



COMMUNITY LEGAL
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

State Budget Submission Priorities 2023-24

November 2022

Foreword

The core purpose of community legal centres is to support people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to access the legal help they need, when they need it, and where they need it.

Now, more than ever, Western Australians experiencing marginalisation or living with disadvantage need access to community services that can help them resolve legal problems quickly and effectively.

This state budget submission is a result of conversations with our members across the state. They have told us about the need they see in their communities and the most pressing issues faced by their clients. They have also told us what would help them to better meet that need.

We have also spoken to our fellow community services peaks, in Perth as well as their staff based across the regions. All community services share a common focus on the needs of people and communities in WA and our services are experiencing many of the same challenges and changes.

Our submission is also based on what the data and evidence tell us. We looked at our own sector service data, broader economic data, evidence about the housing sector, health and mental health, domestic violence challenges, and information about our changing climate. We considered what this information means for the people our sector serves – those experiencing the greatest disadvantage and vulnerability – and their need for access to legal help, today and in the coming years.

The community legal sector has a strong commitment to **better outcomes** for people in need. We encourage decision-makers to consider our findings in light of the wide-ranging social and economic benefits to access to timely, person-centred and place-based legal help.

Our submission provides key recommendations towards a stronger, fairer future where all Western Australians have access to justice, no matter how much money they have or where they live.

Chelsea McKinney
CEO

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.



State Budget Submission

1. Sustainable CLCs

WA needs strong, sustainable community legal centres so that people can access legal help, when and where they need it.

We are calling for:

- ▶ Increased investment in community legal centres, for a thriving legal assistance sector that meets the legal assistance needs of all Western Australians, including those living in rural and remote areas.
- ▶ Sustainable investment to ensure long term viability and enable services to plan, grow and perform prevention and early intervention activities like community legal education and law reform.
- ▶ Indexation to ensure funding keeps pace with cost increases.

We are always trying to strike the right balance between helping many people a little (advice and tasks) and helping fewer people a lot (ongoing and representation) ...and we have to decide who to turn away ...
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

2. Integrated services

Integrated services and partnerships improve outcomes by helping people access the services and support they need.

We are calling for:

- ▶ Government investment to support the development of integrated service approaches including case management, collaboration and partnerships, to improve people’s access to holistic and wraparound services.

The multiple, intersecting health, legal and social problems faced by many in Australia are complex, as are the service systems that exist to address them. It is collaborative solutions that can make a real difference here.
Tessa Boyd-Caine, CEO, Health Justice Australia

3. Tenancy Focus

Tenancy support, advice and advocacy helps ensure people have a place to call home.

We are calling for:

- ▶ Increased, sustainable investment in tenancy advice and education services to meet need across WA.
- ▶ Indexation to ensure funding keeps pace with cost increases.
- ▶ Investment in education and support for tenants on changes to the Residential Tenancies Act.

Housing was one of the top 5 issues for CLC clients in 2021-22, accounting for roughly 1/4 of all Legal Advice and almost 1/2 of duty lawyer services provided by CLCs that year.

4. Strengthened ACCOs

Strengthened Aboriginal community controlled organisations and more culturally responsive mainstream services lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

We are calling for:

- ▶ State government investment in culturally responsive and accessible legal help for Aboriginal people, through funding for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.
- ▶ The state government to work collaboratively to ensure self-determination underpins the development and delivery of legal assistance services for Aboriginal people.

Closing the Gap Target 13: By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.

5. Climate Justice

Including legal assistance services in climate adaptation and disaster response planning is essential for responses that meet the needs of communities and individuals.

We are calling for:

- ▶ The WA state government to recognise the role of legal assistance providers in climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness and response, and to resource CLCs for this work.
- ▶ Government investment to scope and develop the role of WA CLCs in climate justice, and to help identify and address new legal assistance demands from climate change, supporting community resilience.

Climate change is already causing a shift in legal demands, changes in the law, and the emergence of novel, complex questions of law across multiple practice areas (Taylor & Lay, 2022).

About Community Legal WA

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.

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.

There are 26 community legal centres (CLCs) across WA.

CLCs in WA fall into two main categories – generalist CLCs (which provide services across a broad range of legal matters within a geographic area), and specialist CLCs (which provide services to clients from a particular priority group or services relating to specific subject areas). Generalist CLCs may also provide specialist services that target specific priority client groups or areas of law.

Some CLCs provide criminal law services, however, the vast majority of CLC services relate to civil law and family law matters in the form of discrete assistance. Civil law matters include credit and debt, insurance, social security, mental health, disability, discrimination, DFV, elder abuse, child protection, tenancy, immigration, and employment. Specialist services are also provided in environmental law, and to women and young people. CLCs provide high volume and quality services, particularly in civil and family law, for the dollar spent.

Three of WA's 26 community legal centres are Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS): Aboriginal Family Legal Services, Southern Aboriginal Corporation and Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre. FVPLSs are specialist Aboriginal community controlled, not-for-profit organisations that provide legal and other holistic, culturally safe and trauma informed services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing or at risk of family violence and sexual assault. They provide assistance in family law, criminal injuries compensation, care and protection, and family violence restraining order matters. They also undertake community legal education, early intervention and prevention, law reform, policy and advocacy activities.

Community legal centres:

- ▶ Are the service of choice for people experiencing complex needs
- ▶ Have specialist skills in trauma informed care and culturally responsive service delivery
- ▶ Operate at a grassroots level
- ▶ Are nimble, responding efficiently to changing and emerging needs in their communities
- ▶ Offer integrated care with holistic or social supports and work closely with other local services to provide a web of support.

CLCs support some of the most vulnerable West Australians, many of whom feel safer accessing a trusted local service than a government agency. Of the more than 23,500 people supported by CLCs last year, 16% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 8% spoke a language other than English at home, 25% disclosed a disability or mental health issue, 21% lived in regional or remote areas, 9% were experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and 31% told us they were experiencing family violence.

The top six legal issues for clients who accessed CLC support last year were: family and domestic violence, family law (property), parenting arrangements, housing, employment law and wills/probate.

Access to legal help in WA

Legal problems are widespread in our community. Around one in two Australians experience at least one legal problem every year, with around a third experiencing more than one legal problem.¹

Prompt, accessible and affordable legal assistance prevents problems from spiralling out of control. It keeps people in their homes and in their jobs and makes women and children safer.²

However, accessing private legal help is unaffordable for many Australians. On the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index in 2021, Australia ranked 40th out of 46 countries for the affordability and accessibility of our civil justice system.³ The situation is not improving, with our performance falling over the last few years. Results from an Australia-wide survey of legal need undertaken in 2012 indicate that just over a third of people in Australia who experience a legal problem do not have their legal needs properly met.^{4 5}

Getting legal help shouldn't be determined by your bank balance or postcode.

Community legal centres are an essential part of improving access to justice for Western Australians, providing access to free or low-cost legal help to tens of thousands of people in our community every year.

Legal needs change with time and are influenced by multiple variables. Western Australian community legal centres tell us they are seeing an increasing number of people needing legal help and that people have increasingly complex and more urgent legal needs. Our consultations with other Western Australian peaks demonstrated the experience of rising need and increasing complexity is not confined to the legal assistance sector.

¹ Coumarelos, C., Macourt, D., People, J., McDonald, H., Wei, Z., Iriana, R., & Ramsey, S. 2012, Legal Australia-Wide Survey: Legal Need in Australia, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, available at:

[http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/LAW_AUS/\\$file/LAW_Survey_Australia.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/LAW_AUS/$file/LAW_Survey_Australia.pdf)

² Productivity Commission 2014, Access to Justice Arrangements: Overview, Inquiry Report No. 72, Canberra, available at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/access-justice/report/access-justice-overview.pdf>

³ World Justice Project, 2021, Rule of Law Index®, available at:

<https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-INDEX-21.pdf>

⁴ Productivity Commission estimates based on unpublished Legal Australia-Wide Survey data. Productivity Commission 2014, Access to Justice Arrangements, Inquiry Report No. 72, Canberra, available at:

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/access-justice/report/access-justice-volume1.pdf>

⁵ See also for example, Kalico Consulting, 2017, Legal Need in Western Australia, available at

https://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Legal_Need_in_Western_Australia.pdf We anticipate the Department of Justice's soon to be released WA Legal Needs Report will provide an updated evidence base to provide a more comprehensive picture of the scale and geography of unmet legal need in WA.

Sarah's story

'Sarah' lived in Broome and had recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness. She was referred to Aboriginal Family Legal Services (AFLS) by a family friend for help preparing a will and making Enduring Power of Attorney and Enduring Power of Guardianship arrangements.

Sarah was also a member of the ACBF Funeral Fund, which had recently gone into liquidation and was refusing to pay out to any parties.

AFLS staff were able to visit Sarah at home where she was receiving palliative care, complete an assessment of her capacity, and prepare the necessary documents for her. AFLS also helped Sarah to access her superannuation account details and to register as an interested party in the ACBF collapse with the Liquidators.

Sarah died a few weeks later and AFLS staff were able to help her family by referring them to Broome Circle to assist with the going claims against ACBF and to provide information about claiming any interest in superannuation funds that may exist in Sarah's name that had not been drawn upon during her life.

Without these services Sarah would have died intestate, resulting in her grieving family going through a longer, more distressing process to finalise her financial affairs, and a higher cost to the state.

Cost of living

More than one in eight people (13.4 per cent) and one in six children (16.6 per cent) in Australia live in poverty.⁶ Poverty erodes economic and social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing and food.⁷ Poverty has also traditionally been a key social indicator of legal need, with low-income households significantly more likely to experience legal problems.

We are seeing an increasing reliance on buy now pay later. People are using this to survive. People are buying Coles vouchers on After Pay to buy food. This leads to people spiralling into financial crisis and increasing rates of predatory lending.

CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Inflationary pressures are rising across the state with Perth's inflation currently at an annual rate of 6.0%.⁸ Our members are already seeing the impact of the rising cost of living on their clients, and it is anticipated that these pressures will get worse. The cost of food and energy is going up, with the regions particularly hard hit.

⁶ Davidson, P; Bradbury, B; and Wong, M (2022) Poverty in Australia 2022: A snapshot Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and UNSW Sydney.

⁷ Alternative Law Journal, 2012, Justice and Poverty, <https://www.altlj.org/news-and-views/opinion/444-justice-and-poverty>

⁸ WA Government, Department of Treasury, Highlights of WA economy as at 15 September 2022 <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/highlights-of-the-wa-economy>

Rising costs increase inequality and disadvantage and increase many of the social determinants of legal problems.⁹ Our members have told us that they are seeing significant follow-on effects from the increased cost of living as people put off paying their bills, access buy now pay later and payday lending schemes, and experience increased risk of violence, substance abuse and mental ill health. This reflects findings of a recent national ACOSS survey on the impact of rising cost of living.¹⁰

Tiana's story

'Tiana', a mother of a teenager and a victim-survivor of family and domestic violence, contacted Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA) (CCLSWA) for help to remove a default notice on her credit file.

Tiana's daughter needed orthodontic work and she took up the option offered by the orthodontist to pay for the work using a buy now pay later (BNPL) product from an external provider. Almost a year later Tiana relocated to escape her abusive ex-partner. As a result, her daughter was not able to complete the orthodontist treatment.

Tiana contacted the orthodontist practice to let them know of her change in circumstances. They agreed to an alternative repayment plan for less than half the original fee. This fee covered the partial treatment her daughter had received.

This agreement was either not communicated to the BNPL provider or not processed by them. They engaged lawyers and a debt collector to pursue Tiana for the full amount of the original agreement despite her efforts to negotiate with both the BNPL provider and the debt collector. The debt collector also listed a default on Tiana's credit file, at which point she sought help from a community legal centre.

The BNPL provider was part of a complicated corporate structure, and it would have been very difficult for Tiana to work out how and where to make a successful complaint. CCLSWA was able to identify the correct complaint mechanism and to achieve the outcome Tiana wanted, which reduced her debt to the lower fee agreed by the orthodontist for the partial treatment her daughter received.

Learnings from Tiana's case were shared by CCLSWA to help resolve any future complaints about the credit provider, and to promote enhanced monitoring by the Australian Financial Complaints Authority.

⁹ Davidson, P. & Bradbury, B., (2022) The wealth inequality pandemic: COVID and wealth inequality ACOSS/UNSW Sydney Poverty and Inequality Partnership, Build Back Fairer Series Report No. 4, Sydney. https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/The-wealth-inequality-pandemic_COVID-and-wealth-inequality_screen.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ACOSS-cost-of-living-report_web_v02.pdf

Mental health

Mental health and legal issues often co-occur and interact with each other and the existence of one can exacerbate the severity of the other.¹¹

There are indications that mental health challenges rose due to the economic and social dislocation of COVID-19 and those higher rates continue to persist.¹² Research conducted by Australian National University, shows the number of Australians experiencing psychological distress in January 2022 was 2.6% higher than numbers pre- COVID.¹³

Joseph's story

'Joseph' had been diagnosed with Schizophrenia when he was 19 years old. He had a supportive family and had been managing his illness well for 24 years. However, when a change in his care providers resulted in a lack of community support and follow-up, Joseph became overwhelmed and felt alone. His mental health deteriorated, and he began missing his medications.

One day, Joseph attended a local shopping centre. He had missed his medications and described feeling like a black cloud was hanging over his head. He approached an elderly man in the shopping centre and pushed him over. Joseph was charged with Aggravated Assault. When Joseph first contacted Ruah Legal Services he felt overwhelmed. Joseph's lawyer was able to explain the court process and outline his options. With help from Ruah Legal Services, Joseph applied to the Magistrates Court START Court program.

The START Court assisted Joseph with community mental health support and gave him the opportunity to participate in an anger and anxiety management course through a community psychologist. Joseph was also able to send a personal letter of apology to the victim of his offending through the supervision of the Court. After 7 months of engaging with the START Court, Joseph graduated from the Court with a small ceremony and personal words of congratulations from the presiding Magistrate. Joseph received a fine of \$1,000 which was suspended for 9 months. This meant that Joseph was not required pay the fine unless he committed an offence during the 9-month suspension period. In addition to resolving his legal matter, Joseph was able to quit smoking, re-build his confidence and re-engage with community mental health supports.

The impact of increasing mental health issues was one of the most significant themes in our consultations with members and was repeatedly emphasised. Community legal centres are seeing the considerable impact that increasing mental health challenges have in their clients and across our community. When people are experiencing significant mental distress, and in particular when they are unable to access adequate mental health care, this can impact across many facets of their lives including increasing the urgency and complexity of legal need. It can also be more difficult for CLC's to help people address their legal problems when those people are also experiencing mental health challenges.

¹¹ Nagy MT & Forell S (2020) Legal help as mental healthcare, Health Justice Insights, Health Justice Australia, Sydney

¹² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Mental health services in Australia, AIHW, Australian Government, 26 August 2022

¹³ N Biddle and M Gray, Tracking wellbeing outcomes during the Covid-19 pandemic (January 2022): riding the Omicron wave, ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, Australian National University, 14 February 2022, accessed 15 September 2022.

Disability

People with disability can be particularly vulnerable to legal issues including issues associated with discrimination, employment, guardianship, housing and financial matters.¹⁴

Our members told us that their clients face particular pressures around access to the NDIS and disability services, particularly in the regions. They identified a need for more advocacy and support in this space, including regional place-based support.

NDIS and access to services is a huge problem, especially for the most vulnerable people.
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Family and domestic violence

Reported rates of domestic violence rose during the COVID-19 pandemic, and recent statistics demonstrate these numbers have not reduced.¹⁵ WA Police report that family related offences in WA are currently trending at 19% above the five-year average.¹⁶ Family and domestic violence was the top issue for clients contacting community legal centres in WA again in 2021-22.

CALD women who are financially dependent on their partner and are experiencing family violence [are most at risk of not having their legal assistance needs met]
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Laila's story

'Laila' arrived in Perth with her husband, Abas, and young children in 2019. Laila's relationship was characterised by significant violence towards her by Abas. They separated in early 2020. English was Laila's second language, and an interpreter was needed for all appointments.

Laila was referred to a Women's Legal Service (WLSWA) lawyer during outreach to a women's health centre for assistance with divorce. The lawyer identified multiple legal issues impacting on her and her children, including immediate risk of harm due to FDV, family law issues, parenting and migration.

During this time, Abas was still visiting Laila's home to see the children and would continue to use violence against Laila. Abas frequently threatened to kill Laila, the children and himself if she told anyone about their separation. Abas also used Laila's uncertain visa situation to frighten her and control her efforts to seek help.

¹⁴ Coumarelos, C., Macourt, D., People, J., McDonald, H., Wei, Z., Iriana, R., & Ramsey, S. 2012, Legal Australia-Wide Survey: Legal Need in Australia, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, available at: [http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/LAW_AUS/\\$file/LAW_Survey_Australia.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/LAW_AUS/$file/LAW_Survey_Australia.pdf)

¹⁵ H Boxall, A Morgan and R Brown, 'The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the Covid-19 pandemic', Statistical Bulletin, 2020, 28, doi: 10.52922/sb04718.

¹⁶ WA Police, Crime in Western Australia, Year to date crime comparison, [https://www.police.wa.gov.au/crime/crimestatistics#/,](https://www.police.wa.gov.au/crime/crimestatistics#/) accessed 9 October 2022.

The lawyer assisted Laila to access more secure accommodation and develop a safety plan. The lawyer assisted Laila to make an application for a Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO) protecting herself and the children.

Laila, receiving help for the first time, felt stronger and more confident of her rights and her options. She decided that she wanted to relocate to another state, away from Abas and closer to other members of her community. She also wanted to apply for a divorce from Abas, which she was now able to do.

The lawyer went through all the documents Laila would normally need to proceed with a divorce, including a marriage certificate (certified translation to English), proof of residence, a valid passport (since Laila's had expired), and other visa details. She also explained that since serving Abas with divorce documents could potentially trigger him to carry out his threats, there would need to be careful consideration of the timing of service, including simultaneously making an application in the Family Court of WA. The lawyer added that although a divorce was not required for her to leave WA or Australia, parenting orders from the Family Court of WA would be necessary since the children cannot leave the State without Abas' consent.

The lawyer assisted Laila and support workers to agree on an action plan which included filing concurrent applications in the Magistrates Court for a FVRO and the Family Court for parenting orders and a divorce.

Before the plan could be put in place, Abas broke into Laila's home and committed a horrific assault against her, including physical and sexual assault, and in front of the children. The police were called and assisted Laila and the children to move to a women's refuge.

The lawyer urgently prepared and lodged Laila's application for parenting orders, including permission to relocate with the children, and requested the matter be heard on an urgent basis. An ex-parte FVRO was also applied for and obtained by the lawyer the same day.

The Family Court Magistrate made a finding that given the extensive family violence and need to protect the children from harm, the presumption that the children had a right to a meaningful relationship with their father was not applicable. Orders were made that unless Abas filed documents and engaged in the Family Court process by late 2021, the case would be brought back before the judge in Chambers and final orders made. Abas did not engage, and final orders were made providing Laila with sole parental responsibility and restraining the father from having any contact with her or the children.

Despite initially lodging an objection, Abas failed to attend the trial for the FVRO matter, and that order was made final for 5 years.

The final piece of protection of Laila was provided by the lawyer assisting Laila to apply for and obtain a divorce from Abas.

While Laila first presented to WLSWA seeking assistance for a divorce, the lawyer was able to identify and resolve the far more pressing threat to her and the children's safety, support Laila to make informed legal decisions and ensure the long-term safety of Laila and her family.

Housing and homelessness

Housing was identified by our members as one of the most pressing issues currently facing CLC clients.

This is not surprising. WA is experiencing a housing crisis, with rental vacancy rates at historical lows, high rents and increasing mortgage pressures. Anglicare WA's Rental Affordability Snapshot 2022 found less than 1% of available properties were affordable for people on income support payments and nothing was affordable for people on JobSeeker.¹⁷ At the end of July 2022 Perth's rental vacancy rate was 0.6% and regional centres varied between 0.1 and 0.5%. According to the Real Estate Institute of WA, a balanced market would be reflected in vacancy rates between 2.5 and 3.5%.¹⁸

Clients experiencing FDV are staying in terribly dangerous relationships as they have nowhere else to go. Tenants are paying extraordinary rent (more than 60% of their income) as they can't afford to move anywhere else and nothing is available.

CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Men

Our members also identified men as a specific group in WA who are often not able to have their legal needs met. Men may not be able to access CLC services for a range of reasons including because another party to their legal matter is already receiving services from the CLC or because they do not meet the criteria to be able to access that service.¹⁹

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in our community.²⁰ COVID-19 continues to impact the legal assistance sector. What our members have told us about the impact on them reflects recent research into the ongoing broader impacts of COVID-19 on community service organisations, including by the Centre for Social Impact and Social Ventures Australia.²¹

During the pandemic, emergency funding enabled services to deliver emergency relief and other supports. Our colleagues report there is an ongoing need for this extra support, but this funding has been discontinued.

¹⁷ https://www.anglicarewa.org.au/docs/default-source/advocacy/anglicare-wa-rental-affordability-snapshot-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=de77d2cf_8

¹⁸ https://sqmresearch.com.au/graph_vacancy.php

¹⁹ Lawyers and law practices are not able to provide legal assistance where there is a conflict of interest or a perception of a conflict. For example, they cannot represent two or more individual clients with differing interest in the same matter. They also cannot represent one client against a former client.

²⁰ Shergold, P., Broadbent, J., Marshall, I., Varghese, P., 2022, Fault Lines, An independent review into Australia's response to COVID-19, available at: <https://www.paulramsayfoundation.org.au/news-resources/fault-lines-an-independent-review-into-australias-response-to-covid-19>

²¹ Social Ventures Australia and the Centre for Social Impact (2021) Partners in recovery: Moving beyond the crisis? Available at <https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/partners-in-recovery-moving-beyond-the-crisis.pdf>

COVID-19 also has an ongoing organisational impact on community legal centre operations, including on worker mental health due to ongoing uncertainty and changing work environments, as well as ongoing workforce disruptions and an increased burden on management.

When staff are unwell [with COVID] and cannot work, or cannot work from the office, this affects our ability to deliver particular services (duty lawyering, in-person appointments). A certain amount of administration time is used every month in rostering, changing appointments and communicating changes to staff, which are a result of COVID.

CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

1. Sustainable CLCs

WA needs strong, sustainable community legal centres so that people can access legal help, when and where they need it.

Strong effective CLCs need sustainable funding that reflects the true cost of delivering services, including in regional and remote areas, that supports crucial work to prevent legal problems occurring, and that recognises the costs of running a legal practice and engaging a suitably experienced workforce.

It used to be that we could call someone back that day or the next day. Even with triaging for most urgent it can be a few days before we can respond because of the number of people getting in contact and the level of desperation and distress. We are not able to respond as quickly as we did in the past. Our services should be able to respond in a timely fashion
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Funding to meet need

Demand for legal assistance significantly outstrips the availability of services. This means that services are forced to focus their resources on those clients with the most urgent and acute need, and the benefits of early intervention and prevention are unable to be fully realised. Better resourcing would enable services to have a more balanced approach to prevention, early intervention and representation, and face less pressure to triage out those whose needs are less urgent.

[We are not able to meet the needs of] anyone not experiencing acute crisis at the moment of their call
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

We currently are not meeting demand ... We have a two week wait for appointments and do not run waitlists, however our turn aways/ referrals would be upwards of 3-4 per day.
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Funding sustainability

Short-term or insecure funding limits the ability of CLCs to best plan and deliver long term outcomes across all of the program areas that benefit the community. The McGowan Government provided very welcome COVID-19 funding for the sector, which is vital to assist centres in navigating the impacts of COVID-19 on legal needs and service delivery. With higher need and ongoing service challenges, it is essential this short-term funding boost be built into core funding, alongside further increased ongoing investment. This will enable services to plan and best meet community need over the longer term.

We are always trying to strike the right balance between helping many people a little (advice and tasks) and helping fewer people a lot (ongoing and representation). There are always people who need more help than we can deliver, and we have to decide who to turn away ... and who to decline to help beyond a particular service level. So we meet the need in some sense, but there is much more assistance that could be provided, and many more people who would benefit from more intensive assistance.
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Indexation

Funding from the Department of Justice for legal assistance services is currently not tied to the state government indexation policy. In June 2022, the Fair Work Commission announced a 5.2% increase to the national minimum wage and 4.6% increase to modern award minimum wage. In addition, the superannuation guarantee increased by 0.5% on 1 July 2022. These changes are welcome and important for helping workers on low incomes with the rising cost of living. However, CLCs like other community service organisations are facing significant wage cost pressures because of these increases. As people-centred community service organisations, staff costs account for around 70% - 80% of CLC running costs. With the rapidly increasing Consumer Price Index, rising rents, and increasing fuel costs, a significant gap has developed between funding indexation and community legal centre operating costs.²²

Without proper indexation, there is a danger that funding boosts will be eaten by inflationary costs rather than increasing service delivery to people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage, as Government intended.

The challenges of service delivery in regional and remote WA

Everyone has the right to access justice – no matter their postcode.

Community legal centres are committed to providing access to justice, no matter where people live.

As noted in the 2017 Legal Need in Western Australia report, the legal assistance sector is required to service almost 80% of the state population within the Perth area, whilst also servicing 20% of the population across a land mass one third the size of Australia.²³ There are well-recognised challenges to delivering services in regional, rural and remote (RRR) areas, including costs, logistics, travel and cultural issues. CLC staff in regional centres spend significant time and resources travelling to meet the legal assistance needs of people across huge service areas.

Those most at risk of missing out on legal help are people in remote areas
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

Increasingly, our members report that housing shortages significantly exacerbate the challenges to regional and remote service delivery. Difficulties community legal centres face recruiting staff in RRR areas are exacerbated when there is no housing available for them to live. Housing availability is constrained both by a lack of affordability, with rents at record highs in many areas, and a lack of availability, with vacancies at record lows. Relocation costs can also be prohibitive for staff.

It is essential that funding for regional and remote services reflects true costs of service delivery in those areas.

²² Social Ventures Australia and the Centre for Social Impact (2021) Partners in recovery: Moving beyond the crisis? Available at <https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/partners-in-recovery-moving-beyond-the-crisis.pdf>

²³ Kalico Consulting, 2017, Legal Need in Western Australia, available at https://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Legal_Need_in_Western_Australia.pdf

Online services

Over the past few years, and particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant expansion of legal assistance services delivered by phone or online. These are an important complement to face-based services and can improve access, particularly to specialist services. However, while online and phone services can help improve access to legal help, they are not the answer for everyone. The transition to online services in many sectors during COVID-19 lockdowns highlighted the digital divide, particularly in remote regions which may not have reliable access to the internet. Recent data tells us that 11 per cent of Australians are "highly excluded" from digital services because they do not have access to affordable internet or don't know how to use it.²⁴

CLCs told us that a significant proportion of their clients find online technologies difficult to access. Clients may not have access to electronic devices, may not be able to afford the necessary data technology or may not feel comfortable using digital platforms to access services. The increase in delivery of online services also present costs and challenges for service providers, requiring greater training, expertise and IT support.

Online services can improve access but present challenges and are not accessible to everyone.

Language services

Our members also raised language as a significant barrier to service access, including for access to in-person as well as online support. Interpreter and translation services can be costly and difficult to source, in particular for Aboriginal clients for whom English is not their first or even their second language.

Law and policy reform

As person-centred, responsive and independent community organisations, CLCs are well positioned to improve access to justice through advocacy for law and policy reform. They see first-hand where our laws and policies are not working well and where there are particularly unfair and costly impacts on people experiencing disadvantage. This is a key strength of CLCs and it is important this expertise is harnessed to inform the development of new legislation and policy responses and the review of existing laws and policies.

This core work for CLCs requires government investment. Without appropriate resourcing, centres face difficult decisions around where to best devote their limited capacity – contributing to making our legal system fairer for everyone, or essential front-line service delivery. They should not be forced to choose between the two.

²⁴ Thomas, J., Barraket, J., Parkinson, S., Wilson, C., Holcombe-James, I., Kennedy, J., Mannell, K., Brydon, A. (2021). Australian Digital Inclusion Index: 2021. Melbourne: RMIT, Swinburne University of Technology, and Telstra.

WA needs strong, sustainable community legal centres so that people can access legal help, when and where they need it.

We are calling for:

- ▶ Increased investment in community legal centres, for a thriving legal assistance sector that meets the legal assistance needs of all Western Australians, including those living in rural and remote areas.
- ▶ Sustainable investment to ensure long term viability and enable services to plan, grow and perform prevention and early intervention activities like community legal education and law reform.
- ▶ Indexation to ensure funding keeps pace with cost increases.

2. Integrated services

Integrated services and partnerships improve outcomes by helping people access the services and support they need.

Legal needs don't exist in isolation. Legal need in WA is connected to people's experiences of disadvantage and often intersects with non-legal problems, such as mental and physical health problems, family violence and alcohol and other drug issues.

The Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Legal Australia-Wide Survey found that people experiencing family and domestic violence "were 10 times more likely than others to experience legal problems other than domestic violence, including a wide range of family, civil and crime problems."²⁵

People do not always recognise problems they are facing as legal problems. They may lack knowledge about where to go for help and they may seek help from other services, for example a health or homelessness service, or a women's refuge.

Fragmented and siloed systems cannot meet increasing and increasingly complex levels of health, legal and social need. 100 Families WA research clearly demonstrates the barriers people experiencing disadvantage in WA face accessing services and supports.

The retelling of our story in bits, over and over, when trying to access stretched services is often frustrating and so easily compounds already existing trauma.
100 Families WA

CLCs, as smaller, person centred and often place-based services, embody many of the characteristics that families in the 100 Families WA project reported as being needed to improve their access to help. CLCs aim to provide person-centred approaches that are responsive, adaptable, and effectively address structural barriers to service access.²⁶

However, we know that we can improve the responsiveness of legal assistance services to the multiple, intersecting health and legal problems that are experienced by many clients through creating more integrated, collaborative and joined-up services. This type of service delivery helps to better address the complexities of mental health service pathways, the clustering of needs in relation to family violence and the interacting problems that bring people into contact with child protection authorities – all challenges experienced by many CLC clients.

²⁵ Coumarelos, C. 2019, Quantifying the legal and broader life impacts of domestic and family violence, Justice issues paper 32, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney.

²⁶ Eastern Community Legal Centre, Integrated practice – Better Practice Principles. <https://eclc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ECLC-Better-Practice-Principles-Integrated-Practice-Report.pdf>

Integrated approaches to providing legal assistance can take different forms, including:

- ▶ Co-location of a lawyer at another agency
- ▶ Lawyer outreach embedded in a community service
- ▶ Multidisciplinary teams (lawyers and community service professionals working closely to deliver services together) within a community legal service or other community organisation
- ▶ Health justice partnerships – formal partnerships between legal assistance service providers and health or community services
- ▶ Two or more organisations merging to offer services together on a permanent basis.
- ▶ Dedicated case management or social work resource located in, or connected to, community legal centres²⁷

Within each type of integrated practice, there are many and varied models, although all aim to provide a more holistic person-centred response that leads to better client outcomes through coordinated support for a diverse range of legal and social needs.

Many CLCs told us that they would like support to grow and strengthen more integrated and joined up approaches.

The opportunity to develop our practice further with a structured case management model within the legal service and to provide a service broader than the legal service would make a world of difference to how we can improve people's lives and prevent them from a cycle of poverty and disadvantage. Many individuals and families would benefit from someone able to walk beside them in their journey and help them when they come upon barriers.

CLWA Member survey 2022

Community Legal WA, in partnership with Health Justice Australia, the WA Association for Mental Health and Legal Aid, held a symposium in October 2022 to explore and inspire partnerships between the legal assistance sector and health and community services. The overwhelming response to the symposium reflects that community service providers see the need and potential for this work to lead to better outcomes for people, and they are actively seeking the support, resources and knowledge necessary to progress this work.

Research into successful partnership approaches in other jurisdictions demonstrates that they require:

- ▶ Comprehensive planning with a clearly developed and articulated rationale
- ▶ Well documented policies and guidelines
- ▶ Monitoring and evaluation embedded into program design, utilising principles of continuous improvement and, where possible, co-design
- ▶ Outcomes measurement and ongoing needs analysis to ensure the program is adaptive and responsive to changing community needs.²⁸

²⁷ Eastern Community Legal Centre, Integrated practice – Better Practice Principles. <https://eclc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ECLC-Better-Practice-Principles-Integrated-Practice-Report.pdf>

²⁸ Ibid.

Models of collaboration, case management or joined up support need to be flexible and, where possible, place-based. They also require strong foundations to be successful – this requires time and expertise. Investment must be made to enable evaluation of models so we know they are achieving the right outcomes – and the people using the services must be central to their design and evaluation. These types of partnerships not only need investment, they also need a supportive funding landscape that enables and drives collaboration.

Integrated services and partnerships improve outcomes by helping people access the services and support they need.

We are calling for:

- ▶ Government investment to support the development of integrated service approaches including case management, collaboration and partnerships, to improve people's access to holistic and wraparound services.

3. Tenancy focus

Everybody deserves a place to call home: supporting people to stay in their homes through strong and sustainable tenancy support and advocacy services

Access to adequate stable housing is a fundamental human right.

Housing is the basis of stability and security for an individual or family.

Homelessness and precarious housing are associated with significant social and economic costs, and yet are experienced by many Western Australians.²⁹

The Productivity Commission's recent review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement found that the insecurity experienced by many private renters 'can be a source of stress, disruption and financial cost'.³⁰ The review found that about 19 per cent of private renters' moves were not their choice and that some vulnerable renters, including older renters, people with disability or low levels of education, are disproportionately likely to face involuntary moves.³¹ The review also found that some renters, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with disability, face direct or indirect discrimination in the private rental market.³²

Poor-quality rental properties can threaten renters' health and wellbeing. The housing of renters on low incomes is more likely to have major structural problems and need repairs than other properties. In the informal and marginal rental market dwellings often violate basic safety standards.³³

The tight rental market in WA has meant a shift in the power balance with landlords holding greater power than ever. Recent polling found that 1 in 20 tenants have experienced a "no reason" eviction in just the past 12 months, and nearly a quarter of tenants (24 per cent) were fearful to ask for basic repairs to their home because of fear of eviction.³⁴ Nearly a third of tenants reported receiving significant rent increases over the past year, and 31 per cent of tenants reported they are living in fear that the owner will sell the rental home and they will have nowhere to live.³⁵

It is therefore not surprising that housing was one of the top five issues for clients of community legal centres in 2021-22. Roughly a quarter of Legal Advice and almost half of duty lawyer services provided by CLCs in 2021-22 were for housing related matters.³⁶

²⁹ Ong Vifor J, R., Singh, R., Baker, E., Bentley, R. and Hewton, J. (2022) Precarious housing and wellbeing: a multidimensional investigation, AHURI Final Report No. 373, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/finalreports/373>, doi: 10.18408/ahuri8123801.

³⁰ Productivity Commission, 2022, In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, Study Report, Canberra. <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/housing-homelessness/report/housing-homelessness.pdf>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Shelter WA 2022, report on independent polling was conducted in August 2022 by Painted Dog Research. All survey participants were over 18 years of age and include residents from the Perth metropolitan and regional areas.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ CLASS data, 47% or 1182 out of a total of 2493

CLCs told us they are seeing higher levels of vulnerability, urgency and complexity in housing matters, as well as new clients who have not needed to access their services before. Growing complexity means a greater number and length of appointments are needed to resolve a problem. CLCs also report seeing more people with children, as well as older people, who are at risk of homelessness.

Housing insecurity is one of the biggest issues at the moment. Clients experiencing family violence are reticent to leave because they have nowhere to go. Overcrowding is leading to more violence and tension and elder abuse

CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

All Paths Leads to a Home, Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness articulates the need for greater investment in strategies to intervene early and prevent homelessness occurring. The Strategy identifies supporting at-risk tenancies is a key component of this work, and is particularly important for vulnerable cohorts such as older people or families with children. Secure and stable housing is also a key consideration in children entering care and for the reunification of children and families.³⁷

Tom's story

'Tom' was helped by Circle Green through a duty advocacy program at the Perth Magistrates Court.

Tom, who is in his 70s, on the aged pension and lives alone, fell behind on his rent payments after lending a significant amount of money to a friend who didn't pay him back.

Tom managed to pay off all the outstanding rent two days before a court hearing, however, the real estate agent still wanted to evict Tom because he had been behind on his rent previously. The real estate agent told Tom he would be evicted that day, and Tom was preparing for this outcome, even though this meant he would be homeless.

The Circle Green lawyer provided Tom advice about his options given the outstanding rent had been repaid, and represented him in the pre-trial conference. The lawyer made submissions as to why the tenancy should not be terminated, and Tom's intention and capacity to maintain rent payments moving forward.

The real estate agent agreed to withdraw the application for termination. Circle Green also provided a referral to a financial counsellor to assist Tom with budgeting and to set up a rental payment from his Centrelink payment, to avoid missed rent payments in the future.

Tom was very grateful for the help he received, and said he had believed he would be homeless by the end of the day but because of Circle Green's advice and advocacy he was able to keep his home.

³⁷ <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-06/homelessness-strategy-final.pdf>

Tenancy Advice and Education Services

The Tenancy Advice and Education Service (TAES) is an important program that protects tenants' right to housing through advocacy, advice and education. Tenant advocacy services provide much needed advice and education to the one in three Western Australians who rent their homes. Tenant advocacy services play a fundamental role in homelessness prevention.

Despite increasing need, TAES program funding has declined significantly over time. Funding provided by the WA State Government for 2022-23 was lower than the funding provided in 2015-16, despite significant increases in the number of Western Australians renting.

COVID-19 funding from the Department of Justice has been a welcome boost and for many CLCs is used to increase capacity to deliver housing-related services. However, this COVID-19 funding is currently not ongoing, is not adequate to cover tenancy support, and is needed for a range of other services and supports.

Tenancy funding needs to be increased and needs to be offered for longer periods. Tenancy issues are not going away, and we need to be able to invest in long term tenant advocates to deliver the best service to clients (and the advocates deserve more employment security than they currently have.)
CLWA member, 2022 State Budget Submission consultation

It is clear that TAES is a crucial tenancy support and homelessness prevention program, however, it requires reform to ensure long term sustainability. Any proposed changes to the program should be done in consultation with CLCs who deliver TAES services.

Law reform

Proposed, much-needed, changes to the Residential Tenancies Act to produce a fair and equitable rental system are likely to require targeted community legal education and may lead to increased need for legal assistance. CLCs identified this as an area that requires specific investment to achieve the best outcome for renters experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

Tenancy support, advice and advocacy helps ensure people have a place to call home.

We are calling for:

- ▶ Increased, sustainable investment in tenancy advice and education services to meet need across WA.
- ▶ Indexation to ensure funding keeps pace with cost increases.
- ▶ Investment in education and support for tenants on changes to the Residential Tenancies Act.

4. Culturally responsive legal assistance

Strengthened Aboriginal community controlled organisations and more culturally responsive mainstream services lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Community legal centres have a critical role in partnering with government to create legal assistance systems and services that are culturally secure and safe, and growing services that are delivered by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. WA's Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy recognise genuine partnership, shared decision-making and building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector as essential to achieving improved outcomes and addressing the ongoing legacy of WA's history.^{38 39} It is incumbent upon all Government agencies, in collaboration with peaks and service providers, to ensure that these plans are acted upon and the outcomes they seek are achieved.

It is essential that this work is prioritised by the government, led by Aboriginal organisations and communities, and undertaken in collaboration with the legal assistance sector.

Legal assistance services play a key role including through support to prevent and end family violence, to prevent or minimise entry into out of home care and providing advice, advocacy and representation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants in social, community and private housing. The Department of Justice's recently released Legal Assistance Strategy and Action Plan recognise the need to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to culturally safe legal assistance services and that wherever possible, Aboriginal people have the option to choose to receive services from an Aboriginal community controlled organisation.

Closing the Gap Target 13: By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.

Bella's story

'Bella' had been in a relationship since 2017. Although things were going well when they first got together, over time her partner became very manipulative and controlling. He made her social support circle smaller, making Bella think he was the only person she could rely on. Eventually he started physically abusing her.

Bella was referred to Aboriginal Family Legal Services (AFLS) by the local women's refuge. Legal staff successfully helped Bella to obtain a Family Violence Restraining Order so that she was safe. They also referred her to their Aboriginal Family Advocates for support and to other services for counselling.

Bella's situation is now much improved and she continues to work with the Aboriginal Family Advocate and to receive support from other services for the trauma she experienced as a result of the violent relationship.

³⁸ https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-09/Implementation%20Plan%20-%20CtG_1.pdf

³⁹ <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-09/Aboriginal-Empowerment-Strategy-OVERVIEW.pdf>

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) play a pivotal role in delivering culturally secure legal assistance services to Aboriginal adults and children who are victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, including sexual assault/abuse, or who are at immediate risk of such violence. FVPLS offer legal assistance and other non-legal services in relation to matters such as family law, victims of crime compensation, child protection, tenancy and social security assistance. Greater investment in FVPLS will increase their capacity to provide effective, culturally responsive support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities experiencing violence.

Strengthened Aboriginal community controlled organisations and more culturally responsive mainstream services lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

We are calling for:

- ▶ State government investment in culturally responsive and accessible legal help for Aboriginal people, through funding for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.
- ▶ The state government to work collaboratively to ensure self-determination underpins the development and delivery of legal assistance services for Aboriginal people.

5. Climate justice

Including legal assistance services in climate adaptation and disaster response planning is essential for responses that meet the needs of communities and individuals.

Western Australia faces a range of challenges from the impacts of our changing climate. International modelling predicts that in general our climate will become much hotter and as a whole much drier. We will experience a greater risk of bushfires – with our bushfire season longer and more intense. Although there are likely to be fewer cyclones, those that form are likely to be much greater in intensity.⁴⁰

It is overwhelmingly clear that people experiencing poverty are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Poverty significantly increases peoples' susceptibility to poor health and wellbeing outcomes resulting from climate hazards such as heatwaves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and bushfires. With limited access to social and financial resources, people in poverty are less able to cope, adapt and recover from these hazards.

Legal need is impacted by climate change but often goes unrecognised and is not adequately reflected in Western Australian climate adaptation and disaster response planning. Extreme heat already causes more deaths than any other extreme weather event and is increasingly a potential factor contributing to employment, tenancy and administrative legal matters – and this will increase.⁴¹

Climate Change is already causing a shift in legal demands, changes in the law, and the emergence of novel, complex questions of law across multiple practice areas (Taylor & Lay, 2022).

⁴²

CLCs have a core role supporting our communities to be safe and resilient. CLC clients are more likely to experience climate harm because of where they live, their mental or physical health and how resilient their houses are to extreme weather. For many of these clients, their financial situation can restrict opportunities to move or adjust their living circumstances and, when disasters happen, they are more likely to be underinsured or uninsured.

⁴⁰ Government of Western Australia, September 2021, [Western Australian Climate Projections Summary.pdf](https://www.wa.gov.au) (www.wa.gov.au)

⁴¹ Yuming Guo et al 'Projecting Future Temperature-Related Mortality in Three Largest Australian Cities (2016) Environmental Pollution

⁴² Taylor, M., & Lay, B. (2022). Community lawyering and climate justice: A new frontier. *Alternative Law Journal*, 47(3), 199–203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1037969X221110906> and <https://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/media/media-releases/climate-change-policy-to-guide-legal-evolution>

Climate change increases the demand for services in an already tightly constrained environment, accelerating and intensifying the types of legal issues people experience. Everyday civil law problems are likely to accelerate as a result of general climate change impacts, as well as standalone extreme weather events like Tropical Cyclone Seroja and bushfires. The increased legal need from climate disasters has been shown to continue for a long time – often many years – after the disaster.⁴³

More indirect impacts of climate change may result in more ‘hidden’ legal problems, “including:

- ▶ Insurance and consumer law problems fueled by uninsurable goods and properties
- ▶ Tenancy law problems arising from disputes about heating and cooling, and habitability during times of extreme heat or flooding
- ▶ Employment law problems, especially for low-paid workers in high heat environments, pay and conditions, workplace injuries
- ▶ Family violence law problems, which all too often spike during disasters and extreme heat
- ▶ Mental health law problems which can be exacerbated during crises.
- ▶ Community legal education needs to help people understand the laws and policies that will affect them in terms of local climate risk and provide strategies to help them adapt.”⁴⁴

Better outcomes will be achieved if we act early and invest in anticipating and planning our response to climate challenges. Effective adaptation, emergency and recovery planning and coordination require a collective and collaborative approach. Legal assistance services are key stakeholders with important roles and capabilities in response and recovery efforts. Tropical Cyclone Seroja and disasters in the eastern states highlighted the important role of CLCs during disasters and through recovery. These events also highlighted the need for more natural disaster preparedness including community legal education.

Community legal centres need to be included in the planning and processes that lead to emergency and disaster preparedness, response and recovery, through both place-based responses as well as regional and state-wide coordination and planning.

Including legal assistance services in climate adaptation and disaster response planning is essential for responses that meet the needs of communities and individuals.

We are calling for:

- ▶ The WA state government to recognise the role of legal assistance providers in climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness and response, and to resource CLCs for this work.
- ▶ Government investment to scope and develop the role of WA CLCs in climate justice, and to help identify and address new legal assistance demands from climate change, supporting community resilience.

⁴³ See for example findings from the Climate Justice Legal Project <https://www.fclc.org.au/cjlp> as well as recent mapping and data analysis by Community Legal Centres Australia

⁴⁴ Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria, 2021, Climate justice - protecting Victorians in an age of climate change. Available at: https://www.fclc.org.au/climate_justice



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