Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Annual Report 2021/2022

Northern Territory
Legal Aid Commission

The Hon. Chansey Paech
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Parliament House State Square
DARWIN NT 0800

Dear Attorney-General

I am pleased to introduce our annual report for 2021-2022 and my third as Chair of the NT Legal Aid Commission.

This year we farewelled our Director, Suzan Cox QC OAM, who retired on 12 November 2021 after 19 years of service as Director, and 30 years with NT Legal Aid. We extend our sincere and heartfelt thanks to Suzan for her dedication and contribution to the Commission and the legal profession.

We congratulate Annmarie Lumsden on her appointment to the role of Director on 6 December 2021.

Annmarie is a highly accomplished senior leader of a large, complex legal aid organisation with an unparalleled level of experience undertaking a number of senior roles with Legal Aid NSW over 23 years before her appointment as our Director. She has been instrumental in driving reform both within the criminal justice system and more broadly, in the areas of domestic and family violence, family law and child protection, the right to silence and double jeopardy. Ms Annmarie brings substantial experience in issues of indigenous incarceration and justice, including the establishment of an Aboriginal people's sentencing court in the District Court of NSW, the Bugmy Justice Project and work on initiatives to reduce indigenous incarceration, including reviewing the impacts of continuing detention and extended supervision regimes on Aboriginal people.

Earlier this year Annmarie was announced the winner of the prestigious Terry Keaney Award, an award conferred by a committee with representatives from the NSW judiciary, The NSW Bar Association, the Law Society of NSW, ALS (NSW/ACT) and Legal Aid NSW. It is a well-deserved accolade, celebrating her dedication to the profession, excellence as a criminal defence lawyer and commitment to social justice.

This year the NT Legal Aid Commission has continued to implement its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, and through our strategic planning meetings, we have strengthened the Board's understanding of the Commission's activities and built on the relationship between the Board and management. The Board has undertaken an active role in advocating on behalf of the Commission with key stakeholders, particularly in relation to the value of the Commission's work and funding pressures. We are pleased to support the associated strategic goals in pursuance of this plan. As I reported last year, we maintain our strong desire to achieve budget certainty and we continue to seek to secure a five year funding agreement with your Government.

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic has been a continued challenge for us during the year, with impacts across the NT including operations in all of our regional offices and activities. The Commission's Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy continues to be an important aspect of our Strategic Plan, and guides and assists us in creating a positive workplace environment which will enhance morale, productivity and retention. This was also supported by the Commission's COVID Safety Plan. We will continue to focus on Employee Wellbeing and the Strategy will be reviewed in light of the impacts of the pandemic on workforce needs.

While we continue to implement operational strategic goals, such as our Information Technology and Communications strategy, we also continue to grow organisationally to ensure that our services are of a high quality, accessible and appropriately targeted. This year, we:

- completed the Domestic Violence Legal Service Strategic Plan for 2021-2025
- completed our 'Reflect' Reconciliation Action Plan
- completed a project to develop a Domestic and Family Violence Framework to ensure that our services are safe, effective and appropriate to people experiencing domestic and family violence
- continued our existing partnerships and joint projects with the legal and non-legal services and entered into new partnerships.

We acknowledge the strong relationship and vital and ongoing support from the Attorneys-General in the important work of the Commission. Without your support, our work would not be possible.

I thank the members of our Board for their contributions in providing strategic guidance for NT Legal Aid. I acknowledge and thank the many volunteer members who have served on Legal Aid Review Committees, and the members of the private legal profession who undertake legal aid work and support NT Legal Aid to achieve its purpose.

Yours sincerely
Duncan McConnel SC
Chairman

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Director's Report

It is now 6 months since I commenced in the role of Director of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission (NT Legal Aid). Having spent most of my career as a legal aid lawyer, at Legal Aid ACT and then Legal Aid NSW, it is a role that aligns with my values and my commitment to the value of legal aid commissions in providing access to justice to the most marginalized and vulnerable in our community.

As well as enjoying the role of Director, I love living in Darwin. I have participated in a saltwater welcoming ceremony and received a very warm welcome to country from an elder of the Larrakia people, the traditional owners of the beautiful land and sea of the Darwin region. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

I have also received a very warm welcome from the staff of NT Legal Aid and the members of our Board.

We are fortunate to have certainty of Federal funding under the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement (NLAP) 2020-2025. The NLAP allows us to plan our services in the areas of family law, family dispute resolution, legal task assistance for civil law issues, health justice partnerships, the respondent early assistance legal service, legal advice, information and referral, community legal education and our social support services.

In stark contrast, the primary challenge for NT Legal Aid in 2021-22 has been our deteriorating financial position as it relates to Northern Territory government funded matters: representation in children in need of care and criminal law matters.

For many years NT government funding has been year on year. Core NT funding for children in need of care representation services is woefully inadequate and we are forced to leverage Commonwealth funding for legal task assistance to progress matters for our clients.

For criminal law matters core NT funding has not included adequate funding for services at courts where we do not have an office (colloquially known as Bush Courts) and NT expensive cases, and we have had to rely upon ad hoc arrangements to seek reimbursement. Since 2019 we have provided Bush Court services on an "invoice only" basis, that is, the Department of Attorney General and Justice (the Department) would reimburse NT Legal Aid for all Bush Court expenditure upon submission of an invoice for that activity. Since 2011, NT expensive cases have been reimbursed through a Treasurer's Advance applied for by the Department on our behalf.

Unfortunately, this year both ad hoc arrangements for reimbursement are no longer available. In January 2021 the Department advised that our Bush Court expenditure would be capped at $250,000 and it would not be able to provide further funds. Despite significant advocacy, on 21 March 2022 we had no option but to make the difficult decision to cease granting aid for new matters at Bush Courts.

This withdrawal of funding has created a serious access to justice issue for remote Aboriginal communities in the NT. NT Legal Aid has historically provided Bush Court services when NAAJA is unable to do so because of a conflict of interest. Our inability to provide Bush Court services means that some very vulnerable clients are unrepresented. Almost 100% of people appearing before these courts are First Nations Territorians who are experiencing financial disadvantage and who speak an Aboriginal language as their first language. Involvement in the NT justice system is difficult at any time, but lack of legal representation means that people do not understand the charges they face and do not receive legal advice about whether they should plead guilty or not guilty. People who are unrepresented cannot identify a defence, or conduct a complicated defended hearing, or

understand matters in mitigation which the court should take into account when sentencing an offender. People may be sentenced to imprisonment who might otherwise not be if they had legal representation

Often matters are adjourned until legal representation can be secured. This delays finalisation of proceedings and has contributed to the backlog of unresolved matters, exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. Delay compounds victim trauma. Our inability to provide Bush Court services has also marred NT Legal Aid's reputation with stakeholders, including the Courts, NAAJA, clients, our own employees and the public.

In addition, at the end of the financial year the Department advised that their application for a Treasurer's Advance on our behalf was not approved. The inadequacy of NT Legal Aid's budget to pay for NT expensive cases as well as the tightening criteria for a Treasurer's Advance has been the subject of discussion with the Department and successive Attorneys-General for many years, but this is the first year that we have been unsuccessful.

The removal of mechanisms for reimbursement of expenditure for both Bush Courts and NT expensive cases means we will go into the new financial year 2022-23 with a significant overspend to carry forward.

On top of this, and notwithstanding that our expenses continue to grow in real terms, the appropriation for core NT Legal Aid grant funding from the NT government for 2022-23 is $757,000 less than the core funding we received last year.

NT Legal Aid is now in the unenviable position of having to consider service cuts to achieve the necessary savings.

NT Legal Aid has been lobbying for a 5 year funding agreement with the NT government for a number of years. The inability for us to seek reimbursement for what should be core services through previously available ad hoc mechanisms makes the need for a long term funding arrangement even greater. Certainty and stability of ongoing funding would allow us to plan and prioritise NT law services and to manage our budgets for those services in the same way we do for services under the Federal NLAP.

We are hopeful that we will make progress next year in securing a long term funding agreement based on a proper assessment of the drivers of demand for NT Legal Aid and appropriate funding levels to meet demand now and into the future.

This year we have made a significant and exciting structural change to the organization, creating the Crime Managing Practitioner role, which is responsible for the crime practice across the Territory. The Darwin Crime Practice Manager as well as the three solicitors in charge of our Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek officers, who lead their crime practices, will report to that role. We will continue to consider and review the organisational structure as opportunities arise.

We have achieved a great deal under the NT Legal Aid Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Under the goal of service delivery, this year we developed and launched our first Reconciliation Action Plan. Our RAP spans 12 months and will allow us to deepen our understanding of our sphere of influence and the unique contribution we can make to the dimensions of reconciliation - race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance.

Reconciliation Action Plan Launch Tennant Creek

Director's Report (continued)

In addition, we developed a DV Safer Effective Pathways Framework to ensure that our services are responsive to the needs of clients experiencing family violence. We have entered into an agreement with CatholicCare NT to deliver our 'dedicated men's support worker' services through Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) in Darwin, similar to our arrangement with Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs. We evaluated the Social Support Worker Service and have decided to create a Senior Social Support role to lead and review the social support practice. Each of these initiatives are funded through NLAP funding provided by the Commonwealth government.

It is now two years since the second Access to Justice in the Barkly Report, which provides a roadmap for how NT Legal Aid, in partnership with other legal service providers, can respond to barriers to accessing justice and how best to address gaps in legal service delivery, despite scarce resources. I am very pleased to say that funding has now been secured for a project officer, which was desperately required to progress the actions under the implementation plan.

This year we have taken steps to enhance data collection, analysis and reporting. This was necessary because the National Legal Assistance Data Strategy expanded NLAP reporting requirements, and tackled this on a number of fronts from system enhancements, to reviewing processes and procedures for data collection. We created a new role to review our data input systems and make modifications where desirable and possible, and to assist us to create more meaningful operational reports. This role is funded with NLAP funding provided by the Commonwealth government.

Data is essential for us to be able to demonstrate the value of what we do. We need to be able to demonstrate the volume of quality services we provide to our vulnerable clients as well as our contribution to the efficient and effective administration of justice.

Enhanced data collection, analysis and reporting will enable us to evaluate program activities more thoroughly. It is also of central importance in building a business case for funding. We need to be able to show increases in demand and the services we provide, and the cost benefit of the services we provide. We need to make sure that the processes and procedures we have in place count our services and, in particular, our grants of legal aid, in a way which is comparative and aligns with the counting methodology of relevant agencies or institutions, from other Legal Aid Commissions, to NAAJA, the DPP, Territory Families and the Courts.

In line with this, we are also reviewing Grants systems, policies, processes and procedures, including our fee structure. We rely on private practitioners to represent clients who have a grant of legal aid and we appreciate the work they do for rates which are far below those they would be paid in the commercial market. Increasing fees for private practitioners must be a priority to ensure the sustainability of the mixed model of inhouse and private practitioner service delivery.

Generally, the challenges of attracting and retaining staff are greater than they have been before. Our Employee Wellbeing Survey this year highlighted the need for Human Resources (HR) to take a greater role in developing organisational capability and culture. We are developing an organisational HR Strategy to address this. Despite the resource challenges we face, we have created a new HR role which will assist in the implementation of the Strategy, including developing a full suite of HR policies that are transparent and accessible to managers and staff alike. We are also implementing the Staff Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan. The health and wellbeing of our staff is central to a healthy, safe and sustainable work environment and must be given priority.

While we have ensured continuity of service provision, COVID-19 has continued to place a strain on our ability to provide services. It has had a particular impact on our Indigenous Outreach Service and some Bush Court services because, from time to time, remote communities have been reluctant to allow outsiders to go there. In addition, all areas of the organisation have been effected by staff shortages on a rolling basis as a result of contracting COVID-19 or being close contacts. This has placed stress on the workplace.

The increasing incarceration of our First Nations People has continued. Numbers in both the Correctional Centres and Youth Detention Centres are at record highs. Conditions are exacerbated by staff shortages and increasing periods of lockdown. Children are self-harming at a greater rate than previously seen. Our concerns about the failure to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Child Protection and Detention in the NT continue.

NT Legal Aid welcomed the launch of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) in August 2021. This ground breaking agreement seeks to create a safer Territory by reducing crime and addressing the Territory's high rates of indigenous incarceration and reoffending. It is early days but we remain optimistic, noting that it will require dedicated and realistic funding and resourcing as well as ongoing support and commitment by ensuing NT governments to succeed.

Our clients are vulnerable and the most marginalised in our community. They have complex legal issues which intersect with complex social issues. 61% of our clients who receive a grant of aid are First Nations people, many of who suffer from intergenerational trauma. For criminal law grants, this figure is 74%. We deal with a complex legal system. Our work is not always easy, but the work we do for people who can least afford legal assistance is vital for a civil society.

I thank all of our staff in our offices across the NT for their dedication and commitment to our clients and the rule of law. I thank our partners in the legal assistance sector, including the private profession and those who give freely of their time to sit on legal aid review committees.

I thank the Board, especially our Chair, Duncan McConnel, and the NT Legal Aid Executive team for their strategic leadership and support. Special credit is due to Deputy Director, Fiona Hussin who acted as Director for 3 months following the retirement of the Director, Suzan Cox.

It has been a privilege to join and lead NT Legal Aid and I look forward to continuing our rewarding work of providing access to justice for disadvantaged people in the Territory.

Annmarie Lumsden
Director
Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Performance Highlights

The Community we assisted

40%

Received Government Benefits

5%

Lived outside a major city/town

51%

Identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders

8%

Were under the age of 18

4%

Were over the age of 65

15%

Were born overseas

24%

Were serving a sentence of imprisonment

11%

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 NT Legal Aid provided a total of 35,162 services in 2021-22 (33,471 in 2020-21)

7%

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

11%

DUTY LAWYER SERVICE

15%

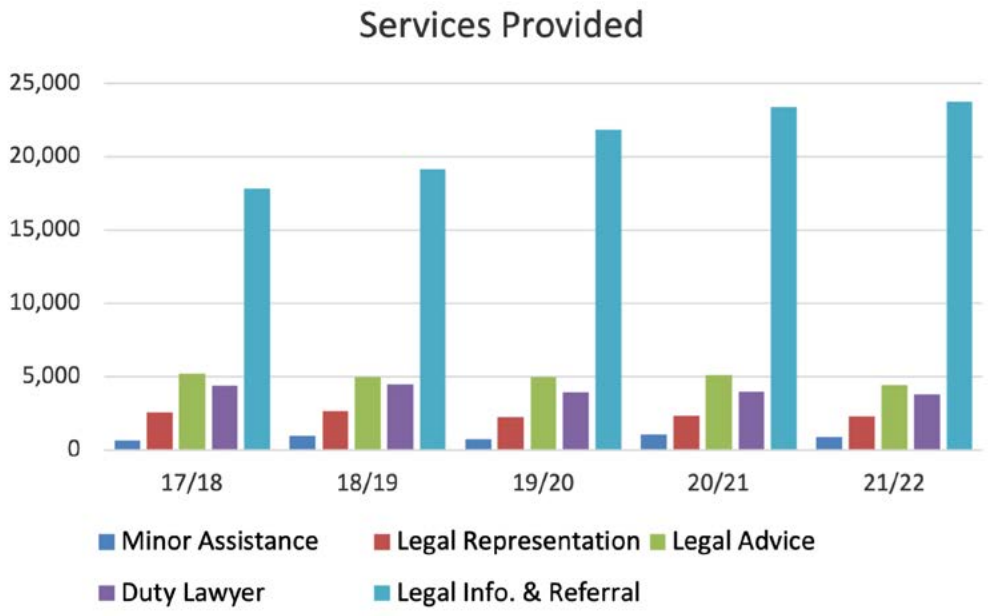
LEGAL ADVICE PROVIDED

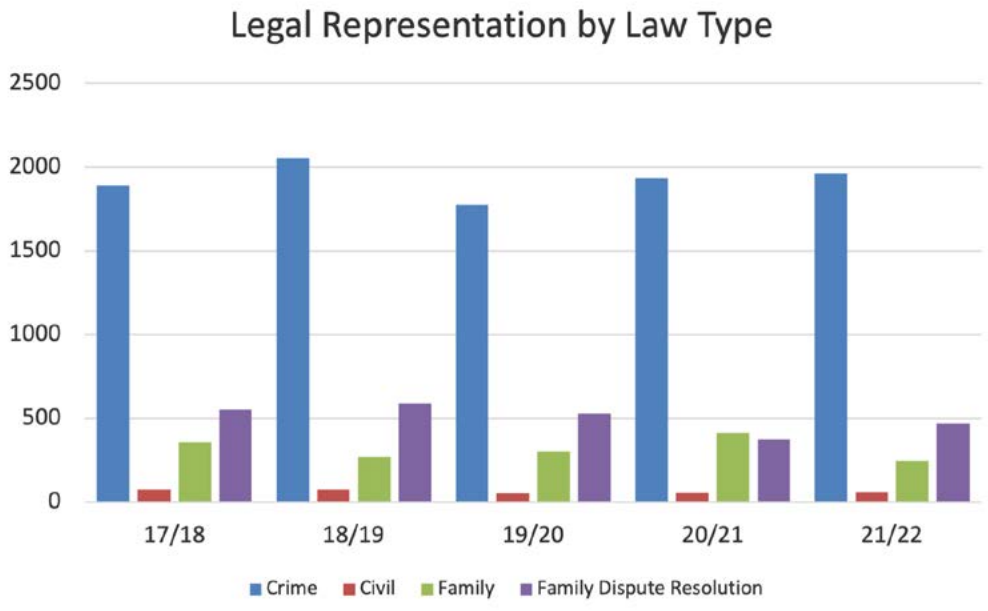
67%

LEGAL INFORMATION & REFERRAL

These percentages represent the distribution of total services provided during 2021-22.

Performance Highlights (continued)

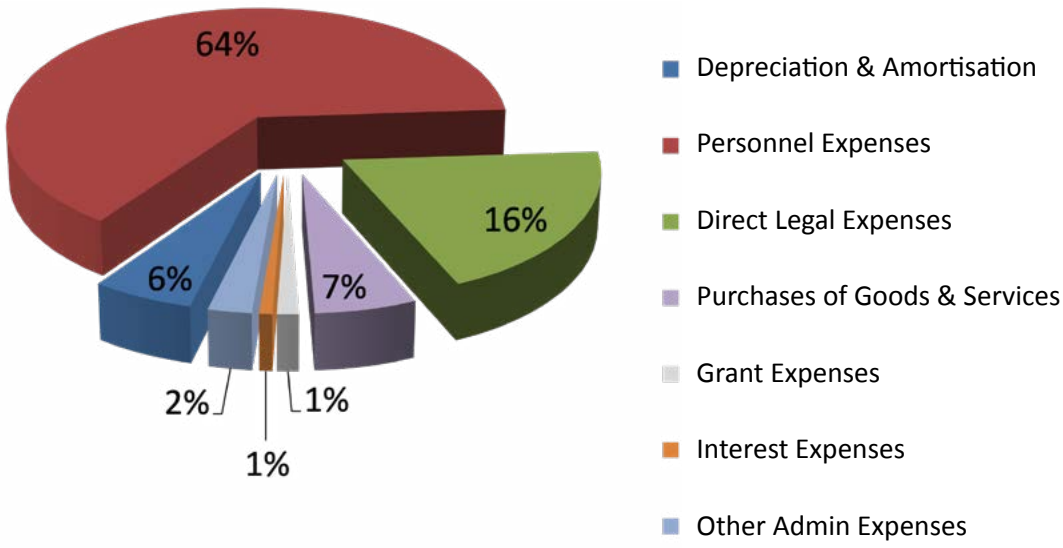




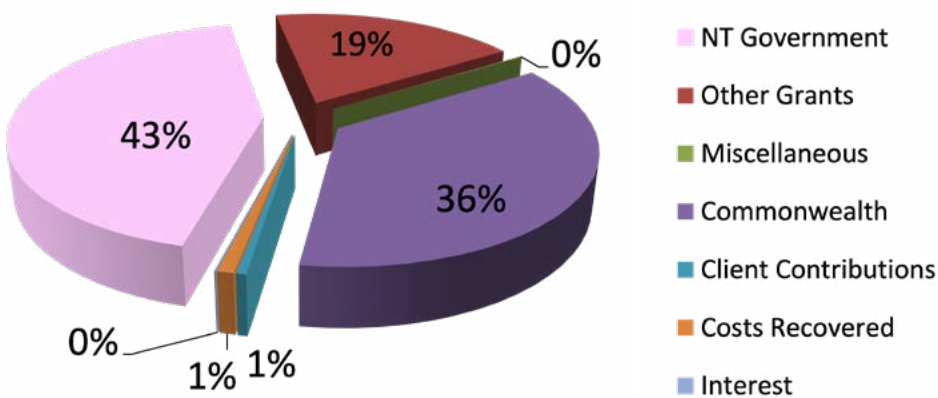
Performance Highlights

Financial Summary

Operating Expenses



Operating Revenue



Snapshot of information and publications 2021-22

21,138

Visits to our website

21,747

Social media users reached by our Facebook posts

55,627

Professionals reached by our Linkedin posts

6,400

Views to our Youtube channel

12,103

Legal publications we handed out

246,319

Legal Information accessed through the Northern Territory Law Handbook website

16,785

Plain language legal information accessed through the LawInfont NT 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 SC

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.

Annmarie Lumsden

Annmarie has been the Director of NT Legal Aid since December 2021. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and Law from the Australian National University and an Executive Masters in Public Administration from the Australian and New Zealand School of Government. She is a Law Society of NSW Accredited Specialist in Criminal Law.

Annmarie has over 30 years post admission experience, mainly as an employee of legal aid commissions in the Act and NSW, but also in private practice and government. She has practiced in civil, family and criminal law, strategic policy and law reform, and as corporate counsel.

Annmarie worked at Legal Aid NSW for over 20 years, holding leadership positions across the organisation including Solicitor Advocate in the Criminal Law Division, and Executive roles including Director Strategic Policy and Planning, Director Family Law, Director Grants and, for the 5 years before coming to the Territory, Director Criminal Law.

Annmarie is a current member of the Council of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration.

The Commissioners (continued)

Samantha Byrne

Samantha joined as a 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

Ali was appointed as a Commissioner in July 2016. 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 as a 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.

Jonathan Parry

Jonathan was appointed as a Commissioner in May 2022 after having been elected by the staff of NT Legal Aid. He joined NT Legal Aid in 2021 as a lawyer in the Grants Section and has also worked at legal aid commissions in Queensland and Victoria. Jonathan has a Bachelor of Laws from Bond University and a Masters of Public and International Law from the University of Melbourne. Jonathan currently serves on the Social Justice Committee of the NT Law Society and is the secretary of a national not-for-profit.

Elizabeth Farquhar

Elizabeth was appointed as a Commissioner in October 2021 as the Attorney-General's nominee. Elizabeth practises in civil and criminal law within the Solicitor for the Northern Territory in the Department of the Attorney-General. Elizabeth was admitted to practise in the Northern Territory in 2006 and holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts from the Northern Territory University and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from the Australian National University. Elizabeth has previously worked as a prosecutor within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Our Staff and Development

Our Employees

As at 30 June 2022 the following persons were employed:

Directorate

Director ..... Annmarie Lumsden
Executive Assistant ..... Bianca Aloisi
Deputy Director ..... Fiona Hussin
Policy Officer ..... Russell Goldflam
Project Coordinator ..... Justine Mickle

Criminal Law Practice

Darwin

Practice Managing Solicitor ..... Jane Irwin
Senior Public Defender ..... Ambrith Abayasekara
Office Managing Solicitor ..... Chrissy McConnel
(On Extended leave)
..... Nicola MacCarron
(On Parental leave)
..... Clement Ng
Solicitors ..... Jacob Henderson
..... Tashi Klose
..... Joshua Bach
..... Eleanor Wallis
..... Lucinda Nadj
..... Christina White
..... Karina Curry-Hyde
Youth Justice Worker ..... Keren Leizerovitz
..... Rebecca Naylor
(On Extended leave)
Social Support Worker ..... Jacqueline MacDonald
Crime Section Supervisor ..... Haley Richardson
Legal Secretary ..... Mark Wright
Administrative Support ..... Christine Salaa
..... Jasmine Htoo

Katherine

Office Managing Solicitor ..... Claire Hockin
Solicitor ..... Kate Bremner
Social Support Worker ..... Tammy Frean
Legal Secretary ..... Cassie Lamb
Administrative Support ..... Terry Dunt

Tennant Creek

Office Managing Solicitorr ..... Kevin Banbury
Administrative Support ..... Melissa Bremner

Alice Springs

Office Managing Solicitor ..... Noah Redmond
Solicitors ..... Brigitte Le Comte
..... Maclaren Wall
..... Brock Budworth
Social Support Worker ..... Position Vacant
Legal Secretary ..... Emma Hohn
..... Sheree Butters
Administrative Support ..... Thao Ta

Our Staff and Development (continued)

Family Law Practice

Darwin

Managing Solicitor ..... Jaquie Palavra
Solicitors ..... Annette Murray
..... Shannon Coetzee
..... James Lowrey
..... Benjamin Fernandez
..... Emma Cook
(On Extended leave)
Family Support Case Worker ... Bethwyn Lovell
(On Extended leave)
..... Hannah Negri
Legal Secretary ..... Sarah Carbone
..... Chloe Stoddart
(On Parental leave)
..... Lauren Creevey
Administrative Support ..... Esmerelda Kleinhanse

Alice Springs

Solicitor ..... Keda Ley

Family Dispute Resolution

Supervising Solicitor ..... Claire Wyatt
Solicitor ..... Aditi Srinivas
Conference Coordinator ..... Emma Schluter
Administrative Support ..... Kanessha Elber

Civil Law Practice

Darwin

Managing Solicitor ..... Alison Hanley
Solicitors ..... Leah Siebert
..... Joanna Laildler
..... Hollie Clark
(On Parental leave)
..... Corinah Batt
(On Parental leave)
..... Amelia Noble
..... Gabrielle Imperial
..... James Cordner
YSDLS Solicitor ..... Amelia Gilroy
REALS Solicitor ..... Candace Gordon
Indigenous Community
Liaison Officer ..... Robert Hale
Legal Secretary ..... Melissa Kingham
..... Taylor Jones
Administrative Support..... Kellie Klonaris
..... Yohanna Lindon
..... Alexandra Habets
(On Parental leave)
..... Courtney Miller

Katherine

HJP Solicitor ..... Harley Dannatt
Administrative Support..... Karen Cooke

Alice Springs

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

Corporate Services

Corporate Services Manager ... Barbara Lelli
Human Resources Manager .... Leeanne Morris
Corporate Support ..... Karen Markos
..... Amanda Bamford
..... Randall Manoharan
..... Jacinta Lacey
IT Systems Engineer ..... Robert Goldsmith
IT Support Officer ..... Billy Tarrillo
..... Rifat Mahmud
Administrative Support..... Sally Hunter
..... Marita Gabel
..... Genie de Vera
..... Kirsten Sharman
(On ParentalLeave)
Data & Reporting Officer..... Alison O'hara

Grants Section

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

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.....Jessica Hill
..... Flora Radecki
..... Position Vacant
Financial Counsellor ..... Serena Staines
Administrative Support..... Melissa Kirstenfeldt

Darwin

Community Legal
Education Team Leader ..... Shelley Alvarez
CLE Educators ..... Sherinald Shwe
(On Parental Leave)
..... Sarah Hult
Administrative Support..... Nunuk Andayani

Domestic Violence Legal Service

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

Our Staff and Development (continued)

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 5 volunteers.

Occupational Health and Safety

In 2021-22 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.

NT Legal Aid has a commitment to work health and safety with no notifiable incidents under the Work and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011

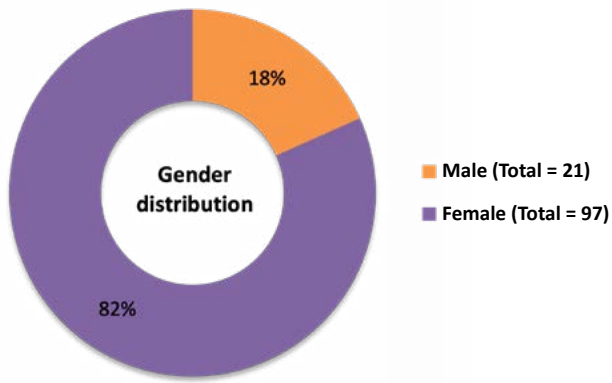
Resignations

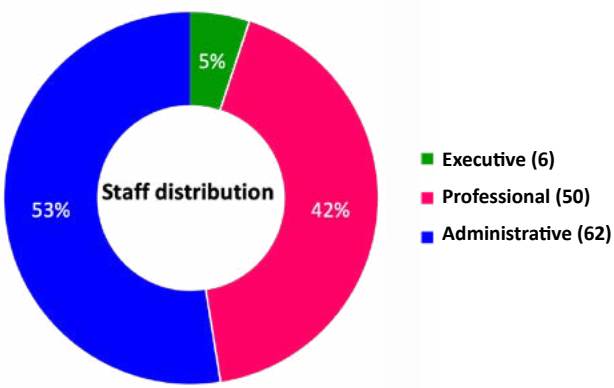
During the year 37 people left NT Legal Aid's employment.

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.

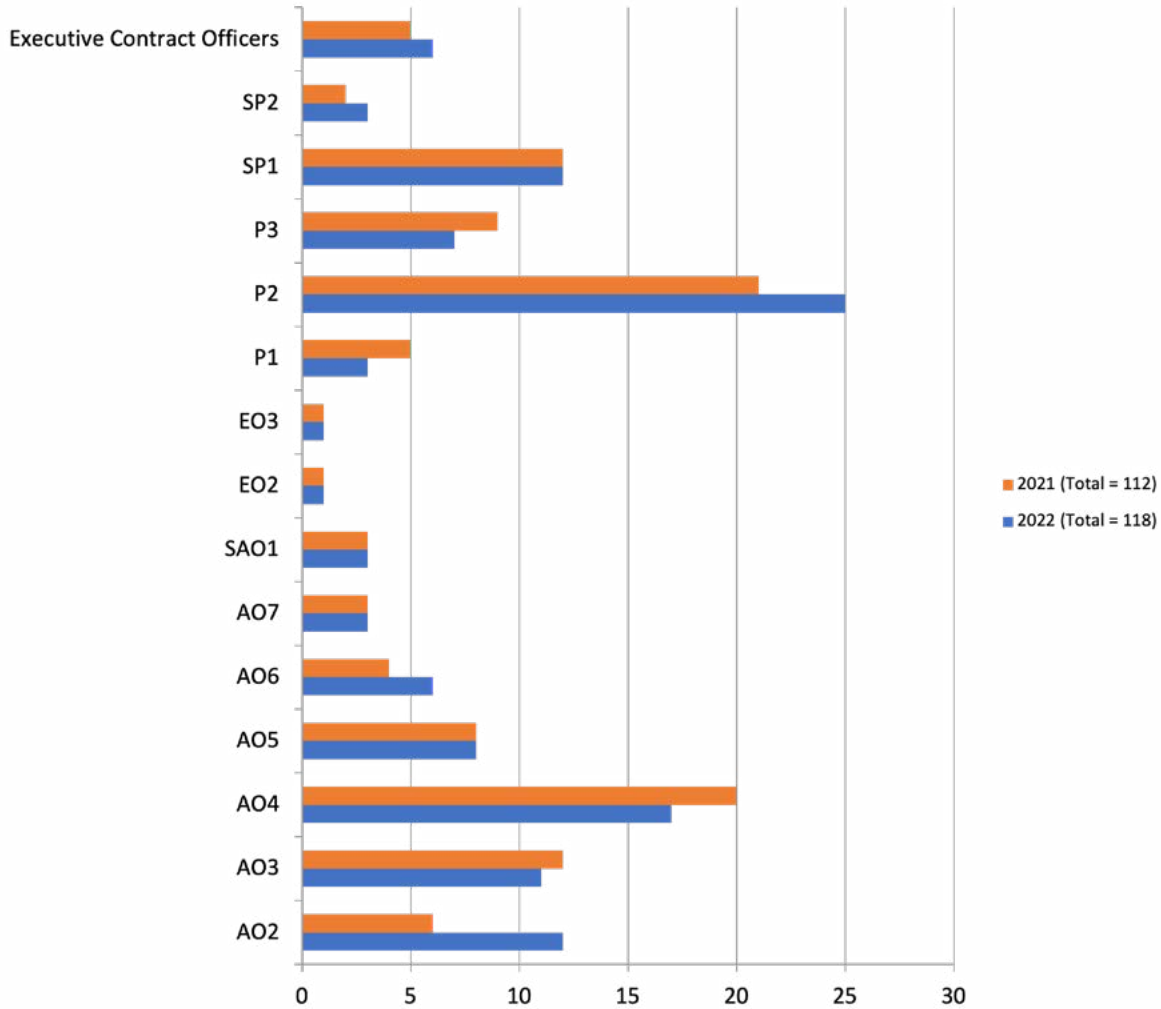
Distribution of employee gender are represented by the graphs on the right.





Salary Ranges

Staffing Levels as at 30th June 2022:



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.

Our Staff and Development (continued)

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

- Responding to DFV and DVO Fundamentals
- 18th CLANT Conference 2022
- 5th National Justice Symposium
- Australian Law Librarians Conference
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/Mandatory Reporting Workshop
- Children and Young People and Tech Abuse
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Domestic Violence
- CPA Congress
- Cross Culture Awareness Program
- DOORS Screening and Safety Planning, Workshop with Perpetrators
- DV-Alert General eLearning Course
- Financial Advice Disputes, Super & Insurance Claims
- Financial Counselling Australia Annual 2022 Conference
- Identifying and Responding to Family Violence
- Introduction to Central Australian Aboriginal Cultures and Context
- Larrakia Legal History and Cultural Tour
- Managing Wellbeing when working with Complex Trauma
- Mental Health and DFV - responding to 'the volcano'
- Mindfulness and Managing Stress
- NT COVID -19 Safety Supervisor
- NTLAC Crime Conference
- Practical Ethics
- CPR Certification Course
- Public DFV Fundamentals 2022
- Rebellious Lawyering in Australia
- Reflective Practice Training
- Resilience - the Grit Factor
- Risk Assessment Management Framework Workshop

- Safe & Together Queensland Implementation Summit
- Safe Talk - Suicide Awareness
- SNAICC National Conference
- Social Media and Survivors
- STOP Domestic Violence Conference 2021
- System, access, evidence: migrant and refugee women DFV
- The Art of Social Media
- The Factors of Parenting Disputes about COVID -19 Vaccination of Children
- The New Family Court: How will it be difference
- The 'New Normal' Leader
- Understanding the Neurobiology of Complex Trauma
- Using a Trauma Lens when working with Domestic and Family Violence
- Vicarious Trauma Training
- Wellbeing and Emotional Awareness when Working with Complex Trauma
- Wesley Life Force Suicide Prevention
- Working with Cultural Difference (NT Focused) eLearning
- Working with Interpreters - AIS
- Working with Trauma Impacted Clients - Managing Suicide Ideation within Legal Process

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission Strategic Plan

Our Vision To be a leader in a fair NT 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 Nations 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 supportive 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, and 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

2020-2025

Our Goals and Strategies

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

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 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.

NT Legal Aid Director with the NT Administrator

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.

Solicitor
Crimminal Law Practice

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.

A Health Justice Partnership with Wurli Wurlinjang Health Clinic operates in Katherine known as the Katherine Individual Support Program.

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 location of the Legal Aid Helpline call centre. The financial counselling service operates from the Palmerston office, but services clients across 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 NT Legal Aid 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.

Tennant Creek Office Team with NT Legal Aid Director

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 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.

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. Over the past year, these services have been provided in an environment where there have been increasing challenges for service delivery.

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. We also provide face-to-face advice at prisons and on-call telephone advice to children and adults in police custody.

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; apply for bail or vary bail conditions; conduct simple guilty pleas, mentions and adjournments; and access legal representation either through NT Legal Aid or the private sector.

Legal Representation

Where a grant of aid is made, ongoing representation is provided to clients in the Local Court, Supreme Court and Youth Justice 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 that bring 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 adults and young people in 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, contested hearings, "doli incapax" matters (regarding legal capacity for children between 10 and 14 years of age), breach of sentence hearings and sentence

Our Principal Functions

reconsiderations. Our lawyers work in conjunction with our specialist youth social worker to assist young people access appropriate services and to deliver a trauma-informed practice.

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.

Policy

NT Legal Aid makes submissions and recommendations to Government and relevant stakeholders in relation to criminal justice issues and law reform. It is an important part of our work and our commitment to a fair NT justice system.

Youth justice remains a particular focal point as we continue to see the effects of regressive bail laws that have increased the number of children remanded in detention to unacceptable levels. In addition to the individual impacts of detention on children as young as 10, the increased detention rates have had flow-on effects on the ability of already under-resourced service providers in assisting young people and the efficiency of the criminal justice system leading to greater delays and increasing the time spent on remand for young people from apprehension to the finalisation of their matters. We continue to make submissions in this area and have advocated strongly for raising the age of criminal responsibility.

Systemic inefficiencies

The significant increase in the number of people on remand in our prisons and detention centres has a direct correlation with inefficiencies in the resolution of criminal proceedings. Major systemic issues which prevent timely resolution of criminal proceedings are evidenced by the increasing number of average listings per matter and the increasing time people spend on remand from apprehension to finalisation of their matters. In addition to having an impact on remand numbers, the need for more appearances per matter than previously has resulted in a higher cost per matter for all agencies and participants in the criminal justice system.

Drivers of inefficiencies are inter-related and include:

- Insufficient resourcing of justice agencies resulting in a focus on the back end of proceedings rather than the early case preparation which is necessary for early resolution.
- Delays in obtaining instructions from clients in custody as a result of the increasing number of detainees on remand together with limited AVL facilities and phones, and limited ability to access the Aboriginal Interpreter Service.
- Structural issues within the criminal justice system, for example, the lack of legislated case management to facilitate early and appropriate disclosure and early resolution of proceedings, and lack of statutory discounts for early pleas of guilty.
- Legislative regimes which encourage multiple listings, for example, bail presumptions, mandatory sentencing, and age of criminal responsibility and doli incapax.

Crimminal Law Practice Team

Our Principal Functions (continued)

Family Law Practice

The family Law Practice delivers a range of targeted services throughout the 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 and service alignment

As the last of the COVID-19 lockdowns eased, the effects of the pandemic lingered and saw a fundamental shift in how families accessed the family law system.

Our practice continued to provide free legal advice clinics, largely by telephone and some in person. All of our family law duty lawyer services were provided by telephone or Microsoft Team links. This was a broad national practice with in-person court attendances reserved for substantive court events such as contested interim and final hearings.

The merger of the family law courts into the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia on 1 September 2021, signalled even more change in the resolution and determination of family law disputes. The new Court meant new Court Rules, Practice Directions, case management pathways and greater front end case management by Judicial Registrars. Our family law legal representation services under grants of legal aid saw an increase in the pre-and post-court application steps required in parenting and property disputes.

Alternate dispute resolution became a key focus of the Court system for both financial and children's matters. This aligned well with NT Legal Aid's Dispute Resolution Family Law Conference program. The majority of our cases were assessed for suitability for Family Law Conferences for parenting and property disputes. Many were resolved either fully or partially with few matters requiring judicial determination. They were also key to resolving a substantial number of our cases before the Court where our in-house Independent Children's Lawyers were appointed to represent the best interests of children in the proceedings.

We warmly welcomed the Court's two new Indigenous Family Liaison officers, Tanya Turner and Hugh Woodbury based in Alice Springs, to assist First Nations families' access the Court and family law system more broadly. This greatly enhances the Court's Indigenous List operating in both Alice Springs and Darwin.

As part of our integrated duty lawyer Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS), our Alice Springs based family lawyer commenced providing in-person duty lawyer services to defendants in the Local Court domestic violence list and

Specialist Approach to Domestic Violence Therapeutic Court. This enables clients to receive legal assistance and social support across intersecting domestic and family violence, family law and child protection jurisdictions.

We continued to provide duty lawyer services (by telephone/ Microsoft Teams link) at our other FASS service locations: the Darwin and Alice Springs registries of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia; and other locations where families are transitioning between federal family law and territory family violence and child protection systems. Our embedded FASS Client Support Worker assesses for risk of domestic and family violence, works with clients on safety plans, provides support during legal proceedings and makes targeted referrals to external support agencies.

Despite our funding challenges, many of our most vulnerable clients faced with statutory intervention in child protection proceedings, received ongoing advocacy, social support, legal task assistance and legal representation in the Local Court Family Matters jurisdiction. We provide in-person duty lawyer assistance weekly, attend at case conferences, court-based conciliation conferences; advocate and negotiate with legal representatives for the CEO of Territory Families Housing & Communities and the other parties; and represent clients on an ongoing basis where their matter may require judicial determination. Our team is dedicated to assisting families whose children have been removed and the subject of a child protection order, work towards reunification and remaining connected to their children through advocacy, inclusion and contribution to care and reunification plans.

FAMILY ADVOCACY & SUPPORT SERVICES

Funded by the Australian Government

An Australian Government Initiative

Equipping and strengthening our team

All practice staff received ongoing training to ensure we continue to work with clients in a domestic violence and trauma informed way.

Collaboration

We developed a partnership with Tangentyere Council and Women's Safety Services of Central Australia (WoSSCA) in Alice Springs supporting victims and users of family violence through counselling, support and education while engaged in the family law and related legal systems in Central Australia. This has enabled our family lawyer to make targeted client referrals to Tangentyere Council Men's Behaviour Change Program or to the victim support services offered by WoSSCA.

Our Health Justice Patnership with DDHS and NT Legal Aid - Legal Health Mob recognises that many of the factors that lead to poor health, well-being and legal outcomes for First Nations 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.

Despite the Pilot's positive evaluation, no ongoing funding was secured from the federal government. However, collaboration remains strong and warm referrals are made by the DDHS Indigenous Outreach Worker, who partnered with the family lawyer during the Pilot.

Community Legal Education

Our family lawyers in Darwin and Alice Springs attended various organisations and locations to deliver community legal education sessions. These have included schools, women's shelters and support services, and multicultural support agencies.

Our Principal Functions (continued)

Contribution to Policy & Law Reform

Our professional team continued to contribute to various policy and law reform activities at both federal and territory levels in the areas of family law and child protection. We are passionate about being part of systemic change, leveraging on our experience at the coalface to inform government about access to justice issues, improvements to our legal system and protecting the vulnerable and those experiencing disadvantage in our society.

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.

Reception for Domestic Violence Legal Service hosted by the NT Administrator

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

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.

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,

	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Summary of major activities					
Total services provided					
Applications for Aid:					
Received	247	219	211	167	**99**
Approved:	245	219	211	167	**99**
Refused:	2	0	0	0	**0**
Free Legal Advice Sessions	641	731	805	588	**488**
Duty Lawyer Services	367	341	339	406	**216**
Legal Task Assistance					**166**

family law, finances and childcare. We are pleased that this funding has been continued.

The year in focus

During 2021-22, DVLS continued to feel 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 has finalised its Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which is available through the DVLS website. DVLS have continued to develop and publish content online including through the DVLS Facebook page. The DVLS Therapy Dog Pilot has developed into the DVLS Therapy Dog Project. The Therapy Dog attends court and meets with DVLS clients. Clients have provided feedback to DVLS, demonstrating improvements to their mental and emotional wellbeing as a result of support provided by the Therapy Dog, and an increased willingness to attend and participate at court, and therefore connect with their DVLS lawyer and support staff.

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 partnered with NT Legal Aid to deliver CLE in collaboration. DVLS also deliver training on domestic, family and sexual violence to the recruit constables at the Northern Territory Police.

Domestic Violence Legal Service Team

Our Principal Functions (continued)

Civil Law Practice

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 to not 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 COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our clients and staff and the Civil Law Practice continues to strive and adapt to meet the additional legal needs of our clients during this time.

Geographic reach

The Civil Law Practice assists 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:

- 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 provide assistance to individuals who are subject to involuntary treatment orders under the Mental Health and Related Services Act. Our lawyers provide free duty lawyer representation and advice for clients appearing

Health Justice Partnership Solicitor with Christine Butler of Primary Health Network

in mental health review hearings before the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative 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. The Civil Law Practice has also initiated several appeals of tribunal decisions to the NT Supreme Court on behalf of clients who are mental health patients.

Our practice continues to 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 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 practice has also been involved in engagement with various disability sector stakeholders to provide legal education sessions around the NDIS scheme and appeal pathways.

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

NT Legal Aid's Health Justice Partnership (HJP) with the Wurli Wurlinjang Aboriginal Health Service's Katherine Individual Support Program (KISP) has continued on into its second year. Funded by the Primary Health Network, the partnership places a civil lawyer alongside this health program targeting Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness or housing crisis, who have chronic health conditions and frequently attend hospital. KISP brings health, social and legal services together for collaborative and holistic case management.

The HJP takes a flexible approach to engaging with this traditionally hard to reach client cohort, addressing legal issues that impact the social determinants of health. The HJP lawyer outreaches to The Salvation Army's Doorways Hub drop in space on a daily basis.

The founding HJP lawyer, Thomasin Opie, was appointed to the NT Local Court Bench in October 2021, leaving the role. Owing to the embedded practices and developed relationships, social worker Tammy Frean was able to step into the day-to-day engagement work, identifying legal issues and facilitating referrals to either legal aid or partner legal services, until the HJP lawyer position was filled by Harley Dannatt in January 2022. The HJP was also able to continue assisting people through COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

The HJP continues to expand and deepen relationships with its collaborating partners, trialling new ways to be accessible to vulnerable clients and build the capacity of the sector.

Indigenous Outreach

Despite the significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak in the Northern Territory, NTLAC continued to meet the objectives of the Outreach Project and exceed outcome delivery. We provided high quality, culturally sensitive, equitable

Indigenous Outreach Solicitor at the Elliot Service Centre

Our Principal Functions (continued)

and accessible legal assistance services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The challenges we faced were significant; in following Chief Health Officer Directions, the advice of the Land Councils, and community leaders, we cancelled a number scheduled remote community visits to avoid the spread of COVID-19. However, when we could not be on the ground, we maintained our presence by reaching out to community contacts and stakeholders, and prioritising telephone and video link advice clinics with remote clients.

For example, the COVID-19 outbreak in Binjari necessitated a highly coordinated and collaborative response from NT Legal Aid, NAAJA, NAAFVLS and KWILS. Moreover, we reached out to our counterparts at NSW Legal Aid to learn more about their strategies during the COVID-19 outbreaks in NSW Indigenous communities. When visits to the Katherine region resumed, we strengthened relationships with community members and other service providers in the four remote communities that we visit, resulting in an influx of legal advices and referrals.

When trips resumed to the West-Arnhem region, we arranged joint visits with HK Training and Consulting, to aid warm referrals to financial counsellors following our legal assistance, and to increase engagement by community members. We established a Community Legal Education Program at Warruwi and formed an important relationship with Families as First Teachers, to enhance engagement with women in Warruwi.

Your Story Solicitor

We also arranged a number of joint visits to the urban communities that we service around Darwin with Somerville, TEWLS, Amity Community Services and others.

We have continued to service a large client base in Tennant Creek through regular clinics (both in person and by video link). We have also continued to engage in CLE activities in collaboration with the other legal services at Tennant Creek High School, the Barkly Region alcohol rehabilitation facility (BRADAAG), the Corrections' Family Violence Program, and with community members at 'the Hub'.

Finally, we are pleased to report that the Access to Justice in the Barkly Working Group, of which NT Legal Aid is a member, has secured funding toward a Project Manager position, which will drive further implementation of the Access to Justice in the Barkly Report recommendations.

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 delivered through Legal Aid Commissions and community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services in each state and territory. YSDLS provides legal advice, information and assistance to people with disability, their families, carers, advocates and supporters wanting to engage with the Disability Royal Commission. The NT Legal Coordinator commenced in March 2020 and the NT Jurisdictional Solicitor commenced in September 2021 and operate within the Civil Law Practice.

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

- Maintaining 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;
- Creating engagement strategies to target priority groups, such as people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background;
- Undertaking information sessions and group submission workshops at both Alice Springs and Darwin Correctional Centres; and
- Contributing to National Legal Aid submissions provided to the Disability Royal Commission on issues relevant to NT Legal Aid clients.

The YSDLS solicitors have 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, defamation and criminal offences. The YSDLS solicitors have also worked closely with clients to support them prepare for private sessions and with the drafting of written submissions.

The YSDLS solicitors have facilitated timely and accurate client referrals to legal and support services, including to the Civil Law Practice for advice on ancillary legal matters.

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 free duty lawyer service to defendants of domestic violence order applications at Darwin Local Court, free legal advice clinics and legal task assistance including assistance transitioning between Commonwealth family law and NT child protection jurisdictions.

A dedicated men's support worker employed by CatholicCare is integrated with the REALS duty lawyer and provides high-quality support services to male victims and alleged male perpetrators, particularly where there is an elevated risk of family violence (such as drug and alcohol use, mental health issues and homelessness). The men's support worker conducts risk assessments, safety planning and facilitates clients accessing support services such as men's behaviour change programs, parenting programs, counselling, housing assistance, financial services and drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Broadly, the objectives of the REALS service are to resolve DVO applications in a timely manner with conditions that are suitable to the circumstances, thereby reducing the number of DVO breaches and DV recidivism. Most matters resolve quickly by consent after some legally assisted negotiations. In some cases, limited task assistance is provided in family, parenting and/or property related legal 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.

FAMILY ADVOCACY & SUPPORT SERVICES

Funded by the Australian Government

An Australian Government Initiative

Our Principal Functions (continued)

Grants Section

The Grants Section administers and assigns grants of legal aid funding for clients with ongoing criminal, family, and civil legal matters. The eligibility criteria for grants of aid are determined by the NT Legal Aid Guidelines set by the Board, with grants being provided to both inhouse and private legal practitioners.

This year, there were 2761 applications for legal aid received, with 2309 of those approved. A total of 57.43% of all matters were provided with assistance by inhouse lawyers, with the remainder allocated to private practitioners. This continues a trend of the private profession assuming more legally aided matters, especially as our inhouse practice take on more lengthy, expensive, and complex matters.

Clients who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comprised 57.41% of all applications received, with 590 referrals received directly from the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA).

The Grants Section also coordinates the reconsideration and review processes through which applicants appeal decisions in relation to grants of aid. This year, applicants sought reconsideration of 119 decisions, and 22 of those progressed to the Review Committee.

This year, the Grants Section commenced a strategic planning process to inform practices in coming years. This process will align with the goals of service delivery, and innovation and improvement as part the NT Legal Aid Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Actions have already been taken to streamline and simplify grants of aid for criminal law matters in the Local Court.

The Grants Section would like to acknowledge the considerable effort of external lawyers to comply with NT Legal Aid's processes and assist clients. Without the support of the private profession, many clients would go without legal representation and advice. We are committed to maintaining and building our reputation as a trusted and respected partner to the private lawyers, their staff, and their clients.

Family Dispute Resolution

The Family Dispute Resolution Team (FDR Team) assists separated couples and their families to discuss the division of property and ongoing care arrangements for children in the safe, 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 bring their lawyer on the day of the mediation.

If a short-term agreement is reached at conference, the lawyers will help parties to make this into a Parenting Plan. If full agreement is reached at conference, the lawyers will draft Consent Orders, which can be enforced later if necessary. In about two thirds of the conferences held at NT Legal Aid parties are able to reach full or partial agreement, but even in those cases where no agreement can be reached, the conference provides an important opportunity to safely discuss concerns, air any grievances and clarify or narrow the issues in dispute. In turn this reduces ongoing conflict and avoids the costs of long running litigation and the associated stress and harm to families.

The FDR Team

Our 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 offer support for individual needs and hold a successful conference.

We also rely on an external panel of impartial and experienced Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners to help provide conferences across Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine and beyond, often by phone or video conference.

The FDR Team liaises with related services to provide tailored and culturally appropriate conferences, most notably 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.

Examples of special services to match needs

In a recent conference the FDR Team supported a client experiencing complex PTSD symptoms that became heightened as their litigation progressed. By offering this client supports such as active safety planning, physical accommodations such as lighting adjustments and voice modulation, and identifying and avoiding triggering language and even triggering colours, the parties were able to take part in a shuttle conference, which resolved their parenting and property issues on a final basis. Trial dates were then vacated, resulting in a significant cost saving to the public purse.

Other examples include:

Empowering a family traversing the child protection system to discuss their own needs, and explore options such as extended family involvement, and engagement with social supports to address mental health and addiction issues, which resulted in Territory Families withdrawing their involvement.

Working step by step with parties who had a highly conflictual relationship and a small (largely debt) property pool to get a clear picture of their property, and financial and legal advice, giving them the confidence to reach a resolution in their matter and move on with their lives.

Service Updates

To ensure that future services could reach as many parties as possible, the FDR Team piloted the use of online dispute resolution services through the 'Immediation' platform throughout this financial year. The pilot gave the FDR Team the opportunity to review existing processes and streamline them. Ultimately the pilot was unsuccessful, but importantly it gave the FDR Team impetus to introduce a more thorough intake process and enhance use of other AVL technology options in suitable matters. The FDR Team will give consideration to every conference moving forwards, to determine whether a face-to-face conference is safe to facilitate and empower maximum participation by parties, or whether safety concerns and remoteness require an online or telephone conference.

As reported previously, TRM, the Territory Records Manager system has been successfully implemented, resulting in our service becoming virtual and paperless, and with more familiarity and some updates the FDR Team has experienced increased efficiency and intra-agency coordination.

Finally, the FDR Team continues to provide property conferences within the Commonwealth's Lawyer-Assisted Family Law Property Mediation Trial (or Small Property Medication Trial (SPMT). Our small team has been able to provide these and the required data reporting with great efficiency and although the national evaluation has not yet been published, benefits to NT parties have included an additional preparation session with lawyers and chairs, extension to the pool at both ends and extra services being paid for such as valuations and translations, and even potentially representation through a court trial and enforcement of orders.

Our Principal Functions (continued)

Preventative Legal Services

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, two full time operators, and one part time operator, 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 – the person may be referred to another helpful service, may be sent some detailed information to help them understand their problem better, or the Helpline may assist the person to obtain a free legal advice appointment. Often all three services are provided. 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.

The Helpline team also operate the on-line chat service. On-line chat provides an alternate means 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 Commission and Domestic Violence Legal Service websites.

To the end of this financial year the service had assisted with 353 real time chats and responded to 31 tickets. A ticket is a request for information left with our service outside of our general operating hours.

The number of callers to Helpline continues to expand with 23,782 callers being provided with assistance during 2021-2022, an increase of 2% 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. 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. In 2021/2022 we received 2,375 referrals, which resulted in calls from our service to people requiring some form of legal help.

Financial Counselling Service

The NT Legal Aid financial counselling service began in early 2021 after successfully applying for funding from the NT Government. We 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.

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The financial counsellor provides assistance to 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 concerns.

The financial counselling service operates from the Palmerston office. The financial counsellor accepts referrals from all legal practice areas within NT Legal Aid as well as from our regional offices.

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.

During 2021/2022 the financial counselling service received 53 referrals. A broad range of assistance was provided to those clients, including sourcing emergency relief, mortgage/loan deferrals, debt negotiations and debt waivers.

Community Legal Education

The Legal Aid Act specifically notes the role of NT Legal Aid 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.

The Community Legal Education (CLE) team coordinates NT Legal Aid's education activities. The team's work is guided by the current 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:

Your Rights Through Art Workshop

Our Principal Functions (continued)

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

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, drawing on their expert knowledge and experience to strengthen their legal education plans.

Community Legal Education Activities

During 2021-22, the 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 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 and resources, ensuring a mix of skills, qualities and inclusive practice.

Your Rights Through Art - Winner People's Choice

Proudly supported by NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

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 and team capacity, however plans are in place to deliver the event again in 2023.

2. Deliver education and training

NT Legal Aid undertook a range of activities to connect with our target audiences in 2021-22 and align with their legal needs and contexts.

A key project for this year was 'Your Rights Through Art' (Law and Me in the NT)

NT Legal Aid was funded by the NT Government's Study NT International Student Wellbeing Grant, to provide "Your Legal Rights Through Art", an art and legal learning program for international students.

The Law and Me in the NT project has grown over the years and we have incorporated and created several different methods of delivery consisting of in person education sessions. This year we delivered through art workshops and an art exhibition.

The sessions consisted of a series of interactive art and legal workshops to help international students and their support networks understand their rights and responsibilities and where to find free legal assistance, while also expressing themselves through different art forms, such as painting, drawing, pottery and indigenous art.

Topics discussed with students during the workshops 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, while also allowing creative expression of these rights through art.

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. The final art exhibition was a brilliant success, with students receiving awards for their work, and being celebrated by peers and the wider community. The winner went on to enter her work in the annual Rights on Show art competition and won her category.

Some other education and training highlights of the year were:

- Launching the 'Sector Needs Survey Report' as part of the Strengths in Conversations Project form the previous year.
- CLE Week in Tennant Creek
- Blurred Borders Training in Alice Springs
- Youth Workers Speed networking event
- CLE for interpreters at ITSNT
- Happy Families dinners with Multi Cultural Council NT
- Youth Conference 2022: organised by 'No One Left Behind'
- National Youth Homelessness Matters Day: Couch Surfing 2022
- 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, and Red Cross Connected Women

Your Rights Through Art Exhibition Night with Hon. Luke Gosling

Our Principal Functions (continued)

During this past year the CLE team delivered 341 education sessions on a range of subjects, with 3,635 participants in those sessions.

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 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
- The Office of Multicultural Affairs Community Education Working Group

3. Develop and distribute information

During 2021-22 NT Legal Aid distributed 12,103 hard copies of our publications and promotions material. 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.

CLE Team and Access to Justice delivering CLE in Tennant Creek

Output Statistics

Snapshot of information and publications 2021-2022
21,138 people accessed 69,090 pages of information on our Website www.legalaid.nt.gov.au
21,747 social media users reached by our Facebook posts
55,627 professionals reached by our Linked In posts
6,400 Views of our YouTube channel
12,103 Legal Publications were handed out
246,319 times Legal information accessed through the NT Law Handbook website
16,785 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.

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

A client in her 50s and with significant and complex health issues, moved into a social housing tenancy in 2020 – it was her first ever secure housing. For the first 12 months of the tenancy, the electricity account was in her partner's name, however his non-payment and subsequent debt to the provider meant the electricity was turned off in December 2021. Without a fan or fridge, the small unit was unliveable, and Ms K became effectively homeless again. Ms K was unable to even speak to the provider about the debt and couldn't make any payments with her limited fixed income. Ms K's partner would not engage on the issue.

The Health Justice Partnership, working alongside financial counsellors from CatholicCareNT, KISP and working from the Hub, detailed Ms K's situation to the energy provider and escalated a complaint. An outcome was reached that had the electricity restored in a new account in Ms K's name. The service providers continue to assist Ms K to manage payments going forward.

2 CASE 2

The Health Justice Partnership began working with Ms R in early 2022 regarding accessing information from the Motor Vehicle Register. Although the task would be considered straightforward for many people with English as their first language or phone resources, Ms. R did not know what information was needed from her and what conditions she was under with regards to obtaining her license. HJP assisted with basic advocacy and access.

Importantly, after working together for weeks on this issue and building a level of trust with Ms R, she disclosed that she was currently experiencing family violence and needed help. HJP then coordinated appropriate legal help as well as safety planning with the Hub, where Ms R continues to attend daily. It was only through developed relationship and trust on a minor legal matter, that the HJP was able to be an effective point in time response to a critical legal and safety issue.

3 CASE 3

The defendant contacted the REALS service for advice and assistance in relation to an application for a Domestic Violence Order (DVO). The application was filed by the defendants ex-partner.

During the appointment, it transpired that the ex-partner had also applied to the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia for an urgent recovery order in relation to the children of the parties (family law proceedings).

The REALS lawyer was able to provide legal advice in relation to both the DVO and the family law proceedings. After receiving advice, the defendant willingly returned the children, removing the need for the Court to consider making an urgent recovery order. The REALS lawyer also referred the defendant to a family lawyer for ongoing representation in the family law proceedings and continued to provide the defendant with family law advice up until such time as a family lawyer was engaged to act for them.

Case Studies (continued)

Having received timely advice at a critical time, the defendant was well supported to proactively engage in both sets of proceedings. The children were promptly returned, limiting the issues in dispute between the parties and issues requiring the Courts determination.

The REALS lawyer also appeared for the defendant at the Local Court on a duty basis in relation to the DVO, where the matter was resolved on a final basis at the second mention.

4 CASE 4

Tammy and Steve recently separated and began discussing care arrangements for their son Jeremy. Jeremy lived with Tammy who was his primary care-giver. Frustrated that they could not agree on Jeremy's care arrangements, Steve went over to Jeremy's day care centre and took him out.

When Tammy found out that Steve had taken Jeremy from his day care centre she asked the police to help recover Jeremy. Unfortunately the police were not in a position to help as Steve, being Jeremy's dad, was entitled to take him from the day care centre. Tammy was distraught as Jeremy had never been away from her.

Tammy contacted NT Legal Aid for assistance. A legal advice session was scheduled during which a lawyer from NT Legal Aid's Family Practice provided Tammy with legal advice and wrote to Steve. In the letter the NT Legal Aid lawyer asked Steve to return Jeremy and invited him to attend a Family Law Conference where Steve and Tammy could discuss parenting arrangements. When Steve refused the invitation, Tammy was left with no choice but to apply for a grant of aid for legal representation in court. Once Tammy's aid was approved, her NT Legal Aid Lawyer made an urgent application to the family law courts to recover Jeremy and other parenting orders.

On receiving the court documents Steve got legal representation and his lawyers contacted NT Legal Aid's Family Practice. Tammy's NT Legal Aid lawyer was able to negotiate Jeremy's return to her care before the first court event.

Tammy's NT Legal Aid lawyers continued to provide Tammy with legal support including organising a Family Law Conference (mediation). A few months later, Tammy and Steve were able to negotiate final parenting orders at this conference, ending all court proceedings.

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 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 offerings and service provider updates including information about programs, services, training, events, policies and procedures, funding and legislative changes. 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 to enhance client and service provider understanding of the service and referral pathways.

Some presenters from our August 2021 meeting

National Webinars

The Pathways Networks worked collaboratively to secure highly regarded speakers to present free online training for its membership, including Dr Virginia Marshall presenting 'The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles', Judy Singer and Elena Campbell presenting 'Experiences of Neurodiversity in Family Law' and Shane Tas presenting 'Men in Focus – unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women'.

Meetings and Networking

Meetings were interchangeably themed and general in nature to maximise opportunities to foster engagement between local service providers. In August 2021 Pathways hosted a themed meeting to celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day with Children's Ground, Darrindirra Family Centre and Save the Children presenting about their services.

Ad hoc meetings were also arranged for specific professionals to enhance networking and inter-agency collaboration, such as parenting program coordinators meeting to discuss the programs each offers, developing effective warm referral pathways and developing plans to enhance stakeholder awareness.

We again had some interruptions to face to face networking opportunities as a result of COVID - 19 and were unable to proceed with two meetings scheduled in Katherine as a result. Pathways meetings have continued to be offered in mixed mode to maximise participation.

Top End Family Law Pathways Network (continued)

Training

Our training offerings included:

A collaborative effort of the CLE and Family Section presenting Blurred Borders training to service providers, focused on the Family Violence Kit and aimed at enhancing their capacity to use visual art and story telling to help explain legal concepts in a culturally accessible way.

Judge Young of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia discussing the changes to the new court system with family law practitioners and family digspute resolution practitioners.

Mental Health and Domestic Violence training presented by YWCA, the Family Law Section and DVLS focussing on the impact of power and control dynamics on clients experiencing intersectional vulnerabilities and developing effective referral pathways to support their emotional and social well-being, followed by domestic violence legislation and restraining order fundamentals.

An interactive workshop of Reflective Practice training presented by Michelle Taylor exploring different models of reflective practice and how to tailor these to service providers' needs.

Trauma Informed Restorative Yoga and Meditation presented by Karen Spitz for October Mental Health Awareness Month which focussed on professionals taking a trauma informed approach to self-care.

Vicarious Trauma training presented by Jackie Burke to understand vicarious trauma and its impacts and how to implement proven strategies to effectively manage vicarious trauma.

Preparing for a Family Law Conference presented by Jill Raby, focussed on developing strategies for negotiating in property matters.

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.

Blurred Borders presenters

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.

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

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

- Community Legal Education
- Booklets (various topics)
- Pamphlets (various topics)
- Annual Reports

Personal information

- Client
- Personnel

Other information

- 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

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
C. Ellis	K. Hourdas	C. Phillips

NT Legal Aid Appointees:

B. Lelli A. Messell

Statistical Information

The demands on the fund have been:					
Applications	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Received	12	15	6	14	7
Approved	9	8	4	8	10
Withdrawn	1	0	0	0	0
Refused	6	2	3	0	0
To be Decided	1	1	0	3	0

Review Committee

Committee's Role

To review decisions referred to the Committee under section 35(3) of the *Legal Aid Act*. Under section 35 of the Act, persons may seek reconsideration or review of those decisions.

During 2021-22 the Review Committee met on 14 occasions to review 14 client requests. The outcome of their deliberations was that 3 decisions were varied in favour of the applicant, and 0 decisions pending.

Membership of the Committee

Members Participating during the Financial Year 2021 -22

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

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Financials 2021/2022

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Auditor-General

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

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

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 2022, 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 2022 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

30 September 2022

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

Statement by Director
30 June 2022

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 2022 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, I am not aware of any circumstances that would render the particulars included in the financial statements misleading or inaccurate.

Annmarie Lumsden
Director

Signed in Darwin this 30th day of September 2022.

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022	2021
		$	$
Revenue			
Grant revenue		**18,826,947**	17,784,709
Services revenue		**271,931**	195,049
Other revenue		**32,014**	72,241
Total revenue	2	**19,130,892**	18,051,999
Expenses			
Employee expenses	2	**(12,246,286)**	(10,845,512)
Legal expenses		**(3,728,488)**	(2,806,817)
Grant expenses		**(237,529)**	(224,228)
Interest expense		**(142,775)**	(161,538)
Other expenses	2	**(2,723,193)**	(3,132,446)
Total expenses		**(19,078,271)**	(17,170,541)
Profit from continuing operations		**52,621**	881,458
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year		**52,621**	881,458
Gain on revaluation of land and buildings	16	**496,179**	-
Other comprehensive income for the year		**496,179**	-
Total comprehensive Income (loss) for the year attributable to the Commission		**548,800**	881,458

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Statement of Financial Position
As at 30 June 2022

	Note	2022	2021
		$	$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	4,713,134	5,100,357
Receivables	4	293,908	189,509
Other assets	5	396,336	379,642
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		5,403,378	5,669,508
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	6	7,637,462	8,205,091
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS		7,637,462	8,205,091
TOTAL ASSETS		13,040,840	13,874,599
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Payables	7	530,514	604,893
Lease liabilities	8	945,939	897,368
Contract liabilities	9	95,925	524,099
Provisions	10	1,918,739	1,896,201
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		3,491,117	3,922,561
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	8	5,680,190	6,642,912
Provisions	10	261,622	250,015
TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		5,941,812	6,892,927
TOTAL LIABILITIES		9,432,929	10,815,488
NET ASSETS		3,607,911	3,059,111
EQUITY			
Reserves	16	3,575,405	2,441,564
Accumulated funds	17	32,506	617,547
TOTAL EQUITY		3,607,911	3,059,111

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Statement of Changes in Equity
For The Year Ended 30 June 2022

2022	Note	Reserves	Accumulated Funds	Total
		$	$	$
Balance at 1 July 2021		**2,441,564**	**617,547**	**3,059,111**
Net surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Commission		-	52,621	52,621
Other comprehensive income attributable to the Commission		496,179	-	496,179
Total comprehensive income (loss)		**496,179**	**52,621**	**548,800**
Transfer to/(from) reserves	17	637,662	**(637,662)**	-
Balance at 30 June 2022		**3,575,405**	**32,506**	**3,607,911**

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

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Statement of Cash Flows
For The Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022	2021
		$	$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Receipts in the course of operations		**198,701**	244,042
Cash Payments in the course of operations		**(18,670,504)**	(16,755,728)
Interest received		**13,374**	25,095
Interest paid		**(142,775)**	(161,538)
Grants received in the course of operations		**19,184,952**	18,750,205
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	14	**583,748**	2,102,076
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		**-**	(11,577)
Payment for investments		**-**	500,000
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		**-**	488,423
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Payment of lease liabilities		**(970,971)**	(902,177)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		**(970,971)**	(902,177)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		**(387,223)**	1,688,322
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		**5,100,357**	3,412,035
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	3	**4,713,134**	5,100,357

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements
For The Year Ended 30 June 2022

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*, Australian Accounting Standards issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board *and the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission Act 2012.*

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, except for land and buildings which are measured at fair value.

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) 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.

(b) 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.

(c) Current and non-current classification

Assets and liabilities are presented in the statement of financial position based on current and non-current classification.

An asset is classified as current when: it is either expected to be realised or intended to be sold or consumed in the Commission's normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is expected to be realised within 12 months after the reporting period; or the asset is cash or cash equivalent unless restricted from being exchanged or used to settle a liability for at least 12 months after the reporting period. All other assets are classified as non-current.

A liability is classified as current when: it is either expected to be settled in the Commission's normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is due to be settled within 12 months after the reporting period; or there is no unconditional right to defer the settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the reporting period. All other liabilities are classified as non-current.

d) Fair Value of Assets and Liabilities

The Commission measures some of Its assets and liabilities at fair value on either a recurring or non-recurring basis, depending on the requirements of the applicable Accounting Standard.

Fair value Is the price the Commission would receive to sell an asset or would have to pay to transfer a liability in an orderly (ie unforced) transaction belween independent, knowledgeable and willing market participants at the measurement date.

As fair value is a market-based measure, the closest equivalent observable market pricing information is used to determine fair value. Adjustments to market values may be made having regard to the characteristics of the specific 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.

To the extent possible, market information is extracted from either the principal market for the asset or liability (ie the market with the greatest volume and level of activity for the asset or liability) or, in the absence of such a market, the most advantageous market available to the entity at the end of the reporting period (ie the market that maximises the receipts from the sale of the asset or minimises the payments made to transfer the liability, after taking into account transaction costs and transport costs).

For non-financial assets, the fair value measurement also takes into account a market participant's ability to use the asset in its highest and best use or to sell It to another market participant that would use the asset in its highest and best use.

e) 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.

(f) Comparatives

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

Notes to the Financial Statements
For The Year Ended 30 June 2022

2. Result of the Year

		2022	2021
Revenue		**$**	$
Grant revenue from	NT	**8,266,950**	7,255,500
	Commonwealth	**6,967,683**	6,934,320
	Others	**3,592,414**	3,594,889
Total grant revenue		**18,826,947**	17,784,709
Services revenue	Client contributions	**103,035**	124,668
	Recovered costs	**168,896**	70,381
Total services revenue		**271,931**	195,049
Other revenue	Interest	**13,374**	25,095
	Others	**18,640**	47,146
Total other revenue		**32,014**	72,241
Total revenue		**19,130,892**	18,051,999

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 over time as the Commission satisfies the performance obligations of providing legal services.

Interest

Interest is recognised using the effective interest method.

Expenses	2022 $	2021 $
The expenses include the following specific expenses:		
Employee expenses		
Salaries and wages	**11,106,461**	9,887,428
Defined contribution superannuation expense	**1,139,825**	958,084
	12,246,286	10,845,512
Administration expense		
Purchases of goods and services	**1,121,695**	1,333,558
Depreciation expenses	**115,466**	127,947
Lease amortisation	**1,005,162**	1,015,418
Other administrative expenses		
Minor assets	**13 6,829**	250,503
Repairs and maintenance	**290,082**	341,119
Operating lease expenses	**53,959**	63,901
	2,723,193	3,132,446
Finance costs		
Interest expense on lease liabilities	**142,775**	161,538

3. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	$	$
Cash on hand	**1,450**	1,450
Cash at bank	**4,706,684**	5,090,761
Advance account	**5,000**	8,146
	4,713,134	5,100,357

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.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For The Year Ended 30 June 2022

4. Receivables

	2022	2021
	$	$
Trade receivables	-	-
Less loss allowance	-	-
	-	-
Recoveries receivable	100,430	89,213
Less loss allowance	(580)	(25)
	99,850	89,188
GST receivable	194,058	100,321
Total current trade and other receivables	293,908	189,509

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 2022 is determined as follows, the expected credit losses incorporate forward looking information.

	Current	< 90 days overdue	> 90 days overdue	Total
30 June 2022				
Expected loss rate (%)	-	-	1.28	
Gross carrying amount ($)	249,299	-	45,189	294,488
ECL provision	-	-	580	580
30 June 2021				
Expected loss rate (%)	-	-	0.05	
Gross carrying amount ($)	137,902	-	51,632	189,534
ECL provision	-	-	25	25

5. Other Assests

Prepayments		
Insurances	172,940	137,948
Rent	89,656	84,796
Salaries	2,354	9,149
Other	131,386	147,749
	396,336	379,642

6. Property, Plant and Equipment

	2022	2021
	$	$
LAND AND BUILDINGS		
Freehold land at fair value	**490,000**	420,000
Total Land	**490,000**	420,000
Buildings at fair value	**710,000**	671,743
Accumulated depreciation	**(7,100)**	(322,420)
Total buildings	**702,900**	349,323
Total land and buildings	**1,192,900**	769,323
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT		
Plant and equipment at cost	**443,961**	443,961
Accumulated depreciation	**(354,547)**	(315,547)
Total plant and equipment	**89,414**	128,414
Leasehold Improvements at cost	**1,055,368**	1,055,368
Accumulated amortisation	**(1,049,244)**	(1,045,380)
Total leasehold improvements	**6,124**	9,988
Total plant and equipment	**95,538**	138,402
RIGHT-OF-USE ASSETS		
Right-of-Use-Buildings	**9,013,958**	9,051,143
Accumulated depreciation	**(2,799,237)**	(1,864,779)
Total Right-of-Use-Buildings	**6,214,721**	7,186,364
Right-of-Use-Motor Vehicles	**337,320**	260,826
Accumulated depreciation	**(203,017)**	(149,824)
Total Right-of-Use-Motor Vehicles	**134,303**	111,002
Total right-of-use assets	**6,349,024**	7,297,366
Total property, plant and equipment	**7,637,462**	8,205,091

The fair values of freehold land and buildings have been determined by reference to direct valuations, based upon independent valuations obtained from the Northern Australia Property Consultants dated 16 February 2022.

6. 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 2022							
Balance at the beginning of year	420,000	349,323	128,414	9,988	7.186,364	111,002	8,205,091
Additions	-	-	-	-	(37,185)	76,494	39,309
Revaluations	70.000	426,179	-	-	-	-	496,179
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amortisation of ROU assets	-	-	-	-	(934,458)	(53,193)	(987,651)
Depreciation expense	-	(72,602)	(39,000)	(3,864)	-	-	(115,466)
Reclassification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance at the end of the year	**490,000**	**702,900**	**89,414**	**6,124**	**6,214,721**	**134,303**	**7,637,462**
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**

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 properly, plant and equipment below the $10,000 threshold are expensed in the year of acquisition. Each class of properly, plant and equipment is carried at cost or fair value as indicated, less, where applicable, accumulated depreciation and any impairment losses.

Freehold land and buildings are shown at their fair value based on periodic valuations, at least every five years, 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 olher 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 and at the same time income is recognised with regards to the contribution. 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(e) 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.

6. Property, Plant and Equipment (continued)

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 a! 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 depreclable assets are:

Fixed assets class	Depreciation rate
Buildings	25 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.

(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:

	2022	2021
	$	$
Amortisation expense of right-of-use assets	**987,651**	1,015,420
Interest expense on lease liabilities	**142,775**	161,538
Expense relating to short-term leases	**7,275**	-
Expense relating to leases of low-value assets	**46,684**	59,611
Total amount recognised in the comprehensive operating statement	**1,184,385**	1,236,569

Commission as a lessee

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 slraight-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 tease (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 subject to re-measurement principles consistent with the lease liability including Indexation and market rent review.

Impairment of property, plant and equipment

An asset is said to be impaired when the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount.

Non-current physical agency assets are assessed for indicators of impairment on an annual basis or whenever there is indication of impairment. If an indicator of impairment exists, the agency determines the asset's recoverable amount. The asset's recoverable amount is determined as the higher of the asset's current replacement cost and fair value less costs to sell. Any amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds the recoverable amount is recorded as an impairment loss.

Impairment losses are recognised in the comprehensive operating statement. They are disclosed as an expense unless the asset is carried at a revalued amount. Where the asset is measured at a revalued amount, the impairment loss is offset against the asset revaluation surplus for that class of asset to the extent an available balance exists in the asset revaluation surplus.

7. Payables

	2022	2021
	$	$
CURRENT		
Trade payables	**16,983**	13,044
Accrued expense	**487,230**	551,733
Other payables	**26,301**	40,116
	530,514	604,893

These amounts represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the Commission prior to the end of the financial period, which are unpaid. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition.

8. Lease Liabilities

	2022	2021
	$	$
CURRENT	**945,939**	897,368
NON-CURRENT	**5,680,190**	6,642,912
Total	**6,626,129**	7,540,280
Lease liability movement		
Opening balance	**7,540,280**	8,388,595
Additions	**39,309**	53,862
Interest expense	**142,775**	161,539
Payments	**(1,096,235)**	(1,063,715)
Closing balance	**6,626,129**	7,540,281
Future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable leases not recorded as liabilities are as follows:		
Within one year	**39,891**	39,891
Later than one year and not later than five years	**79,781**	119,672
Later than five years	**-**	-
Total	**119,672**	159,563

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.

9. Contract Liabilities

	2022	2021
	$	$
Unearned contract revenue	**95,925**	524,099

Unearned contract revenue relates to grant revenue which has been prepaid for service that will be provided In FY 2022-23. Of the amount included in the unearned contract revenue balance as at 1 July 2021, $524,099 has been recognised as revenue in 2021-22.

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.

10. Provisions

	2022	2021
CURRENT	**$**	$
Annual leave	**901,026**	823,994
Long service leave	**712,990**	768,697
Leave loading	**169,336**	153,783
Fringe benefits tax	**12,040**	45,277
Super contribution and others	**123,347**	104,450
Total current provisions	**1,918,739**	1,896,201
NON CURRENT		
Long service leave	**261,622**	250,015
Total non-current provisions	**261,622**	250,015

Reconciliations of provisions	Annual Leave $	Long Service Leave $	Leave Loading $	Other $	Total $
Balance as at 1 July	823,994	1,018,712	153,783	149,727	2,146,216
Additional provisions recognised	1,361,375	157,432	136,670	1,649,672	3,305,150
Reductions arising from payments	(1,284,343)	(201,532)	(121,117)	(1,664,012)	(3,271,005)
Balance as at 30 June 2022	901,026	974,612	169,336	135,387	2,180,361

10. Provisions (continued)

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.

11. Superannuation Commitments

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

Employee contributions for NTGPASS members are based on an elected rate of 2% to 6% salary. NTSSS benefits are entirely employer funded and do not require employee contributions. As at 30 June 2022 total superannuation expended amounted to $1,139,825 (30 June 2021 - $958,083).

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.

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.

12. Trust Accounts

The Commission operates a solicitor's trust account and the funds are not used in the achievement of its objectives. Therefore, these monies are not brought to account in the financial reports but are disclosed by way of note. The trust account is maintained for verdict and settlement monies held on behalf of legally aided persons. The Commission may recover some costs upon finalisation of these matters. As at 30 June 2022 the trust account had a $34,366.36 balance (2021 - $Nil).

13. Expenditure Commitments

	2022	2021
	$	$
Grants in aid	**2,004,114**	1,353,586
Total expenditure commitments	**2,004,114**	1,353,586

14. Cash Flow Information

Reconciliation of cash flows from operations with profit from ordinary activities:

	$	$
Surplus for the year	**52,621**	881,458
Cash flows excluded from profit attributable to operating activities		
Non cash flows in profit:		
- depreciation and amortisation	**1,120,628**	1,143,367
- loss on disposal of assets/assets donated	**-**	2
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
- (increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	**(104,399)**	39,827
- (increase)/decrease in other assets	**(16,694)**	(70,887)
- increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	**(502,553)**	176,882
- increase/(decrease) in provisions	**34,145**	(68,573)
Cash flows from operations	**583,748**	2,102,076

Notes to the Financial Statements
For The Year Ended 30 June 2022

15. Contingency Legal Aid Fund

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

	2022	2021
	$	$
Opening balance	**1,060,441**	1,078,525
Interest earned	**7,659**	9,568
Client contributions received	**-**	-
Costs recovered	**28,541**	14,764
	36,200	24,332
Disbursements:		
Legal costs	**(69,314)**	(42,412)
Bank charges	**(4)**	(4)
	(69,318)	(42,416)
Adjustments:		
Add: Unpresented cheques	**-**	-
Less: Interest earned & reinvested last year	**-**	-
Cash balance at year end	**1,027,323**	1,060,441
Less: Clients/grants approved but not paid at year end	**(277,374)**	(273,834)
Net funds available	**749,949**	786,607

16. Reserves

	2022	2021
	$	$
Property, plant & equipment reserve	**332,652**	257,789
Asset revaluation	**1,154,266**	658,087
Commonwealth reserves	**2,088,487**	1,525,688
Total	**3,575,405**	2,441,564
Movements in reserves		
Property, plant & equipment reserve (funded)		
Opening balance	**257,789**	399,980
Transfer from (redistribution to) retained earnings	**74,863**	(142,191)
Closing balance	**332,652**	257,789
Asset revaluation reserve		
Opening balance	**658,087**	658,087
Revaluation increments on revaluation of:		
- Freehold land	**70,000**	-
- Buildings on freehold land	**426,179**	-
Closing balance	**1,154,266**	658,087
Commonwealth reserve		
Opening balance	**1,525,688**	461,347
Transfer from (redistribution to) retained earnings	**562,799**	1,064,341
Closing balance	**2,088,487**	1,525,688
Total	**3,575,405**	2,441,564

17. Accumulated Funds

Accumulated funds at the beginning of the financial year	**617,547**	658,239
Net surplus / (deficit)	**52,621**	881,458
Transfers from/(to) reserves	**(637,662)**	(922,150)
Accumulated funds at the end of the financial year	**32,506**	617,547

18. 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 are as follows:

	Note	2022	2021
		$	$
Financial assets			
Cash and cash equivalents - at amortised cost	3	**4,713,134**	5,100,357
Trade and other receivables - at amortised cost	4	**99,850**	89,188
Total financial assets		**4,812,984**	5,189,545
Financial liabilities			
Trade payables and accruals - at amortised cost	7	**530,514**	604,893
Total financial liabilities		**530,514**	604,893

Categories of financial instruments

The agency's financial instruments are classified in accordance with AASB 9.

On initial recognition, the Commission classifies its financial assets into the following categories, those measured at:

- amortised cost

Financial assets are not reciassified subsequent to their initial recognillon unless the Commission changes its business model for managing financial assets,

Amortised cost

Assets measured at amortlsed cost are financial assets where:

- the business model is to hold assets to collect contractual cash flows; and
- the contractual terms give rise on specified dates to cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest on the principal amount outstanding.

On initial recognition assets are measured at fair value plus transaction costs, except for trade and other receivables which is measured at transaction price.

Subsequent to initial recognition, these assets are carried at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method less provision for impairment.

The effective interest method is a method calculating the amortised cost of a financial asset and allocating the interest revenue over the relevant period using the effective interest rate, which is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset to the net carrying amount of the financial asset.

Interest income, foreign exchange gains or losses and impairment are recognised in profit or loss. Gain or loss on derecognltion is recognised in profil or loss.

Financial liabilities

The Commission measures all financial liabilities initially at fair value less transaction costs, subsequently financial liabilities are measured at amorlised cost using the effective interest rate method.

The effective Interest method is a method calculating the amortised cost of a financial liability and allocating the interest expense over the relevant period using the effective interest rate, which is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments through the expected life of the financial liability to the net carrying amount of the financial liability.

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 analysis 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.

18. Financial Risk Management (continued)

Financial liability and financial asset maturity analysis

	Within 1 year		1 to 5 years		Over 5 years		Total	
	2022 $	2021 $	**2022 $**	2021 $	**2022 $**	2021 $	**2022 $**	2021 $
Financial liabilities due for payment								
Trade and other payables (excluding estimated annual leave and net GST payable)	**530,514**	604,893	**-**	-	**-**	-	**530,514**	604,893
Total expected outflows	**530,514**	604,893	**-**	-	**-**	-	**530,514**	604,893
Financial assets – cash flows realisable								
Cash and cash equivalents	**4,713,134**	5,100,357	**-**	-	**-**	-	**4,713,134**	5,100,357
Trade receivables (net)	**99,850**	89,188	**-**	-	**-**	-	**99,850**	89,188
Total anticipated inflows	**4,812,984**	5,189,545	**-**	-	**-**	-	**4,812,984**	5,189,545
Net (outflow)/inflow expected on financial instruments	**4,282,470**	4,584,652	**-**	-	**-**	-	**4,282,470**	4,584,652

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	
	2022	2021	**2022**	2021	**2022**	2021	**2022**	2021
	%	%	**$**	$	**$**	$	**$**	$
Financial assets								
Cash and cash equivalents	**0.14**	0.15	**4,713,134**	5,100,357	**-**	-	**4,713,134**	5,100,357
Receivables	**-**	-	**-**	-	**99,850**	89,188	**99,850**	89,188
Total financial assets			**4,713,134**	5,100,357	**99,850**	89,188	**4,812,984**	5,189,545
Financial liabilities								
Accounts payable and accruals	**-**	-	**530,514**	604,893	**-**	-	**530,514**	604,893
Total financial liabilities			**530,514**	604,893	**-**	-	**530,514**	604,893

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.

	2022		2021	
	+1.00%	**-1.00%**	+1.00%	-1.00%
Cash and cash equivalents	**47,131**	**(47,131)**	51,004	(51,004)
	47,131	**(47,131)**	51,004	(51,004)

Notes to the Financial Statements
For The Year Ended 30 June 2022

19. 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 2022				
Recurring fair value measurements				
Land	-	490,000	-	490,000
Buildings	-	702,900	-	702,900
Plant and Equipment	-	-	89,414	89,414
Leasehold Improvements	-	-	6,124	6,124
Right of use buildings and motor vehicles	-	-	6,349,024	6,349,024
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

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.

19. 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 2022	Fair value at 30 June 2021	Valuation technique(s)	Inputs used
Description	**$**	**$**		
Freehold land	**490,000**	**420,000**	**Market approach using recent observable market data for similar properties**	**- Price per square metre; market borrowing rate**
Buildings	**702,900**	**349,323**	**Capitalisation on an assumed income based on comparative properties**	**- Price per square metre; market borrowing rate**
Plant and equipment	**89,414**	**128,414**	**Depreciated replacement cost**	**- Market buying /selling price** **- Useful lives of 5 years** **- Replacement cost based on comparable price of modern equivalents**
Leasehold improvements	**6,124**	**9,988**	**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	**6,349,024**	**7,297,366**	**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 2022 has been determined and approved by the Board on the basis of an independent valuation obtained from Northern Australia Property Consultants dated 16 February 2022.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.

20. Auditors' Remuneration

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

	2022	2021
	$	$
Remuneration of the Auditor General for the Northern Territory, for:		
- auditing or reviewing the financial statements	**18,000**	17,000
Total	**18,000**	17,000

21. 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
Annmarie Lumsden	Commissioner ex officio	6/12/2021	Current
Suzan Cox QC	Commissioner ex officio	ex officio	12/11/2021
Samantha Byrne	Commissioner	1/07/2013	Current
Ali Nur	Commissioner	25/07/2016	Current
Tessa Czislowski	Commissioner	09/11/2018	Current
Hugh Bond	Commissioner	23/04/2021	14/03/2022
Jonathan Parry	Commissioner	6/05/2022	Current
Elizabeth Farquhar	Commissioner	11/10/2021	Current

(i) Transactions with Commissioners

During the year, surplus legal work has been allocated to legal firms Commissioners who hold executive positions in legal firms may have surplus legal work allocated to them. All applications for grants of aid received, including those from Commissioners who hold executive positions, are on an arm's length basis and are assessed in accordance with the Commission's Guidelines.

21. 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:

	2022	2021
	$	$
Short-term benefits	**2,731**	1,953
Total	**2,731**	1,953

Executives and Senior Management

Name	Position
Annmarie Lumsden	Director
Susan Cox QC	Ex-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

	2022	2021
	$	$
Short-term benefits	**1,167,79**	1,277,514
Post-employment benefits	**-**	-
Other long-term benefits	**112,068**	159,028
Termination benefits	**-**	-
Total	**1,279,863**	1,436,542

(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.

	2022 $	2021 $
Income	**16,972,374**	16,131,414
Expenses	**(478,565)**	(536,183)
Receivables	**1,025**	8,602
Payables	**(30,117)**	(4,549)
Unearned Revenue	**(5,000)**	(132,173)

22. Contingencies

There were no known contingent assets or contingent liabilities of a significant nature at 30 June 2022 (2021 - $nil).

Commission Offices

Darwin
9-11 Cavenagh Street, DARWIN NT 0800
Locked Bag 11, DARWIN NT 0801

Palmerston
Shop 6, Goyder Centre, 25 Chung Wah Terrace,
PALMERSTON NT 0830

Katherine
20 Second Street, KATHERINE NT 0850
PO Box 145, KATHERINE NT 0851

Tennant Creek
Shop 3, 163 Paterson Street,
TENNANT CREEK NT 0860
PO Box 794, TENNANT CREEK NT 0861

Alice Springs
77 Hartley Street, ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870
PO Box 969, ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871

Legal Aid Helpline:
1800 019 343

Office hours:
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Website address:
www.legalaid.nt.gov.au

Email address:
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Facsimile:
(08) 8911 0016

YouTube NTLegalAid

www.facebook.com/NTLAC

Mim Cole

Mim Cole, a Larrakia, Wardaman and Karajarri woman, is a visual artist from Darwin, Northern Territory. Mim has been creating art since she was a teenager, learning techniques through practice and observation of the art-making of her Mother, Uncles and large artistic family.

Mim is a natural artist who experiments with and applies her traditional and abstract compositions to a variety of media including painting, printmaking and a wide range of design work. Her sense of composition is particularly inspired by the rawness of ancient Aboriginal art.

Mim's creative practice, licensed under the name of Mimmim, holds a strong connection to identity, family, country, nature and community which she channels intuitively into her art. Mim enjoys pushing the boundaries of her arts practice using a mix of vibrant colours with a traditional palette to express dynamic movement in each painting and design.

Story

The centre circle represents the NT Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC). The lines travelling outwards are the connections, journeys, and travel across the NT that NTLAC achieve to guide and support community. The outer circles represent the people in community that NTLAC help.

The cross hatching is an honouring of Gulumoerrgin/Larrakia culture and country in which NTLAC is located.

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