

# Annual Report 2021-2022



**COMMUNITY LEGAL**  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners in the Perth region, the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation and acknowledge their special connection to land, waters and community.

Always was. Always will be.

We pay respects to all First Nations Peoples in Western Australia and their cultures, and to Elders, past and present.

## Our Partnerships

We would like to acknowledge our key partners this year:

Our funders the WA Department of Justice, the Department of Communities and Lotterywest.



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Justice**



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**



We are part of a national network and member of Community Legal Centres Australia.



Community Legal Centres  
Australia

CLWA would like to thank the following law firms for their pro bono support and commitment to CLCs and access to justice:

- ▶ **Lavan**
- ▶ **Gilbert+Tobin**
- ▶ **Corrs Chambers Westgarth**
- ▶ **Herbert Smith Freehills**
- ▶ **Allens**

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## Our Vision

Our Vision is for a fair Western Australia, in which everybody has equal access to justice

### About Us

Community Legal WA is the peak body for community legal centres in WA. Our purpose is to support our members and work for a fair WA, where everybody has access to justice.

Key pillars of our work:

- ▶ **Promote and enhance access to justice**
- ▶ **Strengthen effective and responsive community legal services**
- ▶ **Lead and unite the sector through a strengthened peak body**

### About Community Legal Centres

**Community legal centres are independent community organisations that provide free or low-cost legal help to people, when they need it most. Getting legal help in time can stop problems getting worse – keeping people in work, families in their homes and kids safe.**

There are 26 community legal centres, right across WA. Some centres help people who live in a geographical area, like the northern suburbs of Perth and some centres are specialists in an area of law, like employment. Community legal centres help people understand their rights, discuss their options, and provide legal advice and representation.

# Our Members



Associate Member





## CEO's Report

**I have worked for social justice my whole adult life, but this has been my first year working in the community legal centres sector.**

It has been exciting to get to know members and see the work they do; I am astonished by what CLCs deliver with the few resources available. An unwavering commitment to social justice and meeting the needs of people who need help is the golden thread that runs through every centre, every staff member, and every volunteer.

CLWA has had a lot of change, with a new team bringing a mix of CLC and other experience from community, government and politics. Members were front of mind - we held more than 12 consultations and events and facilitated 58 CPD activities. The client needs that members raise with us, and the feedback they provide on our activities and their own development requirements, inform the detail of our work every day.

We have sought to focus deeply on our core purpose; to support people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to access the legal help they need. Our primary focus is on the needs of people and communities, and our work - on advocacy, member representation and sector development - is shaped by that focus.

**Chelsea McKinney**

*CEO*



## Chairperson's Report

**Change. That's the word for this year for CLWA.**

The year started with a commitment from members for a transition to a staff-led, well resourced, peak body. This transition has seen the development of much needed clarity on member engagements, consultation frameworks, a renewed focus on client-centric decision making, and the commencement of a full governance review.

Our CLWA team has changed significantly as well. Responding to input from members, these changes include significant focus of our services on policy advocacy - ensuring our sector continues to be known as leaders in this space. Following additional investment by the Department of Justice, we've also launched a dedicated project to assist our members in responding to demands of reform - the Sustainable CLCs project.

The CLWA Board has worked in the background to support Chelsea and her team in these areas. As a Board in transition, we have continued to be mindful of the need to empower and release our staff to deliver on the vision. This is made much easier by the dynamic and consultative leadership Chelsea continues to provide.

To all our staff that have contributed to the CLWA over the last year - thank you for your commitment and dedication. To my fellow Board members - thank you also for your collective wisdom.

**Brodie Lewis**

*Chairperson*

# Highlights 2021-22



## July 2021

Chelsea met Shadow Attorney General Mark Dreyfus on his visit to WA in July.



## November 2021

It was great to get together with members for our November engagement event, with one day focusing on vision and strategy and our 2021 AGM, and the second day on sector sustainability, social policy and law reform.



## February 2022

We joined the launch of the Hands up for Justice Federal Election campaign, calling for sustainable funding nationally for CLCs.

## August 2021

We welcomed Attorney General John Quigley's announcement of 4-year funding contracts for community legal centres in WA.



## January 2022

We supported the community legal sector call for a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in WA.

A dedicated Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People will help to ensure the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are protected.



## March 2022

Our March member engagement event took place online, focusing on data and our case management systems project. *(Read more on page 13)*





## May 2022

During Law Week, we held a stall at the Murdoch Student Law Society Careers Fair, sharing information with law students about the fantastic work of CLCs.

## June 2022

We finished the year with our June member engagement event, launching our Online Referral Tool (formerly the chatbot) to help people find the right legal help online. *(Read more on Page 11)*

We also partnered with the Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime to hold a consultation with community legal sector staff on whether WA should criminalise coercive control.



## Celebrating Anniversaries

In November 2021 Peel Community Legal Services celebrated 20 years of serving its community. In April SCALES Community Legal Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary and in June, Gosnells CLC celebrated their 40th birthday with a big party. It was great to see so many passionate people focused on access to justice - having fun!

## Celebrating legal champions

This year, we celebrated Southern Aboriginal Corporation CEO Asha Bhat OAM, who was named in Pro Bono Australia's Impact 25 top changemakers, as well as being named in the Queen's Birthday Honours. We also congratulated Shayla Strapps from Ruah Community Services who won Woman Lawyer of the Year and Ann-Margaret Walsh, Principal Solicitor of Street Law Centre who was awarded the Antoinette Kennedy career contribution Award at the Women Lawyer of the Year Awards.

## Training and CPD

CLWA facilitated or ran 58 CPD activities for its member solicitors this year with more than 968 workers attending these activities and approximately 830 solicitors gaining CPD points.

## Drivers Licence Reform

WA's driving licence regime has a big impact on people in remote and regional communities, particularly Aboriginal people, and can compound disadvantage. We supported our RRR Network's initiative, with Corrs Chambers Westgarth working pro bono to prepare an excellent report on driving licence issues. It contains recommendations for system reform to reduce negative impacts on people in rural and regional WA.

## COVID

COVID was again a significant issue in 2021. The sector shared resources to minimise duplication and reduce costs, jointly purchasing RATs and masks in early 2022 and sharing procedures on vaccination and remote working. CLWA provided members with rapid interpretation of new policy and successfully worked with the Deputy Chief Health Officer and WACOSS to have legal services explicitly named in the community sector directions.

# Data Snapshot

## The people we help and what CLCs do

All CLCs are required to record their service data in a system called CLASS, adhering to the National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual. The following statistics were taken from CLASS, representing the work completed by CLCs during the 2021-2022 financial year.

### The people helped by CLCs:

**23691** people assisted



~63%  
Female



~33%  
Male



~4%  
Non-binary



~23%

People who disclose a **disability / mental health** challenge



~31%

People who disclose experiencing **family violence**



~16%

People who identify as **Aboriginal** and/or **Torres Strait Islander**



~8%

People whose main **language** spoken at home is not English



~9%

People experiencing or at risk of **homelessness**



~7%

People experiencing **financial disadvantage**

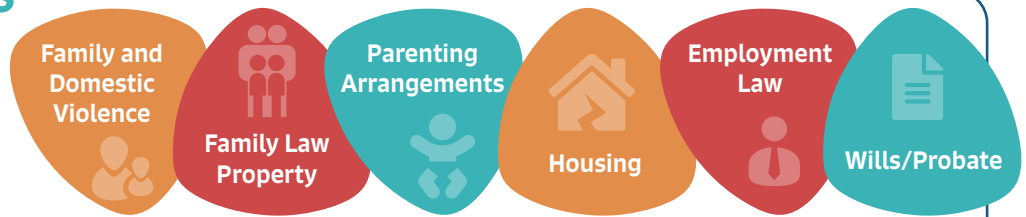


~21%

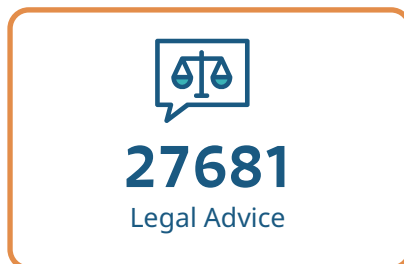
People living in outer **regional** or **remote** areas



## Top 6 issues for clients contacting community legal centres



## Services delivered by member CLCs



## Referral Service

At CLWA, we provide a referral service for people seeking legal help.

2021-2022: **1481** referrals made

## Pillar One:

# Promote and enhance access to justice

## Family and Domestic Violence Legal Health Check Project

The Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Legal Health Check assists people supporting victims/survivors of FDV to identify legal problems early and refer them to an appropriate community legal service.

People experiencing FDV report on average up to 20 different legal problems, which can greatly impact their wellbeing. Getting legal help before problems escalate makes a positive difference to people's lives, increasing access to justice and creating better legal, social and wellbeing outcomes.

CLWA developed the FDV Legal Health Check project to meet the need of vulnerable people in our community. The project was funded by the Department of Communities under the National Partnership Agreement: COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses.

CLWA partnered with 14 community legal centres across WA to deliver the project. This year, 221 workshops were delivered to community service organisations, focusing on the importance of getting early legal assistance and using the FDV Legal Health Check. During the reporting period, this resulted in providing a legal service to 240 clients, state-wide, once a FDV Legal Health Check referral was received. The project had significant further benefits including increasing the profile of community legal centres in the community and identifying complex and multiple legal issues early.

Staff members Helen Liedel, Sarah Jarman, Karla Cerna and Joshua Marks all supported this project.

## Refuge Project

CLWA was pleased to support the work of the Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre project: FDV Support Workers and the Law: Upskilling & Empowering the Front Line.

The purpose of the project was to educate staff on the difference between legal information and advice and their role in the legal process; this increased their confidence to help people access services and have their legal needs met. CLWA staff member Carrie Hannington worked with NSCLC to provide online and face-to-face education sessions to 42 women's refuges across Western Australia and in men's FDV accommodation.

## Improving Data

Supporting CLCs to provide data to government has been a significant focus this year. Our work on the WA Legal Needs Tool included identifying issues affecting CLC engagement, negotiating with stakeholders, the development of a custom data translation tool and supporting CLCs to use the tool. Our work was instrumental in achieving the outcome of full CLC sector unit level provision of data. Learnings from the process have enabled us to take a leadership role in national discussions on data, and we are actively working to find solutions so CLCs can balance their data reporting and legal practice obligations. Special thanks to Catherine Eagle and Brodie Lewis for finding a solution, ably supported by member Rowan Kelly and staff Joshua Marks.

## Legal Assistance Strategy and CLWA's advocacy work

CLWA has continued our advocacy for higher and sustained investment to meet people's need for legal assistance services; including to manage the increasing need and complexity of cases arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living pressures.

We have advocated strongly for WA's first Legal Assistance Strategy and Action Plan to meet the needs of people across the state, and address system challenges. CLWA provided our own direct input, as well as a range of opportunities for members to engage in consultation. The strategy recognises the important place of community legal centres in WA's legal assistance sector, and the unique strengths of CLCs, including their responsiveness to community needs. The strategy also has a welcome focus on collaboration and culturally safe, trauma-informed, person-centred and timely legal assistance.

We have also continued our collaborative role supporting a range of justice and advocacy forums, including the Protection and Care Advocacy Network, Path to Safety steering group, WA Peaks Forum and Social Reinvestment WA. We have been an active member of important campaigns including Raise the Age, Make Renting Fair and the appointment of a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in WA. As a member of the national Hands up for Justice campaign we advocated for sustainable funding for community legal centres in the lead up to the 2022 federal election.

Carrie Hannington and then Jocasta Sibbel led this work, with representation on various committees also provided by Chelsea.



*Josh Marks with UWA's Kate Offer and students at the launch of our Online Referral Tool*

## Chatbot/Online Referral Tool

After two years of consultation, development, and testing, CLWA's Online Referral Tool was officially launched on 30 June 2022. The Online Referral Tool uses the Josef legal tech platform to collect information on a user's legal issues and recommend CLCs near them that might be able to help. The Tool is available 24/7 and can direct users to a CLCs own online form or email a CLC requesting an appointment.

Within CLWA's own team, Catrina Campbell-Fraser, Manvir Khehra, and Joshua Marks developed and tested the tool, but it would not have been possible without the involvement of UWA's Kate Offer (Director of Applied Innovation), and student volunteers Georgina Due, Astrid Sweeney, Sam Dulyba, and Christie Ooey.

At the time of publication, over 450 tailored referrals have been made to users online; demonstrating that the Online Referral Tool helps connect people to their local CLCs and reduces the effort required to get the right help. We will continue to monitor and evaluate the Tool in the coming year.

## Pillar Two:

# Strengthen effective and responsive community legal services



## Accreditation

Across the 2021-2022 financial year, 10 WA community legal centres completed assessment requirements to attain phase 3 accreditation status within the National Accreditation Scheme (NAS). This brings the total number of WA centres to have attained phase 3 accreditation status to 18. The remaining centres, who are currently at varying stages of the assessment process, will finalise phase 3 accreditation by early 2023. This is a fantastic effort from our community legal sector and is a testament to the high quality of services, and the dedication of community legal personnel.

Work is already beginning to design the phase 4 accreditation process, commencing July 2023, with the intention that phase 4 will include some tweaks to the NAS but not major policy changes.

We continue to work closely with, and be supported by, our colleagues within the National Accreditation Network. In partnership with CLCA, we also assisted many centres to undertake the Setting the Benchmark: Governance Tool which was piloted in WA. Sincere thanks to CLCA and the many centres who voluntarily engaged with this resource.

Lastly, we extend our thanks and best wishes to Trish Ryans-Taylor who served as Accreditation Coordinator for several years before her retirement in February 2022. All the best Trish!

## Digital capacity building: the ICT Strategy Project

This year we completed the ICT Strategy project with the finalisation of a CLC fit-for-purpose ICT service model and Helpdesk. We on-boarded 5 CLCs and transitioned the helpdesk to a private provider this year to ensure ongoing sustainability of the model. Earlier stages of the project saw support for CLCs to transition to cloud-based services including Microsoft 365, SharePoint and MS teams, and the establishment of collaborative sector-wide Teams for information sharing, collaboration and peer support. This project also developed the chatbot/online referral tool detailed on page 11. Trish Ryans-Taylor, Catrina Campbell-Fraser, Robert Bryce and Marina Greaney all made noteworthy contributions to this work.

## Sustainable CLCs Project

The Sustainable CLCs project supports the community legal sector to build collaborative and person-centred services, which align to the Department of Justice reform agenda. Across the next two years, CLWA will support the CLC sector by providing training, resources, conferencing and consultancy to enable engagement across five pillars of reform.

In 2021-2022, CLWA scoped and agreed a project proposal with the Department of Justice to deliver support for community legal centres. Whilst most of the work for the Sustainable CLCs project began in July 2022, initial consultations around the role of specialist and generalist community legal centres were held in June 2022 as part of the members engagement forum. We thank all our centres for the valuable insights and feedback received during these consultations.

## CMS Project

CLWA received funding from the Department of Justice to support CLCs to transition to virtual service delivery during COVID, aligning with the drive to transition to Case Management Systems (CMS). These can be a valuable workflow and productivity tool for CLCs and support data quality improvements. Nationally, the legal assistance sector is going through a rapid change in the data and CMS environment, and the CMS project enabled CLWA to support centres to understand the benefits of using a CMS, look at potential offerings and make decisions about implementation.

From September 2021 to June 2022, Project Manager Brian MacCauley and Data and Implementation Analyst Joshua Marks supported our members to work through this process.

They ran education forums, training and demonstration sessions and built support networks with peak bodies in other states and with service providers. By June 2022, 11 of 26 CLCs had made progress towards implementing the identified CMS, Actionstep, and 1 had completed the implementation. Despite funding finishing for the project, CLCs are supporting each other to continue this process.



*The Sustainable CLCs team comprises Sarah Jarman, Felicity Townsend, Eleanor Yates and Joshua Marks.*

## Pillar Three:

# Lead and unite the sector through a strengthened peak body

In November 2021, the CLC sector came together to create a new and more detailed strategic plan to guide our work to 2025. As well as carving out more time to enhance access to justice and continuing our focus on sector sustainability, members asked that we strengthen CLWA as an organisation and as the sector's peak body. This component of the new plan, combined with a more stable funding environment for CLWA, led to an organisational review of our operations, staffing, governance and finance. On the staffing front, we completed a restructure so that we could increase our capacity in the core functions of sector development, communications, advocacy and law reform.

This year we reviewed how we interact with our members, to ensure we take a solution-focused approach to the policy positions we develop, and to our representation and advocacy to government and other stakeholders. We have trialled different engagement formats, including online forums and targeted consultations; and tackled some challenging questions affecting the sector. We have also worked with COVID restrictions to find opportunities to meet face-to-face again as a sector.



We developed a Member Engagement Framework to set out; when, how and on what we engage the sector; what principles guide us in that work, and what members can expect of us.

**“The facilitation coupled with the background survey was excellent - what could have been a very contentious session was handled brilliantly. Well done.”**

*Feedback on the Specialist-Generalist Consultation.*

We were excited to launch our inaugural member feedback survey in June. Survey respondents noted that our work has improved over the past year in relation to communications, member engagement and working influentially with government. However, there is more work to do; members identified the following as priorities for improvement: building and enhancing the collective strengths of the sector, supporting the sector to be client-focused, and representing the sector's interests.

**“CLWA has delivered on organisational objectives and been a positive conduit between government and CLC sector”**

**“CLWA has been active and quick to respond to emerging issues”**

*2022 CLWA Member Feedback Survey*



CLWA consulted members to agree a set of principles on legal needs and funding advocacy, to strengthen our focus and make the process clearer. Together, we agreed to put client and community need first and - supported by the Board and members - set clear delegations, putting decisions on the focus, approach and tone of our advocacy with the CEO. This reduces the pressure on members to develop sector positions while still enabling their input, and reduces the risk of conflicts of interest.

CLWA also commenced a governance review to action the item in our strategic plan: 'Build a strong and capable peak body with appropriate governance, resources, and structure to achieve our objectives'. At the November strategic planning day, members endorsed a continuing shift away from a peak body model that functions as a secretariat carrying out member decisions towards a model that charges staff with more responsibility, offering the CEO decision-making authority on matters of policy. This work will continue in the next financial year led by a Board subcommittee and with opportunities for members to be consulted on the most appropriate governance model for CLWA.

Following these changes, the end of the 2021-22 financial year saw the final appointments in our new core staff and project team. Below are the new CLWA team (as at June 2022):



**Chelsea McKinney**  
CEO



**Sonia Abbott**  
Corporate Services Coordinator



**Jocasta Sibbel**  
Policy & Advocacy Coordinator



**Chantelle Lines**  
Strategic Communications  
Coordinator



**Eleanor Yates**  
Accreditation Coordinator/Sector  
Development Manager



**Sarah Jarman**  
FDV LHC Project Manager/Senior  
Project Officer



**Joshua Marks**  
Data and Impact Advisor

# Member Engagement Events

This year we were able to facilitate three member engagement forums.

In **November 2021** we had a two day in-person program that included a CLWA vision and strategy session and our 2021 AGM. This was followed by a day focused on sector sustainability, social policy and law reform.

In **March 2022**, we were excited to host an online forum focused on data and Case Management Systems (CMS). The aim of this session was to assist members with their planning for transition to new systems such as ActionStep. This day also included information on the Federal Election campaign "Hands up for Justice".

Finally, in **June 2022** we hosted a hybrid in-person/online event, that included the launch of our Online Referral Tool and consultation around specialist and generalist community legal centres.

Across each of these events, there has been a strong focus on ensuring members are kept up to date on the work CLWA is doing with the Department of Justice and the impact of reforms on the sector.



"CLWA has been very proactive and engaged well with members regarding significant changes that are happening in the CLC space at present"

"Great work refocusing and energizing sector"

*Comments from member CLCs from the June 2022 Member Engagement Survey*





## Report from the WA PII representative and Chair of the Legal Practice and PII Committee

In this role I regularly take calls on a confidential basis from lawyers in centres about potential notifications and a wide variety of issues that arise when running a legal practice within a community legal centre setting. These discussions often form the basis of planning CPD sessions that are targeted towards CLCs, to ensure we can provide the best possible service for our clients. We are lucky to be able to work with pro bono partners to run these sessions.

The Legal Practice and PII administration sub-committee meets around every 6 weeks and supports me in my role. I would like to acknowledge and thank the other members of the sub-committee; Fiona Hobbs whose administrative support is essential, and Ann-Margaret Walsh and Alison Muller whose practical ideas and experience are invaluable.

During the year we grappled with the legal practice implications of providing client data to our funders. We were grateful for pro bono advice from Grant Donaldson SC which assisted us to work out a strategy to provide data in a form that was useful to our funders, without compromising our fundamental duties to our clients. I would like to thank Rowan Kelly for his assistance with this.

Amongst other activities, during the year we:

- ▶ **planned and delivered CPD sessions requested by CLCs**
- ▶ **responded to legal practice issues that arose**
- ▶ **finalised 2021 crosschecks and organised the 2022 crosschecks**

## The National PII network

CLCs Australia has a PII Network made up of a representative from each State and Territory. I am the PII representative for WA and am the chair of the National PII network.

Each year the network is involved in ensuring that our PII policy is placed with an insurer on the best possible terms and for the best possible price. Once again this year, we were only able to finalise our policy in the last week of June.

We were able to renew our policy with our existing insurer in a difficult insurance market because of our reputation as a sector that focuses on managing risk and has in place great strategies to reduce the likelihood of us making

errors in providing services to our clients, and so avoiding claims against us.

The substantial update of the Risk Management Guide (RMG) has continued during 2021-2022 and we are hopeful of seeing the draft before the end of 2022.

### Catherine Eagle

*Welfare Rights and Advocacy Services,  
PII Representative for WA  
Chair of the National PII Network*

*Many thanks to Fiona Hobbes, Virtual Assistant and Executive Support Services for her work supporting the Legal Practice and PII Committee*

# 2022 Financial Summary



## Annual Performance

In 2021/22 CLWA reported a surplus of \$128,986. Income for the year was \$1,757,113. This included a non-recurrent grant of \$994,557 from the Department of Communities for the Family and Domestic Violence Legal Health Check. Whilst CLWA managed this project, the outcomes were delivered by several community legal centres, and this cost of delivery is reflected in the project costs figure of \$801,010. After sustained funding advocacy, CLWA received a substantial increase in core funding from the Department of Justice, which extends to 2024. This has enabled the organisation to invest in recruiting and establishing a core team of staff to ensure that CLWA can function as a professional peak body. At 30 June 2022 CLWA held cash balances of \$645,941 and reserves of \$401,047. In 2022/23 the Board have agreed to invest some of the organisation's reserves to continue the transformation of CLWA and to support the community legal sector in this challenging reform era.

*CLWA would like to thank outgoing staff bookkeeper Jane Riches for her valued work.*

### Carol Child

*Treasurer, CLWA*

Profit and Loss	\$ 2022	\$ 2021
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Grants	1,697,856	767,878
Membership Income	47,518	27,262
Interest and Other Income	11,739	41,920
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,757,113</b>	<b>837,060</b>

Employment Expenses	696,493	624,310
Project Costs	801,010	91,220
Other Expenses	130,624	85,180
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,628,127</b>	<b>800,710</b>

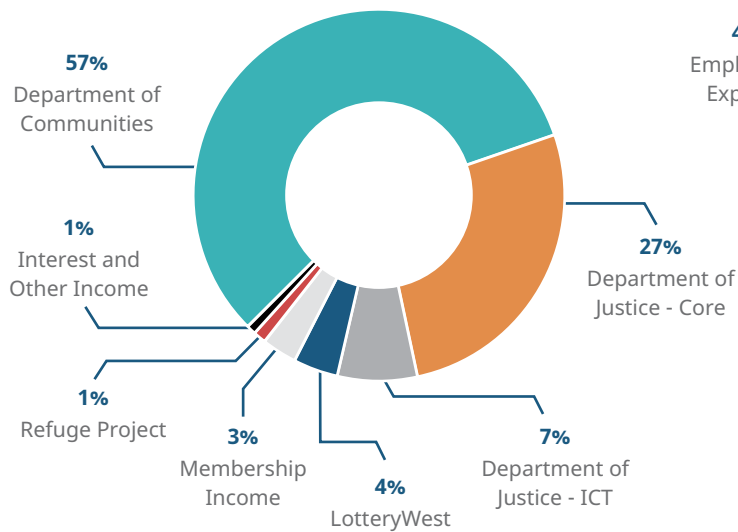
<b>Surplus for the Year</b>	<b>128,986</b>	<b>36,350</b>
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Financial Position	\$ 2022	\$ 2021
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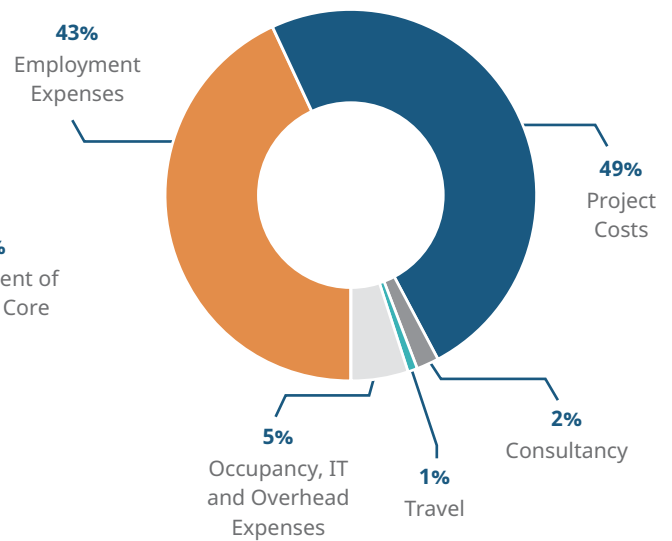
Fixed Assets	12,948	15,641
Current Assets	731,109	2,005,866
Current Liabilities	-342,404	-1,704,323
Non-Current Liabilities	-606	-45,125
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>401,047</b>	<b>272,059</b>

<b>Current Year Surplus</b>	<b>128,986</b>	<b>36,350</b>
Reserves	272,061	235,709
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>401,047</b>	<b>272,059</b>

## Breakdown of Income



## Breakdown of Expenditure



The audited financial statements are available on our website or on request.

## CLWA Board 2021-22



**Chairperson**  
**Brodie Lewis**  
Business Manager,  
Albany CLC



**Deputy Chair**  
**Sarah Patterson**  
CEO, Gosnells CLC



**Treasurer**  
**Carol Child**  
Corporate Services  
Manager, Circle Green



### Members

**Asha Bhat**  
CEO, Southern Aboriginal Corporation



**Chris Gabelish**  
Operations Manager, Regional Alliance West



**Jennie Gray**  
CEO, Women's Legal Service WA



**Kathy Johnson**  
CEO, Peel Community Legal Services



**Sarah Toovey**  
General Manager, RUAH Legal Services



**Gai Walker**  
Managing Director, SCALES Community Legal Centre

We would like to thank former Chairperson Chuck Berger and 2020-21 Board members Louellyn Gane and Corina Martin for their hard work and valuable contributions.



**COMMUNITY  
LEGAL**  
WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA

**Community Legal Centres Association (WA) Inc**  
Claisebrook Lotteries House  
33 Moore Street  
East Perth WA 6004

**T:** 08 9221 9322  
**E:** [administrator@communitylegalwa.org.au](mailto:administrator@communitylegalwa.org.au)

[www.clwa.org.au](http://www.clwa.org.au)

**Office hours:** 9:00am to 4:00pm - Monday to Thursday