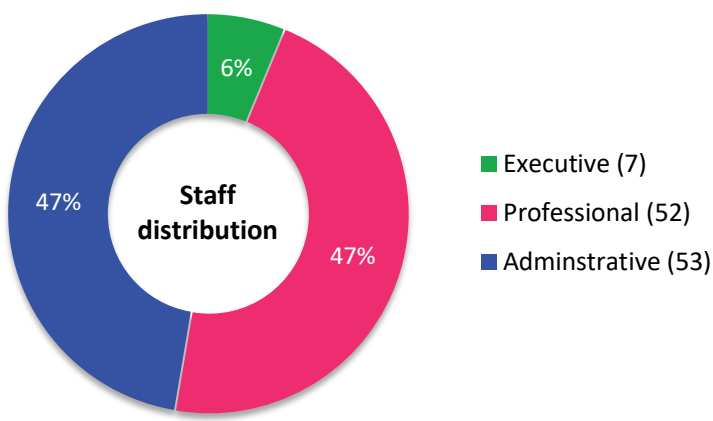
During the year 31 people left NT Legal Aid's employment.

Equal Employment Opportunity

NT Legal Aid is committed to providing equal opportunity for all employees. NT Legal Aid is an Equal Opportunity Employer that values and respects the diversity of its workforce and believes that diversity enhances participation.

Distribution of employee gender are represented by the graphs on the right.

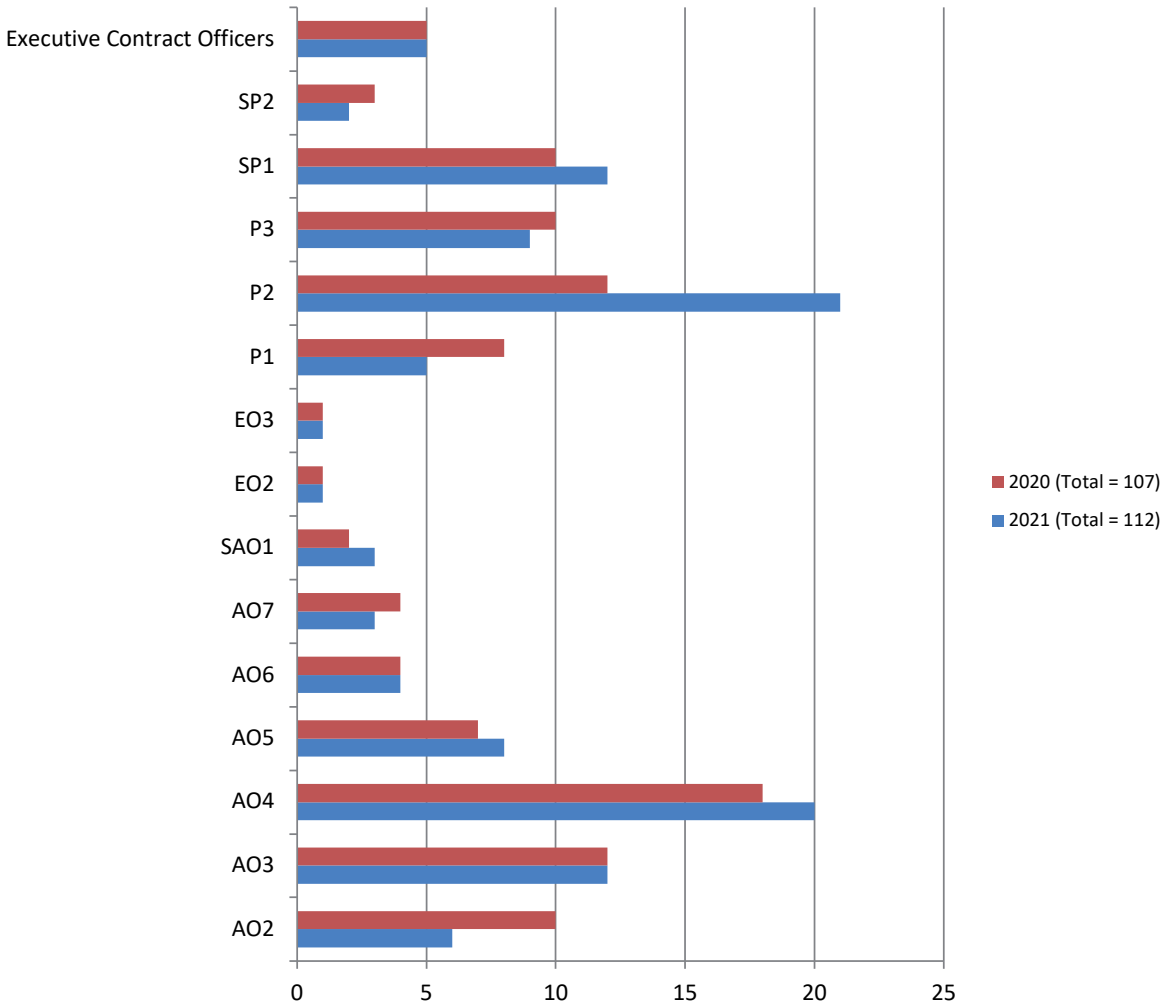




Our Staff and Development (continued)

Salary Ranges

Staffing Levels as at 30th June 2021:



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

Staff Development

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

- 2021 Law Week Ethical Pursuit
- A step towards First Nations justice in child protection
- Annual Children's Court Practitioners Conference
- ASSIST - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- Australian Indigenous Women in Criminal Justice Systems
- Avert Family Violence - Responding to Perpetrators of family violence
- Avert Family Violence - Screening & Safety Planning
- ChangeFest
- Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention/Mandatory Reporting Workshop
- Child Safe Organizations Workshop
- CLE Induction Training
- Complex Trauma and Addictions
- Culturally Sensitive Practice in Mental Health
- Defensive 4WD Operation Combination Course
- DFV Fundamentals
- Domestic Violence Response Training - Indigenous Workshop
- DV Alert eLearning
- Emerging Leaders - Communication Skills
- Emotional Intelligence and the Brain
- Family Violence Basics + Screening and Safety Plan
- FASD Training
- Financial Counselling Australia Conference
- FLPN Member Meeting
- FLPN Webinar Legal System Abuse and Coercive Control
- Foundations of Family Violence Online Training
- Hints & tips for showing respect and influencing change
- Inclusion Program
- Interpreter and Translating Service
- Intro to Central Australian Aboriginal Cultures and Context
- Intro to Narrative Therapy
- Introduction to the NT ICAC
- Know your Assembly
- Kriol Awareness Course
- Men and masculinities in preventing violence against women
- Mindfulness Based Emotional Intelligence
- NDIS Legal Obligations and Case Update
- No More Violence Breakfast
- NT Redress Coordination Team - Trauma Informed Care
- Ochre Ribbon Week Breakfast
- Pathways - How to use a Trauma Informed Approach
- Preventing Discrimination, Harassment and Bulling for Managers and Supervisors
- Professionalism in the Workplace
- Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
- Provide First Aid & Provide CPR
- Public Training DFV Fundamentals
- Reconciliation Action Plan Development
- Refresher Standard MHFA
- Resilience Online Workshop- CORP Workplace solutions
- Resisting Collusion with Male Perpetrators
- Respectful relationships education: "It's not just up to schools"
- safeTALK Workshop
- SBS Inclusions Program
- Start at the Top Family Law Conference
- Strengthening Accountability across perpetrator intervention systems webinar
- Supportlink Referral
- The Accidental Counsellor (2 days course)
- Trauma Informed Care
- Understand and Respond to Burnout
- Understanding Coercive Control
- Using Mindfulness for Difficult Conversations
- Working with ATSI People & Communities
- Working with Cultural Difference
- Working with ITSNT Interpreters
- You Can't Say That! Hints & tips
- Young Workers' Right Service
- Youth Mental Health First Aid

Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025

Our Vision

To be a leader in a fair justice system.

Our Purpose

To ensure that people in the NT understand their legal rights and disadvantaged people have access to quality legal services. To uphold a fair NT and national justice system

Our Territory

We operate in uniquely challenging circumstances because of isolation, a small population, geographic dispersal, cultural diversity, economic hardship and disadvantage to our first nation's people.

Our Values

Social Justice:	Fairness and equity valuing diversity
Culture:	Acknowledging first nations peoples and valuing our multi-cultural community
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
Sustainability:	A safe and supporting work environment

Our Services

We align our Territory context and our values to provide relevant, safe and culturally appropriate services through:

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

1. Service Delivery

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

Strategies for 2020-2025:

- Secure five-year funding arrangements with the NT government
- Maintain and continue to Improve effective service delivery, quality, consistency, and accessibility for our clients
- Identify barriers to accessing services and identify unmet legal need
- Develop collaborative solutions and partnerships with our providers and stakeholders

2. Leadership and Governance

Goal statement: Provide strong leadership across the sector and ensure best practice for legal aid.

Strategies for 2020-2025:

- Implement Board-approved strategies and decisions
- Set operational plans within a comprehensive risk management framework
- Provide the Board with relevant, succinct, accurate, and high-quality information and reports
- Provide timely advice on high-impact issues

Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025 (continued)

3. Reputation and Partnerships

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

Strategies for 2020-2025:

- Play a leading role in the development of legislation and policy
- Promote the important role of the Commission to government and the community
- Provide evidence-based information around legal issues, with a focus on disadvantaged people and unmet legal needs
- Maintain relationships with the Attorneys-General and other key stakeholders, including other legal assistance services, the legal profession and judiciary
- Explore opportunities to partner with others to share legal expertise, information, resources and referrals
- Initiate and continue to participate in key activities and forums

4. Innovation and Improvement

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

Strategies for 2020-2025:

- Maintain relevance of service delivery
- Enhance data collection, analysis and reporting to enable meaningful evaluation of program activities
- Actively seek the input of staff, stakeholders and clients to challenge and improve established systems, processes and practices
- Seek opportunities for new ways to deliver services more efficiently, effectively, and to meet existing and emerging legal needs

5. Capability and Culture

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

Strategies for 2020-2025:

- 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 planning
- Create and maintain a healthy, safe and sustainable work environment
- Develop and implement initiatives to build and review staff resilience
- Develop approaches to retain corporate knowledge, including succession planning

Our Obligations

Duties of the NT Legal Aid Commission

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

Section 8 of the *Legal Aid Act* provides that the NT Legal Aid 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 NT Legal Aid 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 NT Legal Aid 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 June 2020 Commonwealth funding for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25 financial years was established and is set out in the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

Overview of Our Operations

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

NT Legal Aid is independent of the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments. Section 27 of the *Legal Aid Act* allows NT Legal Aid 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 NT, the interests of an authority or body established for a public purpose by or under a law of the NT or in the interests of a body corporate in which the NT or such an authority or body has an interest.

The services provided by NT Legal Aid take the form of legal information and referral, community legal education, legal advice, duty lawyer services, and legal representation.

Legal Information and Referral

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

Community Legal Education

NT Legal Aid provides education for the community to help people know their rights, prevent or reduce legal problems and get help when needed. Education is provided through interactive learning sessions for community groups and service providers, mutli-media, print and web publications, public events and projects. NT Legal Aid partners with other community legal services to share skills and resources, address needs and coordinate our work.

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

Free duty lawyer services are available at such sittings of those Courts and Tribunals in the NT 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 Domestic Violence Legal Service.
- To respondents for proceedings under the *Domestic and Family Violence Act* through the Respondent Early Assistance Legal Service.
- To sittings of the Family and Federal Circuit Courts.
- To people appearing before the Mental Health Review Tribunal.
- In criminal law matters including youth justice proceedings at Courts in locations where NT Legal Aid has an office.
- In matters under the *Care and Protection of Children Act*.

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.

Legal Assistance Guidelines

NT Legal Aid 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 NT Legal Aid's website.

Contributions and Recovery of Costs

Client contributions are collected in accordance with section 29 of the *Legal Aid Act*. Initial contributions of a minimum of $110.00 are usually imposed, except where the person is in custody or a child. 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 or they have been released from custody.

Where possible NT Legal Aid may also recover some or all of the costs incurred in representing the client.

Client contributions are an important part of NT Legal Aid's funding base.

Reconsideration and Review of Decisions

An applicant for legal assistance may request that a decision in relation to a grant of aid 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 NT Legal Aid, the person affected may request that the decision be referred to a Review Committee for review.

The Review Committee consists of an officer of NT Legal Aid, a private legal practitioner and an independent person with relevant experience.

Legal Practices

NT Legal Aid conducts legal practices which include criminal law, family law and civil law. NT Legal Aid also auspices an independent Domestic Violence Legal Service.

Locations

NT Legal Aid 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. NT Legal Aid also conducts outreach services outside of these offices, including the courts, prisons, community organisations and remote communities.

Katherine Office Team

Our Offices

Darwin Office

Located within the Darwin office are the following divisions:

- The Directorate
- Corporate Services
- Criminal Law
- Family Law
- Civil Law
- Grants Section
- Preventative Legal Services
- Family Dispute Resolution Program

The Domestic Violence Legal Service operates as a stand-alone service and has an office at Nichols Place in the Darwin Local Court Precinct.

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 to the region is provided in family and civil law matters from other offices of NT Legal Aid by telephone or audio visual link. Assistance for family and civil law matters can be provided by referral through the Legal Aid Helpline.

Tennant Creek Office and Legal Services with Minister Uibo

Palmerston Office

The Palmerston office provides street front access to NT Legal Aid in Palmerston. It assists with operation and supervision of the Darwin switchboard and is the main location for the Legal Aid Helpline call centre. The financial counselling service operates from the Palmerston offices, but services clients accorss the NT. 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.

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 in the region in family law matters is provided from other offices of the Commission by telephone or audio visual 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.

NT Legal Aid continues to work collaboratively with legal and related services in the region.

Our Principal Functions

The Directorate

In consultation with the Board of Commissioners, manage and provide direction to the operations of NT Legal Aid.

Corporate Services

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

Criminal Law Practice

Our criminal law practice provides specialist legal advice and representation to achieve timely and appropriate outcomes for people charged with criminal offences and for those suspected of committing offences.

Lawyers uphold the values of professionalism, integrity, accountability, honesty and trust. Our services are provided in a respectful and confidential way. We use interpreters whenever required and our lawyers assist clients to navigate the criminal justice system in an informed way.

Services:

NT Legal Aid provides legal advice, duty lawyer services, representation and legal education. We engage with Government and other stakeholders to achieve policy change and law reform.

Legal Advice

We provide confidential, free legal advice remotely and from our Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs offices by phone or in person.

Duty Law service:

Our duty lawyer service is available at the Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs courts. The service is free and is designed to assist clients to assess the seriousness of their case; conduct simple guilty pleas, mentions and adjournments, and access legal representation either through NT Legal Aid or the private sector and to apply for or vary bail conditions.

Legal Representation

Where a grant of aid is made, ongoing representation is provided to clients in the Youth Justice Court, Local Court, Bush (community) Courts and Supreme Court. In some circumstances representation is also granted for matters in the appellate jurisdiction including the Supreme Court, Court of Criminal Appeal and High Court.

NT Legal Aid criminal practitioners work in conjunction with NT Legal Aid's social support workers to comprehensively address the social, substance misuse and family issues bringing some clients into conflict with the legal system.

NT Legal Aid practitioners represent adult clients in the Local Court for matters including bail applications, pleas of guilty, contested hearings, committals, breaches of orders and in the mental health diversion list of the Local Court in Darwin.

In the Supreme Court our practitioners appear for matters including bail applications, pleas of guilty, pre-trial applications, jury trials, applications in relation to mental impairment and fitness to stand trial and applications for extensions of non-parole periods (for prisoners serving mandatory life sentences).

In the Youth Justice Court our practitioners appear for children in bail applications, referrals for youth diversion, pleas of guilty, pre-hearing/trial applications (including "doli incapax" applications regarding legal capacity for children between 10 and 14 years of age), contested hearings, breach of sentence hearings and sentence reconsiderations.

Education

Our criminal lawyers work collaboratively with our community legal education team to create and conduct targeted legal education initiatives on the criminal justice system particularly programs for young people in schools, and people from refugee or migrant backgrounds.

Our Principal Functions

Policy

NT Legal Aid makes submissions and recommendations to Government and relevant stakeholders in relation to issues of youth justice, crime and law reform. It is an important part of our work and our commitment to a fair NT justice system. This year we saw significant reforms in youth justice implemented. We made submissions to government about the detrimental impact of these reforms on the progress that had been made following the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Young people in the NT. We raised concerns that these reforms would increase the number of young people in detention and that this would have trickle down impacts on services assisting young people in relation to criminal matters. The number of young people in detention has continued to increase since these reforms took effect.

Family Law Practice

Our work

The family Law Practice delivers a range of targeted services throughout Northern Territory in family law (parenting and financial), child support, care and protection of children and domestic and family violence. These services are provided through:

- Legal representation in lawyer-assisted Family Dispute Resolution (mediation) – on grants of legal aid in parenting and property matters.
- Ongoing legal representation of clients with grants of legal aid in court proceedings in the Federal Family Law and Territory Local Courts;
- Legal representation of children (as the appointed Independent Children's Lawyer) in proceedings in the Federal Family Law Courts;
- Duty lawyer services – at the Federal Family Law Courts and Territory Local Courts to provide initial advice and appear in Court, including through our – Family Advocacy Support Services (see below).
- Legal task assistance – discrete legal tasks to assist clients in resolving or getting closer to resolving their legal problem.
- Free legal advice and information –advice clinics at different times during the week which are confidential and can include interpreter services;
- Community legal information & education – about family law and child protection law and processes. Our lawyers visit different sites and agencies to share knowledge about the law and our services.

The year in focus

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our clients over the last year.

The NT has seen a rise in domestic and family violence with a reported increase of 50% to 30 June 2021. Families have experienced financial stress and disruption in parenting arrangements. Child welfare intervention by Territory Families have continued to rise. Additionally, the NT has seen a surge in demand for public and private housing. The NT's priority housing applicants face the longest wait time in Australia and significant barriers to accessing affordable housing for rent.[1]

Despite the pandemic and lockdown, our practice has continued to deliver specialist legal and associated social support services to families experiencing relationship breakdown, disputes about parenting children, dividing property or financial support and who have Territory Families involvement because of care and protection concerns about their children.

We are dedicated to helping people throughout the Northern Territory in an open, respectful and trauma informed way to minimise risk or harm to our clients and their families and work towards the best possible outcomes.

Supporting our clients

We support our clients with not only their legal needs but also their social and emotional support needs. We do this through our in-house Social Support Worker who works in collaboration with our lawyers. These supports include risk assessment,

[1] https://www.anglicare-nt.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Rental-Affordability-Snapshot-2021.pdf

Our Principal Functions (continued)

safety planning and targeted assisted referrals to emergency accommodation, counselling and trauma services, Centrelink, and other government and service based organisations. Clients are supported at court and other locations when navigating the legal and social support systems.

Over the last 12 months of change and uncertainty, the trauma informed Family Practice has adapted to provide increased risk assessment and safety planning for families affected by family violence; targeted referrals to urgent/temporary accommodation providers, specialist safety assessment and management services, counselling and financial supports and advocacy including with the financial counsellor based in our Palmerston office.

Collaboration

We have continued to work closely with our legal and allied partners to improve access and services to mutual clients and families transitioning legal systems. Partners include territory wide legal assistance services, Aboriginal health services, community services such as Relationships Australia, Anglicare, Catholic Care and domestic violence organisations.

Through Health Justice Partnerships, we have strengthened the support we provide to our First Nations clients by linking them in with holistic services at the Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS) and the Katherine Individual Support Program.

We are planning to develop a partnership with Tangentyere Corporation and Women's Safety Services of Central Australia (WoSSCA) in Alice Springs to better support victims and users of family violence through counselling, support and education while engaged in the family law and related legal systems in Central Australia.

Proudly supported by NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Danila Dilba Health Service

FAMILY ADVOCACY & SUPPORT SERVICES

Funded by the Australian Government

An Australian Government Initiative

Family Advocacy and Support Services

We provide integrated legal assistance services to families affected by domestic and family violence operating out of the Darwin and Alice Springs registries of the Family Law Courts and other locations where families are transitioning between federal family law and territory family violence and child protection systems.

The service provides both legal and social supports to clients by assessing risk, their safety and social needs with assisted referrals to other support services or agencies.

Health Justice Partnership – Legal Health Mob

We have built on our existing health justice partnership with Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS) to embed a NT Legal Aid Family Law practice lawyer and an Indigenous outreach worker full-time within DDHS for a 12 month period ('Legal Health Mob'). Whilst the service was initiated and funded in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased rates of domestic and family violence, there is recognition of the breadth and diversity of other legal issues clients are experiencing and need assistance for.

Legal Health Mob recognises that many of the factors that lead to poor health, well-being and legal outcomes for First Nations

HJP Legal Health Mob Team

people cannot be addressed by healthcare or legal assistance alone. We also recognise that the reasons why First Nations Territorians cannot or do not seek legal help for their legal issues are complex.

By working in partnership, DDHS and NT Legal Aid aim to address these complex barriers and work towards improving clients' legal and health outcomes. To do this, Legal Health Mob triages clients' legal and social support needs, manages referrals and utilises the existing NT Legal Aid weekly in-reaching legal clinics.

Contribution to Policy & Law Reform

Our professional team actively contributes to improvements and changes in the law and legal processes. This year we have contributed to various submissions on family law and domestic and family violence.

Domestic Violence Legal Service

The Domestic Violence Legal Service (DVLS) provides advice, legal assistance and referrals to people at risk of or experiencing domestic violence in the Darwin and greater Darwin region.

Funded by the Northern Territory Government since 2009, DVLS has been operated by NT Legal Aid as a specialised standalone service providing legal advice and referrals by telephone and in person in Darwin City and Palmerston, and a duty lawyer service and representation for domestic violence matters in the Darwin Local Court.

Our Work

DVLS assists applicants and protected persons in domestic violence proceedings to apply for domestic violence orders and to vary domestic violence orders, including police domestic violence orders.

DVLS frontline staff triage clients and make referrals to places of safety where appropriate, make appointments and provide information face-to-face and by telephone.

The service is staffed by a Managing Solicitor, two solicitors, the Safety and Wellbeing Coordinator, Office Coordinator and Administration Officer. From June 2021, the service employed a part-time solicitor for 12 months, using a COVID-19 related grant from the Northern Territory Government.

The DVLS Managing Solicitor is provided with guidance, support and supervision by the Deputy Director of NT Legal Aid as required. DVLS maintains its own client database independent of NT Legal Aid's client database.

Trauma Informed Assistance

From November 2016, the Commonwealth Government has funded DVLS to host a Local Support Coordinator, a position we have named Safety and Wellbeing Coordinator (SWC). The work of the SWC has considerably expanded on the breadth of service that DVLS provides to our clients. The SWC works with women and children affected by domestic violence to increase their safety and wellbeing.

DVLS Team

Our Principal Functions (continued)

Clients have a safe therapeutic space with the SWC to share their experience of domestic violence, to develop understandings about the nature and impacts of domestic violence, and to receive practical support and assistance in areas including safety planning, home security, child protection, housing, Centrelink, family law, finances and childcare. We are pleased that this funding has been continued.

The year in focus

During 2020-21, DVLS felt the impact of COVID-19 on people experiencing domestic and family violence which resulted in both increased demands and changing demands on the service. DVLS delivery of legal assistance adapted to ensure that all services remained trauma informed but were appropriate and accessible to those experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence.

DVLS reviewed its website and, with the assistance of NT Legal Aid, greatly improved the content available online. This process involved the development of accessible and relevant factsheets on domestic and family violence that built on the Blurred Borders resource kits, using visual art and storytelling to explain key legal concepts around domestic and family violence. The service also commenced the development of its Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which when finalised will be available through the website.

	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	**20/21**
Total services provided					
Applications for Aid:					
Received	239	247	219	211	**167**
Approved:	237	245	219	211	**167**
Refused:	2	2	0	0	**0**
Free Legal Advice Sessions	715	641	731	805	**588**
Duty Lawyer Services	298	367	341	339	**406**

DVLS participated in a range of networks across the sector. Our collaboration with government and non-government agencies have included the continued partnership with the national charity Share the Dignity. Through this program, our service receives handbags filled with toiletries to distribute to women escaping domestic violence. The Share the Dignity handbags have been much welcomed by clients of DVLS.

DVLS provided a number of formal and informal community legal education sessions to community members and services. During the reporting period, DVLS also partnered with the NTLAC and Top End Women's Legal Service to deliver CLE in collaboration.

DVLS Team with share the dignity founder Rochelle

Civil Law Practice

Overview

The Civil Law Practice is committed to increasing legal assistance to vulnerable clients who are experiencing civil law problems in the NT.

The Civil Law Practice continues to assist vulnerable people in the community who require specialised civil law advice and representation in civil law matters. The focus of the service is to provide 'legal task assistance' to vulnerable people faced with civil law issues to enable them to progress resolution of their civil law problems.

Legal task assistance is not a grant of legal aid, it is limited to four hours per civil matter and does not extend to a solicitor taking carriage of a matter in an ongoing, or representative capacity. This assistance often includes:

- Preparation or assistance with drafting documents.
- Writing a submission letter.
- Writing a letter to another party asking them to do or not to do something.
- Advocating on behalf of a client without taking ongoing carriage of a matter.

The practice also conducts some grant of aid matters where appropriate.

The impact of COVID-19 on our clients and staff cannot be understated and the Civil Law Practice has continued to strive to meet the additional legal needs of our clients during this time and continue to provide quality legal services by adapting our workplace, including setting up work from home capacity.

Geographic reach

The Civil Law Practice provides assistance to vulnerable clients living in remote, regional and rural areas of the NT. The practice continues to be very busy providing civil advice clinics to clients in the Katherine, Palmerston, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Darwin areas.

Areas of law

The Civil Law Practice provides advice and assistance across a broad range of civil law areas including but not limited to employment issues, discrimination, consumer issues, welfare rights, housing and debt matters, health and other service complaints, personal injury, motor vehicle accidents, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and assistance to clients who are receiving involuntary treatment under the Mental Health and Related Services Act.

Targeted services

The Civil Law Practice has a number of specific services which are targeted to particular clients and legal concerns, including:

- Health Justice Partnership with Danila Dilba Health Service;
- Indigenous Outreach Project;
- Health Justice Partnership with Wurli Wurlinjang Health Clinic in Katherine known as the Katherine Individual Support Program
- The Your Story Disability Legal Support Service; and
- Respondent Early Assistance Legal Service.

More information about these services is provided later in this report.

Mental health

The Civil Law Practice continues to develop its expertise in representing individuals who are subject to compulsory treatment orders under the Mental Health and Related Services Act. Our lawyers provide free duty lawyer representation and advice for clients appearing before the Mental Health Review Tribunal who may be involuntarily admitted to the Mental Health Inpatient Unit in Darwin or Alice Springs. We also provide duty lawyer services to those who may be subject to involuntary treatment in the community pursuant to a Community Management Order.

In addition to providing advice and representation in connection with Tribunal hearings, the practice has initiated several appeals of Tribunal decisions to the NT Supreme Court on behalf of clients who are mental health patients.

Our Principal Functions (continued)

The skills and experience of the solicitors in our mental health team have strengthened considerably as we continue to encounter and navigate the complex issues and tensions that arise in the compulsory treatment context. Our advocacy work focuses on ensuring that Tribunal hearings are procedurally fair and that all interference with the civil liberties of people living with mental illness is kept to the minimum necessary, in keeping with the principles of the Mental Health and Related Services Act.

The Civil Law Practice also crafted a comprehensive submission regarding the proposed review of the Mental Health and Related Services Act

National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Civil Law Practice continues to provide advice and representation to clients who need help with matters relating to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including obtaining access to the scheme for funding for disability supports and providing assistance with appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

The objective of this assistance is to provide high quality and accessible legal services to people living with disability and to contribute to the emerging body of case law relating to the NDIS.

Katherine Health Justice Partnership

In 2019 the NT Legal Aid Commission formed a health justice partnership (HJP) in Katherine, 300km south of Darwin, with a range of health and social support providers known collectively as the Katherine Individual Support Program (KISP). NT Legal Aid partnered with KISP to ensure that the civil law concerns of Katherine's most vulnerable people, namely those suffering chronic illness, disability and homelessness, would be addressed as part of their health and social well-being support. This Health Justice Partnership is funded through the NT Primary Health Network.

Under the health justice partnership, our lawyer and social support worker provide:

1. daily walk-in legal advice clinics at the Salvation Army between 9am and 10am.
2. legal advice sessions at any location convenient to client, medical service or social support service.
3. routine legal health checks conducted by our social support worker for clients entering the VTAC rehabilitation program.
4. legal task assistance – ongoing legal work of up to four hours per legal issue – noting that most clients have multiple legal issues.
5. legal referrals to appropriate legal services.
6. social support referrals to community-based services.
7. community legal education for stakeholders and clients.

In April 2021 Associate Professor Lisa Wood from the University of Western Australia undertook an evaluation of the health justice partnership. The report concluded "The HJP has demonstrated a significant impact in the Katherine community in its first 18 months, helping to fill a critical gap in the existing service landscape and providing a vital bridge for more integrated support for people with complex and intertwined legal, health and social issues."

In May 2021 Associate Professor Lisa Wood and our HJP lawyer presented at the Preventative Health Conference in Western Australia. Our paper discussed the Katherine Health Justice Partnership – its evaluation and outcomes.

Indigenous Outreach

The Civil Law Practice continued to deliver high quality, culturally safe legal services to disadvantaged and vulnerable Indigenous people in selected regional and remote areas in the NT through our Indigenous Outreach Program.

In the Katherine region, we have continued to build relationships with community members and other service providers in the four remote communities that we visit. We are the only legal service that regularly visits these communities. The legal advice and education that we provide, as well as the referrals that we make to non-legal service providers, are therefore key to ensuring that those communities have access to justice and other services.

In the West-Arnhem region, we have continued to build relationships with the two remote island communities that we service through regular visits, and particularly by arranging joint visits with HK Training and Consulting.

Similarly, we arranged a number of joint visits to the urban communities that we service around Darwin with Somerville, Top End Women's Legal Service, Amity Community Services and others. By facilitating joint visits, we are able to collaborate with other organisations that service the same client populations to ensure that any gaps in service provision are identified and addressed and any double-up is avoided.

In the Barkly region, we have reached an unprecedented level of collaboration with other stakeholders and service providers. Most notable is our involvement in the Access to Justice in the Barkly Group, which was formed in 2020 to drive the implementation of the Access to Justice in the Barkly Report recommendations. NAAJA, CAAFLU, CAWLS and NTLAC lawyers are working closely together to enhance legal service delivery in the Barkly.

Indigenous Outreach Team with Tennant Creek Ofice Team

We have continued to service a large client base through regular clinics (both in person and by video link). We have also continued to engage in formal Community Legal Education activities at the Barkly Region Alcohol Rehabilitation Facility (BRADAAG), Barkly Regional Arts, the Corrections' Family Violence Program, and with community members at 'the Hub'. Importantly, these relationships provide us with a strong referral network for clients requiring non-legal services to ensure that our clients' needs are holistically met.

Danila Dilba Health Justice Partnership

Our health justice partnership with Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS), started in 2016 to connect DDHS clients with legal assistance within the health care setting, thereby enhancing access to justice, and ensuring more holistic service delivery. Since then, NT Legal Aid civil lawyers attend DDHS clinics on a weekly basis, rotating between clinics to meet with clients. This year saw a promising extension of the health justice partnership, when a team – Legal Health Mob – comprising a NT Legal Aid family lawyer and a DDHS indigenous outreach worker were integrated into the DDHS service. The integrated service has enhanced our health justice partnership by working with DDHS to draw on trusting relationships to address barriers to legal assistance, acting as a central triage for DDHS referrals, and providing in service training education and support to DDHS front line staff in legal issue spotting.

Your Story Disability Legal Support

Your Story Disability Legal Support ("YSDLS") was established to assist people to engage with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability ("the Disability Royal Commission"). YSDLS is a national legal service that provides legal advice, information and assistance to people with disability, their families, carers, advocates and supporters

Our Principal Functions (continued)

wanting to engage with the Disability Royal Commission. The NT Legal Coordinator commenced in March 2020 and operates within the Civil Law Practice.

The Legal Coordinator has developed, built and maintained local relationships with stakeholders to contribute to and support YSDLS local service delivery in the NT. This has included:

- Establishing a local network of NT funded stakeholders;
- Organising information sessions for community members and service providers;
- Community outreach to regional and remote communities in the NT;
- Undertaking CLE to different stakeholders; and
- Creating engagement strategies to target priority groups, such as people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

The Legal Coordinator has provided legal advice to people with disability, their family members, carers, and supporters about engaging with the Disability Royal Commission, such as in relation to privacy, confidentiality, naming names, and criminal offences. The Legal Coordinator has also worked closely with clients to support them prepare for private sessions.

The Legal Coordinator has facilitated timely and accurate client referrals to legal and support services, including to the Civil Law Practice for advice on ancillary legal matters.

Disability Royal Commission Info session by Top-End service providers

Respondent Early Assistance Legal Service

The Respondent Early Assistance Legal Service (REALS) forms part of NT Legal Aid's Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS). It provides a duty lawyer service to defendants of domestic violence order applications at Darwin Local Court, free legal advice clinics, limited legal task assistance and warm referrals to legal and non-legal services. A dedicated men's support worker assists with referrals to men's behaviour change programs, counselling, drug and alcohol rehabilitation and family law parenting and property advice.

REALS help to resolve Domestic Violence Order (DVO) applications in a timely manner with conditions that are suitable to the circumstances, thereby reducing the number of DVO breaches and domestic violence recidivism.

Most matters resolve quickly by consent after some legally assisted negotiations. In limited cases, applications are withdrawn on the basis that the defendant enters into an undertaking or after a successful trial period where an interim order is in force.

In some cases, limited task assistance is provided in family parenting and/or property related matters if our involvement is likely to assist resolving wider issues in dispute. This increases the number of amicable arrangements that can be made regarding the children and property of separating couples.

This year the demand on the REALS service increased directly due to the historic high number of domestic violence order applications lodged in the Darwin Local Court. We believe this is related to the more than 50% increase in domestic and family violence related offences in the Darwin region in this year[1]

[1] https://pfes.nt.gov.au/police/community-safety/nt-crime-statistics/darwin

Grants Section

Administers grants of legal aid under Guidelines established under section 12 of the *Legal Aid Act.*

Legal aid may be granted for representation by a NT Legal Aid legal practitioner or to a private practitioner on the NT Legal Aid panel established under section 30 of the *Legal Aid Act.*

Of the 2654 applications received, 2227 applications were approved. A total of 63.6% of all matters were provided with assistance by NT Legal Aid lawyers, the remainder being assisted by private practitioners. Clients who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comprised 47.23% of the applications approved. 619 conflict referrals were received directly from the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), under our MOU with them.

The Grants Section coordinates and administers the reconsideration and review process where an applicant appeals a decision in relation to a grant of aid under Part VI of the *Legal Aid Act.* This year 142 decisions were reconsidered with 22 going to a Review Committee. This was a 46% increase in reviews on the previous year.

This year the Commonwealth Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme was implemented. This Scheme funds unrepresented parties in Family Law proceedings where a cross-examination ban has been made. Legal representation under the Scheme is available for the hearing, including preparation and for late-stage legally-assisted family dispute resolution, if appropriate. Access to the Scheme is not means or merits tested. A specialised practitioner panel has been established to undertake these matters. NT Legal Aid received additional funding to administer this Scheme.

NT Legal Aid continues to recognise that work is often performed by private practitioners without adequate remuneration and we would like to acknowledge the considerable effort put in by private lawyers to comply with our processes and assist clients. Without the support of the private practitioners many clients would go without representation and advice.

Family Dispute Resolution

The Work of the Section

The Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) section assists separated couples and their families to discuss parenting arrangements and the division of property in the safe, and supported environment of a 'family law conference'.

Family law conferences are the model of mediation used by NT Legal Aid and other legal aid commissions; where all parties are encouraged and helped to get legal advice and have their lawyer attend to assist them on the day.

The FDR gives consideration to the support needs of each section individual party so that they can have a voice at their conference. Impartial Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners who have legal or social science qualifications chair our conferences.

Parties are able to reach partial or full agreement in more than 60 per cent of the matters we conference which promotes the best interests of children and the safety of the family, as well as reducing conflict and the cost to the public.

When an agreement is reached, the lawyers involved prepare an enforceable Application for Consent Orders or a shorter term Parenting Plan. Even if no agreement can be reached, a conference provides parties with an opportunity to safely discuss concerns, air any grievances and clarify issues.

If parties do have to go to court to resolve their dispute, they may still have been able to agree on some points and narrow the issues for the judge to decide.

The FDR Team

The team consists of two senior Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners to assess matters, chair conferences and provide feedback to guide other processes and services at NT Legal Aid, and two administrative officers to do the initial intake and co-ordination required to hold a successful conference.

Our Principal Functions (continued)

We also rely on a panel of external Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners to help provide conferences across Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine.

The FDR Section works closely with related services namely the Family Section, Grants Section, Top End Family Law Pathways Network, private practitioners, Community Legal Centres, Independent Children's Lawyers, interpreters, court registry staff and external related agencies such as the Family Relationship Centre and service providers offering family violence and mental health supports.

Service Updates

Due to which COVID-19, the FDR Section had to quickly adapt to holding all conferences remotely, by video conference or telephone, had previously been utilised to conference with remote or interstate parties.

This presented unique challenges, particularly in terms of how to support self-represented parties, parties in rural and remote areas and parties experiencing other barriers. It was more important than ever that our service collaborate with service providers to provide tailored and culturally appropriate services.

It was clear from our COVID-19 experiences that future services must be oriented towards 'online dispute resolution' therefore our service is preparing to pilot the use of a private online platform called 'Immediation' in the next financial year. Along with our use of TRM, the 'Territory Records Manager' system, this will make our service largely future facing: virtual and paperless.

The FDR Section will aim to balance this by undertaking face to face intake as much as possible to ensure that parties continue to have the tailored support they need. We will continue to be flexible in our approach to convening face to face conferences that facilitate and empower maximum participation by parties.

This was the second year of providing property conferences within the Commonwealth's Lawyer-Assisted Family Law Property Mediation Trial. The Lawyer-Assisted Family Law Property Mediation Trial or Small Property Medication Trial ('SPMT') is a two year national trial which has been extended for a further 18 months.

Parties with a nett property pool of up to $500,000 (excluding superannuation) who can meet a relaxed means and merits test, can receive the benefit of two property conferences (one to prepare and one to finalise orders).

If the parties have not been able to agree a on a division of property, there is further potential assistance available under the SPMT, extending to representation through a court trial and enforcement of orders. Negative equity and 'debt only' matters are included, as are spousal maintenance cases. An extensive evaluation is being conducted but early results - including the extension of this trial - show positive returns.

Preventative Legal Services

NT Legal Aid undertook a restructure in late 2020, which resulted in an amalgamation of its Legal Information and Referral Services and Community Legal Education practices. NT Legal Aid also sought and was successful in obtaining funding to begin a Financial Counselling Service. Together the three practice areas of Helpline, Community Legal Education and Financial Counselling make up NT Legal Aid's Preventative Legal Services division.

Legal Aid Helpline

The Helpline has a team leader/operator, a full time paralegal operator, and two part time paralegal operators, providing legal information and referral to callers throughout Australia.

The Helpline provides confidential help and assistance to people who have a legal problem, or who may be unsure where to get help with their problem. After a discussion with the caller, the Helpline may take several steps to assist: they may refer them to another helpful service, they may be sent some detailed information to help them understand their problem better, or the Helpline operator may assist the caller to obtain a free legal advice appointment. Often all three services are provided to callers. Helpline staff engage in professional development training, and participate in developing on-line resources to provide information

and assistance to callers. As legislation and processes constantly change training and development of our resources is continuous.

As a result of COVID-19, NT Legal Aid was successful in obtaining funding from the NT Government to begin an online chat service.

The funding enabled us to employ another part time Helpline operator, as well as obtain on-line chat service licences.

The primary aim of the chat service is to allow an alternate avenue of contact for people who are isolated and at risk of domestic and family violence. The chat service is available on both the NT Legal Aid and Domestic Violence Legal Service websites.

The service went "live" in April 2021. The service is operated by the Helpline staff, who now have dual roles. To the end of this financial year the service had assisted with 57 chats.

The number of callers to the service continues to expand with 23,388 callers being provided with assistance during 2020-2021, an increase of 7% from the previous year.

Our partnership with Supportlink throughout the NT continues to work well, providing assistance to people requiring legal help. Referrals from Supportlink primarily come from the NT Police. The Helpline receives referrals from Supportlink for people who may need legal assistance.

Proudly supported by NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

The Helpline initiates contact with people requiring legal assistance and/or legal advice. This initiative takes the stress of initiating contact with legal services away from the client.

The Helpline makes the call to the client and discusses the best way to provide them with assistance, whether it is by providing legal information or an appointment to obtain legal advice. Assistance was provided to 1061 people through the Supportlink service this year.

Financial Counselling Service

NT Legal Aid successfully applied for funding from the NT Government to provide an inhouse financial counselling service. NT Legal Aid recognised the devastating impact of Covid-19 on individuals and families - moving people into isolation, impacts on employment and economic circumstances and relationship stressors – all of which can lead to an increase in domestic and family violence.

A financial counsellor can respond to an increase in service demand by people with legal problems and suffering financial hardship, with a focus on those experiencing domestic and family violence. The service embraces the emerging evidence of best practice in integrating social and financial support services within a legal service.

The approach recognises that clients of legal services have underlying social and financial issues that are intertwined with the legal issue and this is impeding them from addressing their legal issue and moving on with their life. Unless both the social/financial and legal issues are addressed, the client will continue to encounter challenges in resolving one or both of the concerns.

After undertaking a recruitment process a financial counsellor joined NT Legal Aid in April 2021. The financial counselling service operates from the Palmerston office, which does not have any legal practice areas operating from that site. The financial counsellor is able to accept referrals from all legal practice areas within NT Legal Aid and all regional offices.

To date referrals have predominantly been from the Domestic

Our Principal Functions (continued)

Violence Legal Service and our family law practice area. The casework is diverse, complex and challenging. The financial counsellor has joined a strong "community of practice" with representation from other financial counsellors working in legal services around Australia. Law reform issues have been identified and work is ongoing in that regard.

Community Legal Education

The Legal Aid Act specifically notes the role of the Commission in initiating and carrying out education programs to promote public understanding (especially for people with special needs) of rights, powers, privileges and duties under the laws in force in the NT.

In late 2020 our long standing manager of the Community Legal Education Team, John Jablonka, left the Commission. John built a strong foundation on which CLE work is undertaken at NT Legal Aid, and left us with a clear vision of where we are focusing our work in future. An internal restructure in late 2020 saw the Community Legal Education team come under the umbrella of Preventative Legal Services.

The Community Legal Education (CLE) team coordinates NT Legal Aid's education activities. The team developed a new five year CLE Strategy (2020-2025), setting out five key areas of work:

- Goals – what we will achieve by 2025
- Priority target audiences
- SMART goals for each priority audience
- Key activities
- Support systems – what supports do we need to achieve our goals by 2025

Why do CLE?
CLE is delivered to improve people's access to and understanding of the law, their rights and ways to prevent, minimise and solve legal problems. It also builds the legal capability of service providers to improve legal system responses and thus improve social outcomes.

Who is it for?
CLE has a broader audience than clients seeking legal help from NT Legal Aid. Our priority audiences are vulnerable people from diverse backgrounds from across the NT. This means anyone with a higher risk of legal problems and greater barriers to addressing these due to social isolation. Current priorities are:

- Young people;
- CALD/Migrant communities;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities;
- International students;
- Service providers.

Preventative Legal Services Team – Palmerston

CLE Strategy 2020-25

The Legal Aid Act provides for the delivery of community legal education to support access to justice. Our purpose is to ensure that people in the Northern Territory understand their legal rights and are comfortable seeking legal assistance if required.

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Our Principal Functions (continued)

How does CLE fit in with NTLAC's services?

The Legal Aid Act mandates NTLAC to provide community legal education to ensure access to justice. NTLAC's strategic plan 2020-25 notes as part of our purpose "to ensure that people in the NT understand their legal rights" in "uniquely challenging circumstances because of isolation, a small population, geographic dispersal, cultural diversity, economic hardship and disadvantage to our first nation's people." Our values of social justice, cultural respect, Integrity, professionalism, commitment to the law, ethics, innovation, and continuous improvement for quality services, accountability, sustainability all support and guide the importance of CLE work. Preventative legal services are a priority and our 2020-25 key strategies include explicit reference to CLE related actions such as service delivery, reputation and partnerships, innovation and improvement, and capability and culture.

What do we educate about?
We deliver education in all areas of law, partnering with our inhouse legal practice areas and other agencies to facilitate effective education across most areas of law. Accessible and relevant messages ensure people know where to get information and help to prevent and address a range of legal issues.

How do we do it?
CLE activities include:

- Face to face and online education sessions with community members and service providers;
- Interactive public awareness events;
- A range of publications and materials in print, film, kit and digital formats;
- Sharing legal information on current topics via social media and websites;
- Training for legal and other service providers in effective skills and approaches for delivery of community legal education and information;
- Networking widely;
- Hosting forums, meetings and workshops; and
- Undertaking projects with a range of partners.

The CLE team works internally with all NT Legal Aid staff to draw on their expert knowledge; strengthen their education.

Community Legal Education Activities

During 2020-21, the Community Legal Education (CLE) team comprised 4 staff: Team Leader, 2 Legal Educators and an Administrative Officer. We continued to work to meet the 2020-2025 CLE strategy's 4 main goal areas:

1. Develop and strengthen relationships
2. Deliver education and training
3. Develop and distribute information
4. Coordinate CLE.

1. Develop and strengthen relationships

Collaborative partnerships with our own staff in regional offices, different legal practice areas and teams are key to the CLE team being able to deliver quality community legal education. We share information regularly, provide in-house training on delivering CLE

STEPS Palmerston Refugee Week

Our Principal Functions (continued)

and working with different target audiences. We also discuss emerging needs and issues that may require resources or education plans.

NT Legal Aid also partners with other relevant agencies to deliver legal education activities sharing expertise, resources, ensuring a mix of skills, qualities and inclusive practice.

NT Legal Aid convenes the NT Community Legal Education Network, with over 200 members from more than 50 legal and other agencies. The network shares information via an email group, an online shared calendar and a Facebook page.

Meetings are held every 2 months involving people from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin and other regions and states. The Network was unable to hold it's annual professional development event due to COVID-19 restrictions, however plans are in place to deliver the event again in 2021-22.

2. Deliver education and training

NT Legal Aid undertook a range of activities to connect with our target audiences in 2020-21 and align with their legal needs and contexts.

Two key projects for the year were:

Law and Me in the NT

NT Legal Aid was funded by the NT Government's Study NT International Student Wellbeing Grant, to provide "Law and me in the NT", an education program for international students.

The project has grown over the years and we have incorporated and created several different methods of delivery: consisting of in person education sessions, online resources and information for international students to improve their access to justice in the NT.

The sessions consisted of a series of interactive workshops to help international students and their support networks understand their rights and where to find free legal assistance.

These included: renting, being safe in relationships, equal opportunity, visas, money and employment rights. The focus was to enable students to prevent and address legal problems early through a range of resources and activities.

The project contributed to strengthening the understanding of relevant laws and processes by both students and the support systems that surround and facilitate their experience in Australia. A recent activity as part of the project in 2021 was providing Legal Health Check training to service providers working with international students, to help them understand legal issues and how to make good referrals.

International Student Orientation

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Strengths in Conversation Project

The Strengths in Conversation (SIC) Project was funded by the NT Government Safe, Respected and Free from Violence prevention grant. Its aims were to strengthen primary prevention of violence against women and children in CALD communities in Darwin and identify training and resources available to sites of primary prevention, including what gaps need to be filled, encourage development of new training, share materials gathered and promote collaboration across the sector.

SIC was a project in partnership with the Steering Committee: Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Dawn House, NAPCAN, NT Working Women's Centre, Multicultural Council NT and Anglicare. The project developed a training matrix and poster, sharing what current and relevant training was available for this sector in the area of primary prevention of family and domestic violence.

In order to pursue the SIC Project aims, a survey was conducted in the sector that works with CALD communities and individuals.

The purpose of the survey was to validate gaps found for sites of primary prevention, based on the training and resources available. The Project received 56 responses to this survey, and collated a report on the results. We also provided recommendations for ongoing improvements to sector and training needs. It was so great to work closely with other service providers and collaborate on initiatives and activities to meet these needs. The Sector Needs Survey Report was officially launched in July 2021.

Some other education and training highlights of the year were:

- Happy Families dinners with Multi Cultural Council NT
- Mock Trial with Nightcliff School
- Democracy Dash
- Legal rights and responsibilities with Secondary Intensive English Students at Darwin High School
- International Students Orientation Days
- Regular weekly outreach visits with migrant English classes in Darwin and Palmerston.

The table below shows a snapshot of education activities and their reach during the 2020-2021 financial year:

- 340 sessions delivered
- 6440 participants attended these

NT Legal Aid staff attended and contributed to a number of networks and committees including:

- The Darwin Refugee and Migrant Support Network (convened by Melaleuca Refugee Centre)
- The Multicultural Advisory Forum (Department of Human Services)
- The Darwin and Rural Workers with Youth Network
- The Domestic and Family Violence Network
- The Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network
- Darwin Support Workers Forum
- Palmerston and Rural Youth Services Network
- NT Veteran Wellbeing Network

Darwin High Healthy Living Expo

Our Principal Functions (continued)

3. Develop and distribute information

During 2020-21 NT Legal Aid distributed 8,906 hard copies of our publications. The snapshot of legal information and publications below shows some of the output in this area. Provision of information online in digital formats continued to be an area of growth.

Output Statistics

Snapshot of information and publications 2020-2021
24,217 people accessed 119,813 pages of information on our Website www.legalaid.nt.gov.au
6,143 social media users reached by our Facebook posts
28,309 professionals reached by our Linked In posts
8,900 Views of our YouTube channel
8,906 Legal Publications were handed out
294,764 times Legal information accessed through the NT Law Handbook website
12,022 people accessed 16,177 pages of plain language legal information through the Law info NT website.

4. Coordinate CLE

We continued to review and update our processes and procedures around the delivery of community legal education. Regular reflection and evaluation of our education programs, including feedback from external agencies and other NT Legal Aid staff allows us to adapt our focus where required.

A fundamental part of our education program also focussed on educating our own staff as well as service providers and the wider community about resources available to assist people with legal problems. This was done via our NT wide networks, our National Legal Aid Community Legal Education Network and via our social media platforms and websites.

Rights in relationship Darwin High School

The Community We Serve

Case Studies

The following case studies represent a small sample of our case work from a number of clients we represent. Names and identifying information have been removed to protect the privacy of our clients.

1 Case 1

Millie is a culturally and linguistically diverse woman who lives in a regional area of Darwin. She has 6 children, 3 of who were living with her at home.

Millie immediately contacted the NT Legal Aid Helpline after she was served with paperwork from Territory Families. Territory Families were seeking a Temporary Protection Order due to concerns that Millie's partner had sexually assaulted the youngest child.

Millie has an appointment for urgent advice and her lawyer negotiated with Territory Families about whether a Temporary Protection Order was necessary. During these discussions, her lawyer gave information and evidence that demonstrated that Millie was acting protectively in response to the allegations and addressing Territory Families' concerns. The Temporary Protection Order application was withdrawn and a safety plan was created.

Her lawyer continued to work with Millie to support her in ongoing discussions with Territory Families to ensure the children's safety.

Throughout this process, Millie also worked with a Family Support Caseworker to do safety planning, receive appropriate counselling support for her and the children as well as receive support at meetings with Territory Families.

2 CASE 2

Rachel and Sam were in a relationship for 7 years. They had one child together, Noah, aged 6. When Rachel decided to leave the relationship, Sam and Rachel could not agree on the parenting arrangements for Noah and therefore Noah stayed living with Sam. Rachel would repeatedly ask to see Noah and when Sam didn't respond, she went to the home to speak with him. This ended up in Sam pushing Rachel and threatening her.

Sam continued to send messages threatening Rachel that she would not see Noah unless she got back together with him and that he would have her deported if she did not repay him the cost of her visa. Rachel went to the Domestic Violence Legal Service ('DVLS') for assistance. A DVLS social support worker helped Rachel get into safe housing and referred her to a counsellor, and a DVLS lawyer helped her to get an interim DVO. Sam wrote to Rachel's lawyer saying that she could not see Noah unless she withdrew the DVO.

DVLS then referred Rachel to NT Legal Aid's Family Section. Rachel was engaged with a second social support worker there, who was able to co-ordinate safety planning and give ongoing support to Rachel, while Sam was invited to one of our Family Law Conferences. Rachel wanted the conference but Sam did not want to take part while there was a DVO in place. Rachel therefore had to apply to the Federal Circuit Court for parenting orders, and interim (short term) orders were made for Noah to spend time with her.

An Independent Children's Lawyer was also appointed by the court (paid for by NT Legal Aid). A Family Consultant prepared a report with recommendations for the Court; namely that the father engage with counselling and do a parenting program. The father

Case Studies (continued)

engaged with these recommendations, and after about 6 months he engaged a lawyer to assist him.

With the support of a lawyer, Sam agreed to attend a Family Law Conference where the parties; with the help of the report recommendations, the Independent Children's Lawyer and the Family Dispute Resolution practitioner; were able to agree upon long term parenting arrangements that worked for them and most importantly for Noah. The parties had the agreement made into Consent Orders by the Court and did not have to return to the Court to argue further. When the DVO expired the parents were able to keep talking together and share the parenting of Noah as he grows.

3 CASE 3

Wally and Jane were in an on/off relationship for a number of years and had one child together. There were concerns raised regarding the parents abusing drugs.

A domestic violence incident between Wally and Jane resulted in police arresting Wally and issuing a police DVO restraining him from engaging in any further domestic violence and he was also charged with assault.

The Local Court referred Wally to REALS for legal advice after Wally expressed he wished to speak to a lawyer. The REALS solicitor spoke with Wally while he was in custody and assisted him on a duty basis at the next court mention.

A large part of Wally's concern was being able to collect his personal belongings after being released from prison. During previous periods of separation, Wally claimed Jane had either sold or refused to return his personal belongings. Jane was similarly concerned that upon his release from prison, Wally would turn up at her house and breach the DVO.

The Police considered the matter a property dispute and would not get involved. It was clear that the issue of personal belongings was going to be a significant issue and needed to be resolved.

The REALS lawyer and Jane's lawyer were able to work collaboratively to establish a list of agreed items to make it easier for all involved (including police) upon Wally's release from prison and to minimise further violence from reoccurring in the future.

The DVO matter was varied by consent to full non-contact with family law exceptions and to allow Wally to attend the premises to collect his personal belongings in the presence of a police officer. The DVO was finalised by consent and without admissions.

With Wally's consent, the REALS solicitor completed a warm referral for family law parenting advice regarding contact with his daughter in addition to referring him to the Men's Behaviour Change program and residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation

CASE 4

Jodi was receiving legal help from the Domestic Violence Legal Service about a domestic violence order (DVO) police had put in place. Jodi was referred to the DVLS Social and Wellbeing Coordinator (SWC) by her DVLS lawyer following the legal appointment. Police had put in place a DVO because partner Mark physically assaulted Jodi. Initially Jodi said she did not want the DVO or to engage in the court process as she was in a relationship with Mark. The SWC engaged with Jodi, built rapport and provided emotional support. Jodi continued to engage, seek support and share her experience of domestic violence and concerns for her safety. Jodi was eager to access services however the impact
of the abuse perpetrated by Mark, particularly the physical, emotional, psychological abuse and isolation had made this difficult and dangerous. Jodi had been managing risk and safety on her own.

Gradually, the SWC continued to work alongside Jodi, undertaking risk assessment, safety planning, education, advocacy with police, referring to the Family Safety Framework, providing home security upgrades through Local Support Coordinator brokerage, connecting Jodi with additional support through specialist domestic violence counselling and a psychologist. Jodi is now separated from Mark, is strongly connected with services, has better engagement with Police and has upgraded to a full non-contact domestic violence order.

Top End Family Law Pathways Network

Top End Family Law Pathways Network's aims and objectives

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department funds NT Legal Aid as the Auspice Agency for the Top End Family Law Pathways Network (Pathways) for the Darwin, Katherine and surrounding area.

Pathways maintains a membership of individuals working for non-government organisations, government, local businesses, private practitioners, court staff, service providers and students who intend to work with separating families.

Pathways aims to promote cross-sectoral awareness of services and source relevant training to enhance service providers' skills in supporting self-care and client care. Pathways also works collaboratively with the other Family Law Pathways Networks across Australia to support national training and networking opportunities.

Pathways meets these objectives by providing training and service provider updates including information about programs, services, training, events, policies and procedures, funding and legislative changes.

Pathways Network Meeting Attendees

Pathways meets on a regular basis to share information and enhance collaborative relationships between service providers. Members are provided with an in-depth overview of a local service or program with the opportunity to ask questions, to enhance client and service provider understanding of the service and referral pathways.

Challenges and Opportunities

Pathways experienced a number of challenges this financial year as a result of COVID-19, resulting in some major events being cancelled as interstate providers were unable to travel. The Pathways Networks used this as an opportunity to work collaboratively to secure highly regarded speakers to present online training, including:

- Jennifer McIntosh on Child Inclusive and Developmentally Focused Dispute Resolution: Two evidence-based methods;
- Angela Lynch on reimagining just and safe outcomes for child and adult victims of domestic and family violence in the family law system in Australia;
- Vincent Papaleo- Untested Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse in Family Law;
- Jess Hill on Understanding Coercive Control;
- Zoe Rathus on Parental Alienation;
- Anne-Marie Rice – Dispute Resolution Events in the Family Court of Australia and the
- Federal Circuit Court of Australia: What Every Practitioner Needs To Know; and
- Heather Douglas – Legal Systems abuse & Coercive Control

Meetings and Networking

As a result of COVID-19 face to face networking opportunities were limited. Service providers were eager to re-engage in face to face networking opportunities in late 2020-early 2021,

Top End Family Law Pathways Network (continued)

with unprecedented numbers of attendees. Danila Dilba kindly permitted us use of their boardroom facilities for our April 2021 meeting where we heard from staff of the Health Justice Partnership of NT Legal Aid and Danila Dilba, TeamHEALTH, Victims of Crime NT, and the Australian Family Nurse Partnership Program about their services and referral pathways.

Our June 2021 meeting was themed, focussing on services supporting clients in accessing compensation services, with three service providers presenting on victims of crime compensation, the Redress Scheme and civil remedies available in the Northern Territory and Commonwealth, with 32 attendees. Attendees from legal and social services also provided updates about their services and deepened their understanding of the important work being done by members of the network.

Training

On 9 March 2021, Ada Conroy presented training on 'Resisting Collusion with Male Perpetrators of Family Violence', designed to prepare practitioners to effectively identify and respond to men who cause family violence harm, by learning how to identify and resist invitations to collude. The training unpacked the conscious and unconscious belief systems perpetrators can experience and how these can present to service providers as well as the need to prioritise victim survivors safety and to hold men who use violence accountable for the impact of their behaviours. Many participants reflected on their own experiences of invitations to collude and used the training as an opportunity to consider how they may respond differently in the future. 27 participants attended training with feedback consistently very positive.

On 28 June 2021 Jodie Grant presented a webinar on 'How to Use a Trauma Informed Approach'. Training was designed to enhance practitioners' skills in responding meaningfully and effectively to clients in a strengths based, trauma informed framework that maximises client agency and choice in the family law system.

Jodie's wealth of practical experience resulted in a robust Q and A forum canvassing difficult conversations, manifestations of trauma and its impact on clients and challenging us to reflect on our own experience of trauma and its impact on our professional practice, collaborative work and self-care. Training was extremely well received by its 39 participants. Training was particularly timely given the lockdown that occurred less than 24 hours prior, with service providers facing a heightened level of uncertainty in service provision, and concern for clients experiencing trauma, family violence and mental health challenges.

Pathways looks forward to continuing to support service providers, assisting separating families enhance their networks and collaborative efforts and to provide relevant training to support their work with clients.

Information Management

Information Act 2002 (NT)

Freedom of Information (FOI) gives an individual the right to apply for access to Northern Territory Government information and to access or correct personal information. It is about enhancing government accountability and participation in our democratic system of government.

NT Legal Aid continually commits to complying with the Act, information privacy principles and record management requirements.

Applications must be made in accordance with section 18 of the Act. On application, the FOI officer arranges the allowable release of information in accordance with the Act and applies exemptions on a case by case basis where applicable.

A copy of the Act and FOI request forms are available via the Office of the Information Commissioner's NT website at *https://infocomm.nt.gov.au/*

General Requests for Information

General information requests are managed by senior staff members within each section and region of NT Legal Aid. All requests are guided by the *Legal Aid Act 1990* and NT Legal Aid's internal Information Requests Procedure Manual. Applications must be accompanied by proof of identity to facilitate identity checks and applications can be made in person at any of the Commission's offices. If the local office is unable to assist applications are forwarded to the Information Officer based in Darwin. Depending on the location and size of information requested a fee may be incurred.

Requests for Publications

Available publications are listed on NT Legal Aid's website. Publications are available upon request and free of charge.

The following information is held by NT Legal Aid:

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

Requests can be made by email via our website (*www.legalaid.nt.gov.au*) or in writing to:

The Information Officer
Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
Locked Bag 11, Darwin NT 0801
Email: info@legalaid.nt.gov.au

Fees

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

Records Management

NT Legal Aid's Registry Team, overseen by the Corporate Services division, manages records and archiving. Processes and procedures are regularly and continually reviewed to ensure internal practices meet requirements under the *Information Act 2002 (NT)* to ensure, maintain and improve record keeping responsibilities and standards within the organisation.

To maintain and enhance the understanding and implementation of efficient practices for information management within NT Legal Aid, staff development, awareness and training remains a priority that NT Legal Aid continually commits to achieve.

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 $200,00 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 solicitor or barrister 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 CLAF.

Membership of the Committee

Director Deputy Director

Law Society Nominees:

C. Spurr	J. Stirk	D. McConnel
M. Spazzapan	P. Cheong	G. McMaster

Commission Appointees:

B. Lelli A. Messell

Statistical Information

The demands on the fund have been:					
Applications	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Received	22	12	15	6	14
Approved	16	9	8	4	8
Withdrawn	2	1	0	0	0
Refused	3	1	6	2	3
To be Decided	1	1	1	0	3

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 2020-21 the Review Committee met on 14 occasions to view 14 client requests. The outcome of their deliberations was that 4 decisions were varied in favour of the applicant, and 0 decisions pending.

Membership of the Committee

(Members Participating during the Financial Year 2020 -21)

Private Legal Practitioner:

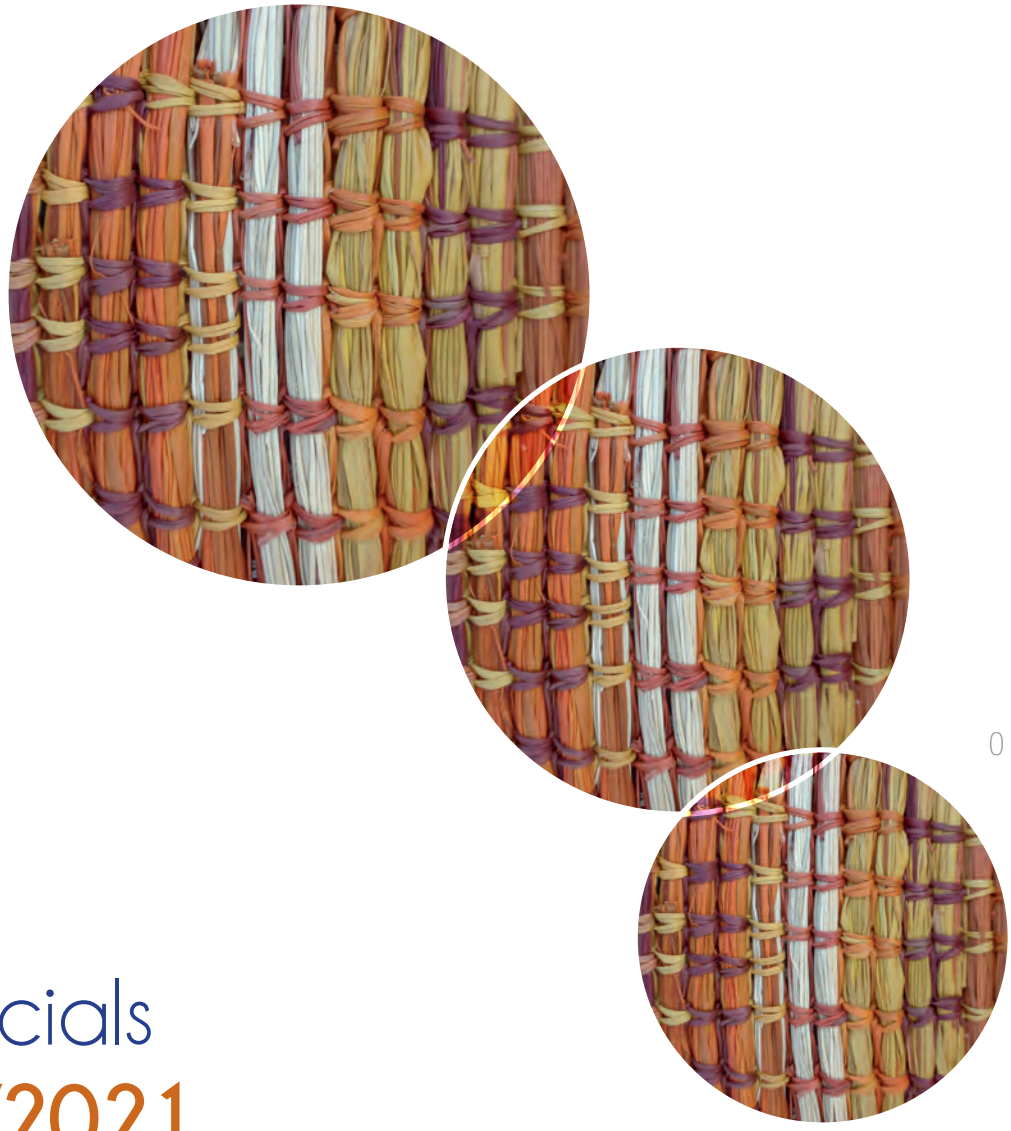
B. O'Loughlin	B. Piper	R. Lawford	C. Spurr
P. Cheong	T. Marris	R. Morley	E. Terrill
P. Tregear	J. Franz	M. Johnson	M. Hubber
P. Maley	J. Adams	J. Nottle	

Independent person with relevant experience:

C. Perry	P.Timney	P. Atkins	W. Morton
H. Roe	J. Sharp	L.Weatherhead	

Officers of NT Legal Aid, being the Director or a person employed by the Commission and holding a current practising certificate under the *Legal Profession Act.*

Secretary to Committee: A Messell



Financials 2020/2021

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

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Auditor-General

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

Year Ended 30 June 2021

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying Financial Report of Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission ("the Commission") which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021, 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 Statement by Directors.

In my opinion the Financial Report of Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission gives a true and fair view of the Commission's financial position as at 30 June 2021 and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the *Australian Accounting Standards.*

Basis for Opinion

I conducted the audit in accordance with *Australian Auditing Standards.* My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Financial Report section of my report.

I am independent of the Commission in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards and the ethical requirements of the *Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to the audit of the Financial Report in Australia. I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

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

Responsibilities of the Directors for the Financial Report

The Directors of the Commission are responsible for the preparation of the Financial Report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with *Australian Accounting Standards*, and for such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a Financial Report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the Financial Report, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the responsible entities either intend to liquidate the Commission or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Directors are responsible for overseeing the Commission's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Financial Report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error. They are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this Financial Report.

Level 9 Northern Territory House 22 Mitchell Street Darwin 0800 Tel: 08 8999 7155

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the Financial Report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit 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 Commission's internal control.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Commission's ability to continue as going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the Financial Report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report however, future events or conditions may cause the Commission to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the Financial Report, including the disclosures, and whether the Financial Report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Julie Crisp
Auditor-General for the Northern Territory

Darwin, Northern Territory

24 September 2021

Statement by Director

30 June 2021

In opinion of the Director of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission declare that:

a) the accompanying financial statements and notes are in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Northern Territory of Australia *Legal Aid Act 1990*;

b) are prepared in accordance with *Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations of the Australian Accounting Standards Board;*

c) give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Commission as at 30 June 2021 and of its performance for the year ended on that date;

d) 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

e) 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.

Fiona Hussin

Acting Director

Signed in Darwin this 24th day of September 2021.

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

As at 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021	2020
		$	$
Revenue			
Grants		17,784,709	16,300,187
Services revenue		195,049	316,773
Other revenue		72,241	133,766
Total revenue	2	18,051,999	16,750,726
Expenses			
Employee expenses		(10,845,512)	(10,674,060)
Legal expenses		(2,806,817)	(2,215,672)
Administration expense			
Purchases of goods and services		(1,333,558)	(1,100,832)
Depreciation, amortisation and impairments		(1,143,365)	(1,110,457)
Other administrative expenses		(655,523)	(972,718)
Grant expenses		(224,228)	(202,571)
Interest expense		(161,538)	(177,961)
Total expenses	2	(17,170,541)	(16,454,271)
Profit from continuing operations		881,458	296,455
Net surplus for the year		881,458	296,455
Other comprehensive income for the year		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to the Commission		881,458	296,455

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021	2020
		$	$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	5,100,357	3,412,035
Receivables	4	189,509	229,336
Investments	5	-	500,000
Other assets	6	379,642	308,755
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		5,669,508	4,450,126
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	7	8,205,091	9,283,020
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		8,205,091	9,283,020
TOTAL ASSETS		13,874,599	13,733,146
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Payables	8	604,893	510,907
Lease liabilities	9	897,368	892,398
Unearned contract revenue	10	524,099	441,203
Provisions	11	1,896,201	1,857,372
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		3,922,561	3,701,880
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liability	9	6,642,912	7,496,196
Provisions	11	250,015	357,417
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		6,892,927	7,853,613
TOTAL LIABILITIES		10,815,488	11,555,493
NET ASSETS		3,059,111	2,177,653
EQUITY			
Reserves	17	2,441,564	1,519,414
Accumulated funds	18	617,547	658,239
TOTAL EQUITY		3,059,111	2,177,653

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Statement of Changes in Equity

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

2021	Notes	Accumulated Funds	Reserves	Total
		$	$	$
Balance at 1 July 2020		**658,239**	**1,519,414**	**2,177,653**
Net surplus attributable to the Commission		881,458	-	881,458
Other comprehensive income attributable to the Commission		-	-	-
Total comprehensive income	18	**881,458**	**-**	**881,458**
Transfer to/(from) reserves	17	**(922,150)**	922,150	-
Balance at 30 June 2021		**617,547**	**2,441,564**	**3,059,111**

2020	Notes	Accumulated Funds	Reserves	Total
		$	$	$
Balance at 1 July 2019		231,726	1,709,352	1,941,078
Change in accounting policy to reflect the retrospective adjustments adoption of AASB 15 and AASB 1058		(59,880)	-	(59,880)
Balance at 1 July 2019 restated		171,846	1,709,352	1,881,198
Net surplus attributable to the Commission		296,455	-	296,455
Other comprehensive income attributable to the Commission		-	-	-
Total comprehensive income	18	296,455	-	296,455
Transfer to/(from) reserves	17	189,938	(189,938)	-
Balance at 30 June 2020		658,239	1,519,414	2,177,653

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Statement of Cash Flows

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021	2020
		$	$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Receipts in the course of operations		244,042	380,753
Cash Payments in the course of operations		(16,755,728)	(15,317,416)
Interest received		25,095	79,821
Interest paid		(161,538)	(177,961)
Grants received in the course of operations		18,750,205	17,172,258
Net cash provided by operating activities	15	2,102,076	2,137,455
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(11,577)	(79,864)
Payment for investments		500,000	(500,000)
Net cash (used in) investing activities		488,423	(579,864)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:			
Payment of lease liabilities		(902,177)	(869,512)
Net cash (used in) financing activities		(902,177)	(869,512)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents held		1,688,322	688,079
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		3,412,035	2,723,956
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	3	5,100,357	3,412,035

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

The Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission (the "Commission") was established on 11 June 1990 by the *Northern Territory of Australia 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 registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission from 3 December 2012

Basis of Preparation

The financial statements are a general purpose financial report that has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Northern Territory of Australia Legal Aid Act 1990* and related Australian Accounting Standards issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board that apply for the reporting period.

The financial statements have been prepared using the accrual basis of accounting, which recognises the effect of financial transactions and events when they occur, rather than when cash is paid out or received.

Historical Cost Convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention.

Accounting Estimates and Judgments

Those charged with governance make estimates and judgements during the preparation of these financial statements regarding assumptions about current and future events affecting transactions and balances.

These estimates and judgements are based on the best information available at the time of preparing the financial statements, however as additional information is known then the actual results may differ from the estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

Judgments and estimates that have significant effects on the financial statements are disclosed in the relevant notes to the financial statements.

1. Summary Of Significant Accounting Policies

(a) Revenue and other income

Revenue is recognised at the fair value of the consideration received, exclusive of the amount of GST.

Government appropriation and grants

Grants revenue is recognised at fair value exclusive of the amount of GST. Where a grant agreement is enforceable and has sufficiently specific performance obligations for the Commission to transfer goods or services to the grantor or a third party beneficiary the transaction is accounted for under AASB 15. In this case, revenue is initially deferred as a unearned contract liability when received in advance and recognised as or when the performance obligations are satisfied

Where grant agreements do not meet criteria above, it is accounted for under AASB 1058 and income is recognised on receipt of funding except for capital grants revenue received for the purchase or construction of non financial assets to be controlled by the Commission. Capital grants with enforceable contracts and sufficiently specific obligations are recognised as an unearned contract revenue liability when received and subsequently recognised progressively as revenue as or when the Commission satisfies its obligations under the agreement. Where a non financial asset is purchased, revenue is recognised at the point in time the asset is acquired and control transfers to the Commission.

Rendering of Services

Revenue from rendering of services is recognised when the Commission satisfies the performance obligation by transferring the promised services. The Commission typically satisfies its performance obligations when:

- the amount of revenue, stage of completion and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured and
- it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Commission.

Interest

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument.

(b) 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.

(c) Goods and services tax (GST)

Revenue, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payable are stated inclusive of GST.

Cash flows in the statement of cash flows are included 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 is classified as operating cash flows.

d) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash includes cash on hand and deposits held at call with banks, and other short term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to cash.

e) Property, plant and equipment

All items of property, plant and equipment with a cost, or other value, equal to or greater than $10,000 are recognised in the year of acquisition and depreciated as outlined below. Items of property, plant and equipment below the $10,000 threshold are expensed in the year of acquisition. Each class of property, plant and equipment is carried at cost or fair value as indicated, less, where applicable, accumulated depreciation and any impairment losses.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

1. Summary Of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

Freehold land and buildings are shown at their fair value based on periodic, but at every five years, valuations by external independent valuers, less subsequent depreciation and subsequent impairment for buildings.

In periods when the freehold land and buildings are not subject to an independent valuation, the Commission shall conduct an assessment to ensure the carrying amount for the land and buildings is not materially different to the fair value.

Increases in the carrying amount arising on revaluation of land and buildings are recognised in other comprehensive income and accumulated in the revaluation surplus in equity. Revaluation decreases that offset previous increases of the same class of assets shall be recognised in other comprehensive income under the heading of revaluation surplus. All other decreases are recognised in profit or loss.

Any accumulated depreciation at the date of the revaluation is eliminated against the gross carrying amount of the asset and the net amount is restated to the revalued amount of the asset.

Freehold land and buildings that have been contributed at no cost or for nominal cost are valued and recognised at the fair value of the asset at the date it is acquired.

All other classes of property, plant and equipment are measured at cost and are therefore carried at cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses. In the event the carrying amount of plant and equipment is greater than the estimated recoverable amount, the carrying amount is written down immediately to the estimated recoverable amount and impairment losses are recognised either in profit or loss or as a revaluation decrease if the impairment losses relate to a revalued asset. A formal assessment of recoverable amount is made when impairment indicators are present (refer to Note 2(f) for details of impairment).

Subsequent costs are included in the asset's carrying amount or recognised as a separate asset, as appropriate, only when it is probable that future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to the Commission and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. All other repairs and maintenance are recognised as expenses in profit or loss in the financial period in which they are incurred.

Plant and equipment that have been contributed at no cost or for nominal cost are recognised at the fair value of the asset at the date it is acquired.

Depreciation

The depreciable amount of all fixed assets, including buildings and leasehold improvements, but excluding freehold land, is depreciated /amortised over their expected useful economic lives using the straight line method and are measured at cost. Leased assets and leasehold improvements are depreciated over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

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 classes of depreciable assets are:

Fixed Assets	Depreciation Rate
Buildings	30 years
Plant & Equipment	5 years

At the end of each annual reporting period, the depreciation

method, useful life and residual value of each asset is reviewed. Any revisions are accounted for prospectively as a change in estimate.

(f) Right of use asset

The Commission leases office buildings and motor vehicles. Lease contracts are typically made for fixed periods of 4 to 10 years, but may have extension options. Lease terms are negotiated on an individual basis and contain a wide range of different terms and conditions. The lease agreements do not impose any covenants. The Commission does not provide residual value guarantees in relation to leases.

The Commission has elected to recognise payments for short term leases and low value leases as expenses on a straight line basis, instead of recognising a right of use asset and lease liability. Short term leases are leases with a lease term of 12 months or less with no purchase option. Low value assets are assets with a fair value of $10,000 or less when new and not subject to a sublease arrangement comprise mainly of photocopiers.

The Commission assesses at contract inception whether a contract is, or contains, a lease. That is, if the contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration.

The Commission recognises lease liabilities to make lease payments and right of use assets representing the right to use the underlying assets, except for short term leases and leases of low value assets.

The Commission recognises right of use assets at the commencement date of the lease (the date the underlying asset is available for use). Right of use assets are initially measured at the amount of initial measurement of the lease liability, adjusted by any lease payments made at or before the commencement date and lease incentives, any initial direct costs incurred, and estimated costs of dismantling and removing the asset or restoring the site, if any.

Right of use assets are depreciated on a straight line basis over the shorter of the lease term and the estimated useful lives of the assets, as follows:

Buildings	5 to 10 years
Motor vehicles	4 to 7 years

If ownership of the leased asset transfers to the Commission at the end of the lease term or the cost reflects the exercise of a purchase option, depreciation is calculated using the estimated useful life of the asset.

The right of use assets are subsequently measured at fair value which approximates costs except for those arising from leases that have significantly below market terms and conditions principally to enable the Commission to further its objectives and are also subject to impairment.

The right of use assets are subject to re measurement principles consistent with the lease liability including indexation and market rent review that approximates fair value and only revalued where a trigger or event may indicate their carrying amount does not equal fair value.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

1. Summary Of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

g) Contract assets

Contract assets are recognised when the Commission has transferred goods or services to the customer but where the Commission is yet to establish an unconditional right to consideration. Contract assets are treated as financial assets for impairment purposes.

h) Financial instruments

Initial recognition and measurement

Financial assets and financial liabilities are recognised when the Commission becomes a party to the contractual provisions to the instrument. For financial assets, this is equivalent to the date that the Commission commits itself to either the purchase or sale of the asset.

Financial instruments (except for trade receivables) are initially measured at fair value plus transaction costs, except where the instrument is classified "at fair value through profit or loss", in which case transaction costs are expensed to profit or loss immediately. Where available, quoted prices in an active market are used to determine fair value. In other circumstances, valuation techniques are adopted.

Trade receivables are initially measured at the transaction price if the trade receivables do not contain a significant financing component.

Classification and subsequent measurement

Financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are subsequently measured at:

- amortised cost; or
- fair value through profit and loss.

A financial liability is measured at fair value through profit and loss if the financial liability is:

- a contingent consideration of an acquirer in a business combination to which AASB 3 applies;
- held for trading; or
- initially designated as at fair value through profit or loss.

All other financial liabilities are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.The effective interest method is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a debt instrument and of allocating interest expense in profit or loss over the relevant period.

The effective interest rate is the internal rate of return of the financial asset or liability. That is, it is the rate that exactly discounts the estimated future cash flows through the expected life of the instrument to the net carrying amount at initial recognition.

A financial liability is held for trading if it is:

- incurred for the purpose of repurchasing or repaying in the near term;
- part of a portfolio where there is an actual pattern of short term profit taking;
- a derivative financial instrument (except for a derivative that is in a financial guarantee contract or a derivative that is in an effective hedging relationship); or
- any gains or losses arising on changes in fair value are recognised in profit or loss to the extent that they are not part of a designated hedging relationship.

The change in fair value of the financial liability attributable to changes in the issuer's credit risk is taken to other comprehensive income and is not subsequently reclassified to profit or loss.

Instead, it is transferred to retained earnings upon derecognition of the financial liability.

If taking the change in credit risk in other comprehensive income enlarges or creates an accounting mismatch, then these gains or losses are taken to profit or loss rather than other comprehensive income.

A financial liability cannot be reclassified.

Financial asset

Financial assets are subsequently measured at:

- amortised cost;
- fair value through other comprehensive income; or
- fair value through profit and loss

on the basis of the two primary criteria, being:

- the contractual cash flow characteristics of the financial asset; and
- the business model for managing the financial assets.

A financial asset is subsequently measured at amortised cost when it meets the following conditions:

- the financial asset is managed solely to collect contractual cash flows; and
- the contractual terms within the financial asset give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interest on the principal amount outstanding on specified dates.

A financial asset is subsequently measured at fair value through other comprehensive income when it meets the following conditions:

- the contractual terms within the financial asset give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interest on the principal amount outstanding on specified dates; and
- the business model for managing the financial asset comprises both contractual cash flows collection and the selling of the financial asset.

By default, all other financial assets that do not meet the conditions of amortised cost and the fair value through other comprehensive income's measurement condition are subsequently measured at fair value through profit or loss.

The Commission initially designates financial instruments as measured at fair value through profit or loss if:

- it eliminates or significantly reduces a measurement or recognition inconsistency (often referred to as "accounting mismatch") that would otherwise arise from measuring assets or liabilities or recognising the gains and losses on them on different bases;
- it is in accordance with the documented risk management or investment strategy and information about the groupings was documented appropriately, so the performance of the financial liability that was part of a group of financial liabilities or financial assets can be managed and evaluated consistently on a fair value basis; and
- it is a hybrid contract that contains an embedded derivative that significantly modifies the cash flows otherwise required by the contract.

The initial designation of the financial instruments to measure at fair value through profit and loss is a one time option on initial classification and is irrevocable until the financial asset is derecognised.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

1. Summary Of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

h) Financial instruments (continued)

Derecognition

Derecognition refers to the removal of a previously recognised financial asset or financial liability from the statement of financial position.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

A liability is derecognised when it is extinguished (ie when the obligation in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires). An exchange of an existing financial liability for a new one with substantially modified terms, or a substantial modification to the terms of a financial liability, is treated as an extinguishment of the existing liability and recognition of a new financial liability.

The difference between the carrying amount of the financial liability derecognised and the consideration paid and payable, including any non cash assets transferred or liabilities assumed, is recognised in profit or loss.

Derecognition of financial assets

A financial asset is derecognised when the holder's contractual rights to its cash flows expires, or the asset is transferred in such a way that all the risks and rewards of ownership are substantially transferred.

All of the following criteria need to be satisfied for derecognition of a financial asset:

- the right to receive cash flows from the asset has expired or been transferred;
- all risk and rewards of ownership of the asset have been substantially transferred; and
- the Commission no longer controls the asset (i.e. it has no practical ability to make unilateral decisions to sell the asset to a third party).

On derecognition of a financial asset measured at amortised cost, the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the sum of the consideration received and receivable is recognised in profit or loss.

On derecognition of a debt instrument classified as fair value through other comprehensive income, the cumulative gain or loss previously accumulated in the investment revaluation reserve is reclassified to profit or loss.

On derecognition of an investment in equity which was elected to be classified under fair value through other comprehensive income, the cumulative gain or loss previously accumulated in the investments revaluation reserve is not reclassified to profit or loss, but is transferred to retained earnings.

Impairment

The Commission recognises a loss allowance for expected credit losses on financial assets that are measured at amortised cost or fair value through other comprehensive income.

Loss allowance is not recognised for financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss.

Loss allowance is not recognised for:

- financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss; or
- equity instruments measured at fair value through other comprehensive income.

Expected credit losses are the probability weighted estimate of credit losses over the expected life of a financial instrument. A credit loss is the difference between all contractual cash flows that are due and all cash flows expected to be received, all discounted at the original effective interest rate of the financial instrument.

The Commission uses the following approaches to impairment, as applicable under AASB 9:

- the general approach;
- the simplified approach;
- the purchased or originated credit impaired approach; and
- low credit risk operational simplification

General approach

Under the general approach, at each reporting period, the Commission assesses whether the financial instruments are credit impaired, and if:

- the credit risk of the financial instrument has increased significantly since initial recognition, the Commission measures the loss allowance of the financial instruments at an amount equal to the lifetime expected credit losses; and
- there has been no significant increase in credit risk since initial recognition, the Commission measures the loss allowance for that financial instrument at an amount equal to 12-month expected credit losses.

Simplified approach

The simplified approach does not require tracking of changes in credit risk in every reporting period, but instead requires the recognition of lifetime expected credit loss at all times. This approach is applicable to the Commission's trade receivables.

In measuring the expected credit loss a provision matrix for trade receivables has been used, taking into consideration various data to get to an expected credit loss (i.e. diversity of its customer base, appropriate groupings of its historical loss experience, etc).

Purchased or originated credit impaired approach

For a financial asset that is considered to be credit-impaired (not on acquisition or originations), the Commission measures any change in its lifetime expected credit loss as the difference between the asset's gross carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows discounted at the financial asset's original effective interest rate. Any adjustment has been recognised in profit or loss as an impairment gain or loss.

Evidence of credit impairment includes:

- significant financial difficulty of the issuer or borrower;
- a breach of contract (eg default or past due event);
- where a lender has granted to the borrower a concession, due to the borrower's financial difficulty, that the lender would not otherwise consider;
- it is probable that the borrower will enter bankruptcy or other financial reorganisation; and
- the disappearance of an active market for the financial asset because of financial difficulties.

Low credit risk operational simplification approach

If a financial asset is determined to have low credit risk at the initial reporting date, the Commission assumes that the credit risk has not increased significantly since initial recognition and accordingly the Commission can continue to recognise a loss allowance of 12-month expected credit loss.

In order to make such determination that the financial asset has low credit risk, the Commission applies its internal credit risk ratings or other methodologies using a globally comparable definition of low credit risk.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

1. Summary Of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

A financial asset is considered to have low credit risk if:

- there is a low risk of default by the borrower;
- the borrower has strong capacity to meet its contractual cash flow obligations in the near term; and
- adverse changes in economic and business conditions in the longer term, may, but not necessarily, reduce the ability of the borrower to fulfil its contractual cash flow obligations.

A financial asset is not considered to carry low credit risk merely due to existence of collateral, or because a borrower has a lower risk of default than the risk inherent in the financial assets, or relative to the credit risk of the jurisdiction in which it operates.

Recognition of expected credit losses in financial statements

At each reporting date, the Commission recognises the movement in the loss allowance as an impairment gain or loss in the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income.

The carrying amount of financial assets measured at amortised cost includes the loss allowance relating to that asset.

Assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income are recognised at fair value with changes in fair value recognised in other comprehensive income. An amount in relation to change in credit risk is transferred from other comprehensive income to profit or loss at every reporting period.

For financial assets that are unrecognised (eg loan commitments yet to be drawn, financial guarantees), a provision for loss allowance is created in the statement of financial position to recognise the loss allowance.

i) Impairment of non-financial assets

At the end of each reporting period, the Commission reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying amount. Any excess of the asset's carrying amount over its recoverable amount is recognised in profit or loss.

Where the assets are not held primarily for their ability to generate net cash inflows – that is, they are specialised assets held for continuing use of their service capacity – the recoverable amounts are expected to be materially the same as fair value.

Where it is not possible to estimate the recoverable amount of an individual asset, the Commission estimates the recoverable amount of the cash-generating unit to which the asset belongs.

Where the future economic benefits of the asset are not primarily dependent upon the asset's ability to generate net cash inflows and when the Commission would, if deprived of the asset, replace its remaining future economic benefits, value in use is determined as the depreciated replacement cost of an asset.

When an impairment loss on a revalued individual asset is identified, this is recognised against the revaluation surplus in respect of the same class of asset to the effect that the impairment loss does not exceed the amount in the revaluation surplus for that class of asset.

j) Contract liabilities

Contract liabilities represent the Commission's obligation to transfer goods or services to a customer and are recognised when a customer pays consideration, or when the Commission recognises a receivable to reflect its unconditional right to consideration (whichever is earlier) before the Commission has transferred the goods or services to the customer.

k) Lease liability

At the commencement date of the lease where the Commission is the lessee, the Commission recognises lease liabilities measured at the present value of lease payments to be made over the lease term. Lease payments may include fixed payments (including in substance fixed payments) less any lease incentives receivable and payments of penalties for terminating the lease, if the lease term reflects the entity exercising the option to terminate.

The lease payments are discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease. If that rate cannot be readily determined, which is generally the case for the Commission's leases, the Northern Territory Treasury Commission's institutional bond rate is used as the incremental borrowing rate.

After the commencement date, the amount of lease liabilities is increased to reflect the accretion of interest and reduced for the lease payments made. In addition, the carrying amount of lease liabilities is remeasured if there is a modification, a change in the lease term, a change in the lease payments (such as changes to future payments resulting from a change in an index or rate used to determine such lease payments) or a change in the assessment of an option to purchase the underlying asset.

l) Employee benefits

Provision is made for employee benefits accumulated as a result of employees rendering services up to the reporting date. These benefits include wages and salaries and recreation leave. Liabilities arising in respect of wages and salaries, recreation leave and other employee benefit liabilities that fall due within twelve months of reporting date are classified as current liabilities and are measured at amounts expected to be paid. Non current employee benefit liabilities that fall due after twelve months of the reporting date are measured at present value, calculated using the Northern Territory Government long term bond rate.

No provision is made for sick leave, which is non vesting, as the anticipated pattern of future sick leave to be taken is less than the entitlement accruing in each reporting period.

Employee benefit expenses are recognised on a net basis in respect of the following categories:

- wages and salaries, non monetary benefits recreation leave and other leave entitlements and
- other types of employee benefits.

Provision 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 anticipated future wage and salary levels, related on costs, experience of employee departures, and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using the Northern Territory Government long term bond rate.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

1. Summary Of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

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 to a non government employee nominated schemes for those employees commencing on or after 10 August 1999.

The Commission makes superannuation contributions on behalf of its employees to the Central Holding Authority or non government employee nominated schemes. Superannuation liabilities related to government superannuation schemes are held by the Central Holding Authority and as such are not recognised in the Commission's financial statements.

n) Economic dependence

The Commission is dependent on Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments for the majority of its revenue used to meet proposed 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.

o) Comparatives

Where necessary, comparatives have been reclassified and repositioned for consistency with current year disclosures.

p) Presentation and rounding of amounts

Amounts in the financial statements and notes to the financial statements are presented in Australian dollars and have been rounded to the nearest dollar, with amounts of $0.50 or less being rounded down to zero. Figures in the financial statements and notes may not equate due to rounding.

q) Impact of COVID 19

The Commission continues to review its internal documents, processes and procedures, which were developed as part of the COVID 19 response in 2019/20 financial year, and the Commission continues to be guided by.

1. Advice by the Australian and Territory Governments and their respective health departments
2. Staff and client safety is paramount
3. Changes due to COVID 19 are temporary, unprecedented and rapidly evolving.

Financial

- Additional short term funding was provided by the Australian Government to cover an increase in service delivery related to COVID 19 to support clients.
- As the Commission receives 96% of revenue from the Northern Territory and Australian Government by way of grants, there has been no indication that there will be any reduction of those revenue streams due to COVID 19.
- There has been no impairment on the Commission's assets due to COVID 19.

2. Result of the Year

		2021	2020
Revenue		$	$
Grant revenue from	- NT	7,255,500	7,148,125
	- Commonwealth	6,934,320	6,582,320
	- Others	3,594,889	2,569,742
Services revenue	- Client contributions	124,668	94,014
	- Recovered costs	70,381	222,759
Other revenue	- Interest	25,095	79,821
	- Others	47,146	53,945
Total revenue		18,051,999	16,750,726

Expenses		$	$
Employee expenses		10,845,512	10,674,060
Legal expenses		2,806,817	2,215,672
Administration expense			
	Purchases of goods and services	1,333,558	972,718
	Depreciation expenses	127,947	111,274
	Lease amortisation	1,015,418	999,183
Other administrative expenses			
	Minor assets	250,503	553,801
	Repairs and maintenance	341,119	473,858
	Operating lease expenses	63,901	73,173
Grant expenses		224,228	202,571
Finance costs		161,538	177,961
Total expense		17,170,541	16,454,271

3. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	$	$
Cash on hand	1,450	1,450
Cash at bank	5,090,761	3,405,585
Advance account	8,146	5,000
	5,100,357	3,412,035

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

4. Receivables

	2021	2020
	$	$
Trade receivables	-	-
Less loss allowance	-	-
	-	-
Recoveries Receivable	89,213	82,218
Less loss allowance	(25)	(3,224)
	89,188	78,994
GST Receivable	10,654,596	150,342
Total current trade and other receivables	189,509	229,336

Impairment of receivables

The Commission applies the simplified approach to providing for expected credit losses prescribed by AASB 9, which permits the use of the lifetime expected loss provision for all trade receivables. To measure the expected credit losses, trade receivables have been grouped based on shared credit risk characteristics and the days past due. The loss allowance provision as at 30 June 2021 is determined as follows, the expected credit losses incorporate forward looking information.

	Current	< 90 days overdue	> 90 days overdue	Total
30 June 2021				
Expected loss rate (%)	-	-	0.05	
Gross carrying amount ($)	137,902	-%	51,632	189,534
ECL provision	-	-	25	25
30 June 2020				
Expected loss rate (%)	-	-	6.29	
Gross carrying amount ($)	150,342	30,952	51,266	232,560
ECL provision	-	-	3,224	3,224

5. Investments

Term Deposits	-	500,000

6. Other Assests

Prepayments

	Insurances	137,948	118,859
	Rent	84,796	84,796
	Salaries	9,149	-
	Other	147,749	102,020
Accrued interest		-	3,080
		379,642	308,755

7. Property, plant and equipment

	2021	2020
	$	$
LAND AND BUILDINGS		
Freehold land at fair value	420,000	420,000
Total Land	420,000	420,000
Buildings at fair value	671,743	671,743
Accumulated depreciation	(322,420)	(235,084)
Total buildings	349,323	436,659
Total land and buildings	769,323	856,659
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT		
Plant and equipment at cost	443,961	464,413
Accumulated depreciation	(315,547)	(296,998)
Total plant and equipment	128,414	167,415
Leasehold Improvements at cost	1,055,368	1,043,791
Accumulated amortisation	(1,045,380)	(1,043,769)
Total leasehold improvements	9,988	22
Total plant and equipment	138,402	167,437
RIGHT-OF-USE ASSETS		
Right-of-Use-Buildings	9,051,143	9,051,143
Accumulated depreciation	(1,864,779)	(926,934)
Total Right-of-Use-Buildings	7,186,364	8,124,209
Right-of-Use-Motor Vehicles	260,826	206,963
Accumulated depreciation	(149,824)	(72,248)
Total Right-of-Use-Motor Vehicles	111,002	134,715
Total right-of-use assets	7,297,366	8,258,924
Total property, plant and equipment	8,205,091	9,283,020

The fair values of freehold land and buildings have been determined by reference to direct valuations, based upon independent valuations obtained from the Integrated Valuation Services dated 10 May 2017.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

7. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

(a) Movements in carrying amounts of property, plant and equipment
Movement in the carrying amounts for each class of property, plant and equipment between the beginning and the end of the current financial year:

	Land $	Buildings $	Plant and Equipment $	Leasehold Improvements $	Right of Use Buildings $	Right of Use Motor Vehicles $	Total $
Year ended 30 June 2021							
Balance at the beginning of year	420,000	436,659	167,415	22	8,124,209	134,715	9,283,020
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	53,862	53,862
Transfers	-	-	-	11,577	-	-	11,577
Amortisation of ROU assets	-	-	-	-	(937,845)	(77,575)	(1,015,420)
Depreciation expense	-	(87,336)	(39,000)	(1,611)	-	-	(127,947)
Reclassification	-	-	(1)	-	-	-	(1)
Balance at the end of the year	**420,000**	**349,323**	**128,414**	**9,988**	**7,186,364**	**111,002**	**8,205,091**
Year ended 30 June 2020							
Balance at the beginning of year	420,000	523,995	111,489	22	-	-	1,055,506
Recognition of right of use assets on adoption of AASB 16	-	-	-	-	8,723,841	206,963	8,930,804
Additions	-	-	79,864	-	327,302	-	407,166
Amortisation of ROU assets	-	-	-	-	(926,934)	(72,248)	(999,182)
Depreciation expense	-	(87,336)	(23,935)	-	-	-	(111,271)
Reclassification	-	-	(3)	-	-	-	(3)
Balance at the end of the year	**420,000**	**436,659**	**167,415**	**22**	**8,124,209**	**134,715**	**9,283,020**

(b) Right of use buildings and motor vehicles

The following amounts were recognised in the statement of comprehensive income for the year in respect of leases where the Commission is the lessee:

	2021	2020
	$	$
Amortisation expense of right of use assets	1,015,418	999,183
Interest expense on lease liabilities	161,539	177,961
Expense relating to short term leases	-	14,634
Expense relating to leases of low value assets	59,611	58,539
Total amount recognised in the comprehensive operating statement	1,236,568	1,250,317

8. Payables

CURRENT		
Trade payables	13,044	2,846
Accrued expense	551,733	368,458
Other payables	40,116	139,603
	604,893	510,907

9. Leases

CURRENT	897,368	892,399
NON CURRENT	6,642,912	7,496,196
Total	7,540,280	8,388,595
Lease liability movement		
Opening balance	8,388,595	8,930,805
Additions	53,862	327,302
Interest expense	161,539	177,961
Payments	(1,063,715)	(1,047,473)
Closing balance	7,540,281	8,388,595

Future minimum lease payments under non cancellable leases not recorded as liabilities are as follows:

Within one year	39,891	43,458
Later than one year and not later than five years	119,672	36,215
Later than five years	-	-
Total	159,563	79,673

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

10. Unearned Contract Revenue

Unearned contract revenue	524,099	441,203

Unearned contract revenue relates to grant revenue which has been prepaid for service that will be provided in FY 2021-22.

Of the amount included in the unearned contract revenue balance as at 1 July 2020, $441,203 has been recognised as revenue in 2020-21.

11. Provisions

	2021	2020
	$	$
CURRENT		
Annual leave	823,994	833,503
Long service leave	768,697	742,615
Leave loading	153,783	154,571
Fringe benefits tax	45,277	45,279
Super contribution and others	104,450	81,404
Total current provisions	1,896,201	1,857,372
NON CURRENT		
Long service leave	250,015	357,417
Total non current provisions	250,015	357,417

12. 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 2021 total superannuation expended amounted to $958,083 (30 June 2020 $923,953).

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.

13. 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 2021 the trust account had a $Nil balance (2020-$Nil).

14. Expenditure Commitments

	2021	2020
	$	$
Grants in aid	1,353,586	828,199
Total expenditure commitments	1,353,586	828,199

15. Cash Flow Information

Reconciliation of net income to net cash provided by operating activities:

	$	$
Surplus for the year	881,458	296,455
Cash flows excluded from profit attributable to operating activities		
Non cash flows in profit:		
- depreciation and amortisation	1,143,367	1,110,454
- loss on disposal of assets/assets donated	2	81,404
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
- increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	39,827	(28,759)
- (increase)/decrease in other assets	(70,887)	(37,055)
- increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	176,882	504,519
- increase/(decrease) in provisions	(68,573)	291,838
Cash flows from operations	2,102,076	2,137,455

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

16. Unearned Contract Revenue

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 fund are as follows:

	2021	2020
	$	$
Opening balance	1,078,525	999,624
Interest earned	9,568	18,334
Client contributions received		
Costs recovered	14,764	106,813
	24,332	81,404
Disbursements:		
Legal costs	(42,412)	(28,759)
Bank charges	(4)	
	(42,416)	
Adjustments:		
Add: Unpresented cheques	-	-
Less: Interest earned & reinvested last year	-	-
Cash balance at year end	1,060,441	1,078,525
Less: Clients/grants approved but not paid at year end	(273,834)	(209,415)
Net funds available	786,607	869,110

17. Reserves

	2021	2020
	$	$
Property, Plant & Equipment Reserve	257,789	399,980
Asset Revaluation	658,087	658,087
Commonwealth Reserves	1,525,688	461,347
Total	2,441,564	1,519,414
Movements in reserves:		
Property, plant & equipment reserve (funded)		
Opening balance	399,980	723,730
Transfer from (redistribution to) retained earnings	(142,191)	(323,750)
Closing balance	257,789	399,980
Asset revaluation reserve		
Opening balance	658,087	658,087
Revaluation increments on revaluation of:		
- Freehold land	-	-
- Buildings on freehold land	-	-
Closing balance	658,087	658,087
Commonwealth reserve		
Opening balance	461,347	327,536
Transfer from (redistribution to) retained earnings	1,064,341	133,811
Closing balance	1,525,688	461,347
Total	2,441,564	1,519,414

18. Retained Earnings

Retained earnings, at beginning of year	658,239	231,726
Adjustments on adoption of AASB 15 and AASB 1058	-	(59,880)
Retained earnings, at beginning of year as restated	658,239	171,846
Net surplus / (deficit)	881,458	296,455
Transfers from/(to) reserves	(922,150)	189,938
Retained earnings at end of the financial year	617,547	658,239

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

19. Financial Risk Management

The Commission's financial instruments consist mainly of cash and short term monetary investments, receivables and payables. The totals for each category of financial instruments, measured in accordance with AASB 9: Financial Instruments as detailed in the accounting policies to these financial statements, are as follows:

	2021	2020
	$	$
Financial assets		
Cash and cash equivalents - at amortised cost	5,100,357	3,412,035
Trade and other receivables - at amortised cost	89,188	78,994
Term deposits	-	500,000
Total financial assets	5,189,545	3,991,029
Financial liabilities		
Trade payables and accruals - at amortised cost	604,893	510,907
Total financial liabilities	604,893	510,907

Due to the nature of operating activities, certain financial assets and financial liabilities arise under statutory obligations rather than a contract. Such financial assets and liabilities do not meet the definition of financial instruments as per AASB 132 Financial instruments: Presentation are excluded above. These financial assets and liabilities include GST amounts receivable from and payable to the Australian Taxation Office.

Financial Risk Management Policies

The Board is responsible for monitoring and managing the Commission's compliance with its risk management strategy. The Board's overall risk management strategy is to assist the Commission in meeting its financial targets while minimising potential adverse effects on financial performance. Risk management policies are approved and reviewed by the Board.

Specific Financial Risk Exposures and Management

The main risks the Commission is exposed through its financial instruments are credit risk, liquidity risk and market risk relating to interest rate risk and other price risk.

There have been no substantive changes in the types of risks the Commission is exposed to, how these risks arise, or the Commission's objectives, policies and processes for managing or measuring the risks from the previous period.

Credit Risk

Exposure to credit risk relating to financial assets arises from the potential non performance by counterparties of contract obligations that could lead to a financial loss for the Commission. The Commission does not have any material credit risk exposures as its major source of revenue is the receipt of grants.

The maximum exposure to credit risk by class of recognised financial assets at the end of the reporting period is equivalent to the carrying value and classification of those financial assets (net of any provisions) as presented in the statement of financial position.

Receivables that are neither past due nor impaired are considered to be of high credit quality. Aggregates of such amounts are detailed at Note 4.

The Commission has no significant concentrations of credit risk exposure to any single counterparty or entity of counterparties. Details with respect to credit risk of receivables are provided in Note 4.

Liquidity Risk

Liquidity risk arises from the possibility that the Commission might encounter difficulty in settling its debts or otherwise meeting its obligations in relation to financial liabilities. The Commission manages this risk through the following mechanisms:

- preparing forward-looking cash flow analyses in relation to its operating, investing and financing activities;
- maintaining a reputable credit profile;
- managing credit risk related to financial assets;
- only investing surplus cash with major financial institutions; and
- comparing the maturity profile of financial liabilities with the realisation profile of financial assets.

The table below reflects an undiscounted contractual maturity analysis for financial liabilities.

Cash flows realised from financial assets reflect management's expectation as to the timing of realisation. Actual timing may therefore differ from that disclosed. The timing of cash flows presented in the table to settle financial liabilities reflects the earliest contractual settlement dates.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

19. Financial Instruments (continued)

Financial liability and financial asset maturity analysis

	Within 1 year		1 to 5 years		Over 5 years		Total	
	2021 $	2020 $	2021 $	2020 $	2021 $	2020 $	2021 $	2020 $
Financial liabilities due for payment								
Trade and other payables (excluding estimated annual leave and net GST payable)	604,893	510,907	-	-	-	-	604,893	510,907
TOTAL EXPECTED OUTFLOWS	604,893	510,907	-	-	-	-	604,893	510,907
Financial assets – cash flows realisable								
Cash and cash equivalents	5,100,357	3,412,035	-	-	-	-	5,100,357	3,412,035
Trade receivables (net)	89,188	78,994	-	-	-	-	89,188	78,994
Term deposits	-	500,000	-	-	-	-	-	500,000
TOTAL ANTICIPATED INFLOWS	5,189,545	3,991,029	-	-	-	-	5,189,545	3,991,029
Net (outflow)/inflow expected on financial instruments	4,584,652	3,480,122	-	-	-	-	4,584,652	3,480,122

Interest Rate Risk

Exposure to interest rate risk arises on financial assets and financial liabilities recognised at the end of the reporting period whereby a future change in interest rates will affect future cash flows or the fair value of fixed date financial instruments. The financial instruments that expose the Commission to interest rate risk are limited to cash and cash equivalents, and term deposits.

	Weighted Average Effective Interest Rate		Interest Bearing		Non interest Bearing		Total	
	2021 %	2020 %	2021 $	2020 $	2021 $	2020 $	2021 $	2020 $
Financial assets								
Cash and cash equivalents	0.15	0.67	5,100,357	3,412,035	-	-	5,100,357	3,412,035
Short term deposits	0	1.57	-	500,000	-	-	-	500,000
Receivables	-	-	-	-	89,188	78,994	89,188	78,994
TOTAL FINANCIAL ASSETS			5,100,357	3,912,035	3,991,029	2,798,248	5,189,545	3,991,029
Financial liabilities								
Accounts payable and accruals	-	-	604,893	510,907	-	510,907	604,893	1,021,814
TOTAL FINANCIAL LIABILITIES			604,893	510,907	-	510,907	604,893	1,021,814

Interest Rate Risk Sensitivity Analysis

The following table illustrates sensitivities to the Commission's exposures to changes in interest rates. The table indicates the impact on how profit or loss and equity reported at the end of the reporting period would have been affected by changes in the relevant risk variable that management considers to be reasonably possible.

These sensitivities assume that the movement in a particular variable is independent of other variables.

	2021		2020	
	+1.00% $	-1.00% $	+1.00% $	-1.00% $
Cash and cash equivalents	51,003	(51,003)	34,120	(34,120)
Term deposits	-	-	5,000	(5,000)
	51,003	(51,003)	39,120	(39,120)

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

20. Fair Value Measurement

The Commission measures and recognises the following assets at fair value on a recurring basis after initial recognition:

- financial assets at fair value through profit or loss;
- financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income; and
- freehold land and buildings.

The Commission does not subsequently measure any liabilities at fair value on a recurring basis, or any assets or liabilities at fair value on a non-recurring basis.

Fair value hierarchy

AASB 13 *Fair Value Measurement* requires all assets and liabilities measured at fair value to be assigned to a level in the fair value hierarchy as follows:

Level 1 – Unadjusted quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the entity can access at the measurement date.

Level 2 – Inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly.

Level 3 – Unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

The fair values of assets and liabilities that are not traded in an active market are determined using one or more valuation techniques. These valuation techniques maximise, to the extent possible, the use of observable market data. If all significant inputs required to measure fair value are observable, the asset or liability is included in Level 2. If one or more significant inputs are not based on observable market data, the asset or liability is included in Level 3.

The following tables provide the fair values of the Commission's non financial assets at fair value in the financial position categorised by levels of inputs used to compute fair value.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Total
	$	$	$	$
30 June 2021				
Recurring fair value measurements				
Land	-	420,000	-	420,000
Buildings	-	349,323	-	349,323
Plant and Equipment	-	-	128,414	128,414
Leasehold Improvements	-	-	9,988	9,988
Right of use buildings and motor vehicles	-	-	7,297,366	7,297,366
30 June 2020				
Recurring fair value measurements				
Land	-	420,000	-	420,000
Buildings	-	436,659	-	436,659
Plant and Equipment	-	-	167,415	167,415
Leasehold Improvements	-	-	22	
Right of use buildings and motor vehicles	-	-	8,258,923	8,258,923

Valuation techniques

The Commission selects a valuation technique that is appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available to measure fair value. The availability of sufficient and relevant data primarily depends on the specific characteristics of the asset or liability being measured. The valuation techniques selected by the Commission are consistent with one or more of the following valuation approaches:

- Market approach uses prices and other relevant information generated by market transactions for identical or similar assets or liabilities.
- Income approach converts estimated future cash flows or income and expenses into a single discounted present value.
- Cost approach reflects the current replacement cost of an asset at its current service capacity.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

20. Fair Value Measurements (continued)

Each valuation technique requires inputs that reflect the assumptions that buyers and sellers would use when pricing the asset or liability, including assumptions about risks. When selecting a valuation technique, the Commission gives priority to those techniques that maximise the use of observable inputs and minimise the use of unobservable inputs. Inputs that are developed using market data (such as publicly available information on actual transactions) and reflect the assumptions that buyers and sellers would generally use when pricing the asset or liability are considered observable, whereas inputs for which market data is not available and therefore are developed using the best information available about such assumptions are considered unobservable.

Valuation techniques used to measure fair value areas follows

	Fair value at 30 June 2021	Fair value at 30 June 2020	Valuation technique(s)	Inputs used
Description	$	$		
Freehold land	420,000	420,000	Market approach using recent observable market data for similar properties	- Price per square metre; market borrowing rate
Buildings	349,323	436,659	Capitalisation on an assumed income based on comparative properties	- Price per square metre; market borrowing rate
Plant and equipment	128,414	167,415	Depreciated replacement cost	- Market buying / selling price - Useful lives of 5 years - Replacement cost based on comparable price of modern equivalents
Leasehold improvements	9,988	22	Depreciated replacement cost	- Useful lives of 2 to 6 years - Replacement cost based on comparable price of modern equivalents
Right of use buildings and motor vehicles	7,297,366	8,258,923	Depreciated replacement cost	- Market leasing price - Useful lives of 5 to 10 years

The fair value of the Commission's owner occupied property as at 30 June 2021 has been determined and approved by the Board on the basis of an independent valuation obtained from Integrated Valuation Services dated 10 May 2017.

Such valuations are performed on an open market, being the amounts for which the assets could be exchanged between a knowledgeable willing buyer and a knowledgeable willing seller in an arm's length transaction at the valuation date. The Commission engages an independent valuer to undertake a valuation of the property at least every five 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.

21. Auditors' Remuneration

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

	2021	2020
	$	$
Remuneration of the Auditor General for the Northern Territory, for:		
- auditing or reviewing the financial statements	17,000	24,999
	17,000	24,999

22. Related Parties

The following disclosures are for the Commission's key management personnel.

Governing Board

Key management personnel of the Commission are those persons having authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of Commission. The Commissioners of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission during the financial year were:

Name	Position	From	To
Duncan McConnel	Chairperson	28/10/2019	Current
Suzan Cox QC	Commissioner ex officio	ex officio	Current
Samantha Byrne	Commissioner	01/07/2013	Current
Ali Nur	Commissioner	25/07/2016	Current
Chrissy McConnell	Staff Elected Commissioner	10/05/2017	Current
Tessa Czislowski	Commissioner	09/11/2018	Current
Alecia Brimson	Commissioner	01/11/2019	18/02/2021
Hugh Bond	Commissioner	23/04/2021	Current

(i) Transactions with Commissioners

During the year, grants of aid has been allocated to legal firms, including those in which Commissioners also hold executive positions. All applications for grants of aid are on an arm's length basis and are assessed in accordance with the Commission's Guidelines.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For The Year Ended 30 June 2021

22. Related Parties(continued)

(ii) Remuneration of Commissioners

Transactions for Commissioners who are employees of the Commission are included in the Remuneration of Executives and Senior Management. Transactions, other than remuneration payments and the reimbursement of approved expenses, were paid by the Commission to Commissioners who are non government employees during the reporting year as below:

	2021	2020
	$	$
Details		
Short-term benefits	1,953	4,410
Total	1,953	4,410

Executives and Senior Management

Name	Position
Susan Cox QC	Director
Fiona Hussin	Deputy Director
Barbara Lelli	Corporate Services Manager
Leeanne Morris	Human Resources Manager

The key management personnel held their positions for the entire financial year unless otherwise stated.

(i) Remuneration of Executives and Senior Management

	2021	2020
	$	$
Short-term benefits	1,277,514	1,159,095
Post-employment benefits	-	-
Other long-term benefits	159,028	190,808
Termination benefits	-	-
Total	1,436,542	1,349,903

(ii) Retirement Benefits

No retirement benefits have been made by the Commission to Senior Management during the reporting year.

(iii) Loans to Responsible Persons

No loans have been made, guaranteed or secured by the Commission to Senior Management during the reporting year.

(iv) Other Transactions

Transactions, other than remuneration payments and the reimbursement of approved expenses, were paid by the Commission to Commissioners who are non government employees during the reporting year as below:

Other Related Party Disclosure

The Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission and the Northern Territory Government are related parties. The Commission is a statutory authority of the Northern Territory.

The following table provides quantitative information about related party transactions entered into during the year with all other Northern Territory Government controlled entities.

Northern Territory Government Transactions	2021 $	2020 $
Income	16,131,414	14,861,136
Expenses	536,183	501,822
Receivables	8,602	16,482
Payables	4,549	28,466
Unearned Revenue	132,173	441,202

23. 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.

24. Contingencies

There were no known contingent assets or contingent liabilities of a significant nature at 30 June 2021 (2020 – $nil).

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