

Gosnells Community Legal Centre

ANNUAL REPORT

2009

“Committed to Social Justice”

FUNDING BODIES

Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc. acknowledges the funding provided by the following funding bodies throughout the reporting period 2008 - 2009.

- Commonwealth Attorney General's Department
- Department for Child Protection
- Department of Commerce
- Legal Aid WA
- Dept. of the Attorney General for Western Australia
- Law Society of WA Public Purposes Trust
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Lotterywest

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

CHAIRPERSON

LUKE EDMONDS

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

LYNNE BUTLER

SECRETARY

MARION LEACH
(Centre Manager)

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

MARGARET FITZPATRICK

HELEN STAMP

PHILIPPA HARRISON

SHIRLEY GLOVER



Gosnells Community Legal Centre

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The past twelve months have seen a focus on increased community understanding and awareness of the effects of poverty and disadvantage, as people across all walks of life experience the impacts of the Global Financial Crisis.

WACOSS (Western Australia Council of Social Services) recently released 2009 cost of Living Paper showing that the cost of living increased to approximately \$105 in the past two years. This figure does not include the costs of education, clothing or vehicle maintenance and for WA families on low incomes they are being further disadvantaged and in increased danger of losing their homes and spiralling into poverty and debt cycles.

Gosnells Community Legal Centre was struggling to cope with supporting high numbers of vulnerable clients before the effects of the economic downturn were felt by the wider community. This year the complexity of difficulties experienced by clients has significantly increased and their need for on-going assistance and support is not adequately reflected by statistics alone. Counting casework numbers, fails to tell the full story of hours and days spent advocating and supporting individuals; or the pressure placed on Centre staff.

Funding and Services

GCLC is primarily funded under the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program. The CLSP funds are administered through Legal Aid WA and include

Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc

Commonwealth and State funding. During this year, we also received additional one-off Funding through this Program. A partnership with Legal Aid WA funds the Centre's Family Law Service. Other funding is provided through the Department for Child Protection for Financial Counselling Services (Maddington and Gosnells), Department of Commerce for Tenancy Advocacy and Education Service and 12 month funding through the Law Society's Public Purposes Trust towards our Domestic Violence Legal Service. The Centre's Emergency Relief funding is received through Lotterywest and Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Funds were also received through the Proceeds of Crime, Criminal Property Confiscation Act to produce specific Domestic Violence Legal Service brochures and Centre posters for distribution to appropriate referral outlets.

During the year funding enabled GCLC to provide information, advice and casework, through the following services:

- Family Law Legal Service
- Child Support Legal Service
- Family & Domestic Violence Legal Service
- Volunteer Legal Service
- Financial Counselling Services (Gosnells and Maddington)
- Tenancy Advocacy and Education Service
- Welfare Rights Advocacy Service
- Family Dispute Resolution and Mediation Services
- Community Legal Education
- Policy and Law Reform activities
- Emergency Relief and Community Advocacy Service

Further details relating to our services are provided on page 24.

Community Legal Education and Law Reform

The Centre has been involved in a number of community development related activities throughout the year.

Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc

Community Legal Education projects have included:

- Fortnightly accredited Family Law Information Sessions and individual private consultation with family law staff
- Acknowledging NAIDOC Week, International Women's Day and White Ribbon Day
- Providing Financial Counselling sessions on budgeting information, purchasing a used motor vehicle and general financial counselling information to new migrant groups
- Hosting sessions for other Community Workers; a 2 day Tenancy Training program with Tenants Advice Service, hosting an Equal Opportunity Commission information session
- By request, arranging client feedback and customer service evaluation for Department of Housing
- Enduring Power of Attorney and Wills Information Session at Addie Mills Centre
- Domestic Violence Legal Service information to other Community Legal Centre Workers and a session to local community workers
- Participating in Gosnells Community Lotteries House expo to showcase services provided with the House.
- Staffing a stall at the Aboriginal Women's Health forum;
- A guest speaker engagement at Perth Family Relationship Centre staff meeting
- Updating our website, enabling off-site maintenance by Amanda Hashman (volunteer)
- Homeless Persons Week 2008 – partnership with Ruah and Salvation Army
- A Children's Artwork competition during Anti-Poverty Week 2008 – partnership with Gosnells Primary School.

GCLC's contribution to Law Reform and Legal Policy projects, this year, included:

- Equal Opportunity Commission submission highlighting discriminatory practices within Private Rental Market towards CaLD and Aboriginal people.
- National Human Rights Submission
- Participating in community workshops relating to The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness
- Organised and hosted a South East Metro Housing Forum
- Provided submission to Electricity Code Consultative Committee on Review of the Code of Conduct for supply of electricity for small use customers.
- Attended workshop and contributed to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination against Women. Provided input to the Australian NGO Shadow Report.

Research and Community Involvement

The Centre uses various research systems to continuously improve service deliver, administration procedures and management policies. Community based research assists in adapting the Centre's operations to best meet the needs of clients and to identify Community Legal Education and Law Reform activities. Community based research is enhanced by the Centre continuing to maintain and build a strong network of contacts through partnerships and links with a wide range of organisations in the community. Staff regularly attend network meetings relevant to their areas of expertise and this assists in sharing information and maintaining awareness of current trends in the community service sector. It also provides an opportunity to maintain effective referral arrangements that benefit our client group. In the last year, Centre staff have been involved with:

Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc

- Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project (ADVIP)
- Child Support Stakeholder Engagement Group (WA)
- Community Legal Centres Association (WA)
- Domestic Violence Legal Workers Network
- Family Law Network Hosted By The Family Court
- Gosnells Community Lotteries House Inc
- Legal Aid Child Support Liaison Group
- Professional Indemnity Insurance Committee
- South East Metropolitan Emergency Relief Forum
- State Emergency Relief Committee
- WACOSS Emergency Relief Forum
- Financial Counsellors Association of WA
- Community Legal Education Worker Network
- Financial Counsellors Association (WA)
- Financial Counselling Resource Project (Case Support)
- Child Support Liaison Group Meeting
- Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners Forum
- Tenants Advice Service Network
- Centrelink & Community Agencies Liaison
- Welfare Rights Sub Committee
- Western Australian Dispute Resolution Association Inc (WADRA)

New Computer Network

This year, our service delivery was greatly enhanced by the introduction of a new computer network and multipurpose printer-copier thanks to grant funding from Lotterywest. Centre staff had been struggling for the past few years with IT equipment that failed to cope with the workload. The introduction of new computers and excellent IT support has created a more efficient service and reduced the frustration and time required to constantly attend to computer breakdowns.

Staffing Issues

Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc

Without the professionalism, teamwork and strong support provided by Staff, Volunteers and members of the Management Committee the achievements and positive client outcomes would not be possible. During the year Gosnells Community Legal Centre employed 24 staff and 18 volunteers contributed to the Centre's activities.

In addition to their individual caseloads, our solicitors provide daily supervision to paralegal staff. Their attention to detail and support, underpins the high quality of casework provided by the Centre. This level of responsibility is acknowledged and appreciated by the Management Committee. Linda, our Principal Solicitor continues to share her expertise and provide Management support to assist the Centre to expand and meet changing community needs. We extend our sincere thanks to Linda, and to Lorraine, Funmi and Samantha.

The Centre's very busy Reception area provides information and referrals to anxious and distressed clients. Anne and Tanya ensure a welcoming atmosphere and attend to all clients and telephone calls. They are supported in this role, by Joe and our volunteers Jim and Val, to ensure that reception and administration areas run smoothly.

All staff were involved in supporting and training new workers, students and volunteers throughout the year to further benefit our wider community.

During this year, Tara College completed her Certificate in Business (Legal Administration) traineeship; Rushika Patrick assisted as Community Legal Education Officer until her contract ended in December 2008; Christian Eriyagama assisted on a casual basis during his University break and he brought a range of different skills to the Centre. Their placements have now concluded and we wish them well in their future careers.

Tanya Branningan (Reception administration) and Phyllis Cusworth (Legal Secretary) joined our team and have both settled into their roles extremely well. Angela Pelligra and Tracey George have each been working on our longstanding project of redrafting the Domestic Violence and the Law

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Handbook. Their attention to detail and research skills have been very much appreciated as this Handbook is a vital tool for other Community Workers and their clients.

Tracey completed her Articled Clerkship with us this year, and her contribution to the Centre has been highly valued.

Our Tenancy Advocacy and Education Service, Financial Counselling Services, and Duty Intake Service have provided support to countless families and individuals. Pauline Smith (Financial Counsellor) and Christine (Tenancy Advocate) both accepted the challenge of new positions and have enhanced our services. Together with Shirley, Pauline McNamara, Manelka, Anu, Lorraine Adams and Stacey, all paralegal staff worked closely together to ensure clients were supported through a range of difficulties.

The provision of one-off additional funding through the Community Legal Centre program, enabled our Family Dispute Resolution Service to expand. In June, Claire joined Virginia in the Mediation and FDR Service and Virginia, Linda, Samantha and Funmi completed their FDR practitioner accreditation.

The support of our loyal Volunteer Legal Service solicitors requires special mention and thanks. Throughout the year, a roster of solicitors assist clients with appointments after hours, and GCLC staff solicitors provide support for these sessions. Maryse, John, Terri-Anne, Cameron and Samantha have contributed many hours of expertise to make this vital service possible.

Anu Herath has very successfully managed the Centre's financial records and systems over the past few years. Anu has recently resigned from this position and we are extremely fortunate that Matt Blackshaw has accepted a contract arrangement to undertake this role. Matt has previously provided relief financial services and is familiar with our systems and funding body requirements.

Being part of the Management Committee of a Community Association can often end up being a thankless and arduous task. Occasionally though, a

Management Committee has the good fortune to employ a Manager whose abilities, empathy and understanding inspires staff and volunteers and makes the job of the Committee a pleasure. Marion is one such Manager and I cannot thank her enough for the massive contribution she makes to the Centre. The CLCAWA also recognises Marion's talent and ability and have snaffled her to join their Executive Committee.

The Management Committee sincerely values the efforts of all staff and volunteers. Earlier this year a 6% salary increase was made to all staff, and Journey Insurance cover for staff and an Employee Assistance Program contract has continued. This provides confidential, no cost counselling to all staff, volunteers and their immediate family. Supporting distressed clients and competing demands can be overwhelming at times, and the availability of independent professional counsellors is a necessary support service for our staff.

Throughout the year, staff have attended various profession development and training sessions, conferences and workshops. With the introduction of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Points for solicitors, Financial Counsellors training and supervision requirements; all staff are now recording their individual professional development activities on our CLSIS database.

Planning and Service Reviews

Last year, the Centre developed a new Strategic Plan for 2008-2011. This year the Strategic Plan was reviewed in April and by 30th June, all targets and performance indicators were met.

Recording statistics is a necessary reporting requirement and a vital tool for recording the activities of the Centre. To assist in capturing quality data, staff attended CLSIS training during the year, and an emphasis was placed on recording non-casework activities. Reporting for Financial Counselling Services and Emergency Relief program require additional manual data collection and staff have worked to streamline these systems.

A formal review of the Centre's Financial Counselling Services was held by Department of Child Protection in August 2008. This Review was positive and no concerns were identified. During the year, an additional Financial Counsellor position was created to reflect the increase in funding and the requirement that Financial Counselling Services operate over 5 days and participate in the new Hardship Utilities Grant Scheme (HUGS).

In recognition of the increased number of requests for financial assistance; our Emergency Relief funding increased. At times, the Centre has not been able to attend to the high number of clients presenting for assistance, and Reception staff have begun recording details of clients who are not assisted on the day they present for assistance. We are hoping this data will be useful in future funding application requests to demonstrate the need for additional staff to distribute Emergency Relief funds and to provide assessment and casework related to underlying client issues.

Future Plans

The Centre is facing a number of changes and challenges in the next financial year. The Family Dispute Resolution Service continues to grow and requires separate funding. Without the additional one-off funding provided through the CLC Funding Program, the FDR Service could not continue.

Redrafting of the Centre's Constitution is planned. This has been on hold for the past few years awaiting the proposed changes to the Association Incorporation Act. Our constitution will be amended further if the Act does change in the future.

Changes to a number of staffing positions will be monitored during early 2009/2010 to check that workload and resources are appropriately allocated. During June, a review of all staffing positions was undertaken in preparation for 2009/10 financial year. This review saw the appointment of a second part-time worker in our FDR service to reduce some of the additional workload on Centre solicitors.

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The Duty Intake roster was adjusted to improve the distribution of work across Tenancy and Financial Counselling Services and Lorraine Adams was engaged on a 12 month contract to cover Thursdays.

Shirley's (Senior Paralegal) position was adjusted to provide 2 days per week assistance to the DV Legal Service and Funmi's contracted position will also support the DV Legal Service. The Centre's administration and reception activities will be monitored to ensure that all procedures are documented and adequate reception relief arrangements are in place.

Our Strategic Plan will be reviewed 6 monthly and teamwork planning will be required to ensure a balance between casework demands, our CLE and Law Reform activities, requests to participate in community development projects, local events and our capacity to provide supervision students and volunteers placements.

We intend seeking additional pro-bono support from Solicitors interested in joining our Volunteer Legal Service roster and to enhance the availability of this service. We also recognise the increasing number of CaLD clients requesting support from our Centre and will seek to further identify the issues and needs of this client group to ensure our service delivery is appropriate and accessible. Our connection with local agencies supporting refugees and new migrants will assist in identifying any gaps or Community Legal Education requirements.

Funding is being sought to re-print our Domestic Violence and the Law Handbook and redrafting of this publication is being finalised with support from many community sources. This will be our primary CLE activity for next year.

The 30th National Community Legal Centre Conference is being held in Perth and will provide an opportunity for most caseworkers to attend and develop networks and a deeper understanding of the issues facing all CLC's in Australia.

Conclusion

Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc

The strength of Gosnells Community Legal Centre lies in it's connection to the local community and understanding of client issues. We have received support from staff of various government departments, community organisations and members of parliament; and on behalf of the Centre, I thank them for their continued support throughout the year.

I also extend my appreciation to the Centre's members and this year's Management Committee for their support, time and commitment. I especially thank Shirley Glover for her valued contribution and the thoughtful insight she provided as Staff Representative on the Management Committee over the past 2 years. To the dedicated team of skilled staff and volunteers of Gosnells Community Legal Centre – thankyou.

Luke Edmonds
Chairperson
October 2009

Mission, Vision and Objectives

(From 3 Year Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011)

MISSION: Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc. is dedicated to achieving equality and access to social justice and human rights for all members of the community.

VISION: A community where everyone values and respects human rights and social justice.

OBJECTIVES:

Management and Governance

1. That Gosnells Community Legal Centre's mission and values are implemented.
2. The management of Gosnells Community Legal Centre is transparent and accountable to all stakeholders.
3. Gosnells Community Legal Centre is financially accountable and viable.

Administration and Operations

1. Quality Services are delivered that meet service standards.
2. Emerging community trends are recognised and responded to.

Service Delivery:

1. Legal, social and economic justice for people within the community is provided.
2. The prevalence of legal, social and economic injustice is reduced.
3. The community has a voice in law reform.

CORE VALUES:

- Above all, a commitment to social justice.
- A commitment to equity – a fairer distribution of legal, social and economic resources and power.
- A commitment to participation – maximising opportunities for the community to participate in the circumstances and decisions that affect their lives.
- A commitment to a just workplace that values respect, integrity and teamwork.
- A commitment to access – fair and equitable access for all persons to those services that are important to their quality of life and the upholding of their legal, social and economic rights.
- A commitment to rights – striving for fairer, more comprehensive rights that can be enforced by all people, regardless of gender, income or cultural background.
- A commitment to delivering a professional service.

All staff and Management Committee members will work towards achieving these principles for our community. This commitment to social justice must be paramount in all decision making.

USERS OF THE SERVICE – A SNAPSHOT

GCLC recognises that many barriers exist to prevent members of our community from enjoying equal access to justice. One of the most significant barriers is the lack of financial resources. Consequently all of our services are targeted at low-income earners or disadvantaged people.

Except for the Financial Counselling services (Gosnells and Maddington regions), the services provided by GCLC are not geographically bound. Services focus on the South East Metropolitan corridor from Canning to Armadale, however, we receive requests for assistance from many areas.

Each year the Centre sets targets as a way of measuring performance. In 2008/2009 the Centre exceeded those targets in each area.

TOTAL CLIENTS ASSISTED (Advice and Casework):	1318
(776 new clients, 375 repeat clients, 167 existing clients)	
Number of Information and Referral Activities:	2002
TOTAL ASSISTED:	3320

ACTIVITIES:

Assistance provided:

Information	2002
Advice (one off assistance)	941

Casework:

Cases Open (at 1 July 2008)	174
Cases opened during 2008/2009	832
Cases still open at 1 July 2009 and ongoing	192
Cases closed during 2008/2009	814

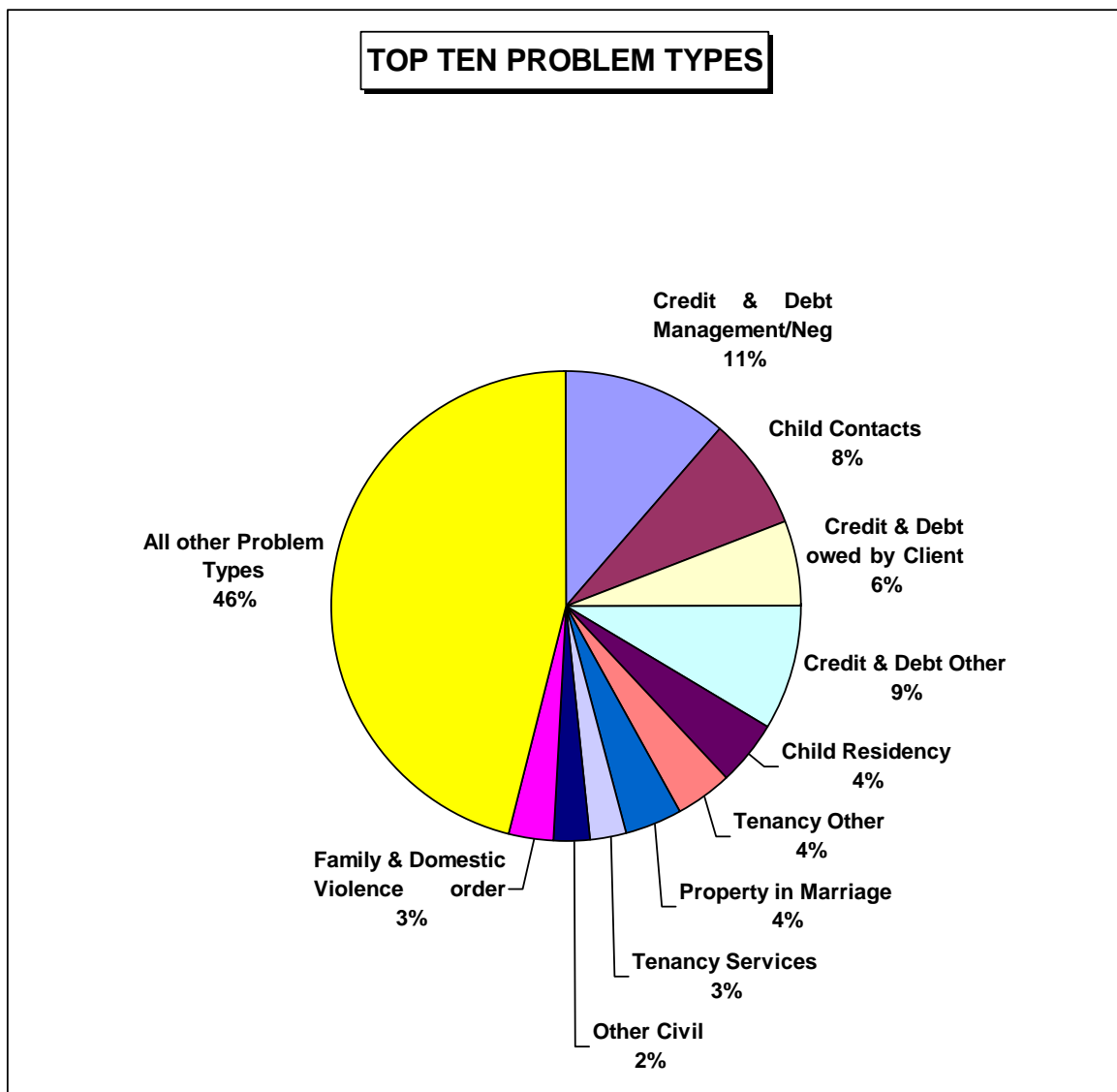
Project activities:

Community Legal Education Activities	18
Law Reform and Legal Policy Projects	9

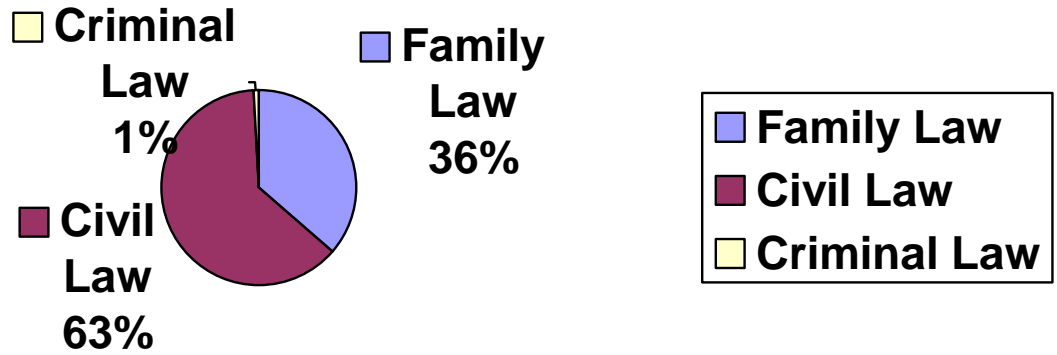
SERVICE PROVISION

During the 2008/2009 financial year, GCLC assisted many individuals and families through casework services, information, advice and emergency relief assistance. A significant number of these clients also received assistance in the form of support with document preparation, advocacy and representation at appeals.

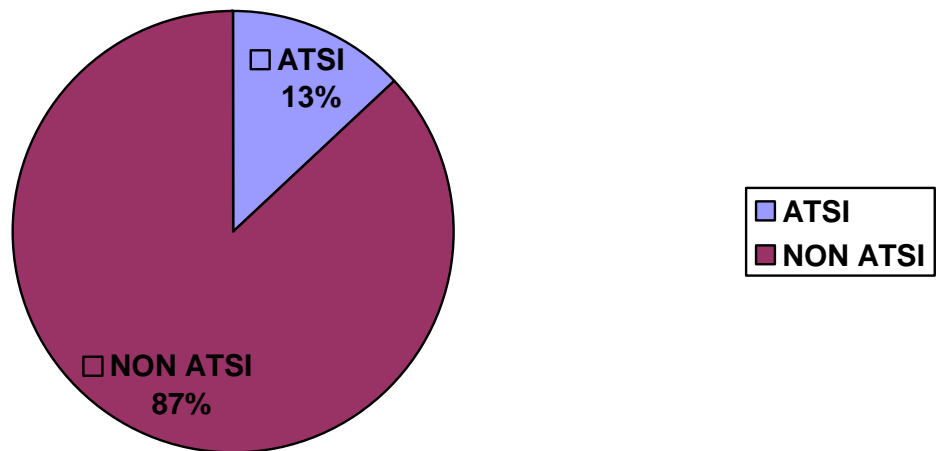
Information and advice statistics represented below are taken from the national CLSIS data collection system and includes family law, child support, domestic violence service and tenancy.

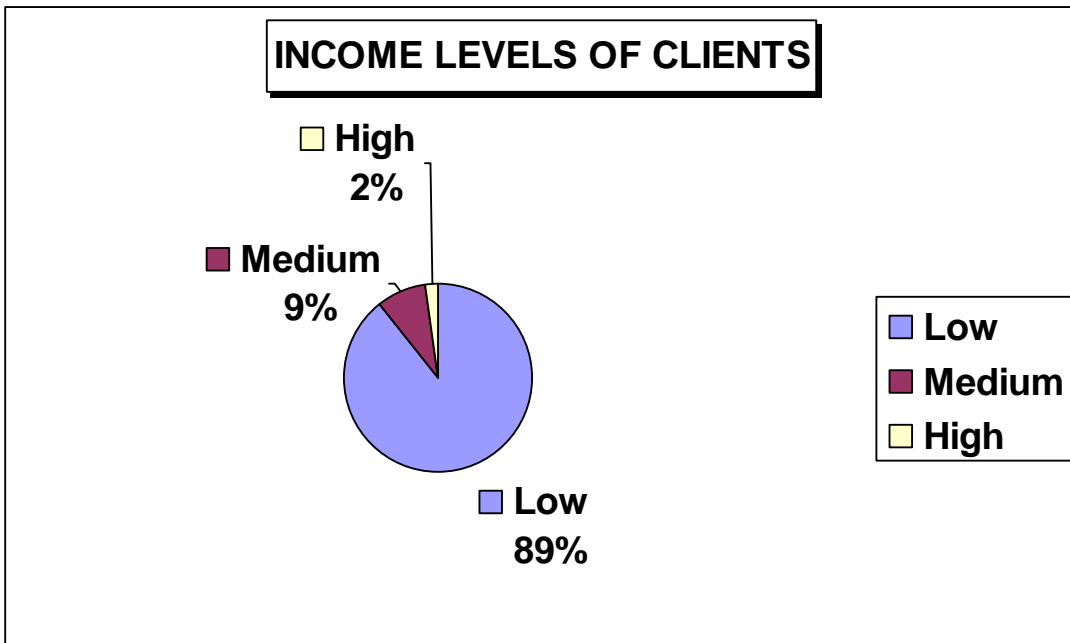
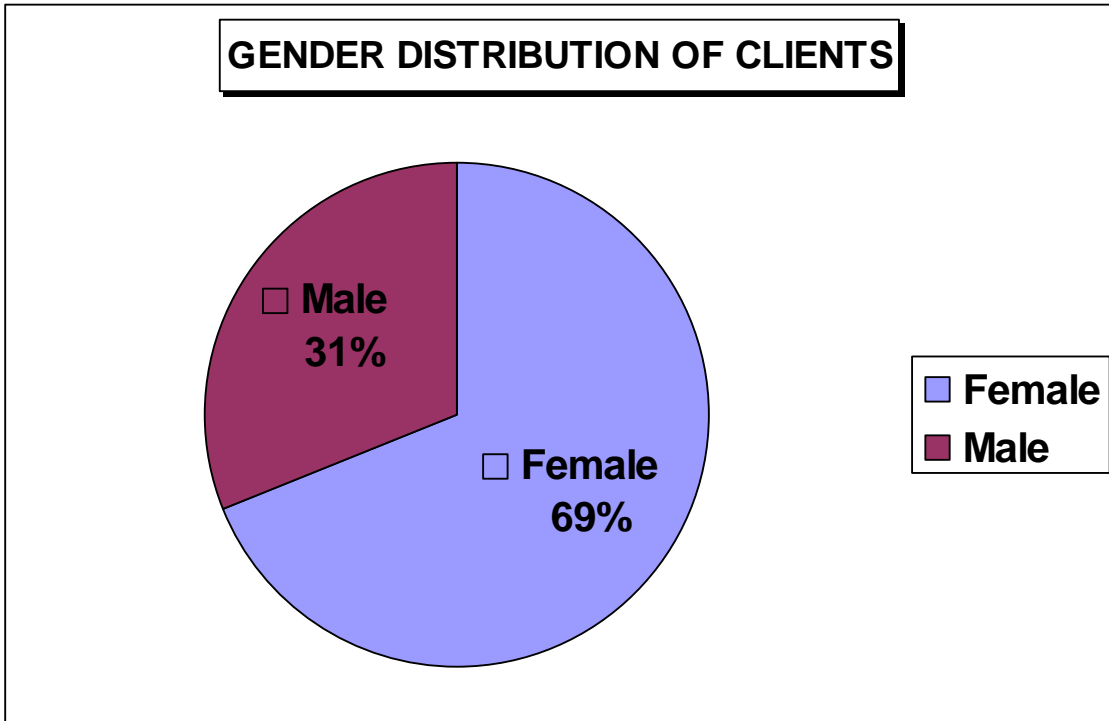


NUMBER OF SERVICES FOR EACH PROBLEM TYPE



NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CLIENTS





ACCESS AND EQUITY

Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc

The Centre's Mission Statement reads: Gosnells community Legal Centre is dedicated to achieving equality and access to social justice and human rights for all members of the community.

To support this statement, the Centre has a Client Service Charter and a specific Access and Equity policy. These strategies emphasise that persons using the service have the right not to be discriminated against, either in the planning, design or administration of CLC programs; or in the way services are delivered by Centre staff.

Centre procedures include:

- Services are free of charge
- Information and signs are in plain English and appropriate for visually impaired clients. Use of other languages and interpreters is encouraged
- Access for the most disadvantaged is encouraged by reviewing opening times and use of public transport
- Ongoing consultation and collaboration with clients and community groups
- Services are culturally appropriate and all staff receive cultural awareness training
- Doorways and lifts are not blocked from wheelchair access at any time
- GCLC is committed to working with the Aboriginal community and migrant and refugee communities, but recognizes that there are not homogenous groups and that differences must be acknowledged and respected.

CLIENT SURVEY STATISTICS

To assist in ensuring that access and equity issues are addressed, GCLC provides a survey to clients when their file is closed. Surveys are also provided to clients attending Community Legal Education presentation and Family Law Information Sessions

Many clients return our surveys and others provide donations, letters, cards and express their thanks for the assistance provided.

Feedback from the client satisfaction surveys are discussed with individual staff and also form part of our staff meetings and forward planning processes to enable continuous improvements to our service delivery.

In 2008/2009, 114 client satisfaction surveys were returned.

Separate reporting results were compiled for Advice and Casework surveys; and Community Legal Education activities. Satisfaction results indicated:

Advice and Casework:

- Explanation to client 100%
- Access 100%
- Responsiveness 100%
- Treatment of client 100%
- Usefulness of assistance 100%

Community Legal Education:

- Explanation to client 97.67%
- Access 100%
- Responsiveness 100%
- Treatment of client 96.55%
- Usefulness of assistance 93.1%

Feedback below reflects some comments:

What part of the service were you most satisfied with?

- All of them.
- The extra care and support from the solicitor and genuine interest.
- The length that was taken to help me with my matter.
- Impartial and considerate attitude of all staff.
- The friendly way they treat us, give response all the time.
- Compassionate and understanding of our situation. Prompt action and service given by all concerned at the Centre.
- Solicitor was excellent. Very helpful and professional. Very good at their job and I was so pleased with the results.
- Treated with respect and compassion during extremely difficult times.
Excellent follow up.
- Friendly, polite and always smiling.
- All aspects were excellent, friendly staff, made to feel comfortable, not just a number.
- Kept informed of what was happening each step of the way.
- Everyone was very kind and understanding and extremely helpful in our circumstances.

What part of the service were you least satisfied with?

- None
- All the questions I had to answer, but I guess that comes with it.

Are there any ways in which you think we could improve our service?

- Just keep doing what you are doing.
- Maybe more days.
- To have separate mediation.
- Extending the hours.
- More staff to ease the pressure on the workers.
- More government assistance, more staff. Maybe DVD's to watch about helping people understand what happens when you go bankrupt or any other thing.

THE SERVICES

Hours of Operation: All Centre services are open to the public from 9.30-12.30 and 1.30-3.30 Tuesday-Friday. Staff are available at other times for telephone assistance and to provide follow-up casework and administration tasks. The two Financial Counselling Services (Maddington and Gosnells) operate Monday-Friday.

This section of the Annual Report covers the main issues and activities of the Centre's services during 2008/2009.

THE LEGAL SERVICE

Gosnells Community Legal Centre's Legal Service contains the following programs:

- Child Support (advice, minor assistance and documentation)
- Family Law
- Domestic Violence Legal Service
- Volunteer Legal Service (after hours service providing initial advice in family and general law matters provided by volunteer solicitors)
- Generalist Para-legal (assisting with completing court documents, legal aid applications and facilitating access to legal advice, information regarding Department of Housing and Centrelink, advocacy and representation at appeals).
- Community Legal Education and Law Reform Projects
- Tenancy Advocacy and Education
- Financial Counselling Services
- Family Dispute Resolution and Mediation

Child Support Service

The Child Support Service has operated continuously since 1991. Linda Saverimutto has been the Child Support Solicitor and Principal solicitor throughout this period. Funmi Adesina has also been mainly attending to Child Support case work during the year 2008/2009. The Centre continues to offer a full time service to carer parents and liable parents on limited income. We have also been assisting joint shared care parents under the current Family Law legislation. Our clients are mainly sole parents on Centrelink benefits. The service assists clients with advice and preparation of documents so that the clients can represent themselves in the Family Court. Our clients do not get a grant of Legal Aid for court representation and depend on our assistance for self representation. The fortnightly Family Law information sessions have been updated to include the latest Child Support amendments.

Funmi and Linda represent the Centre on the National Child Support Stake holders Committee and make contributions regarding Child Support matters. The Centre is also represented on the Child Support Liason Committee consisting of Legal aid, Child Support Agency, Centrelink ,Family Court and the

Solicitor General's Department. This is a networking group and very helpful in discussing day to day case work and liaising with other relevant agencies.

Funmi and Linda are also Accredited Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners and assist in Child Support mediation. GCLC has established a Partnership with Midland Family Relationship Centre for referral of clients who need mediation for Child Support matters as we are a specialist Child Support Centre, We have had some successful outcomes with clients coming to an agreement with regard to Child Support.

Throughout the 2008/2009 year the Child Support Service has assisted many clients and achieved positive outcomes. The client surveys also indicate high client satisfaction with this service.

Family Law Service

The Family Law solicitor primarily provides legal advice in regard to arrangements for children. Property law advice is also provided where clients meet our income and assets limit. Casework includes negotiation by letter and telephone, preparation of Family Court documents and applications for Legal Aid.

We continue to liaise and build relationships with the various Family Dispute Resolution providers, mainly Family Relationship Centres at Perth and Midland in order to assist our clients as they comply with compulsory participation in Family Dispute Resolution.

We note that a high proportion of our clients present with Violence Restraining Orders, either as the protected person or as the person bound by the Order. This adds an additional challenge to our work in trying to resolve disputes in high conflict situations.

A trend that we observe is that much of our work is in preparing Court documents and rather less in negotiating with the other party.

Lorraine attends the Family Law Network, held every 2-3 months at the Family Court and chaired by the Principal Registrar. This is a valuable opportunity to hear from the Court and from other CLC family law solicitors about current issues in family law particularly in respect to unrepresented litigants.

Shirley Glover (Generalist Paralegal) also provides Family Law assistance.

Domestic Violence Legal Service

The demand for representation and assistance in Restraining Order matters has remained high throughout the year. Many of the applications for Violence Restraining Orders were heard before the new Family Violence Magistrate in Armadale. Samantha Craig, our Domestic Violence Solicitor, has developed a good working relationship with the new Armadale Family Violence Service.

The Centre has also maintained its involvement in the Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project (ADVIP), attending Core and Interagency meetings on a fortnightly basis wherever possible.

GCLC also maintains its involvement with the Domestic Violence Legal Workers Network (DVLWN). Gosnells Community Legal Centre partly funds the DVLWN Co-Coordinator position in conjunction with Women's Law Centre, Community Legal Advocacy Centre (CLAC) Fremantle, and Southern Community Advocacy, Legal and Education Service (SCALES) Rockingham.

Samantha Craig and Funmi Adesina continued on with the work Helen had commenced, with applications for Criminal Injuries Compensation, on behalf of a number of clients. Many of these claims have now been finalised with favourable awards being made.

An Information Session for caseworkers was conducted by Samantha on 3 October 2008, which was well attended and received. A further presentation will be conducted again in late 2009. Our Domestic Violence and the Law Handbook has been updated, with the expectation that the updated and amended chapters will be sent out to current manual owners. The manual will also again be marketed as a comprehensive tool for caseworkers. The updated manual will reflect recent changes to Restraining Order and Family Law Legislation.



Information Session for community workers

Family Dispute Resolution and Mediation

The Family Dispute Resolution Service and the Community Mediation Service is co-ordinated by Virginia Wells and supervised by the Principal Solicitor Linda Saverimutto. The Service has a pool of Voluntary Mediators and since early March 2008, the Centre has been actively developing the Family Dispute Resolution Service in line with the Centre's accreditation as an FDR provider in August 2007. At the same time, the mediation of community and neighbourhood disputes continued.

In March 2008, it was recognised that changes to the Family Law Act required a review of the Centre's Mediation policies and procedures with regard to the practice of Family Law Mediation. The Centre's Principal Solicitor /Mediation supervisor has been actively involved in this review. Following the amendment of various policies and procedures, the Centre commenced distributing updated

promotional materials and increased publicity of the service to potential clients and referral sources.

On 20 December 2008, the Attorney-General announced that the Australian Family Dispute Resolution Training Group would deliver subsidised assessments and training to assist eligible Family Dispute Resolution practitioners meet new nationwide accreditation standards. This meant that from 1 July 2009, all FDR practitioners required accreditation in order to provide Family Law mediation. Between March and June 2009, the GCLC mediation team, elected to complete all subsidised assessments and have been successfully accredited. With accreditation, the Centre's FDR team are now able to issue Certificates individually under Section 60I (8) of the Family Law Act.

The Centre's Volunteer FDR/Mediation team comprises of Barry and Margaret Mendelawitz, Barbara Kwiecien, John MacIlsac, Vanessa Pepe, Virginia, GCLC Solicitors Linda, Samantha and Funmi are accredited FDR Practitioners; and Clare Gill is employed on a part time basis.

As with all GCLC Services, the Mediation Service is free to clients.

Volunteer Legal Service

Office Administrator, Joe Armstrong, co-ordinates this Service. A team of dedicated Solicitors from the private legal profession donate their time to assist clients on a rostered basis. After-hours appointments are currently provided in this Service by:

Maryse Aranda
John Cooke
Terri-anne Famlonga
Cameron Trees

and Samantha Craig. Reception coverage and administration support is provided by staff from the Centre's Legal Service.

Generalist Paralegal Service

Senior Paralegal, Shirley Glover, and rostered Duty Intake Service staff provide assistance in the form of information, facilitating access to legal advice, completion of forms, and preparation of appeal submissions in Centrelink matters. Although the Centre does not receive specific Welfare Rights funding a commitment has been continued over many years to provide this service in view of the strong need that exists within the community. During 2008/2009 the number of clients presenting with Centrelink related difficulties has increased. Shirley co-ordinates the Duty Intake Service and regular monthly meetings are held to ensure all staff providing Duty Intake have up-to-date information, share knowledge and identify client trends requiring particular resources.

Due to the high demand for Family Law assistance, the Generalist Paralegal also provides assistance with Family Law matters.

Housing Forum 2008- raising local issues and sharing information



Tenant Advice and Education Service

Tenancy and Financial Counselling related problems are the most pressing issues leading clients to seek support from the Centre. The Centre's Tenancy Advice and Education Service is funded through the Department of Commerce. The Service assists clients in the East metropolitan area and this year, a second part-time tenancy advocate (Christine Mayfield) has joined Pauline McNamara in delivering the Service. Assistance is provided to private and public housing tenants; including information, advice, ongoing casework and representation at Department of Housing appeals. Staff also regularly provide Community Legal Education sessions, and contribute to Centre Law Reform activities.

This year, the lack of affordable accommodation has impacted on tenants in many different ways. Homelessness has become a reality for some of our clients, and the threat of homelessness has resulted in other tenants making decisions to not seek assistance with maintenance related issues, for fear of losing their accommodation. In the last 12 months, the number of telephone information and one off advice has decreased (201 information and 220 one off advice); whilst the number of on-going casework has increased significantly from 111 cases opened in 2007/2008 to 222 cases opened in 2008/2009. This reflects the complexity of cases presenting as has also been mirrored by the Centre's Financial Counselling Services.

Community Legal Education and community development activities this year have included: arranging a client feedback forum for Department of Housing, meeting with Chris Tallentire (member for Gosnells) to discuss tenancy issues and homelessness, hosting Equal Opportunity Commission meeting to seek submissions to inquiry regarding racial discrimination in the Private Rental market, Homeless Persons Week activities, contributing to discussions and papers highlighting issues of Homelessness and public tenancy difficulties.



Providing displays and community information sessions assists in raising awareness of the Centre's Services

Financial Counselling

The Centre operates two Financial Counselling Services (Maddington and Gosnells). Both services are located in Gosnells Community Lotteries House. Funding is provided through the Department for Child Protection and in March 2008, the Department conducted a Service Review and concluded: "This is a very professional organisation that values staff and is proud of the reputation it has established. They understand the importance of looking at all issues when clients present and have numerous resources which they can bring to bear. They have a background of being very stable, of being flexible in their decision making process and open to inspection".

Three Financial Counsellors are employed, providing full-time services and ensuring relief cover. Financial counselling involves assisting and advocating on behalf of clients in financial difficulty. This includes negotiating with essential services to avoid disconnection, liaising with creditors, improving budgeting skills, providing information in relation to bankruptcy, providing clients with options in relation to their circumstances and making referrals to other services. The Financial Counselling Services aim to empower clients to learn more effective ways to manage their finances and to increase awareness about consumer rights and entitlements.

The Financial Counsellors also provide Community Legal Education sessions as requested and use their casework to identify opportunities to contribute to suitable submissions and Law Reform projects. During the year, they provided Budget Sessions to new migrants, participated in the Aboriginal Women's Health Forum and Gosnells Lotteries House Expo, ran an information session on "Buying a Second-hand Car" for new CaLD residents; contributed to the Electricity Code consultative review and provided input to the National Human Rights submission. Documentation of casework examples forms a part of the Service's reporting requirements and provides a valuable record of the complexity and importance of the work undertaken in this area.

A Financial Counsellor is also available to attend the Means Enquiry Summons at Armadale Magistrate's Court to assist clients with their statement of financial position.

DUTY INTAKE SERVICE

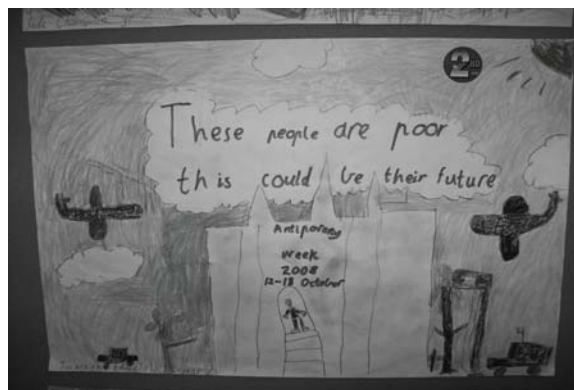
On a roster basis, paralegal staff provide a Duty Intake Service to assist clients, attending without an appointment. A significant proportion of these contacts involve Financial Counselling issues and Tenancy related difficulties, especially rent arrear, the need for priority housing and homelessness concerns.

Over the past twelve months, the impact of reduced work hours, unemployment, high rental costs and the lack of affordable stable accommodation has been reflected in the problems clients are experiencing.

Through the Duty Intake Service, the immediate concerns and crisis situations are frequently resolved for clients. This ensures that client's situations do not deteriorate further before they are provided with on-going casework assistance. By alleviating stress and providing support and practical assistance at their first visit to the Centre, clients are then better placed to work in partnership with caseworkers to find appropriate solutions to meet their needs.

EMERGENCY RELIEF

Through the Duty Intake Service, GCLC works in partnership with a number of community organisations delivering emergency relief services, and a significant number of our clients are assisted through the St. Andrew's Hamper Program. Emergency Relief assistance distributed by GCLC is primarily used towards utilities accounts, chemist accounts, rental payments, other accommodation expenses, and Smart Riders for public transport. During the year, increased Emergency Relief funds were provided by Lotterywest and Commonwealth Government in recognition of the increase in pressure created by the Global Financial Crisis. The generalist paralegal, Shirley Glover, is also convenor of the South East Metropolitan ER Forum and attends State Emergency Relief Committee meetings, and staff attend the monthly WACOSS Emergency Relief forum meetings.



Children's Artwork –
Anti-Poverty Week 2008

STAFF TRAINING

All staff attend various professional development opportunities relevant to their areas of service delivery. This includes conferences, workshops, information forums, seminars and guest speaker sessions.

In particular, Centre Solicitors are required by the Legal Practice Board to accumulate annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points; Financial Counsellors are required to document annual training and supervision hours; and the accreditation process for Family Dispute Resolution practitioners was an extensive exercise.



CENTRE ADMINISTRATION

Management

The Centre's Management Committee meets monthly and Marion Leach (Manager) attends as Secretary to provide information and support to Committee Members. This year, Shirley Glover has attended as the Staff Representative.

Tenancy Training for Centre Staff and Community workers

Financial Management

Throughout the year, regular financial reports were provided to the Commonwealth and State Governments in accordance with the requirements of our various funding agreements. All funds were expended in accordance with the Service Agreements.

The appointed auditors Frances A Jones completed the Audit for the 2008/2009 financial year. An excerpt from the Audit Report, and the Audited Financial Statements are attached to this Annual Report.

APPENDIX A

PAID AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS 2008/2009

Employee Name	Position
Lorraine Adams	Duty Intake Officer
Olufunmilayo Adesina	Solicitor
Josephine Armstrong	Office Administrator
Stacey Armstrong	Duty Intake Relief
Tanya Brannigan	Reception
Tara Colledge	Business Administration Trainee (until Oct)
Samantha Craig	Solicitor
Phyllis Cusworth	Legal Secretary
Christian Eriyagama	Casual Assistant (Jan/Feb)
Tracey George	Article Clerk
Claire Gill	Mediation Assistant
Shirley Glover	Senior Paralegal officer
Anupama Herath	Financial Counsellor / Finance Administrator
Marion Leach	Manager
Christine Mayfield	Legal Secretary and Tenancy Advocate
Pauline McNamara	Tenancy Advocate
Rushika Patrick	Community Legal Education Officer (until Dec)
Angela Pelligra	Casual Project Officer (until June)
Manelka Perera	Financial Counsellor
Linda Saverimutto	Principal Solicitor
Pauline Smith	Reception and Financial Counsellor
Lorraine Taylor	Solicitor
Virginia Wells	Mediation Co-Ordinator
Anne Westerside	Reception

Volunteers

Valerie Ellis	James Adams	
Stacey Armstrong	Amanda Hashman	
Margaret Mendelawitz	Barry Mendelawitz	
Barbara Kwiecien	John MacIlsac	Vanessa Pepe

Volunteer Legal Service

Maryse Aranda
John Cooke
Terri-Anne Famlonga
Cameron Trees
Samantha Craig

APPENDIX B
AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
2008/2009