



Annual Report 2022–2023

Australian Centre for
Disability Law

Acknowledgement



The Australian Centre for Disability Law ('ACDL' or 'the Centre') acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands across Australia, and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, Traditional Owners of the land on which the ACDL office is situated. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Disclaimer

This publication is for general information purposes only. It is not intended to provide advice on any particular matter or legal question, and it is not a substitute for legal advice from a qualified professional. ACDL disclaims all liability for any errors or omissions of any kind whatsoever, and for any loss or damage arising, in whole or in part, from any person relying on any information in this publication.

This publication

You may download, copy, distribute, display and otherwise freely deal with this publication for personal, educational or governmental purposes, provided that you attribute the Australian Centre for Disability Law as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to (a) charge others for access to part or all of this publication (other than at cost), (b) include part or all of this publication in advertising or a product of sale, or (c) modify this publication in any way.

Australian Centre for
Disability Law

The Centre works with all people with disability and has experience with a wide range of impairments and disability, including physical, intellectual and sensory impairments as well as neurological, psychosocial and a range of long-term health conditions. It provides legal assistance free of charge to its clients, who come from socially, financially and legally disadvantaged backgrounds and rely on the Centre for legal assistance.

Phone +61 2 7229 0061

Toll-free 1800 800 708

NRS 133 677
or www.relayservice.gov.au

Fax +61 2 8088 6069

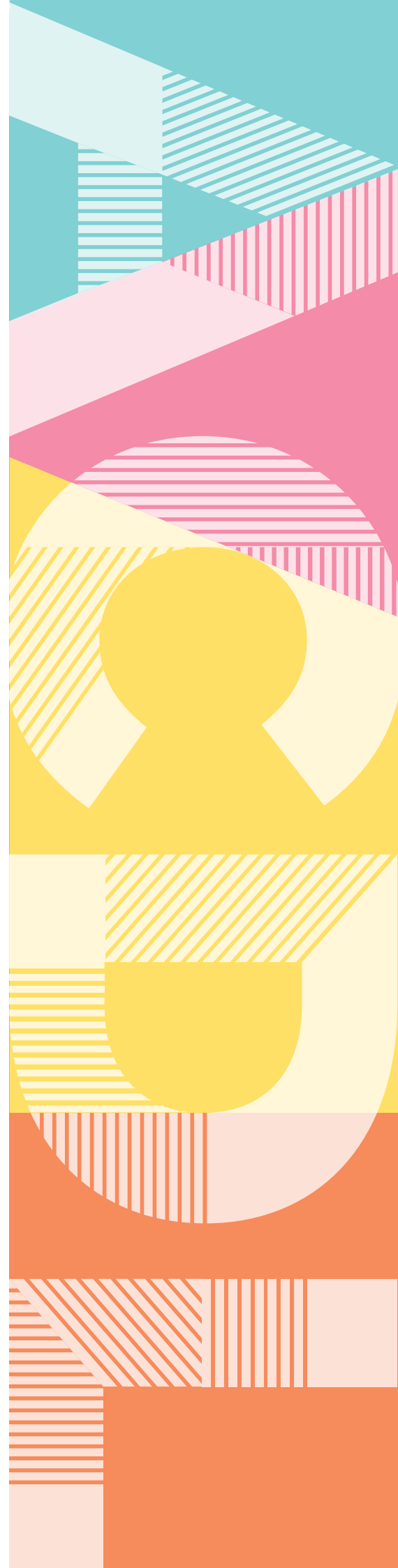
Email info@disabilitylaw.org.au

Web www.disabilitylaw.org.au

Note: All case studies in this publication have been de-identified, and all names changed.

Contents

About the Australian Centre for Disability Law	2
Our vision	4
Our purpose	4
Our goals	5
Chairperson's report	6
Josef supported to access his local supermarket	7
Message from the Executive Officer	8
Our people	10
Our legal firm partners and volunteers	11
Kai gets the support he needs at school	12
Our work	13
Disability discrimination practice highlights	18
Amina able to safely remain in her home	19
The free legal hub	20
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence — legal advice and representation to victim-survivors with disability	21
Learning together — tools to help you get the support you need at school	22
First People's Project (Talk Up)	24
What our clients say about us	25
Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	26
International workshop to implement optional protocol of the convention of persons with disabilities in Republic of Korea	27
Sonia better equipped to rebuild her life after domestic and sexual violence	28
Our community organisation partners	29
Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income	30
Statement of financial position	31





About the Australian Centre for Disability Law

The Australian Centre for Disability Law is a community legal centre specialising in the legal rights of people who are discriminated against because of their disability. The centre was established in 1994 to help people with disability and their supporters to learn about and pursue their rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth.)

Based in Sydney, the practice services disability clients across metropolitan and regional New South Wales and represents clients across Australia in human rights cases. Clients come from socially, financially and legally disadvantaged

backgrounds and are provided with legal assistance free of charge.

Funding comes from the Commonwealth and New South Wales governments, and from the NSW Public Purpose Fund. From time to time, the centre also receives project-specific funding from other government and non-government supporters.

The centre's management committee provides oversight and governance. Members of the committee include people disability, those with extensive

We specialise in the legal rights of people who are discriminated against because of their disability.

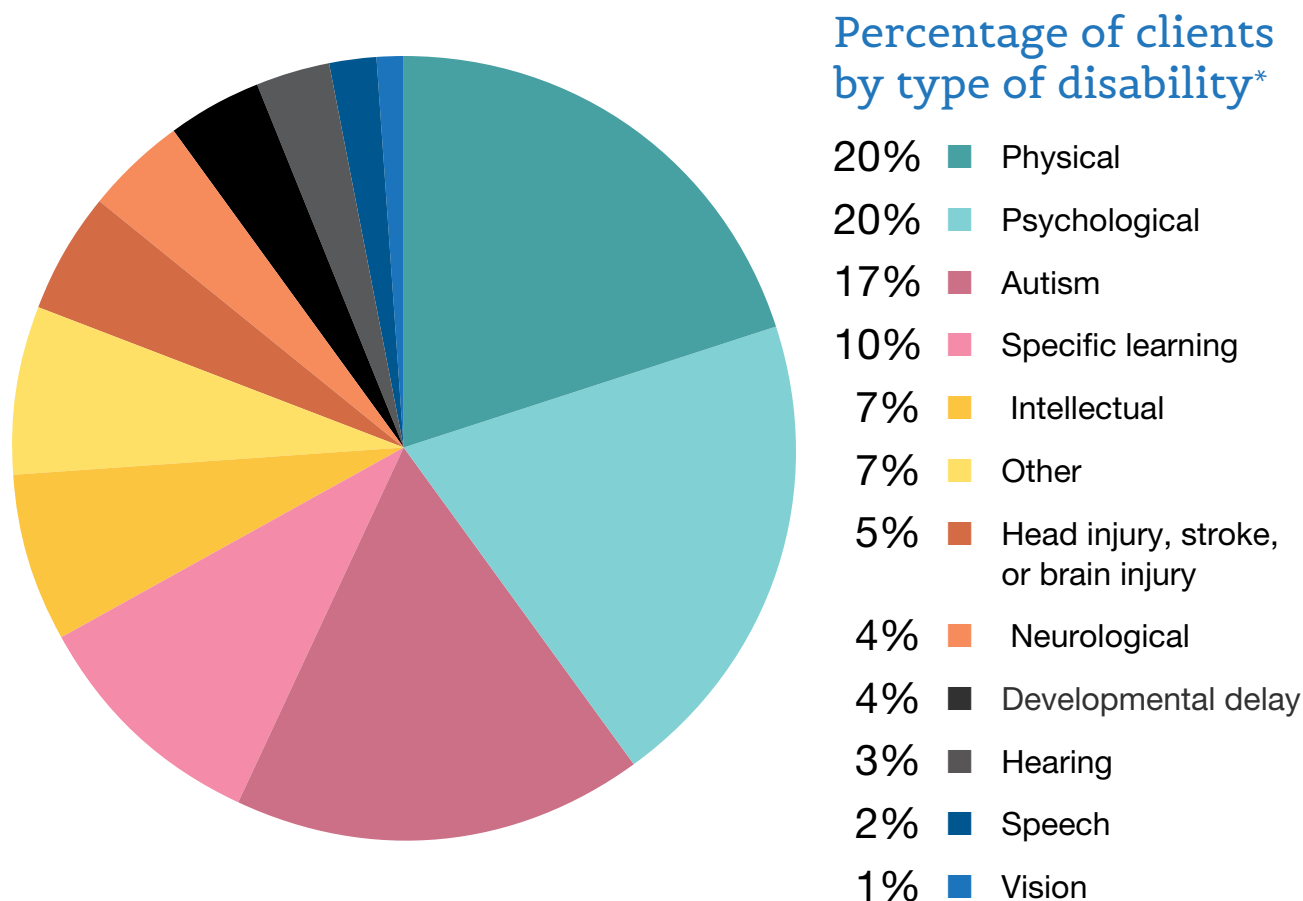
practical and academic legal expertise, and experience in disability advocacy, management and financial control.

The centre has a small permanent staff of practicing solicitors who are supported by volunteer solicitors and paralegals. In addition, significant legal assistance on a pro bono basis is provided through partnerships with commercial law firms. Funding constraints mean paid administrative and operational support is limited. The centre also works in close conjunction with a number of disability advocacy organisations.

Membership of the centre is open to individuals, organisations and corporations who share the centre's vision.

The centre is an independent, non-profit, apolitical organisation that is incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW). It is a public benevolent institution for the purposes of Australian taxation law and is therefore eligible to receive tax-deductible donations.

We work with a diverse range of people with disability, including those with physical, intellectual and sensory impairments, as well as neurological, psychosocial and long-term health conditions.



* Data in tables is from 15 March - 30 June 2023 due to a change of casework management system



Our vision

A society in which people with disability live with dignity, and in which their human rights and fundamental freedoms are recognised, respected and fulfilled.

Our purpose

We will work towards the realisation of our vision by providing people with disability and their supporters with specialist legal assistance in our designated practice areas, and by undertaking complementary community legal education, continuing legal education and policy and reform activities.

Our goals



To work with and alongside people with disability and their representative organisations towards the realisation of the legal and human rights of people with disability in our designated practice areas



To ensure that our work is distributed equitably across all disability groups



To ensure that those people with disability and their supporters who are most socially and legally disadvantaged, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, have equitable access to our services



To understand and interpret disability and disability rights concerns within a social model of disability in which 'disability' is conceptualised not as a personal characteristic but as a result of people's interactions with a social environment prone to barriers that are capable of being overcome



To identify and pursue opportunities to achieve outcomes in our designated practice areas that will have a broad positive impact on the realisation of the human rights of people with disability



To contribute to the positive development of the law as it affects people with disability and their supporters at state, national and international levels



To support the work of Disabled People's Organisations in Australia and internationally, by contributing legal knowledge and expertise where this is relevant to their work



To build the capacity of disability rights and legal services in Australia



Chairperson's report

for the year ended 30 June 2023

Welcome to the Australian Centre for Disability Law (ACDL) 2022-2023 Annual Report. I hope you enjoy reading about the valuable work our centre undertakes.

This year, our centre has established two new practice areas, whilst managing a significant increase in demand for our existing services. Later in this report, you'll hear more about our new service for survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence who have a disability. We've also made significant progress in our Health Justice Partnership project together with Southwest Sydney Local Health District.

Work also continued on a number of other innovative projects for which ACDL has previously been awarded funding. This includes the Learning Together project, and the Talk Up project, which are both nearing completion.

Mark Patrick — our Principal Solicitor leads a team of dedicated staff and volunteers to deliver professional and efficient legal services to the increasing number of clients accessing our service. I thank our staff and volunteers for striving to achieve the best outcomes for our clients.

ACDL has strong ties with several pro-bono law firms — Baker & McKenzie, Hall & Wilcox, HWL Ebsworth, Sparke Helmore, Wotton & Kearney and Clayton Utz — who continued to provide volunteer solicitors to the centre. I would like to thank these firms for their continued and invaluable support.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues on the Management Committee for their ongoing professional support and dedication.

I commend this report to you.

Rosemary Kayess, Chairperson

Josef supported to access his local supermarket

Josef has a vision impairment, and he requires another person to assist him with navigating the shops and helping him to find the items he needs. He is unable to afford to have a support worker attend the shops with him on every occasion, and sometimes he requires the assistance of shop staff so that he can complete his shopping.

When Josef attended the supermarket, he was told that he would be unable to have a staff member assist him during his shop. This meant that he was unable to complete his shopping on that occasion, and had to leave.

Josef made a formal complaint to the supermarket head office, however there was no resolution. He then contacted ACDL.

ACDL wrote to the supermarket, and requested that a reasonable adjustment be provided to Josef.

In response, the supermarket agreed to provide a staff member to assist Josef each time he visits the supermarket. Josef provides prior notice of his attendance to help the supermarket prepare for his visit.



Message from the Executive Officer

for the year ended 30 June 2023

During the year ACDL continued to deliver outstanding legal services to our community. We faced many challenges during the year including high levels of demand for our services which, at times, were unfortunately unable to meet.

We also continued to experience high levels of distress from our clients, and we have introduced programmes to support our staff, such as group supervision and financial assistance for external counselling.

The advice line and discrimination legal practise delivered 463 legal advices, which was 140% above our target, and a further 75 legal tasks, which was 167% above our target. We also worked on 138 intensive casework and representation services of which 94% concerned complaints of disability discrimination in the areas of education, employment, goods, service and facilities, assistance animals and premises.

We were grateful to receive two-year funding from the NSW government to establish a Domestic Family Sexual

Violence legal practise. We moved swiftly to establish this service, and brought on board Ms Rebecca Belzer in September 2022. Rebecca has worked very well to develop relationships and referral pathways within the disability community and the wider community legal assistance sector. The results of this practise are very encouraging, and we continue to see a high level of demand for our services.

In addition, we established a Health Justice Partnership with South-Western Sydney Local Health District Community Mental Health Service, and commenced providing services to people with mental health conditions during the latter part of the year. Currently, we have staff members located at Liverpool hospital and Bankstown Community Health Centre. The relationship with our local health district is outstanding, and the feedback from their staff is overwhelmingly positive with many clients benefiting from a seamless referral to our service.



I'm also pleased to report that both of our Information, Linkages and Capacity Building projects are well underway and on track to be completed by 30 June 2024. Resource development for our Education Toolkit project was mostly completed during the year with some final resources to be completed in late 2023. The training programme accompanying the resource development has been an outstanding success and to date we have trained over 1,500 people on how to advocate for themselves to get the support they need at school, TAFE, University or other educational institution.

More than 12,000 people have accessed online resources, including the various accessible versions of the Learning Together toolkit. During the year Ms Laura Cottam resigned from her position and I thank her for her work on this project. I also thank our Project Manager, Ms Sally O'Meara for her work on this project and Ms Michele Wallace for creating and designing the artwork for this project. This project would not be the success it is without their significant contributions.

The Talk Up project is a partnership between First Peoples Disability Network, ACDL, and People with Disability Australia. This project is about empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to know and understand their legal rights through the creation and delivery of educational resources and workshops. It has three phases. The first phase involves listening to the community about what their legal problems are, and some of the disadvantage they're facing. From these consultations — we work together with the community to build resources that will help them understand their rights and how they can navigate the legal problems they are confronting. The last phase of the project involves delivery of these resource back to the community, including workshops with community

members to enhance their legal knowledge and empower them to know and use their rights.

During the year we ran these workshops at Western Sydney and then in Dubbo and Wellington. The final location is the Northern Rivers of NSW and we expect to complete this location by June 2024. I thank Indi Angel-Auld for her contribution to managing this project up to her departure in November 2022.

I am deeply grateful to our staff and volunteers, and pay tribute to their dedication, hard work and fortitude working in very difficult conditions. I thank Ms Anna Nguyen for her contribution to the legal practice and wish her well with her future endeavours.

I also thank the Commonwealth and NSW governments, and the Trustees of the NSW Public Purpose Fund for funding our work through the Community Legal Centres Programme, administered by Legal Aid NSW. I'd especially like to thank our funding managers at the Community Legal Centres Programme for their support during the year.

Our legal firm partners provide us much needed additional capacity for the centre to meet its strategic objectives and deliver legal services to our clients. I thank them for their continuing support.

I am also greatly indebted to all members of the management committee who give up their time to serve our community. I'm particularly thankful for Ms Rosemary Kayess' leadership of the management committee and her ongoing support.

Mark Patrick, Executive Officer



Our people

Our management committee

Our volunteer management committee is responsible for the governance of the centre. Its members have broad experience and expertise, including as practising and academic lawyers, disability advocates and as management and accounting specialists.

Members during 2022 – 2023 were:

- Rosemary Kayess — Chair
- Jenny Green — Vice Chair
- Julian Laurens — Secretary
- Giancarlo de Vera — Treasurer
- Mark Rae, and
- Samantha French

Our staff

Our staff work tirelessly to ensure the best possible outcomes for our clients.

Mark Patrick	Principal Solicitor and Executive Officer
Anastacia Totoeva	Health Justice Partnership Senior Solicitor
Kimia Randall	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Andrea Kelly	Health Justice Partnership Solicitor
Rebecca Belzer	Domestic, Family Sexual Violence Solicitor
Sarah Adbou	Solicitor
Roshana Wikramanayake	Solicitor (on leave)

Our legal firm partners and volunteers

Our centre is fortunate to have support from law student volunteers, secondees and pro bono solicitors. We would especially like to thank our volunteers Jaime Sebaruth and Midori Sugiyama who gave their time 2-3 days a week to assist the Centre.

We also thank our pro bono law firm partners Baker McKenzie, Hall & Wilcox, HWL Ebsworth, Sparke Helmore Lawyers, Wotton & Kearney and Clayton Utz who provided us with the equivalent of one

solicitor per week. We also thank HWL Ebsworth for providing us with secondees during the year.

Our clients benefit greatly from our partnerships with law firms and other legal practitioners who provide assistance on a pro bono basis. These partnerships significantly increase our capacity to provide high-quality legal services to socially, financially and legally disadvantaged people with disability.

Our pro bono partners, student volunteers and interns give their time to staff our advice line, participate in research, and assist in drafting letters. Our work would not be possible without their support. In particular, we would like to thank the following solicitors and students:

Vasudha Akula
Maryam Alkozai
Andrew Banks
Georgina Barnes
Jarrod Bayliss-McCulloch
Hugh Peace
Claudia Chaffey
Audrey Chan
Samantha Copeland
Matthew Cull
Luke Depares
Erin Doyle
Kim Fisher
Thomas Gibson
Kate Gillingham
Chelsea Gordon
Tania Hanna
Kristina Hewetson
Grace Huang
Ian Jones
Nathan Kennedy
Karen Keogh
Jessica Liu
Amber Mahoney
Claudia Matthews

Stephanie Miller
Georgia Murphy-Haste
Rani Narulla
Carl Newton
Trent Morfis
Sophie Morstyn
Emmalee Pacillo
Angela Pale
Emily Ransom
Caroline Reilly
Matthew Salgo
Anthony Nguyen
Kelsey Baird
Romy Sirtes
Nancy Tang
Claudia Matthews
Elisa Lee
Brendan Edgehill
Heidi Anderson
Sian Gilbert
Anthony Metcalfe
Renee Magee
Yasmin Frost
Thomas Dickinson
Blake Cavanagh

Joyce Amitai
Sania Saeed
Danielle Santos
Nick de Bres
George Stribling
Brianna Hammerschmid
Jing Zhang
Trent Wilson
Sian-Lee Ooi
James Crosby
Lyndal Sivell
Tina Lau
Vincent Giang
Natalie William
Rosannah Iemma
Lauren Parnaby
Cloe Jolly
Nick de Bres
George Stribling
Matthew Fuller
Holly Yuan
Georgina Riley
Sarah Aljassim
Jeremy Murnain

Kai gets the support he needs at school

Kai is a 6-year-old boy with disability who attended a private school. Kai needs additional support at school in order to participate in schooling on the same basis as students without a disability.

Kai had a number of incidents at school due to the school not providing the correct behavioural plans and support for him.

ACDL provided advice to Kai and his family, and wrote a letter to the school about this issue.

We then engaged in negotiations with the school to resolve the matter, with the school agreeing to provide an aid for Kai, which greatly assisted his schooling experience.





Our work

Disability discrimination

People with disability are subject to high levels of discrimination, and are often the victims of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Our legal practice focusses on areas of law affecting people with disability such as discrimination, employment, guardianship and public trustee matters, problems with housing and debt and education.

Over the course of the year, the centre provided 463 instances of legal advice, completed 75 legal tasks, and worked on 138 casework representation services.

Casework and representation

Typically, our discrimination representative service involves very intensive and time-consuming casework which may commence immediately before or after the alleged act of discrimination.

In some cases, a matter can be resolved by sending a letter on behalf of a client advising the other party of their legal obligations and that action will be taken if they do not address a problem within a specified period. We will attend meetings with clients to try to resolve matters when necessary.

In other cases, we assist clients with a complaint to either the Anti Discrimination NSW (ADNSW) or the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). This includes drafting complaints, advising on options and/or representing a person in a conciliation conference.

Where these approaches fail, we will pursue the matter to conclusion in the relevant tribunal or court.

This year we worked on 138 intensive casework and representation services.

Dispute resolution

In some cases, we will take on matters that are more intensive or where legal proceedings have commenced. This is often because a client is particularly vulnerable. The work may involve attending a conciliation conference at the ADNSW or the AHRC.

Some examples of these types of matters are:

- Students across various stages of education not being given appropriate education support
- Unfavourable treatment in employment
- Matters involving access to appropriate adjustments in social housing
- Matters involving access to premises.

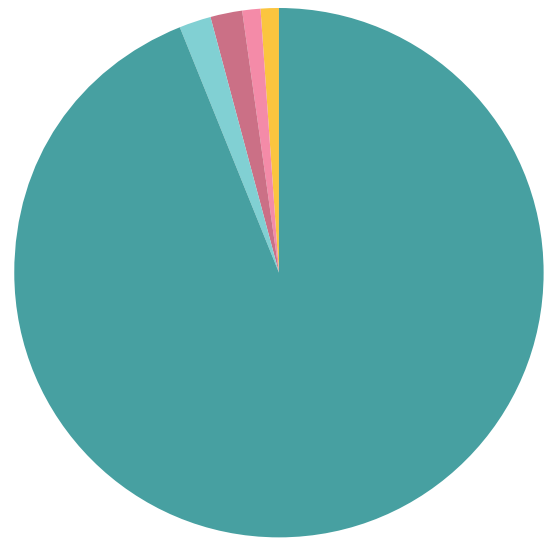
We met our target for dispute resolution services during the reporting period, opening 14 services against a target of 14. We closed 22 dispute resolution services against a target of 11.

Court and tribunal matters

When resources permit, the Centre will act for parties involved in matters before courts or tribunals in relation to systemic issues that warrant the intensive use of our resources.

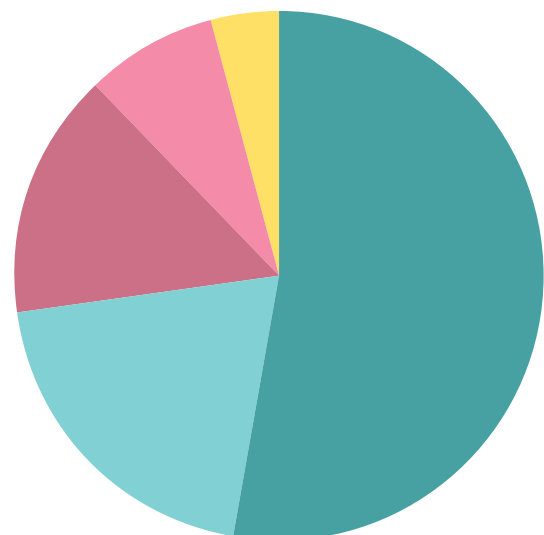
This is usually the most intensive disability discrimination client work we undertake, and we examine the individual merits of such cases carefully before proceeding to represent the client.

Casework by area of law*



- 94% ■ Disability Discrimination
- 2% ■ Other Civil Law
- 2% ■ Credit and Debt
- 1% ■ Employment
- 1% ■ Accommodation

Disability discrimination casework by area of public life*



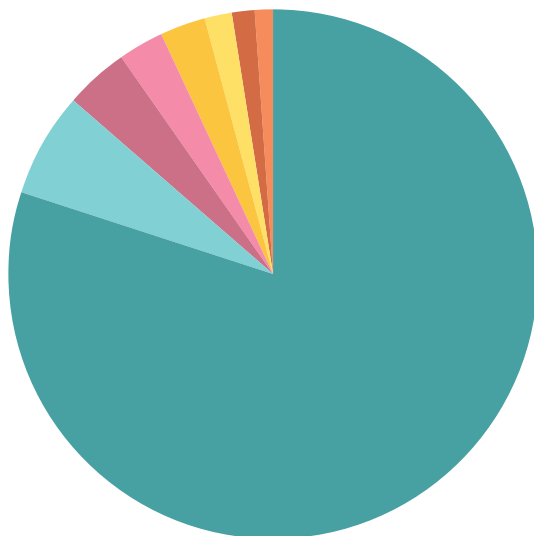
- 53% ■ Education
- 20% ■ Employment
- 15% ■ Goods, services and facilities
- 8% ■ Assistance Animals
- 4% ■ Access to premises

Legal advice and tasks*

During the year we provided 463 legal advices to people with disability, 140% above our target and provided 75 legal tasks, 167% above target.

We also provided an additional 37 legal advices and 15 legal tasks through our Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence funding stream.

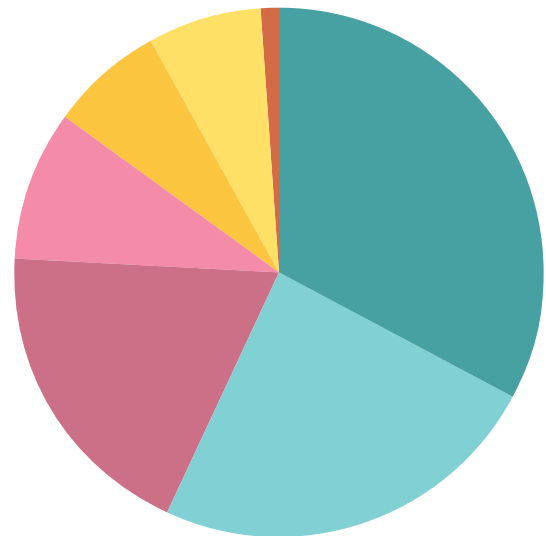
Legal advice by area of law*



- 80% ■ Disability discrimination
- 6.5% ■ Other
- 4% ■ Employment
- 2.7% ■ Consumer and debt
- 2.7% ■ Guardianship
- 1.6% ■ Housing
- 1.4% ■ Family law
- 1.1% ■ Criminal

Of our advice in the area of disability discrimination, 33% per cent related to education, 19% to employment, 24% to the provision of goods and services, 7% to accommodation, and 7% access to premises. We also provided advice on consumer contracts and other areas of civil law, government, housing and tenancy matters.

Disability discrimination advice by area of life*



- 33% ■ Education
- 24% ■ Provision of goods & services
- 19% ■ Employment
- 9% ■ Other
- 7% ■ Accommodation
- 7% ■ Access to premises
- 1% ■ Clubs

Legal information and referral*

Our legal information and referral service involves providing general information about the law, legal systems and processes and other support services to assist in resolution of legal related problems. When an enquiry falls outside our areas of practice, our team will assist by providing a referral.

This year, our team facilitated 1377 referrals for clients we could not assist. This was 110% above our target and reflects the increased demand for our services during the reporting period.

* Data in tables is from 15 March - 30 June 2023 due to a change of casework management system



Community legal education

The centre plays a key role in educating members of the community about disability discrimination law, what disability discrimination looks like, and how to act on possible discrimination when it arises.

This year the centre conducted 19 community legal education programs. We also invested significant work in creating 3 new community legal education resources.

During the year we:

- Presented to NSW Young Lawyer Mid-Year Assembly on ACDL and the current issues faced by people with disability
- Presented to Legal Aid NSW Wollongong and Illawarra CLC
- Presented to Legal Aid NSW Nowra and Shoalhaven CLC
- Hosted regular public online and face-to-face sessions about self-advocacy in education
- Presented to Law Society and the Young Lawyers on disability inclusion, including ways in which people with disabilities can participate fully in our legal community
- Presented to NSW Young Lawyers Humans Rights Sub-Committee and the Disabled Australian lawyers Association on our work and the challenges faced

by young lawyers and law students with disability

- Delivered Disability Discrimination CLE's to Western Sydney Community Legal Centre, Newcastle Legal Aid, Hunter CLC and Newcastle University Legal Centre, Western NSW Community Legal Centre, Mission Australia, People with Disability Australia and Legal Aid NSW-Sydney Office
- Hosted Learning Together training at Newcastle Library.

Our Chairperson, Rosemary Kayess also gave a talk on sexual and reproductive rights to Women with Disabilities Australia.

Outreach

Our team make visits to rural and regional areas to provide advice and education on disability discrimination and about rights. These include advocacy and legal services, disability services, family violence services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services and Land Councils, and individual clients.

We continued our monthly outreach clinic at the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association's Granville office, and delivered a legal clinic at Graceades Community Cottage in conjunction with the ILC Talk Up Project.

Community Events

The Centre attends disability expositions and events to raise our profile and promote better awareness among people with disability and relevant organisations about our service. These events are an opportunity to network with other disability and legal organisations and make contact with people with disability who are in need of legal assistance.

During the year we attended the Sydney Disability Connection Expo in June 2023 and we shared a stall with People with Disability at the Sydney Disability Expo in July 2022.

Policy and law reform

Policy and law reform is often the most efficient way of dealing with systemic legal issues and social injustice. It can result in change for a whole group of people and prevent repeated costly, time-consuming legal proceedings for individuals facing similar situations.

Our policy and law reform work are informed by our casework experience, as well as by detailed research and policy analysis. Much of this work is undertaken by our volunteers.

This year we prepared or were involved in 4 law reform initiatives against a target of 2.

We endorsed DVNSW submissions on the Coercive Control Bill, including calling on the NSW Attorney General

for a longer consultation process on the Coercive Control Bill. We also endorsed Kingsford Legal Centre's open letter on the Respect at Work Bill. We endorsed a joint statement to remove the requirement to separately prove injury in NSW Victims Support applications, and we endorsed a submission by DANA to replace the Disability Services Act.

Human rights law practice

Our human rights law practice involves assisting people with disability in relation to complaints that allege a contravention of their human rights as recognised under the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth).

We also assist people with disability to communicate to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under Article 1 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Unlike our disability discrimination legal practice, our human rights legal practice operates on a national basis and is unfunded, relying heavily on the work of our volunteers and pro bono legal partners. As such, it is only capable of providing legal assistance to a very limited number of people. Priority is given to people with legal problems that, if resolved, will result in systemic change for people with disability and their supporters.



Disability discrimination practice highlights

74

instances of
stakeholder
engagement

8

law
reform
activities



intensive
casework
worked
on during
the year

138



463

legal advices
& 51 legal tasks
provided to people
with disability

19



community
legal education
programs
conducted

3

community legal education
resources created



Amina able to safely remain in her home

Amina is a pensioner living in community housing. She sought modifications to her home. Amina asked that the carpet be removed from the property, because it exacerbates her health conditions.

Amina reached out to her housing provider on numerous occasions and disclosed her disability and provided documents supporting her request. The housing provider, however, refused to pay for replacement flooring. Amina was told that any adjustments to the flooring of the premises would need to be self-funded.

ACDL wrote a letter to the housing provider seeking the implementation of this reasonable adjustment requested by Amina.

In response to this letter, the housing provider agreed to replace the flooring in Amina's home at no cost. The carpets have now been removed, and flooring replaced making it safe for Amina to continue to reside in her home.

The free legal hub

Health Justice Partnership with South-Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) Mental Health Service

Over the course of this year, ACDL laid significant groundwork to establish the Health Justice Partnership (HJP) with South-Western Sydney Local Health District-Community Mental Health Service. Relationship-building was key during this period with our health partner, as we worked closely with key Executive staff from the SWSLHD Community Mental Health Service and their team leaders.

The building and establishment phase of the HJP has been informed by best practice in the field, as spearheaded by Health Justice Australia — the HJP Centre for Excellence. Health Justice Australia was engaged as a consultant to assist with partnership brokerage, helping the partners establish a shared understanding and goals for the project, as well as setting up a measurement and evaluation framework. Over the course of March-May 2023, the partners met on-site at Liverpool Hospital to participate in Health Justice Australia-led partnership development and evaluation workshops, which has built a strong foundation for our work.

In the context of this close engagement, ACDL and SWSLHD Community Mental Health signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the project in May

2023, reflecting joint commitment, shared responsibility and clear direction for the work ahead until at least June 2025 (subject to securing funding beyond this date).

It was decided by the parties that the Free Legal Hub service would be integrated on-site at Liverpool Hospital and Bankstown Community Health Centre, two days per week. These areas in Sydney are among the most culturally and linguistically diverse — as well as the most disadvantaged — in all of New South Wales. It was therefore appropriate for us to target these priority groups, and to draw on our experience in working with people with disability in offering a dedicated, on-site service for people with mental health conditions in the disadvantaged areas of South-Western Sydney.

Early in 2023, ACDL recruited two lawyers for the project, Andrea Kelly and Kimia Randall, each bringing not only legal expertise, but significant experience from the mental health sector.

The culmination of this year's work was the formal launch of the Free Legal Hub in Bankstown and Liverpool in July 2023.

Anastacia Totoeva, Senior Solicitor





Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence — legal advice and representation to victim-survivors with disability

Rebecca Belzer is continuing work to develop ACDL's new practice area providing legal advice, representation services, general assistance and referrals to victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence with disability.

Significant work has been undertaken to:

- Raise awareness of the service, and develop referral pathways
- Develop resources and training, and
- Deliver legal advice and representation services

We attended the Sydney Disability Expo to raise awareness for ACDL's DFSV service. Our team provided details about how to contact ACDL for further advice and assistance. We also attended the Community Legal Centre Domestic Violence and Victims Compensation Sub-

Committee and the CLC Family Law, Care and Protection Sub-Committee quarterly meetings.

As of 30 June 2023, we have provided 37 Legal Advices, 15 Legal Tasks, 9 Other Representations, 2 Ongoing Legal Support Services and numerous referrals to victim-survivors of DFSV.

We have completed 34 community engagements by way of contact, introductions and liaison with possible referral pathways through CLCs, 13 CLE activities and developed training resources on Domestic and Family Violence.

One client said "Thank you so much Rebecca for all your help and guidance. We are thrilled with the outcome and very relieved to close this chapter in our lives."



Learning together — tools to help you get the support you need at school

This year, ACDL made significant progress on our project ‘Learning Together — tools to help you get the support you need at school’.

This project is made possible with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services through their Information Linkages & Capacity Building (ILC) programme. The aim of the project is to make it easier for students with disability to stay in mainstream education and reach their full potential.

Accessible resources

Our toolkit *Learning together — tools to help you get the support you need at school* is now available in a variety of accessible formats, including easy read, Auslan, large print, E-text, audio narrated and braille.

The Learning Together toolkit helps students with disability to understand:

- How to create a vision for their education journey
- Their right to education, and what education providers should be doing to support them
- Reasonable adjustments, and how to request the support you need
- Communication techniques to encourage a positive, collaborative relationship
- What to do when things are not working
- How the legal complaint process works, and how to access more help if necessary.

Community Training

Community training continued in-person and online this year for students with disability, their families and the organisations who support them. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and participants report feeling more confident to advocate for reasonable adjustments, and clearer about their rights in education.

Work is also underway to develop a self-paced on-demand course that will be available 24 hours a day from our website. This will be particularly helpful for busy students and families who struggle to find time to attend a training session.



Further Education

We also released a further education supplement. The project team consulted students with disability undertaking University, TAFE, and higher degree by research. The aim of this consultation was to develop an additional resource that complements the Learning Together toolkit with specific tips and resources for further education students.



Culturally and linguistically diverse students

The Learning Together toolkit is now available in eight community languages:

- Arabic
- Vietnamese
- Traditional Chinese
- Simplified Chinese
- Korean
- Bengali
- Assyrian, and
- Urdu.

We're working closely with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) organisations to complete the development of translated training which will be available both on-demand and as a live community legal education session.



Reach

As we near the end of this funded project, we have scaled up our marketing efforts in order to reach as many students with disability as possible. Initial numbers indicate that our toolkit and other resources have reached approximately 12,000 individuals to date.

All resources will remain available beyond the project period, and we are working to embed this very successful program into the day-to-day operations of the Centre.



First People's Project (Talk Up)

The Talk Up Project is about empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to know and understand their legal rights, through the creation and delivery of educational resources and workshops. Talk Up is a partnership between First Peoples Disability Network, ACDL, and People with Disability Australia.

During the year we conducted community consultations across four weeks at Graceades Community Cottage at Mount Druitt, and identified five key priorities affecting community. These include disability discrimination (particularly in relation to education and employment) housing, the NDIS, contact with police and the criminal justice system, and resources to community to advocate for themselves.

As a result of the consultation, we developed resources including an information and referral book, website content, a magnet with key information for services in Mount Druitt and a wallet card with key information for legal and mental health support.

We took these resources back to the community and ran three educational workshops at local community centres with participants. The community praised the quality of the resources and the community consultation process with comments such as:

- “Every voice is valued and respected”
- “Everyone fits in and everyone is welcome”
- “It’s hard in society to feel like I fit in but here I can speak out. I feel comfortable and I feel like I fit in”
- “We all work as a team”
- “I learnt from these ladies, Talk Up is great they really are”
- “I feel like help is in the future and that this is a safe place to start getting assistance”
- “Great information, services, contacts and choices of Advocacy”

To date we have distributed about 500 copies of the resource to the community in Mount Druitt.

We also commenced community consultations at Dubbo/Wellington and identified similar legal issues such as disability discrimination, the NDIS police and the criminal justice system, post-prison release as well as housing and homelessness. We expect to deliver these resources to community in November 2023.

We have identified the as a third location, and we will commence community consultations in early 2024.

For more information about the Talk Up project, visit the website at:

fpdn.org.au/talkup/

What our clients say about us

“Thank you again for your amazing assistance in my matter and it has been a privilege to get to know you, briefly.”

“Thanks for sorting it out for me. Going to the Club for a meal is important to me and I’m happy that I know that they will make the adjustments I need”

“Thank you for your incredible help and compassion over the last few months”

“Dear Anastacia, I want to tell you thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for me. You have given me strength as a woman to go on in my career whatever that may be. You have also shown me to stand up and have my say”

“Thank you Rebecca. For everything 🙏 I am very grateful and relieved to know that there are organisations like yours looking out for these beautiful souls.”

“Your professionalism in managing this complaint has helped me greatly. It is the only validation I have received in 5 years of dealing with this situation.”

“Thank you so much Rebecca for all your help and guidance. We are thrilled with the outcome and very relieved to close this chapter in our lives”

“I want to thank you for all your help. Now people know that we can fight back when they do the wrong thing”

Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The 16th Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a four-day event that brings together governments and civil society organisations from across the globe to consider matters regarding the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

This year COSP was held in New York City from 12 to 15 June 2023 with Mr Harry Rutner, Solicitor joining the Australian Civil Society delegation.

The overarching theme for this year was 'Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD: achievements and challenges', with a sub-focus on three main issues:

- Ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities
- Digital accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Reaching the under-represented groups of persons with disabilities.

The Conference included a general assembly, where countries spoke to the overarching themes of the conference and

interventions could be made. There was also a large range of in-person and virtual side events that ran throughout COSP on topics relevant to the sector. Through the general assembly and side events, COSP gave a unique opportunity to discuss issues relevant to our work and gave insight into the approaches taken by each nation to promote the rights of people with disability.

From sessions on "Making work more inclusive" facilitated by Ministry of Disabled People New Zealand to "Digital participation of persons with intellectual disabilities" facilitated by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations, the opportunities for learning and discussion were endless. We also heard from our own Australian representatives, in a session about 'Australia's Disability Strategy: Achieving our vision of an inclusive Australia'.

COSP was an opportunity to hear from and ask questions to some of the leading minds in the disability sector from across the world. This conference allowed ACDL to reflect on how we can best support our clients and work towards implementing the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability in an Australian Context.





International workshop to implement optional protocol of the convention of persons with disabilities in Republic of Korea

In April, the Australian Centre for Disability Law was invited by Disabled Peoples International Korea (“DPI Korea”) to participate in a two-day conference to discuss the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Our participation in the workshop was a great opportunity to grow our international reputation and visibility within the Asian region, bring prominence to the Centres contribution to international jurisprudence, and share our knowledge and experience with our Korean colleagues.

Along with Mr Mark Patrick — Principal Solicitor, Ms Samantha French (Member of the Management Committee, and Senior Policy Officer at People with Disability Australia) was also invited to bring her international advocacy expertise to the workshop. Ms French is an internationally respected disability advocate and policy professional and is well known to many of the participants in the workshop.

Mr Patrick facilitated workshops on the “CRPD Committee Views on Individual

Communications under the Optional Protocol” and spoke about the treaty body and its functions, the Communications mechanism, including important jurisprudence from the Committee regarding jurisdiction and admissibility of communications.

We thank Mr Lee Young Seok, President of DPI Korea for the invitation to participate in the conference and our host and guide for the conference — Ms Eun Jung Kim, International Relations Manager of Disabled Peoples International Korea. We were grateful for Miss Kim’s kindness and generosity. All participants were made to feel very welcome and valued during the workshop.

A dinner was hosted in our honour at a traditional Korean restaurant. We thanked our hosts for their hospitality and wished them well pursuing communications under the Optional Protocol. Our offer of assistance was gratefully received.

We look forward to continuing this work.



Sonia better equipped to rebuild her life after domestic and sexual violence

Sonia is a person with disability from regional NSW. She was in a de facto relationship with Tom for approximately 25 years, ending in 2019. During the course of the relationship, Sonia experienced domestic and sexual violence. As a result of this violence, Sonia has Chronic PTSD, diagnosed anxiety disorder, a back injury and neurological condition.

Sonia contacted ACDL to seek legal advice about possible courses of action for financial compensation for the injuries suffered during the relationship. Sonia and Tom never lived together during the course of their relationship, and Tom was now denying that they were in a de facto relationship.

Sonia was particularly concerned about a Centrelink issue whereby she received Centrelink payments for a period of approximately 12 years as a single person, despite being in a de facto relationship. Sonia had not previously obtained legal advice and found it overwhelming to speak about her experiences.

Over the course of 3 legal advice sessions, ACDL advised on a wide range of legal issues, including the legal definition of a de facto relationship and her prospects of success, commencing an out-of-time

property settlement application with the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia and the Kennon principles for the possible impact of domestic violence on a property settlement.

ACDL advised Sonia on her entitlement to a property settlement should a court allow an out-of-time application. ACDL also conducted extensive research into recent NSW cases where a victim-survivor brought a civil suit against a perpetrator of domestic violence for damages resulting from the domestic violence. ACDL advised on the possible torts that may be relevant in a civil suit and explained the case law.

We spoke anonymously with Centrelink to determine the appropriate course of action in the situation where someone incorrectly received 12 years or more of payments at a higher rate than they were entitled to.

ACDL provided referrals for a medical negligence claim, and for a personal injury and intentional tort application, as well as referrals to Sonia's local housing office and community housing assistance services.

Sonia is now pursuing these courses of action, and has a clearer understanding of the legal options available to her.

Our community organisation partners

The Centre maintains partnerships with a number of individuals and organisations who share our vision and values. These relationships maximise the strength of our organisation, and help us to achieve the best possible outcomes for our clients.

Many of our clients don't have the resources, confidence or knowledge to take their legal complaints beyond the advice stage. Our partnerships with disability advocacy service providers put us in a unique position to provide clients with a holistic service to suit both their legal and advocacy needs, so that the best overall outcome can be achieved.

We would like to thank First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA), People with Disability Australia (PWDA) and Disability Advocacy NSW for their ongoing association and support.

We would also like to thank Speak my Language (Disability), NSW Young Lawyers, Central Coast Community Legal Centre, Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre, Women's Legal Service of NSW, Deloitte, Justice Connect and Your Story Legal Service.



Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
		\$
Total Revenue	1,533,581	1,411,456
Total revenue	1,533,581	1,411,456
Expenses		
Accounting fees	(28,284)	(27,870)
Audit fees	(6,973)	(6,500)
Board/Governance expenses	(8,933)	(3,228)
Client support services	(50,634)	(74,112)
Computer/IT/website	(45,001)	(43,306)
Consultancy/Legal costs	(297,327)	(268,762)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(19,388)	(57,707)
Employee benefits expense	(813,030)	(840,284)
Insurance	(10,937)	(5,258)
Office equipment	(8,997)	(5,720)
Printing and stationery	(12,688)	(11,806)
Rent & operating lease expense	(35,638)	(5,425)
Resources/subscriptions	(13,936)	(15,989)
Telephone & Internet charges	(7,757)	(15,084)
Travel & Accommodation	(20,894)	(3,243)
Other expenses	(37,058)	(22,073)
Finance costs	(38)	(1,303)
Total expenses	(1,417,513)	(1,407,670)
Surplus for the year	116,068	3,786
Other comprehensive income for the year		-
Total comprehensive income for the year	116,068	3,786

Statement of financial position

as at 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Assets		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,123,582	2,691,882
Trade and other receivables	8,215	1,385
Prepayments	9,497	14,562
Total current assets	2,141,294	2,707,829
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	7,255	15,798
Right-of-use assets	-	10,846
Total non-current assets	7,255	26,644
Total assets	2,148,549	2,734,473
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	96,872	230,685
Contract liabilities	1,497,146	2,046,643
Lease liabilities	-	10,242
Employee benefits	124,540	113,664
Total current liabilities	1,718,558	2,401,234
Non-current liabilities		
Employee benefits	13,064	32,380
Provisions	9,900	9,900
Total non-current liabilities	22,964	42,280
Total liabilities	1,741,522	2,443,514
Net assets	407,027	290,959
Equity		
Reserves	86,504	-
Retained surpluses	320,523	290,959
Total equity	407,027	290,959

