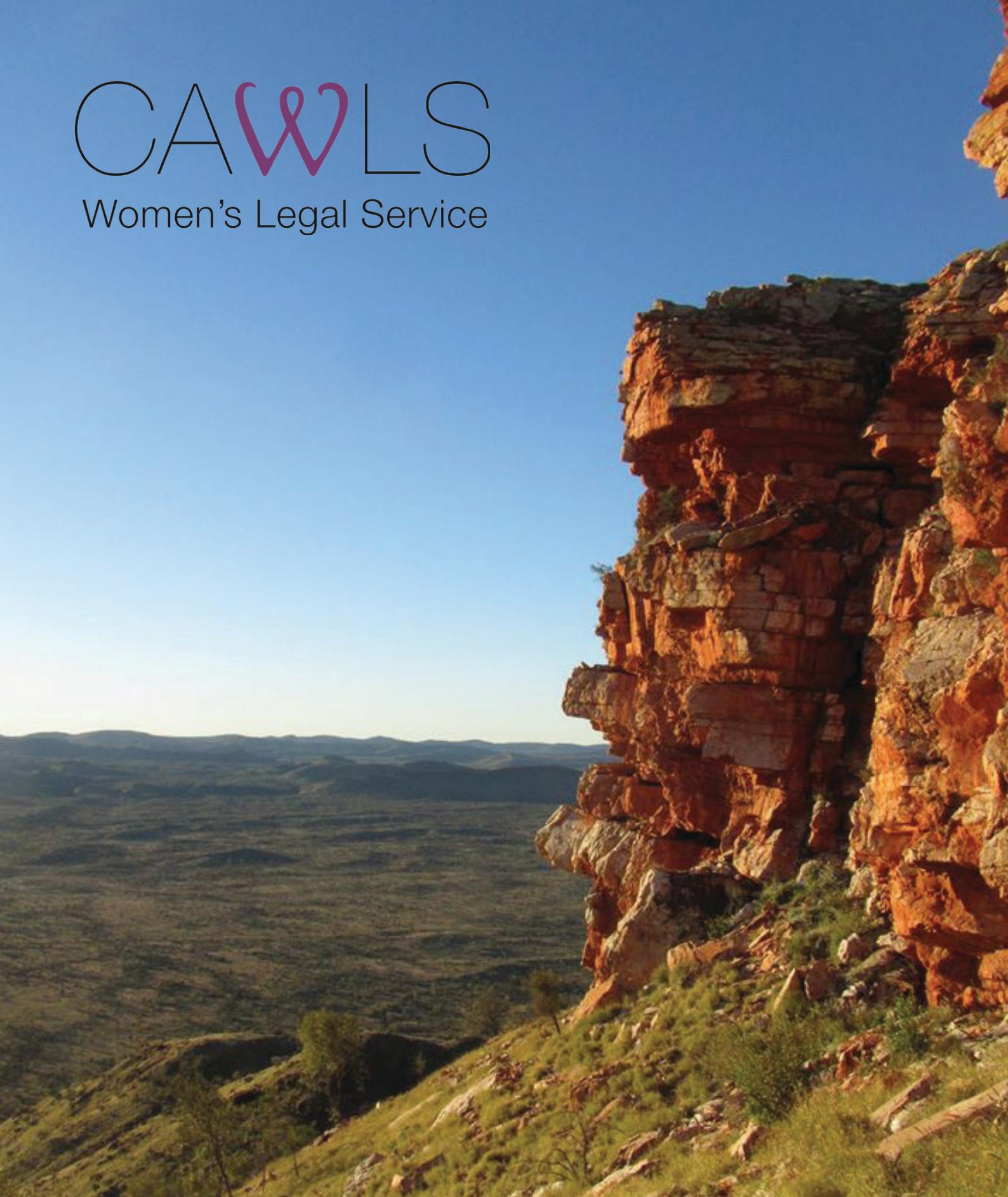




Women's Legal Service



**Annual Report
2015 - 2016**

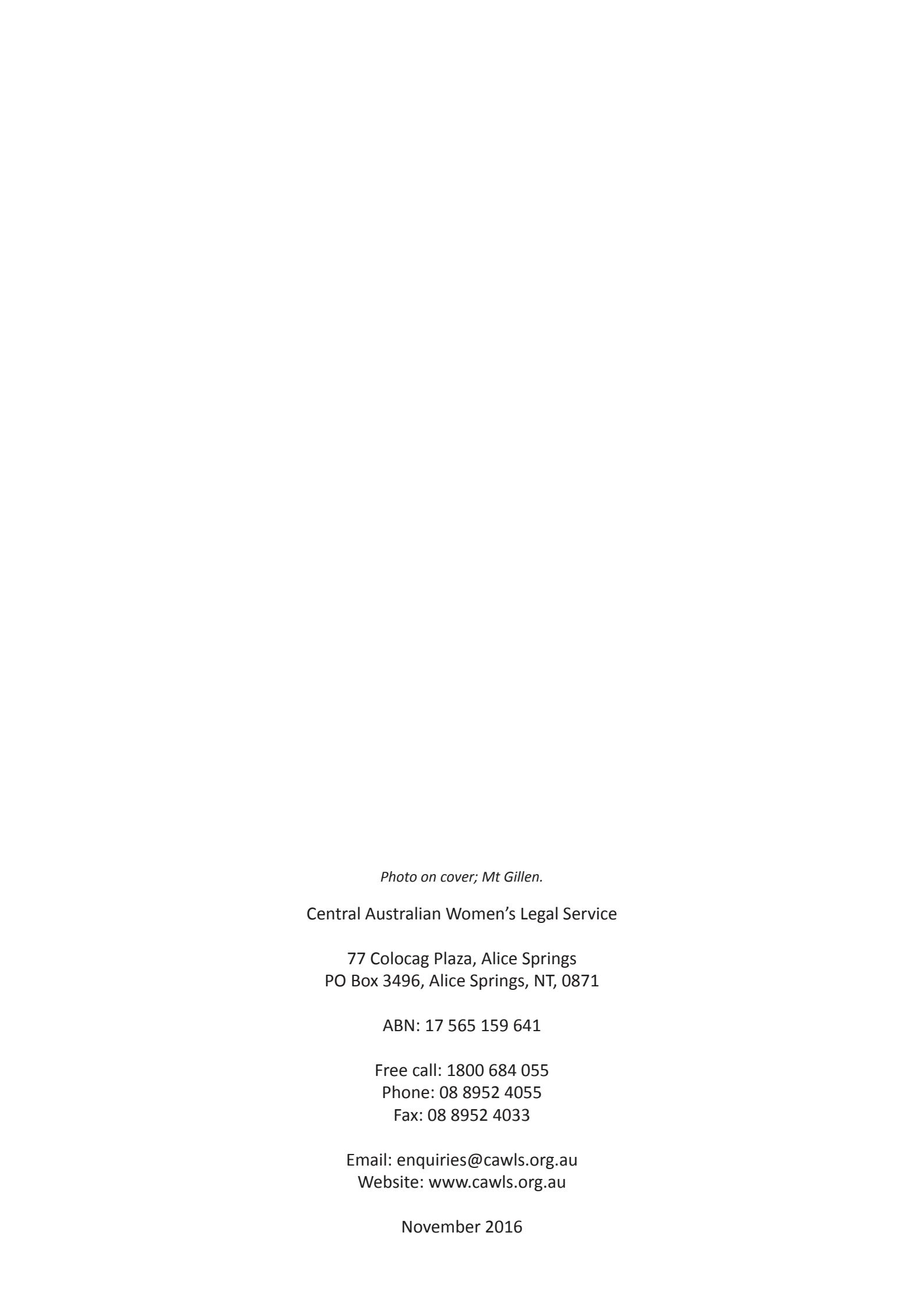


Photo on cover; Mt Gillen.

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November 2016

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Flag from Women's Safety Project launch May 2016



Mt Gillen

Central Australian Women's Legal Service

VISION AND PURPOSE

The vision of the Central Australian Women's Legal Service (CAWLS) is to enable, educate and empower women to better engage in the legal system so that their rights are considered and respected. CAWLS is an accessible, proactive and responsive service for all Central Australian women with priority given to those in greatest need.

CAWLS was born out of necessity. In the early 1990's a group of dedicated women legal practitioners began providing free legal advice on a voluntary basis to women in need. Women seeking assistance were primarily victims of domestic violence who had no other access to legal advice. Over time, it became obvious that women in Central Australia required a full time, specialist women's legal service. A submission to the federal government ultimately resulted in the creation of CAWLS. We continue to be guided by our core values namely:

Integrity

Working honestly and consistently with women to provide a professional service;

Inclusivity

Valuing equality of access to our service, and endeavoring to make a positive difference for a diverse range of women;

Respect

Providing services that are respectful of the dignity, safety and security of women;

Quality of Service

Striving for excellence in service delivery to ensure practices are compliant, accountable and client focused.

ABOUT US

CAWLS is a not for profit organisation based in Alice Springs, providing free legal advice to all women in the Central and Barkly Regions. CAWLS offers a domestic violence legal service as well as generalist legal advice.

We are the only women-specific legal service in the Central and Barkly regions. A large component of our service delivery is related to domestic violence and the interconnected legal issues that accompany this, such as family law, child protection, victims of crime compensation and tenancy matters. Clients can access these services via scheduled clinic appointments or, if the matter is related to domestic violence, can utilise the drop-in service.

CAWLS applies a collaborative approach in order to provide holistic care to clients who are moving through the legal process. To accomplish this, CAWLS works closely with other service providers in the area such as law enforcement, local women's shelters and health services to address pertinent issues.

CAWLS seeks to ensure:

That every client's experience is validated;

That women are empowered to utilize the legal system for their benefit; and

That by assisting every woman to the best of our ability, we are contributing towards social justice in the community.



Ajmer Cavalier sets up the CAWLS stall at NAIDOC celebrations, Alice Springs Town Council lawns.

Chairwoman's Report

Our vision is to enable, educate and empower women to better engage in the legal system so their rights are considered and respected.

In 2015/16 CAWLS has once again risen to the challenge of being a provider of high quality legal service to women in the Northern Territory who are far too often the victims of crimes that leave them vulnerable and often place them and their children at risk of harm.

Under the leadership of the Managing Principal Solicitor and with the guidance of a dedicated committee, the team at CAWLS secured significant Federal Funding under a National Partnership Agreement to develop a Health Justice Partnership. The Women's Safety Package enabled the establishment of the Partnership which now locates key services for Central Australian women in the Alice Springs Hospital and local health clinics. Research provided the springboard upon which the model was built and following the May 2016 launch, the service began delivering critical advice and support. The need for CAWLS service continues to increase and we can only hope that awareness through this method continues to empower women.

The launch of the Women's Safety Package attracted significant federal and local political and media attention and provided an opportunity for community and particularly women's services in Alice Springs to show their support of CAWLS in this incredibly important area. Guest speakers unilaterally congratulated CAWLS for being at the forefront of delivery for services to women, and despite the dreadful circumstances that demand this work, this event was a celebration of the excellent work our organization does alongside its many partners in our community.

CAWLS's success is due in no small part to the combined efforts of its staff, under the careful leadership of Managing Principal Solicitor, Janet Taylor. Our team of staff are dedicated and diligent and maintain a very high level of service provision for the women of Central Australia. I have been fortunate to serve on the Management Committee for some years now and following the retirement of our current Chair, Kate O'Brien, earlier this year, I happily accepted the role of Chairperson.

It is my pleasure to be able to thank staff for their work throughout 2015/16 and a particular thank you to Janet for her exceptional work as a leader, manager and champion for Central Australian women. Our outgoing Chairperson, Kate O'Brien dedicated many years to the committee following Tania Collins into the role of Chairperson. Kate executed her duties as Chair with great skill, thought and consideration and provided a benchmark of care and dedication that left no question about how our organisation should proceed.

Our outgoing committee members this year are Kelly Richards, Dianne Gipey and Stephanie Campbell and on behalf of CAWLS, I thank them for their service. To our new Management Committee members, Linx McPherson, Meg Donahoe, Brianna Sanderson and Sabine Wedemeyer I say welcome and thank you for your efforts and energy thus far, and to our ongoing MC members, your ongoing support and commitment is appreciated.

It has been a pleasure to be a part of CAWLS and especially rewarding to serve as Chairperson this year. I look forward to a future of continued service to the MC, the organization and ultimately to the women of Central Australia.



L to R: Belinda Pearson Chairperson of CAWLS Management Committee; Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Defence; Janet Taylor.

Managing Principal Solicitor's Report

The 2015 – 2016 financial year has been another year of growth for CAWLS. The service has grown, not only in staff capacity, but in regards of service delivery, reputation and community engagement.

The last twelve months have seen an amelioration of instances of domestic and family violence across the Central Australia and Barkly regions. This has resulted in presentations of women requiring assistance in domestic violence related matters at CAWLS as well as other intrinsically linked legal issues.

For women who present at the domestic violence service, assistance is provided to not only protect individual safety, but also to deliver specialist legal advice and representation to guide the client through the legal process. CAWLS clients also often need support accessing other essential services in the region, frequently on a referral basis. CAWLS works closely with stakeholders throughout the community to ensure that these needs are met.

Assisting women to keep themselves and their children safe is pivotal to our work at CAWLS. The role that our senior lawyers, Anna Ryan (domestic violence matters) and Penny Johnston (family law matters), play in ensuring that responses afforded to women accessing our service by staff are appropriate, respectful and informed is crucial to this service delivery.

After a long period of stability CAWLS has seen considerable staff changes as well as growth over the past year. In this regard I would like to thank Aimee Winra (Legal Practitioner), Jennifer Preston (Paralegal), Jasmin Silver (Officer Manager), Lauren Macaulay (Community Legal Education lawyer) and Kim Raine (Health Justice Partnership Lawyer) for their hard work and dedication at

CAWLS and wish them well with their future endeavours.

I would also like to welcome a number of new staff; Julia Parkin (Community Legal Education Lawyer), Michelle Alleman (Legal Practitioner), Marissa Klein (Paralegal), Ajmer Cavalier (Client Support Worker), Tessa Snowdon (Project Manager), Annabel Blain (part time Administrative Support Officer) and lastly Alicia Schmidt (Office Manager).

The service has grown substantially in the past twelve months due in part to the Women's Safety Package funding that we were fortunate to receive at the end of 2015. This funding by the Commonwealth Government has allowed CAWLS to build the Health Justice Partnership (HJP) with community health providers in the region, providing onsite and on call legal support to victims of domestic violence within both the Alice Springs Hospital and Flynn Drive Community Health Centre. A special mention to the staff who work under this package, for their hard work in getting the project off the ground and up and running in a short period of time.

In conjunction with this, we have established the Specialist Domestic Violence Unit (SDVU) which focuses largely on building stronger collaborative relationships, referral pathways and information networks for clients and providers of domestic violence services within the region.

Along with the Women's Safety Package, CAWLS continues to run an effective community legal education (CLE) and outreach program, extending assistance to clients in remote areas, prison clinics and town camps, who would not otherwise have access to free legal advice. Anna Hutchinson, Michelle Alleman and Julia Parkin have regularly

traveled to Tennant Creek during 2015 – 2016 to provide outreach legal advice. Julia, in her capacity as the Community Legal Education lawyer, has also provided legal advice and education to various town camps in the region and outlying communities, such as Ali Curung and Santa Teresa.

Community development still remains an important part of our service delivery. We value our stakeholders and endeavour to meet the needs of the community; many of these needs are identified and referred to CAWLS by other service providers in the community. This year CAWLS participated in International Woman's Day, White Ribbon Day activities and Sexual Assault Awareness Month celebrations staff liaised with external bodies such as the courts, one participated in committees and other community events as outlined in the CLE section of this report.

While CAWLS has grown and is currently operating at an increased capacity due to the current level of funding; community legal services across Australia are facing a 30% cut in the next financial year. CAWLS remains optimistic that this decision will be reversed, particularly for victim services that provide front line assistance in the Northern Territory with the highest rates of domestic and family violence in Australia.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and support of the Management Committee throughout this past year, all of whom have made significant contributions in terms of volunteering their time, expertise and energy to the betterment of the service. Extra special thanks in this regard to Belinda Pearson, who took on the reins of Chair woman after Kate O'Brien stepped down earlier this year.

It has been a privilege to serve as the Managing Principal Solicitor over these past six years. I have been fortunate to work with and alongside some amazing women during this time. Given the Service is thriving – I have seized the opportunity to take long service leave over the next year. In my absence Penny Johnston will be acting as the MPS.

Finally, a huge thanks to all staff at CAWLS for their hard work, energy and dedication in the delivery of services to clients and keeping a sense of humour along the way! The team effort from Amanda, Marissa, Annabel, Anna H, Anna R, Penny, Ajmer, Tessa, Julia, Michelle and Alicia has been outstanding and ensures that we continue to provide effective and targeted provision of services to all women.



CAWLS booth at NAIDOC week, Alice Springs Town Council lawns.

Management Committee

BELINDA PEARSON - CHAIRWOMAN

Belinda has called Alice Springs home for nearly 30 years and for most of this time she has been an educator and now Principal in the public school system. Through contact with women and children over many years in schools and in our community, Belinda is very aware of the need to empower and educate so that individuals can make informed choices and positive changes in their lives. A role on the Management Committee of CAWLS and now the privilege of being the Chairperson gives Belinda an ongoing opportunity to have an impact on the services for women that will ultimately improve the quality of their lives.



MEGAN DONAHOE - TREASURER



Megan has lived and worked in Central Australia since 1997 in a range of roles supporting children, youth and families. This includes working in community development programs on remote Indigenous communities in WA and the NT, program and policy development with FAHCSIA and numerous roles with the Northern Territory Government department of Child & Families (Child Protection). Megan has an honours degree in Social Work from Deakin University, a Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution and is also an appointed Justice of the Peace. Current studies include undertaking a Bachelor of Laws through CDU. A recent addition to the CAWLS management committee, Megan is looking forward to making a contribution in her role as treasurer. At present Megan is a School Counselor with St Philips College.

LINX MACPHERSON - GENERAL MEMBER

Linx has lived in Alice Springs for nearly 17 years and works in the Art and Mediation (Alternative Dispute Resolution) fields. She is passionate about mediation and how it can assist people and communities in solving their own disputes. She is delighted to be involved with CAWLS and provide any support she can. Linx is also on the Council of the NT Community Justice Centre.





SABINE WEDEMEYER - GENERAL MEMBER

Sabine is the CEO of Mental Health Association Central Australia (MHACA), Alice Springs. She has extensive experience in Aboriginal related health and community services across a range of roles in the private, public and NGO sectors. Previous to working at MHACA she was a Senior Project Manager at the NT Government Domestic and Family Violence Reduction Strategy; Safety is Everyone's Right project and has also worked at the Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Programs Unit, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the Drug and Alcohol Service Association, Alice Springs.

BRIANNA SANDERSON - SECRETARY

Brianna grew up in Alice Springs before moving to Adelaide to attend secondary boarding school, later completing her Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics at Flinders University. Brianna has since returned to Alice Springs to work in the Department of Health. Brianna is a recent addition to the CAWLS Management Committee, she brings her experience from working in health to the our newly established Health Justice Partnership and her experience generally to the benefit of CAWLS and our clients.



Funding

CAWLS is funded by the Commonwealth Government and the Northern Territory Government.

The Northern Territory Attorney-General's department funds CAWLS to provide a Domestic Violence Legal Service. This service offers free legal advice, representation and support to women who are victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence assistance makes up a substantial component of CAWLS work. Women can receive immediate assistance through our drop-in service operating everyday from our office or over the phone; appointments can also be made in advance if women prefer. CAWLS also provides Community Legal Education to other organisations, town camps and schools on domestic violence in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and surrounding remote localities as part of our remote outreach.

CAWLS is also funded by the Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for our Indigenous Women's Program as part of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. This program provides legal advice, representation support and legal education to Aboriginal women in the Central and Barkly Regions. Common areas of legal assistance and education include domestic violence, family law, child protection and tenancy as well as credit and debt. Throughout the past year CAWLS has traveled to Santa Teresa, Ali Curung, Ti Tree and Tennant Creek, establishing and further developing relationships within these communities. CAWLS also regularly visits town camps around Alice Springs to meet with women and has provided legal education, particularly around domestic violence, to primary students.

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's

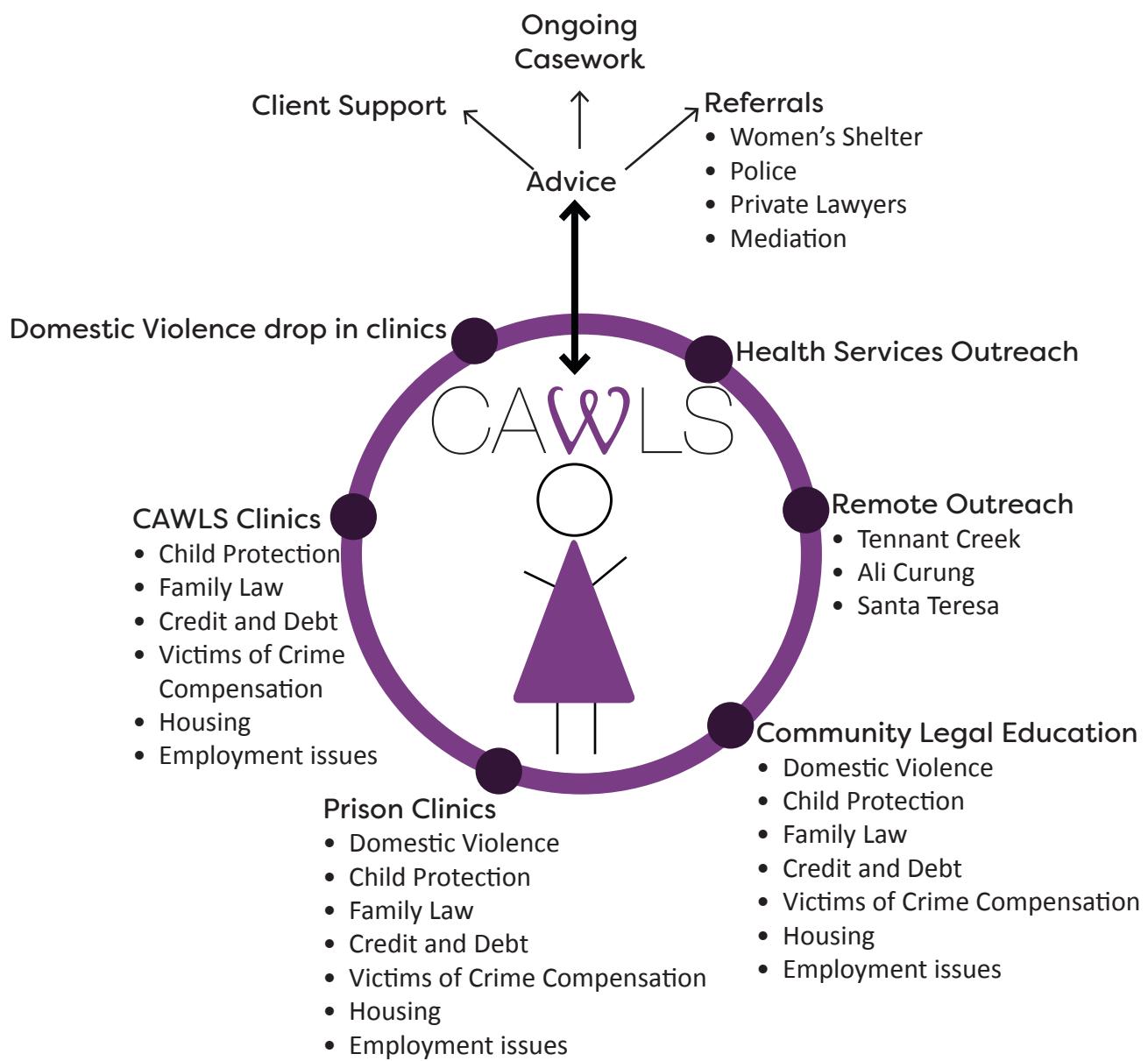
Department funds CAWLS under the National Partnership Agreement to provide a generalist legal service to all women in the Central and Barkly regions. CAWLS provides free legal advice clinics, ongoing casework, and representation where appropriate as well as support and referrals to all eligible women as part of this service.

Additionally, CAWLS received funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's department as part of the Women's Safety Package in October 2015 to establish a Specialist Domestic Violence Unit (SDVU) and Health Justice Partnership (HJP). The SDVU provides wrap around support to eligible female victims of domestic violence while also strengthening relationships with stakeholder organisations in the region. The HJP was formalised with a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the Central Australian Health Service to provide training and professional development to health professionals on domestic and family violence as well as legal information, advice and case management to eligible women referred by health professionals. CAWLS maintains a physical presence within health locations and also provides a on-call service for health professionals making referrals for patients who have been victims or domestic violence.

The CAWLS main office is located in Colocag Plaza, 77 Todd Street, Alice Springs.



CAWLS SERVICE DELIVERY



Legal Practice

DEMOGRAPHICS

Clients

For the 2015 - 2016 reporting period CAWLS recorded a total number of 590 clients.

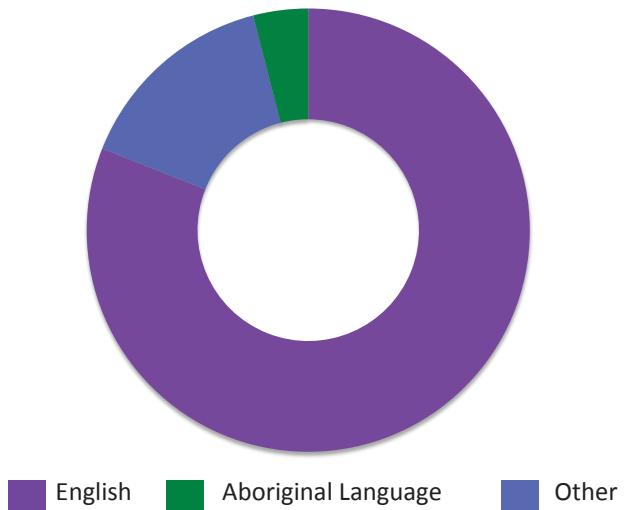
Of these clients:

- 287 were new clients;
- 173 were returning clients; and
- 130 were existing clients.

Language

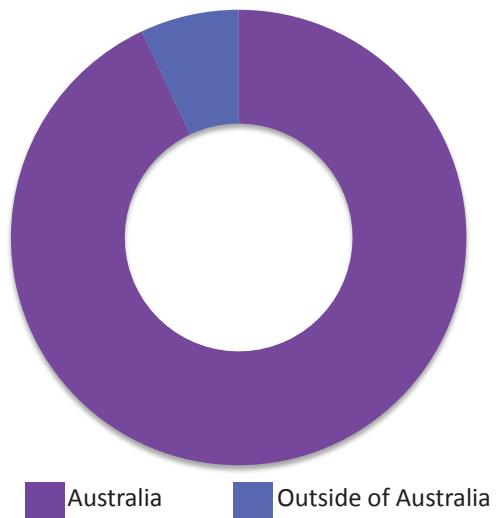
During intake all clients are asked whether they identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

During this reporting period, 81% of clients identified English as their first language. 3% of clients identified their first language as other than English and not an Aboriginal language. 15% of clients identified their first language as an Aboriginal language and not English.



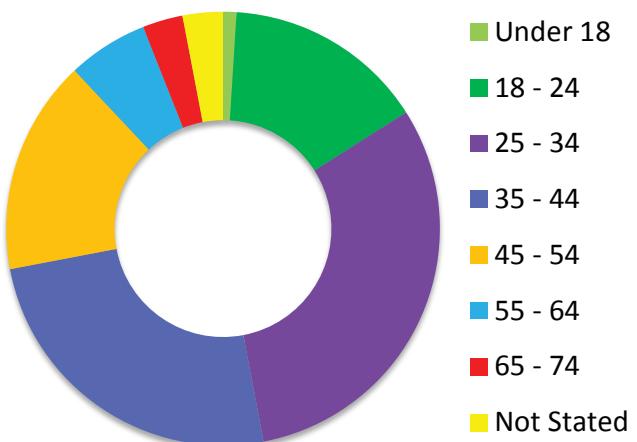
Birth Origin

When asked about their birth origin, 93% were born in Australia and 7% were born outside of Australia.



Age

Our clients fell within the following age groups:



**we assisted
590 women**

**287
new
clients**

**over
57%
identified as Aboriginal**

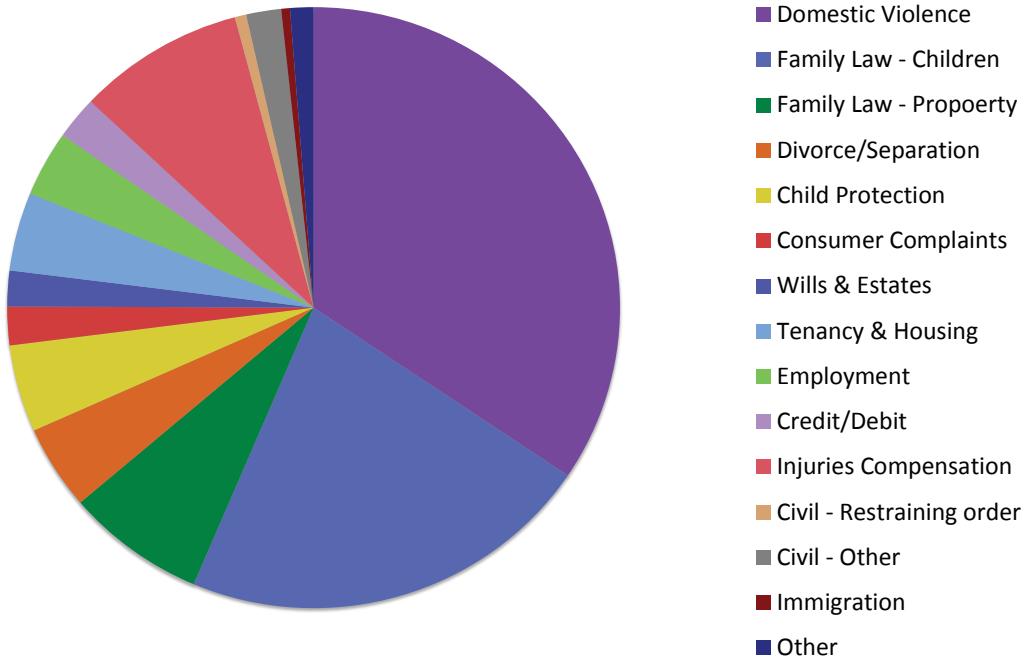
*1/3 were
women aged
between
25 - 34*

**93% were born in
Australia**

Advice and Casework Activities

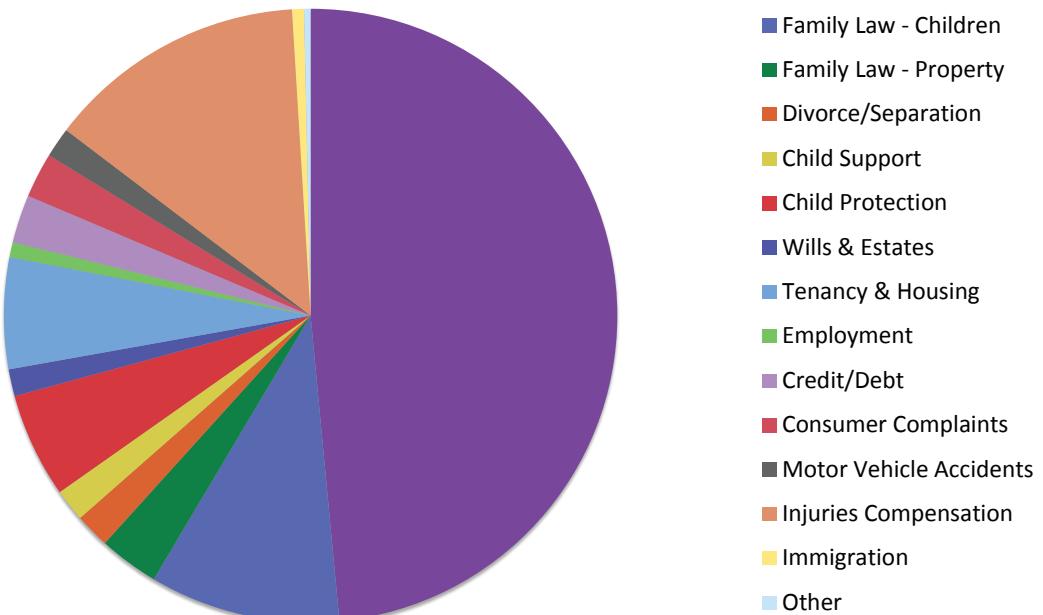
PROBLEM TYPES - ADVICE

An 'Advice' is recorded when CAWLS provides legal advice to a client for dealing with their unique legal issue(s). If appropriate an initial advice will be taken on as case work.



PROBLEM TYPES - CASEWORK

'Casework' involves legal matters taken on in which the client will require ongoing assistance. Often this includes representation at court.



Areas of Legal Assistance

CAWLS provides legal assistance in many areas include child protection, tenancy, credit and debt, consumer complaints and compensation matters. Family law and domestic violence matters continue to be the two main areas where clients seek assistance from our service.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

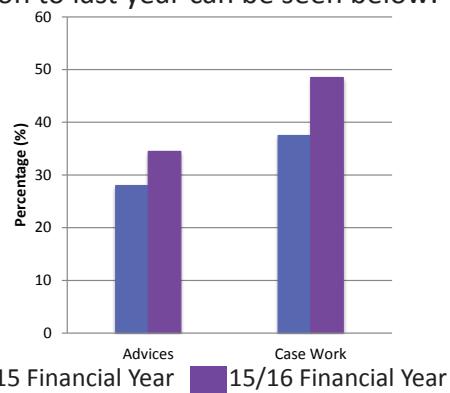
CAWLS offers a drop-in domestic and family violence service five days a week. From 8.30-5.00pm along with a court duty lawyer service on Mondays (when required). The service also conducts Outreach and Community Legal Education in relation to keeping women safe.

Our service provides assistance in obtaining Domestic Violence Orders and varying existing Domestic Violence Orders. We also assist with other interconnected legal problems, such as housing, child protection and family law and victims of crime.

We assist with crisis intervention, support and practical assistance in relation to accommodation. By providing a holistic service we assist in addressing many causative factors of domestic violence.

This year we have seen an increase with Aboriginal women attending our service for assistance with ongoing case work in relation to Domestic and Family Violence.

The increase in both advice and casework in comparison to last year can be seen below:



CASE STUDIES

Case study 1

Our client, Madge*, was middle aged non-indigenous female and a returning client to discuss

- Family Violence
- Financial Abuse
- Mental Health Issues
- Crisis Accommodation

Madge instructed that she had been in a long term relationship with her partner Harold. Harold had been financially and emotionally controlling her for a long time. The financial control had resulted in Madge being required to perform duties as a sex worker. Madge had sadly also been raped by one of her clients which was reported to local police. Madge also spoke of her long history of mental illness and had experienced abuse as a child.

CAWLS advised Madge on how to identify domestic violence, we also discussed family law options.

A warm referral made to a local women's shelter and through this referral, and the facts of the situation, immediate accommodation was provided to Madge at the shelter.

Given the warm referral that was made to the local women's shelter, Madge was provided with a safe space to discuss her issues and be empowered to make some determinations about her future, including hopefully securing further legal assistance.

Follow up with Madge revealed that she stayed at the local shelter for 2 nights and then she returned

by choice to her husband. Advice was provided to Madge around separation and considerations for separating under the same roof, time limitations and divorce.

We revisited Madge's opportunity to make an application for a Domestic Violence Order and discussed a potential claim for compensation for injuries sustained from the sexual assault and advised of time limitation.

Without CAWLS assistance, Madge would have continued to exist in a high risk situation. Without provision of legal information, she would not have been made aware of her legal rights and be able to make an informed decision. Despite Madge ultimately returning to the relationship, she did so with information and advice.

"Thank you so much for all your hard work and advice, again I am so truly overwhelmed at the amazing service at CAWLS and so appreciative of everything that you have done."

Case study 2

Mary* had been in an abusive relationship for many years. She had experienced serious physical and verbal abuse and had tried to leave her partner on a number of occasions.

Mary was feeling unsafe at home; she had fled her home and was sleeping rough. Mary came to see CAWLS for assistance because she was afraid that if she didn't get help, she would be killed by her partner.

Mary explained that she approached CAWLS for assistance in obtaining a Domestic Violence Order because she was too afraid to talk to Police directly. She was worried that Police involvement could escalate her partner's behaviour.

CAWLS arranged a meeting between Mary and Police, so that she could explain her position to Police. The Police accepted Mary's decision to apply for a DVO through CAWLS rather than through Police.

CAWLS advised Mary about the Family Safety Framework and Mary consented to being referred into the framework. The Family Safety Framework is a multi-agency response to high risk cases of Domestic Violence. A number of agencies met and considered Mary's case and how they could assist her and her children.

CAWLS also referred Mary to the Alice Springs Women's Shelter for support with accommodation and counselling.

Mary then made the difficult decision to leave her home town of Alice Springs to escape from her partner. CAWLS referred Mary to a number of services who provided her with emergency financial assistance to help her leave Alice Springs.

CAWLS applied for a full non-contact DVO to protect Mary from her partner. It took four months for Mary's application for her DVO to be finalised by the court, by this time Mary had left Alice Springs.

Mary fled Alice Springs very quickly, she had left her job, her home and her community support networks behind.

CAWLS assisted Mary to apply for Immediate Financial Assistance through the NT Crimes Victims Services Unit. Mary was awarded \$5,000.00 in immediate Financial Assistance to help support her following her relocation.

As Mary was a home-owner she was unable to obtain Territory Housing. Under Superannuation Rules Mary was also unable to access any of her superannuation until she had been on benefits for 26 consecutive weeks.

Mary had left her home, and left her job, but still had to maintain her mortgage payments or face foreclosure. This placed Mary under considerable financial hardship.

CAWLS also lodged an application with the NT Crimes Victims Services Unit for Mary to receive further compensation as a victim of violent crime. This application is ongoing.

Mary continues to face financial hardship; she has been unable to find full-time employment and has only recently been able to sell her home. The proceeds of sale were just enough to discharge Mary's mortgage.

Despite the considerable hardship Mary faced, she has been able to turn her experiences around to help contribute to her new community. Mary has now completed a Certificate 4 in Community Services and intends to complete a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work next year.

Mary wants to use her experiences and knowledge as a survivor of Domestic Violence to help others. Mary has now been offered employment working with the Women's Shelter in her new community, providing education and support to other women who are trying to escape Domestic Violence.

Mary's experience in fleeing domestic violence, is not uncommon. Women who leave Domestic Violence in crisis often leave with only the clothes on their back. They leave their homes, friends, pets, belongings and lives behind to try to survive.

This is why crisis services that support women in these situations, particularly crisis services that provide financial support, are so crucial.



Case study 3

Lily* appeared in the Tennant Creek Court of Summary Jurisdiction as a defendant in a matter where police had issued a Domestic Violence Order ("DVO") against her. The protected person in the matter was her mother, Rose*. Police had also issued a DVO naming Rose as the defendant and Lily as the protected person. Both DVO's arose from the same incident. Rose lived interstate and was on holidays when the incident occurred and subsequently had returned interstate. Both Lily and Rose had refused to give the police attending the incident a statement.

Rose did not appear at the first return, however Lily did. We appeared for her on a duty basis and had the matter adjourned. The Judge also adjourned Roses' matter. Lily instructed us that she was concerned that consenting to the DVO would affect her employment; that police clearances would not come back with clear of incidents and she would not be eligible for a working with children's Ochre Card.

As such, we attempted to negotiate the matter with the prosecution, requesting that they withdraw the DVO against Lily, as the DVO against Rose would still be in place. Prosecution were not willing to withdraw the matter.

At the next court appearance, Rose again did not appear and as such, the DVO where she was named as the defendant was confirmed. In regards to the DVO where Lily was the defendant, we made submissions on behalf of our client, advising that Rose had returned interstate, Rose did not visit Tennant Creek on a regular basis, Rose and Lily had limited contact with each other and our client held concerns for her employment. We requested the DVO be dismissed. The Prosecution did not oppose the application and the Judge dismissed the DVO.

Clients regularly attend our service to assist in matters like this.

FAMILY LAW

Clients seeking assistance in Family Law matters remains one of the larger areas of our legal practice.

Over the last 12 months CAWLS has had an 8% increase in family law advices. In the majority of these cases clients have also reported experiencing domestic violence.

CAWLS has also experienced an increase in major and complex cases, and an increase in Aboriginal women and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women seeking Family Law assistance.

In particular, we have provided advice and assistance to women with respect to the arrangements for their children including:

- Supporting clients through the mediation process either at Relationships Australia or through Family Law conferencing;
- Assisting clients in negotiating with their ex-partners either directly where the other party is self represented, or through their legal representative;
- Where a Family Law application has been filed, providing client's with legal representation in the Federal Circuit Court;
- Assisting client's with urgent recovery applications;
- Providing advice and assistance with respect to the division of matrimonial property;
- Assisting clients with divorce applications, especially where the client has presented with English as their second language and the client has required the use of an interpreter; and
- Assisting clients with negotiating and lodging consent applications for both property and children's matters.

Many of CAWLS's clients present with multiple legal issues and we are generally able to assist with associated legal problems arising out of their relationship; such as housing, bankruptcy and debt issues. In this regard due to the often urgent nature of the problems that our client's present with, CAWLS works closely with other organisations in Alice Springs to ensure that client's are provided with support and assistance.

CAWLS continues to be on the steering committee for the Central Australian Family Pathways Network, We also hold a position on the Family Law section of the Northern Territory Law Society and on the Women's Legal Service Australia Committee.



CASE STUDIES

Case study 1

Michelle* is an Aboriginal mother of three children. When Michelle approached CAWLS for assistance she had recently left a long term relationship with the children's Father. The client reported instances of domestic violence during the course of the relationship and at the time of separation; however no Orders had been sought in this regard.

Since the breakdown of their relationship, the children had been spending regular time with both parents and their families.

When Michelle commenced a new relationship the arrangements with the Father broke down and the Father started to make it difficult for the mother to see the children. There were three occasions where the Father took the children on prolonged trips interstate to visit his family without consulting Michelle. On the third occasion the Father refused to communicate with the mother and refused to let the children talk to her. The mother also learned that he had enrolled the children in school.

CAWLS assisted Michelle in filing a recovery application. CAWLS engaged a process server to serve the Father with the application and he attended Court by phone at the first mention. The Court made an order for the Father to return the children to Alice Springs. During the following Court process interim orders were negotiated between the parties. The matter was resolved some months later with the orders being confirmed as final orders.

Case study 2

Julie* is a young mother with a toddler. She had moved to Alice Springs when she was pregnant to be with the child's father.

Julie's relationship had an extensive history of domestic violence, with the police attending their residence on multiple occasions. The police assisted the parties with reciprocal domestic violence orders (DVO).

After the parties' separated Julie continued to report instances of domestic violence and expressed fears for herself and her child's safety.

“Thank you for everything you’ve done and the support you’ve given me and my family throughout the year”

Julie regularly sought support and protection at the Alice Springs Women's Shelter for both herself and her child during periods when she felt unsafe or at risk. The Department of Children and Families were also involved in carrying out welfare checks during this time.

Julie was referred to CAWLS for assistance in relation to her domestic violence matters and also for family law assistance.

After a Domestic Violence incident, where Julie had gone to the Women's Shelter without the child, the father took the child interstate to live with his family. CAWLS assisted Julie in filing an urgent recovery application. The Court granted the orders and the child was retrieved with Police assistance and returned to the mother.

The father returned to Alice Springs and interim parenting orders were negotiated. A Family Report was obtained by the Court. The matter concluded with the parties entering into Final Consent orders with the father agreeing to the child living with the mother and spending time with the Father at regular times each week.

Case study 3

Mandy* approached CAWLS to assist her in varying existing parenting orders. The orders had only been entered into 3 months previously but the Father was now seeking to relocate interstate.

Mandy has two sons with her ex-husband. Upon the breakdown of their relationship, Mandy sought private legal representation, on which she had spent a considerable sum of money, to obtain parenting orders. This financial strain impacted on her ability to seek private representation in the current dispute with her ex-husband.

Mandy reported that during and after the breakdown of her relationship, her ex-partner had exhibited controlling and intimidating behaviours towards her. This behaviour had continued throughout the family law proceedings and Mandy reportedly found it difficult to cope with these behaviours when attempting to resolve the matter.

CAWLS supported Mandy through the mediation process. An in principle agreement was reached, and CAWLS assisted Mandy in preparing a consent application to vary the existing orders.

*Names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Community Legal Education

Community legal education equips people with knowledge, skills and understanding to help them better identify and manage legal issues in their lives. Awareness of the law and legal rights can help people to address legal problems and seek assistance before these problems grow.

In the 2015-2016 financial year CAWLS continued to place a strong emphasis on improving legal literacy and empowering women in Central Australia with knowledge through our Community Legal Education (CLE) program. Julia Parkin joined the CAWLS team as the CLE Solicitor in November 2015 replacing Lauren Macaulay who held this role until September 2015.

The previous year saw CAWLS provide community legal education sessions to a wide variety of community and staff groups throughout Alice Springs and the Barkly region. Common topics covered included domestic violence, family law, child protection, victims of crime compensation, and consumer law.

CLE sessions were conducted regularly with residents from Hidden Valley, Larapinta Valley and Karnte Town Camps. We also made regular visits to Alice Springs Correctional Centre. As part of CAWLS' outreach service to Tennant Creek monthly CLE sessions were run at Anyinginyi Stronger Families program and Barkly Region Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group. Regular visits at these locations have enabled our CLE Solicitor to develop good relationships with staff, residents, and

community members accessing the CLE service.

In addition to these regular sessions, CAWLS also provided CLE sessions at the Drug and Alcohol Advisory Group in Alice Springs, Charles Darwin University, Ali Curung Families as First Teachers program and the Ti Tree Safe House.

Collaboration is an integral part of delivering successful CLE. This past year CAWLS worked in partnership with practitioners from Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid (CAALAS) and Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission to provide CLE to as wide a range of people as possible. In collaboration with Northern Territory Legal Aid, Relationships Australia and Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia, CAWLS ran two sessions on child protection for members of the Alice Springs Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community. We also worked with CAALAS on a number of remote outreach trips, in particular to Ali Curung to provide education in relation to consumer law.

CAWLS recognises the importance of professional development and the important role for CLE in this context. We provided a number of sessions on domestic violence orders as part of the day long DV101 training which is run periodically by

the Alice Springs Women's Shelter. In addition to this, our CLE solicitor was also involved in arranging a continuing professional development session on domestic violence practice for members of the legal profession in Alice Springs which took place in June 2016.



Julia presenting at Sadadeen Primary School

In March 2016 CAWLS launched two animated stories developed by the italk library and funded with a grant from the NT Law Society Public Purposes Trust. These stories were produced in consultation with community members and CAWLS lawyers and address the issues of domestic violence orders and child protection. The stories were launched at an event hosted by CAWLS to open our new office premises and celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March. Since this date, the CLE Solicitor has employed the italk stories to assist in a number of different CLE sessions.

An important part of CAWLS' community engagement is participation at community events. CAWLS attended and held information stalls at the following events:

- International Women's Day Event at Alukura Women's Health Centre
- Tangentyere Council and Alice Springs Women's Shelter International Women's Day Event
- Ali Curung Family Celebration Day
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month Community Day

The CLE Solicitor also engages with a number of networks and advisory groups on behalf of CAWLS. These include:

- Women's Legal Services Australia
- NT CLE Network
- National CLE CD network
- Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month Planning Committee
- Local Reference Group Prevention Sub-Group
- Northern Territory Law Society CPD/CDU Committee

CASE STUDY

Child Protection Information for the CALD community

In response to a request from some leaders of the Alice Springs CALD community, CAWLS CLE Solicitor collaborated with Relationships Australia, Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia and Northern Territory Legal Aid to run a session on child protection. The purpose of this session was to demystify the child protection system for participants, many of whom came from countries where it was unusual for government to be involved in parenting matters. The session was attended by five women from one particular CALD community who had many questions about how the Department of Children and Families investigates allegations of child abuse or neglect and what constitutes 'harm' to a child.

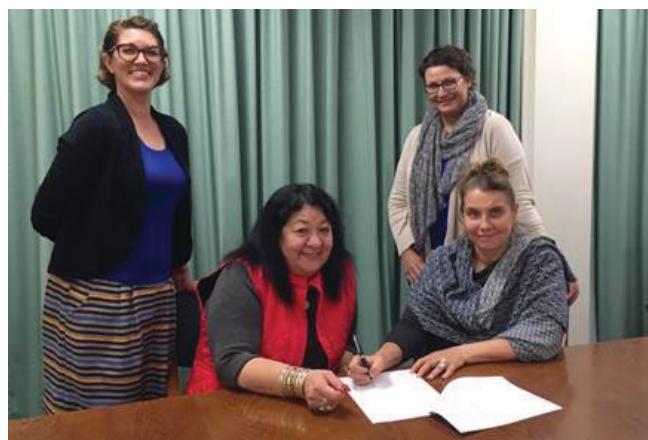


Julia Parkin meets with other members of the NT CLE Network

Health Justice Partnership

The Health Justice Partnership is a collaborative practice model. It was initially developed for clients experiencing chronic illness and/or disability in the United States, referred to as Medical-Legal Partnerships, following research which established that there was a link between clients with health concerns and associated legal needs. Evidence suggests that there was an “increased likelihood of having multiple, complex and interconnected legal and non-legal needs” with clients experiencing chronic illness or disability.

Consequently, an integrated and collaborative practice model emerged between medical services and legal services. It focused on maximising client capacity by providing legal information and support whilst addressing and managing the social need. The practice model, although relatively new to Australia, has now fast evolved.



CAWLS Staff signing the MOU with (L to R); Larissa Ellis, Director Allied Health and Aged Care, Alice Springs Hospital, Central Australia Health Service and Sue Korner, Chief Operating Officer of Central Australia Health Service

Family Violence in a Remote Location

Domestic violence is the leading contributor to preventable death, disability and illness in women

and includes not only physical injury but also direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, damage to property, social isolation and any behaviour which causes a person to live in fear.

The ability to capture the needs of this vulnerable client group is challenging. Victims of domestic violence are usually reluctant to report, fearful of repercussions, without alternative options, not informed and/or educated to be able to identify their experience as being family violence, and additionally unable to improve their underlying social and health concerns.

Accordingly, it was identified that female clients that were at risk of becoming victims or already victims of domestic violence, needed to access legal intervention whilst also securing alternative social supports.

Central Australia was identified as not only having high rates of domestic violence but also particularly high severity. The obvious concerns are:

1. Geographical isolation;
2. Homelessness and/or overcrowding; and
3. Specific cultural consideration.

The demographic continue to battle with choice of safe locations to secure support and advice. Education and early intervention continue to be necessary if we are to assist women in this location.

The Alice Springs Pilot Program

On 16 October 2015, the Australian Federal Government introduced a “Women’s Safety Package”. The package is funded for three years to assist women experiencing domestic violence

to access appropriate legal assistance and other services. It is referred to as a “wrap around service”. It is a collaborative legal practice model where the client has both legal and non-legal needs addressed.

This nation-wide pilot program targets “at risk” women via the new Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships. The locations of the Specialist Domestic Violence Units and the Health Justice Partnerships were selected based on high rates of domestic violence so as to ensure that the most vulnerable women in each state and territory benefited from improved access to front-line services.

CAWLS was the service selected to represent clients in the Central Australia and Barkly regions. CAWLS has formalised its partnership with the Central Australia Health Service to deliver the service to female victims of family violence. The Health Justice Partnership (HJP), launched as the Women's Health and Legal Partnership for Central Australia (women'sHeLP), provides onsite legal training to health professionals and also on-site legal advice via client clinics by way of appointments and an on call service within the Central Australia Health Service.

All women of Alice Springs can now benefit from this HJP which aims to break down the barriers that women face in securing the help that they need. The program will complement existing services and work that the Northern Territory Government is already providing to reduce domestic and family violence.

Client Clinics

Our team works collaboratively with health

professionals to optimise a client's ability to provide instructions and improve outcomes.

Co-location by way of the legal provider being situated on site and having a physical presence at the health facility allows:

- Relationship building for a multi-disciplinary practice;
- Referrals from health professionals to lawyer; and
- Secondary consultations between disciplines for example health professional and social worker.

Legal staff visit the Alice Springs Hospital daily and are otherwise available on call at all other times at the hospital and at health clinics such as Flynn Drive Community Health and Central Australian Aboriginal Congress.

Case study

An example of how women are empowered to seek out legal advice:

- A non-indigenous young mum presented at a health service.
- After being educated by the women'sHeLP lawyer, the health service staff member was confident in referring the woman to the visiting HJP legal service.
- The client had been experiencing serious reservations and fears around seeking legal assistance and/or other supports generally but was encouraged when she was made aware of the confidential safe setting in which she could avail herself of the legal and other supports at no cost.
- The client was able to comfortably feed and change her infant in the safety of the health setting whilst securing her legal advice.

Education

Our women'sHeLP project is in the process of achieving accreditation for health professionals to attend the training program being rolled out quarterly. The medical colleges involved are:

- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- Australian College of Nursing (ACN)
- Australian College of Midwives (ACM)
- Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG)
- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)

By achieving accreditation, health professionals will gain professional development points for the training. Accreditation will also assist in optimising attendance rates.

Quarterly training sessions commence on 8 December 2016 and will be convened at the Centre for Remote Health. There will be no fee for attendees. The funding package will cover the cost of the room hire, resources and refreshments.

A panel of educators have been engaged including:

1. Central Australia Women's Legal Service;
2. Dr Jennifer Delima, Addiction Specialist, Alice Springs Hospital
3. Dr Tessa Boyd Caine, CEO of Health Justice Australia
4. Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Alice Springs
5. Integrated Family Response Unit;
6. NT Police;
7. NPY Women's Council;
8. Tangentyere Council;

The education sessions will canvass the following topics:

- Addressing Family Violence Through a Multi-Disciplinary Approach
- The When, What and How of the women'sHeLP project
- What is Domestic Violence?
- Patient warning signs and how to respond to Domestic Violence in a clinical environment
- The role of SARC
- The role of the Police
- The role of the Family Safety Framework
- The role of the Law in Protecting and Supporting Women and role of CAWLS in Central Australia
- Mandatory Reporting Requirements
- Role Play and Questions for Panel

Further individual service training will be provided intermittently at request on a smaller scale at other health locations. We are also considering ways to adapt materials and resources into online resources with the relevant links to other services and educators so that FIFO health professionals can still benefit for the program.

2016 has seen the introduction of this innovation to Central Australia and 2017 will see the strengthening of this project, relationship building and importantly the advancement of education for health professionals and awareness building for women caught in the web of domestic violence with all the issues that come with this health and legal community epidemic.

women'sHeLP
A Health and Legal Partnership for Central Australia

WOMEN'S SAFETY PACKAGE LAUNCH 25 MAY 2016



Top L to R: The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Deputy Opposition Leader and the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, Member for Lingiari.
Bottom L to R: The Hon Justice Jenny Blokland, Supreme Court of NT; Andrea Mason, CEO NPY Women's Council; Russell Goldflam, White Ribbon Ambassador; Janet Taylor.

CAWLS

Women's Legal Service

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