The Work and Development Service – a world first, has allowed clients to work off debts from fines. Working together in Wollongong – one of four areas where Legal Aid NSW has set up the service, are Children's Court Assistance Scheme Coordinator Sharon Callaghan (centre), Wollongong Legal Aid paralegal Emma Shean (left), and lawyer Linda Meyns. See page 14.

Photo: Greg Totman for the Law Society Journal

DELIVERING COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Major achievements

- Introduced new programs to assist our most disadvantaged clients (pages 14, 22).
- Established two specialist units for serious criminal offences (page 18).
- Achieved record results in family dispute resolution and early intervention (page 20).
- Established the Work and Development Order Service for fines debt (page 14).
- Established early intervention programs for employment law and long-term financial hardship (pages 22, 23).
- Launched a multimedia education package for separating families (page 26).
- Improved our policies so more people can access legal aid (page 17).
- Made 46 law reform submissions (page 29).

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The Work and Development Order Service for fines debt – a world first, has allowed clients to work off debts from fines. Working together in Wollongong – one of four areas where Legal Aid NSW has set up the service, are Children's Court Assistance Scheme Coordinator Sharon Callaghan (centre), Wollongong Legal Aid paralegal Emma Shean (left), and lawyer Linda Meyns. See page 14.

Photo: Greg Totman for the Law Society Journal
We are using new ways to reach our most disadvantaged clients and those at greatest risk of being socially excluded.

Our mandate is to assist disadvantaged people and communities to understand and protect their legal rights through advice, advocacy, representation and education. The people we help generally have multiple layers of disadvantage, which, in many instances go back to childhood. Our challenge is to understand the nature of their disadvantage, to work collaboratively with other agencies on a holistic response and to intervene before legal problems escalate. The aim is to prevent crime or keep people out of court. Research shows that intervening early in a legal dispute can prevent problems from escalating and has significant long-term benefits for the whole community. This early intervention approach has been taken up enthusiastically by our lawyers.

Major achievements

**PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

**Fixing fines debt**

As fines debt can impact significantly on people’s lives, we launched a Work and Development Order (WDO) Service in four locations across the State – the Mid North Coast, Central West, West/South Western Sydney and the Illawarra. Locations were decided on the basis of comprehensive mapping of need undertaken by the Department of Attorney General and Justice using aggregated data from the State Debt Recovery Office and Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Service assists clients to clear fines debt through unpaid work, courses or treatment with an approved sponsor organisation, such as a health or youth service. In expanding the service we also aimed to increase the number of sponsors with the release of the DVD –

*Work and Development Orders: Breaking the cycle of debt,* which can be viewed on YouTube.

Established in October 2011, the service commenced full operation in January 2012. In its first six months of operation the service has exceeded expectations, producing tangible benefits for people in regional areas with unpaid fines and community organisations.

The Service conducted 441 community legal education sessions, and provided 458 legal advice and minor assistance services to clients and organisations. Aboriginal Field Officers in the WDO Service contacted more than 160 organisations. This intense activity resulted in an increase in WDO-approved organisations. As at 30 June 2012, there were 626 organisations approved to sponsor WDOs.

To capitalise on this, Legal Aid NSW launched an intensive *Fix Your Fines* campaign throughout regional New South Wales. Evidence-based mapping of need was used to plan the days. Lawyers assisted clients to engage with the State Debt Recovery Office to apply for fine write-offs, time-to-pay arrangements and make referrals to the WDO Service.

In total, 21 Fines Days were held across New South Wales between April and June, assisting 307 clients from Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Menindee, Bourke, Brewarrina, Walget, Taree, Kempsey, Lightning Ridge, Taree, Purfleet, Nambucca and Bowraville.

**New challenges, more clients for our criminal lawyers**

National events and decisions made a significant impact on our criminal law practice in 2011–2012. These saw Legal Aid NSW establish new specialist units to better handle an increased workload following the transfer of people charged with people smuggling offences to New South Wales for prosecution, and a High Court decision – the Muldrock decision – on offences involving a standard non-parole period.

Our clients who have been charged with people smuggling are severely disadvantaged. They have very limited education and speak little or no English yet they face mandatory gaol terms if found guilty.

In 2011–2012, Legal Aid NSW granted aid to 17 Indonesian men charged with aggravated people smuggling. Since late 2010 when we commenced this work, we have granted aid to 112 Indonesian men. This year, over 35 matters have been listed for trial involving more than 65 defendants. Thirty defendants were acquitted and the jury was
hung in regard to a significant number. A number of prosecutions were withdrawn after the defendants were found to be under 18 at the time of the alleged offence.

In addition to conducting these matters, the Commonwealth Crime Unit has trained private lawyers doing this work, made submissions for law reform and challenged assumptions about the accuracy of expert evidence in relation to client age.

Legal Aid NSW has developed an early response to the decision of *Muldrock v The Queen* [2011] HCA 39, 5 October 2011, which found that NSW courts had been incorrectly interpreting the law since 2004 in cases involving a standard non-parole period. The decision meant that there were people still in gaol whose sentences could be incorrect. As this sentencing error has impacts for our most marginalised clients, Legal Aid NSW acted quickly to set up a *Muldrock* Review Team to conduct a systematic review of about 1,000 cases.

The unit will operate for 12 months.

**Help for all parties to domestic violence**

Domestic and family violence damages victims and perpetrators alike, often for life.

Women and children experiencing domestic violence can be supported by one of 28 Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services, for which Legal Aid NSW administers funding. The services, which assist women to obtain Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders, cover 108 Local Courts. They provided 76,665 services to 27,565 clients across New South Wales (a 3.2% increase on last year and an 86% increase since the 2009 expansion).

More details about the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program appear later in this report (see pages 36 and 131).

Specialist private lawyers working in our Domestic Violence Practitioner Service at 32 courts across the state helped women and children experiencing domestic violence gain legal protection through an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order. Their achievements are on page 33.

As an early intervention strategy, Legal Aid NSW is trialling advice and duty assistance to defendants in Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) matters to test whether this approach reduces future legal problems. The need for such intervention was noted in the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan, a strategy for government, non-government and community organisations to work together better to both prevent domestic and family violence and respond more effectively when it happens.

This pilot at Mt Druitt Local Court, which is still underway, involves a Legal Aid NSW lawyer providing legal advice and minor assistance to defendants to gain more workable orders and, potentially, reduce breaches. See page 18 for outcomes.

A senior lawyer position was established to coordinate a cross-practice, whole-of-organisation approach to domestic and family violence. The position will ensure effective use of funding for domestic violence matters, build best practice across the organisation in the provision of services to victims and defendants, review Legal Aid NSW policies and guidelines, and provide professional support and expertise to lawyers.

Legal Aid NSW is leading other public sector agencies by providing domestic violence and family law training for all legal and non-legal staff, developed with the Education Centre Against Violence. It is our aim that our staff complete this workshop over the next two years.

**Bridging the distance**

Legal Aid NSW understands that, even in the digital age, distance affects access to justice for people living in regional, rural and remote New South Wales. While we cannot feasibly maintain Legal Aid offices in some of these areas, we can still reach out to people in other ways.

One of our innovative initiatives is the Regional Outreach Clinic Program (ROCP), which funds private and Community Legal Centre lawyers to deliver clinics in 14 locations without Legal Aid NSW services. These locations were chosen on the basis of their socio-economic disadvantage and relative lack of access to public legal services.

In 2011–2012, 674 advice services were provided through 127 clinics in the 14 locations.

The regionally-based Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Program aims to improve access to legal services in regional New South Wales. It does this by building cooperative partnerships of public legal sector, pro bono, community and human service providers who assist disadvantaged client groups in their regions.

In 2011–2012, the Program expanded to two more regions on the Mid North Coast, taking the total number of CLSD partnerships to 11.

More information about these regional programs appears on pages 38–40.
Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal people, especially those living in regional, rural and remote areas, have particular needs that demand a flexible and culturally appropriate response. The regional programs mentioned previously made a major contribution towards meeting their needs.

Twenty six per cent of CLSD projects in progress or completed during 2011–2012 were targeted towards meeting the needs of Aboriginal communities in regional New South Wales, whilst 27% of the ROCP services were to Aboriginal people.

Legal Aid NSW has taken on board the recommendations regarding our services in the University of NSW report, *Civil and Family Law Needs of Aboriginal people in New South Wales*. Among these was the appointment of Aboriginal Field Officers.

In 2011–2012, we appointed Aboriginal Field Officers to new positions in Walgett and Coffs Harbour. They are located in Aboriginal Legal Service offices with funding provided by Legal Aid NSW. The positions are designed to help local Aboriginal people experiencing problems with debt, fines, violence and family law matters, some of the legal issues identified in the above report.

Together with a colleague appointed at our Campbelltown office the previous year, this completes the Aboriginal Field Officer Pilot Project, which will be evaluated in 2013.

These officers are playing a key part in a web conferencing trial, run with the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT to make it easier for Aboriginal people to obtain civil and family law advice and minor assistance. Page 43 has details.

**Year ahead**

Increase the number of advice and minor assistance services in civil and family law to Aboriginal people in regional and rural areas by up to 10%.

Evaluate our domestic violence programs and increase training for lawyers.

Trial web conferencing with Aboriginal Field Officers to evaluate its effectiveness in assisting hard-to-reach communities.

Assist more people in long-term financial hardship to reduce their debts.

Complete the review of the sentences of all eligible serving prisoners whose sentences involved a standard non-parole period.

Coordinate our regional and outreach services so that clients have more regular access to legal services.

**Key challenge**

Finding new ways to reach our most disadvantaged clients and those at greatest risk of being socially excluded. Our lawyers will employ early intervention strategies, working in partnership with private lawyers and government and community agencies to prevent people’s problems.

The percentage of services delivered to Aboriginal clients increased from 7.4% to 10.2% over five years.
EXPANDING OUR POLICIES

To ensure our services reach the people most in need, Legal Aid NSW applies policies for granting and administering grants of legal aid.

Major achievements

PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

In 2011–2012, Legal Aid NSW expanded six policies in the areas of criminal, civil and family law, making legal aid even more accessible to those most in need of legal assistance and protecting fundamental human rights.

Criminal law policies relating to continuing detention orders and extended supervision orders were amended. Legal aid is now available to people wishing to vary or revoke an order made under s22 of the Crimes (Serious Sex Offenders) Act 2006 where they may be held in prison or supervised in the community for up to five years after the sentence had expired.

Amendments were also made to family law policy to make legal aid available for contravention matters. We also removed the merit test for care and protection proceedings in the Children’s Court where the legal aid applicant has parental responsibility for a child or young person or has had an aspect of parental responsibility removed by a court order.

Amendments to the civil law policies made legal aid available for:

- sexual assault communications privilege. The aim is to provide legal assistance to sexual assault complainants opposing the disclosure of protected confidences made in counselling sessions;
- electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) administration inquiries before the Mental Health Review Tribunal. This policy protects the fundamental rights of people who have not had an initial inquiry and who may be subjected to ECT treatment against their wishes;
- employment related matters under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) for applicants who are at special disadvantage; and
- migration matters regarding visa cancellation. Legal aid is available for representation at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to applicants who have had their visas cancelled on character grounds, where it raises a significant human rights issue.

Further information on these policies can be found at For Lawyers>Policy Online at www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

We expanded our policies so more people can access legal aid.

We completed an extensive survey of social exclusion factors experienced by legal aid clients. Data is now being analysed to inform policy development.

Year ahead

Improve our means test and contributions policy to enhance our capacity to deliver quality legal services to those at greatest risk of social exclusion.

Key challenge

Ensuring our policies target those most in need while meeting budget savings targets.

Focus on clients

MEASURING CLIENT SATISFACTION

PRIORITY: EXCELLENCE IN LEGAL SERVICES

Legal Aid NSW undertakes a biennial Client Satisfaction Survey to measure satisfaction with advice and minor assistance services across the criminal, family and civil law practices. While the 2011 survey revealed a pleasing 89.5% satisfaction level, there were a number of recommendations for improvement in the report. We reviewed the recommendations and developed an implementation plan in response. Actions taken under the plan include staff training initiatives, work with partners to ensure seamless service, and client awareness raising. The Executive Committee is monitoring implementation. We will conduct another survey in 2012–2013.

INCREASED FOCUS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Grants Assist pilot began in January 2012 at the Central Sydney office. Grants staff helped 18 clients to complete applications for legal aid after they had received advice from a family lawyer, spending up to an hour with each. To support the pilot, Grants staff developed fact sheets and FAQs on how to apply for legal aid, which LawAccess NSW trialled with good results. The pilot will be evaluated in 2012–2013.
Criminal Law
The criminal law practice provides legal information, advice, minor assistance, duty services and representation in criminal courts at each jurisdictional level across the State. These services operate from the Central Sydney office and 19 regional offices. Specialist advice, information, minor assistance, duty services and representation are provided through the Children’s Legal Service, Prisoners Legal Service and Drug Court.

The practice offers community legal education throughout New South Wales and contributes to law reform initiatives.

FACT FILE
Total staff: 318
Total expenditure: $120.851M
State: $110.991M
Commonwealth: $9.860M
49.4% of our overall budget was spent on criminal law services.

Major achievements
PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE
Commonwealth crime
The Commonwealth Crime Unit was established for the defence of people charged with Commonwealth crimes, particularly people smuggling. These are Commonwealth offences where the accused are usually detained on Christmas Island and, if charged, transferred to various States and Territories to be prosecuted.

Many of the accused are fishermen from remote parts of Indonesia. The majority are eligible for legal aid. See pages 14–15 for more details.

Sentence review
The criminal law practice established the Standard Non-Parole Period Unit to review the sentences of people currently in gaol whose sentence may be affected by a 2011 High Court decision. See pages 14–15.

Social security prosecutions
The Wollongong Legal Aid office conducted a pilot under which the criminal and civil sections cooperated to identify potential defences, matters that could be withdrawn and civil remedies in social security prosecutions. While the number of social security prosecutions diminished significantly in 2011–2012 due to a number of factors, staff from criminal law and civil law practices continued to refer appropriate matters for alternate action to that of a criminal prosecution.

Young people
Lawyers answered 18,736 calls to the youth hotline, advising 8,259 young people about their legal rights and provided minor assistance to 3,196 of them. Legal Aid NSW advocated for law reform in the area of youth detention (see page 29) and organised workshops in schools and juvenile justice centres about crime prevention (see page 26).

Domestic violence
In a pilot at Mt Druitt Local Court, advice and minor assistance was provided to defendants to gain more workable orders and, potentially, reduce breaches. From the beginning of the trial in November 2011 to 30 June 2012, 162 defendants received help. Legal Aid NSW is investigating a second trial site.

Over the year our lawyers also worked closely with other support services for defendants, such as The Men’s Shed, to link defendants to appropriate non-legal services for help with financial, gambling and other problems.

TOTAL CRIMINAL LAW CLIENT SERVICES IN 2011-2012: 474,554

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Legal Representation: 23,765</th>
<th>Total Duty Services: 149,634</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhouse: 9,110</td>
<td>Inhouse: 97,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned: 14,655</td>
<td>Assigned: 51,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Other Services: 301,155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Services: 268,846</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Advice: 29,015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Assistance: 3,294</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criminal Law Cases: The People We Help

**Case 1: New beginning for Iraqi refugee**

The Children’s Legal Service appeared for a young person charged with malicious damage to property. He had an extremely traumatic background and had been sexually assaulted. He also had other health and behavioural issues.

While his offences were relatively minor, he was refused bail and became hysterical in custody. With the help of his Children’s Legal Service lawyer, he was allowed bail and given a conditional order that did not involve a conviction. The young person has not been in trouble since.

The combined efforts of the Department of Juvenile Justice, Children’s Legal Service and Ageing, Disability and Home Care, which devised a support plan, achieved an excellent outcome and genuine improvement in this young man’s life.

**Case 2: High Court sets aside inconsistent sentences**

A case ending in the High Court began with two men being found guilty of cultivating a large commercial quantity of cannabis, and a third man guilty of knowingly taking part in the supply of a commercial quantity of cannabis leaf. The last received a lesser sentence than the other two, who had pleaded guilty. The Crown appealed the adequacy of the sentences received by the two men. On appeal, the Court of Criminal Appeal found the sentences inadequate and increased them.

On appeal to the High Court, special leave to appeal was granted on the ground that the Court of Criminal Appeal’s decision created a disparity between the new sentences imposed on appeal and the sentence imposed on the third man, which was not subject to Crown appeal.

The High Court allowed the appeal and set aside the higher sentences. In effect it disapproved of the Court of Criminal Appeal creating a greater disparity in sentences in the course of dealing with the Crown appeal.

**Case 3: Charges dismissed against threatened man**

Our client was a 20-year-old man of Pakistani background. His family fled from Iraq to Syria and later came to Australia as refugees. He was charged with credit card fraud. He had no previous criminal record.

In his defence he told the Court that he had been recruited to commit the fraud by a man who had threatened both him and his family and produced a gun. His co-accused supported the claim. Our client feared for his safety because, when he was 15, he had been kidnapped, interrogated and tortured by another religious sect.

There was other independent evidence to support the allegation of a person recruiting and threatening young people in the area of his arrest. The charges were dismissed on the basis of duress. The Court accepted that our client genuinely believed that the threats would be carried out and that a reasonable person of the same age and sex would have been unable to resist them.

**Priorities: Excellence in Legal Services**

**Responding to changing laws and amendments**

The NSW Law Reform Commission undertook a comprehensive review of the bail and sentencing laws. Legal Aid NSW submitted a report on bail to the NSW Government (see page 29) for consideration and is consulting on the sentencing review.

**Year ahead**

Complete the review of sentences of all eligible serving prisoners whose sentences involved a standard non-parole period.

Respond to the proposed legislative reform to the right to silence and implement any practical changes required.

Evaluate the domestic violence pilot at Mt Druitt and commence a similar pilot at a second site.

**Key challenge**

Maintaining quality legal services which meet client needs in a changing legal environment, and in tight economic circumstances.
Family law
The family law practice provides legal advice, information, minor assistance, duty services and case representation in Commonwealth family law matters, including child support matters, and in State care and protection matters at locations across the state.

In addition, early intervention and family dispute resolution services are provided.
The practice also undertakes law reform and community legal education.

FACT FILE
Total staff: 226
Total expenditure: $64.237M
State: $17.884M
Commonwealth: $46.353M
26.3% of our overall budget was spent on family law services.

Major achievements
PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE
Clinics drive impressive growth
Minor assistance services for clients increased by 78% this year. The result was due to expansion of minor assistance clinics by the family law practice to improve services to people not entitled to legal aid but needing advocacy assistance.

Early intervention
The Early Intervention Unit helped people deal with their legal problems before they became more serious, resulting in an increase in duty lawyer services delivered at Parramatta, Sydney, Newcastle and Dubbo family court registries to self-represented litigants. Outreach services were provided at 25 locations across New South Wales, including Parkes, Forbes, Cowra, Bowral, Mittagong, Goulburn, Cessnock, Grafton, Moss Vale, Kiama, Queanbeyan, Singleton and Wyong.

Information and education play an important role in early intervention. We reached out to clients through social media and offered information and resources on family law in Australia through an interactive website (www.bestforkids.org.au). The site had 21,796 page views in 2011–2012. See also page 26.

Family dispute resolution
This year the Family Dispute Resolution Service conducted a record 2,586 conferences (mediations), reaching full or partial settlement in over 79.4% of matters (full table in Appendix 7). The conferences aim to facilitate early dispute resolution. Also increasing (by 16%) were grants for litigation intervention conferences – lawyer assisted mediation processes for matters in the late stages of litigation.

In 2011 the service began a court ordered mediation pilot at the Family Court Registry in Parramatta. Legal Aid NSW conducted 129 matters under this pilot of which 44% reached full agreement and 38% interim agreement. As a result, the Court saved around 110 days of hearing time.

TOTAL FAMILY LAW CLIENT SERVICES

The service conducted over 85 mediations in matters referred from Bidura Children’s Court. The mediations involved family members, legal representatives for children and the Department of Family and Community Services.

Having received a tick in the Australian Institute of Criminology evaluation, the dispute resolution service for care and protection matters has continued beyond the pilot timeframe.
PRIORITY: EXCELLENCE IN LEGAL SERVICES

Responding to changing laws and amendments

Legal Aid NSW contributed to legislation and policy in the care jurisdiction, including through participation in the Children’s Court Advisory Committee and the Children’s Court Working Group. We gave our comments on a number of Practice Notes, which govern practice and procedure in the Children’s Court, including those on case management and the Children’s Court Clinic.

The family violence amendments to the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) commenced in June 2012. Legal Aid NSW had earlier made submissions on the reforms. The new definition of family violence categorises a broader range of behaviours as constituting family violence and recognises its complex and pervasive nature. The family law practice received training on the impact of these amendments and is keeping a close watch for any emerging trends or issues.

Family courts must now take account of the nature of an Apprehended Violence Order and the circumstances under which it was made when considering issues relating to family violence. Local Court Practice Note (2) may also impact on the changes and result in greater collaboration between the family and crime practices on family violence matters.

Year ahead

Expand family law advice and minor assistance services to Aboriginal people in rural and regional areas.
Increase the reach of family law services to clients from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
Improve the ability of people with family law matters to resolve their matters without having to go to court.
Expand the Parramatta mediation pilot to the Sydney Family Courts Registry.

Key challenge

Maintaining both the quality and quantity of family law services delivered across New South Wales in times of significant economic constraint.

Family law cases: the people we help

**Case 1: Family heritage at stake**
Help from Legal Aid NSW brought a father and son back together and enabled the son to connect with his Aboriginal heritage.

The father, an Aboriginal man with previous substance abuse problems and a gaol record, contacted our Coffs Harbour office when his son and former partner disappeared from the area. The father had spent regular time with the boy and wanted the relationship to continue. On her part, the boy’s paternal grandmother was keen that he learn about Aboriginal culture.

Legal Aid NSW lodged a court application and the mother and boy were located in Grafton. Extensive negotiations and a Legal Aid conference with a skilled family dispute resolution practitioner followed. As a result, the boy, now aged three, spends time with his Aboriginal family each week.

**Case 2: Kids stay with mum**
At risk of permanently losing her three young sons, a mother asked Legal Aid NSW to represent her in care proceedings in the Children’s Court. The Department of Family and Community Services had removed the children from her care because of concerns about her mental health, drug use, past violent relationships and housing. The department argued that the boys should not be returned due to the mother’s poor progress since their removal.

Following a defended hearing, the Court found that the mother had taken significant steps towards working out her problems. This meant that there was a realistic possibility that each child could be restored to her care. If our client stays on track, she will be welcoming home her three boys.

**Case 3: Safe from a forced marriage**
A sixteen-year-old girl contacted our Campbelltown office anxious to prevent her parents from taking her to Lebanon for an arranged marriage. She later changed her instructions so she could travel to Lebanon for her sister’s wedding, the sister being over 18 years old.

To protect the girl, orders were made under the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth) which effectively made any marriage she contracted in Lebanon illegal in Australia. It is now likely that new legislation will be introduced as a result of the case.
Civil law

The civil law practice provides legal advice, minor assistance, duty and casework services to people through the Central Sydney office and 13 regional offices. It has unique expertise in delivering cost-effective services to disadvantaged communities in a broad range of general law areas.

Civil law problems, if left unsolved, can have a far-reaching impact on people’s lives. The impact can range from health problems to family breakdown and contact with the criminal justice system. The civil law program focuses on areas that have the most impact on people’s lives, including tenancy and housing issues, debt, social security, refugee and migration issues and other breaches of fundamental rights.

The practice also directs its services towards the people who are most disadvantaged in accessing legal services. These include people living in rural and remote areas, homeless people, the elderly, people with a mental illness or other serious health issues, Aboriginal people and people experiencing severe financial hardship.

### FACT FILE

- **Total staff:** 187
- **Total expenditure:** $31.190M
- **State:** $22.181M
- **Commonwealth:** $9.008M
- 12.7% of our overall budget was spent on civil law services.

### Major achievements

**PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

**Privacy for victims of sexual assault**

The Sexual Assault Communications Privilege Service (SACPS) at Legal Aid NSW commenced in October 2011. An Australian first, SACPS assists victims of sexual assault to keep their therapeutic records, including counselling notes, confidential. It recognises that these records are therapeutic, not investigative, and that disclosure of sensitive personal information in court can significantly further harm the victim and undermine confidence in sexual assault proceedings.

Since start up SACPS has assisted, often at short notice, more than 60 complainants to assert the sexual assault communication privilege, that is, prevent use of their counselling records in court unless in the public interest.

**Fixing fines**

Legal Aid NSW established a new specialist service to give legal advice and assistance to people with fines debt.

Civil lawyers conducted a fines campaign in regional New South Wales, encouraging disadvantaged people to get on-the-spot help with their fines and other debts.

See page 14 for the excellent results achieved and early evaluation.

**Social security**

We increased our minor assistance services in social security law by 102% as part of an effort to help people resolve issues at an early stage.

This year we worked with Centrelink to improve early referral for legal advice of agency customers who owe a Centrelink debt and are being investigated for social security criminal offences. In conjunction with TAFE NSW and Centrelink, we worked on a pilot financial and legal literacy program as a pathway to divert social security debtors from the criminal justice system.

### CIVIL LAW CLIENT PROFILE

**Based on total cases and inhouse duty services**

**Client type**

- **Female:** 45.4%
- **Born in non-English speaking countries:** 23.6%
- **With dependants:** 11.1%
- **On C’wlth benefits:** 53.8%
- **Aboriginal:** 6.4%
- **Under 18:** 3.2%
- **Aged 18-60:** 79.2%
- **Over 60:** 17.4%
- **Rural and regional:** 23.4%

*Includes Newcastle and Wollongong
Employment law
Lawyers in the civil law practice received special training to deliver employment law services. As a result, the number of employment law advice services increased by 40% (to 108 per month), and minor assistance increased by 94% (to 31 per month). Services focused on early intervention and assisting people, especially those at risk of long-term exclusion from the workforce, before they reach the conciliation stage at Fair Work Australia.

Bulk Debt Project
This joint project with Victoria Legal Aid and West Heidelberg Community Legal Centre assists people on Centrelink benefits who are in long-term financial hardship and have no prospect of repaying their debts. To date, $71 million of debt has been waived. The project is continuing for a further year.

We are working with the financial services industry (banks, debt collectors, credit providers) to provide a sustainable solution for people in long-term hardship with debts they cannot pay.

Helping during natural disasters
Our lawyers were on the ground assisting local residents with flood insurance claims in Moree, Griffith and Wagga Wagga following heavy rains in February and March, 2012. A letter box drop in the worst affected areas in the Riverina led to a sharp increase in requests for advice at our Wagga Wagga office.

Mental health
The Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS) provides legal representation for people who appear before the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) and the Guardianship Tribunal.

This year we introduced new policies to allow us to provide representation for patients at MHRT hearings where approval is sought by the hospital for electro-convulsive therapy to be administered to the patient. In 2011–2012 inhouse MHAS lawyers provided over 3,200 duty services and 900 advice services.

Private lawyers provided a further 9,800 mental health duty services for Legal Aid NSW clients. Legal Aid NSW made 537 grants of aid for matters before the Guardianship Tribunal, an increase from 310 in 2010–2011.

Inquests
The State Coroner adopted suggestions for recommendations in a range of matters conducted by the Coronial Inquest Unit. As highlighted in a case study on page 24, matters included deaths in detention.

Other projects
The Offshore Asylum Seeker Project and Older Persons’ Legal and Education Program are reported in the Section Collaborating with our partners.

Responding to changing laws and amendments
The Mental Health Act 2007 will be reviewed in the coming year. Our Mental Health Advocacy Service has already provided preliminary advice to the Minister for Mental Health and will contribute further to this important review. The Service is also preparing for statewide introduction of the 2007 changes to the Inebriates Act 1912.

In an important change to social security law, tougher qualification criteria were introduced for the Disability Support Pension. We gave evidence to the Senate Community Legislative Committee on the changes. Recent improvements to national credit laws have started to filter through to customers, with a generally safer and fairer lending environment. We are also noticing consumers taking advantage of their financial hardship rights by lodging more applications with their lender or external dispute resolution schemes. For our clients this means more suitable lending practices in the market place and improved access to justice.

Following the significant natural disasters of 2011, the first tranche of improvements have been made to the insurance market, including a common definition of flood and enhanced obligations in the General Insurance Code to guarantee consumers their right to make a claim on a policy (regardless of whether the insurer thinks the claim would ultimately be paid). These reforms should make a difference for people who incur loss or damage arising from natural disasters. The civil law practice will closely monitor this as part of its overall response to disaster events.
Civil Law cases: the people we help

Case 1: Home repossession avoided

*Commonwealth Bank of Australia v Wales [2012] NSW SC 407*

When the bank served our client, who was in financial hardship, with a statement of claim seeking to repossess her home, she contacted the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) for help.

The bank contacted Ms Wales in order to resolve the dispute, and the parties made an agreement which reflected little concession to hardship. There was no reduction in the amount of payments (in fact, the repayment schedule increased) and seemingly there was no extension of the period of the contract.

The bank did not direct our client to its designated procedure for considering hardship variations, and did not even explain that there was a designated procedure.

Legal Aid NSW took the matter to the Supreme Court.

The Court found the bank did not appropriately invoke the mechanism for making a hardship variation, depriving our client of her opportunity to have the hardship application determined by the FOS or the Court.

The Court set aside the default judgment entered against our client for possession of her home.

This precedent decision has implications at a national level for lenders who fail to adhere to their obligations to consider a customer’s financial hardship. Also for the first time, external dispute resolution was acknowledged by the Court as a central forum for the resolution of financial hardship disputes.

Case 2: Overturning a Centrelink decision to raise debt

Our client lives in regional Australia. She was being investigated by Centrelink, which alleged that she was in a marriage-like relationship but claiming benefits as a single person and asked her to repay over $156,000.

Our client had multiple serious health issues and found it very difficult to attend appointments. A legal aid lawyer travelled to her home and arranged for her to be assessed by a social worker from our Client Assessment and Referral Service. The case was difficult, complicated and challenging with hundreds of pages of evidence to consider.

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal found that she was not a member of a couple throughout the relevant period. If the tribunal had found otherwise, our client could have faced criminal proceedings and the prospect of a gaol sentence.

Case 3: Evidence prompts detainee welfare recommendations

We represented the families at inquests into the apparent suicides of three detainees at Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. All had occurred in a three-month period in late 2010 and were heard together.

In the first inquest, a Fijian man facing immediate deportation threw himself from a balcony when officers forcibly attempted to remove him from the Centre. In the second, an Iraqi man who suffered from a depressive illness hanged himself. The health service had noted his depression but had not considered his condition serious. In the third, a man facing deportation on criminal charges in the UK hanged himself. Immigration authorities had been warned that he might take his own life.

Legal Aid NSW obtained crucial expert evidence from a consultant psychiatrist and persuaded the State Coroner to make a number of broad-ranging recommendations. These included procedures for aborting removals where self-harm or suicide is threatened; better communication by service providers on detainee welfare; improved training for mental health staff; and a review of clinical governance procedures.

Year ahead

Develop innovative ways of assisting people to resolve civil law problems, especially in relation to debt and consumer protection.

Implement a statewide community legal education program to raise awareness of civil law issues and areas covered by this practice.

Increase our services to young people.

Monitor the impact of the introduction of the impact of income management in Bankstown.

Provide legal help to older Aboriginal people in regional areas.

Key challenge

Managing the increasing and unmet demands in civil law through partnerships with other services and innovative models of service delivery.
HOLISTIC SERVICES

Meeting clients’ complex needs
The social workers in our Client Assessment and Referral Service (CARS) work collaboratively with lawyers to ensure the best possible outcomes for clients.
They do this by preparing psychosocial assessments for use in court that address the complex range of social difficulties underlying people’s legal problems. They also link clients to other services that can assist them.

Major achievements
PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE
Social workers assisted 510 clients referred to the unit, mostly by the criminal law practice.
They assessed 472 clients, providing 263 psychosocial reports for use in court and making 380 referrals to other agencies. Clients needed assistance with a range of issues, key areas being mental health, intellectual disability, drugs and alcohol, homelessness and parenting.

Halting the ‘roundabout’
There is a risk that some people are referred from service to service on the ‘referral roundabout’, failing to find the help they need. A strategy was developed to improve the consistency and accuracy of information and referrals across Legal Aid NSW.

Central to the strategy was establishing a network, with representatives from regional offices and Central Sydney. Other actions finalised under the strategy in 2011–2012 included:

- creating clear pathways on the new Legal Aid NSW website for people who need legal help and for lawyers and service providers;
- providing referral training for Legal Aid NSW staff with LawAccess to improve skills; and
- improving the process for legal aid applications which directs people refused aid to appropriate services.

PRIORITY: LINKING SERVICES
Case managing clients with intellectual disabilities
Section 32 of the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990 permits people with a mental illness, intellectual disability or acquired brain injury (ABI) who are facing criminal charges to be diverted from the justice system and receive treatment. To increase the number of diversions, the Client Assessment and Referral Unit launched a pilot to assist private lawyers in the Shoalhaven in making case plans for clients with intellectual disability or ABI in s32 matters. All clients referred to date under the s32 order did not pay a fine or go to gaol, but agreed to get help under a support or treatment plan (see graph below).

The pilot was set up under a partnership between Legal Aid NSW and the Intellectual Disability Rights Service. See page 35.
The Disability Casework Project (part of the Disability Services Improvement Project) funded for two years by the Public Purpose Fund, aims to help divert clients away from the justice system through enhanced assessment and referral services. Early results indicate diversion in 100% of matters with 88% of clients not reoffending while completing their diversion order.

The clients, young people with intellectual disability or ABI, are among the most disadvantaged of all Legal Aid NSW client groups, having complex social histories and multiple health and welfare needs. This high proportion of clients who received a s32 order did not pay a fine or go to gaol, but agreed to get help under a support or treatment plan (see graph below).

Results from the Disability Casework Project: recidivism rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of clients</th>
<th>No offences within 6 months</th>
<th>31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No offences within 12 months</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reoffended within 6 months</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reoffended within 6 to 12 months</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Order continuing</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case: Holistic support changes a young life
Following an argument with his mother, a 15-year-old boy was charged with assault and multiple property damage offences. He was taken to Westmead Children’s Hospital where he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and prescribed anti-psychotic medication, but did not comply with taking it.
Psychosocial assessment by a legal aid social worker found the boy had endured a traumatic and abusive childhood and spent the past 10 years living in different foster care homes. Reunion with his mother after running away from a foster care placement proved disastrous given his early family history and mental health condition.

With social work help, the boy was able to address a range of problems. He moved in with his aunt, received psychological counselling, took medication and attended an anger management course.

Year ahead
Evaluate the Shoalhaven pilot project for private lawyers.
Evaluate the Disability Casework Project.
Evaluate the Information and Referral Strategy.

Key challenge
Developing consistent, high-quality referral practices across Legal Aid NSW, supported by the new referral network.
Community legal education (CLE) equips people with the awareness, knowledge and skills needed to successfully resolve law-related problems encountered in everyday life. Legal Aid NSW has a strong history of providing community legal education as part of its core services to the public.

CLE sets out to help people anticipate and avoid legal problems, act more quickly when problems do occur and deal with legal issues more effectively, including knowing when and where to get support and expert help. CLE covers a wide range of activities aimed at increasing legal capability. CLE can be delivered as a workshop in a school, a legal theatre performance, a web-based resource or a step-by-step guide or brochure.

The strategic plan which guided our work in 2011–2012 is based on the Legal Aid NSW Plan priorities and the actions are linked to the Operational Plan.

Major achievements

PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The CLE program provides innovative programs for priority client groups and structured programs for community sector workers who work with socially and economically disadvantaged people. Early access to legal assistance through information and community legal education is an important strategy and this year our creative multimedia education strategy helped us to reach a wider audience.

Highlights included:
- Setting up the Best for Kids website (www.bestforkids.org.au) for families going through separation. The site features videos, interactive guides and links to legal and non-legal services with captioning in Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese and closed captioning for hearing impaired people. Best for Kids has dedicated social media channels on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.
- Producing What’s the law?, an education kit for English language teachers to use with newly arrived migrants and refugees. It includes a DVD with 10 photo stories about common legal problems, teachers’ notes, student activity sheets and certificates of attendance. What’s the law? also has a dedicated YouTube channel.
- Publishing an information kit for people in gaol who face the prospect of visa cancellation on character grounds.
- Developing a DVD called Law for Everyday Life to help community workers identify civil law problems.
- Presenting 28 workshops for young people in schools, youth centres and juvenile justice centres to warn them of the dangers of criminal behaviour in groups. A total of 3,897 young people attended along with 300 juvenile justice and youth workers.
- Releasing a new brochure in English and Arabic outlining the revised qualification criteria for the Disability Support Pension, with tips for doctors on how to assist their patients with pension claims.
- Increasing CLE to Aboriginal people across the State by 18%.
- Producing a brochure for Aboriginal people called Who gets my stuff after I die? which was used to complement wills clinics for Aboriginal people.
- Presenting 28 workshops for young people in schools, youth centres and juvenile justice centres to warn them of the dangers of criminal behaviour in groups. A total of 3,897 young people attended along with 300 juvenile justice and youth workers.
- We were able to reach a much wider audience through creative multimedia projects.

PRIORITY: EXCELLENCE IN LEGAL SERVICES

The Legal Aid NSW Plan for 2011–2012 identified two areas of focus for quality legal education services: staff training and project evaluation.

Highlights included:
- To better equip Legal Aid NSW staff involved in developing and delivering our CLE program, we delivered four professional development sessions to 61 people. Training concentrated on facilitation skills and service evaluation.
- We developed an evaluation framework and collected data in order to evaluate three CLE projects in 2012: the Law for Community Sector Workers program, the What’s the law? train-the-trainer workshop and Best for Kids website.

PRIORITY: SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

We commenced developing a new CLE management system that will achieve better reporting and assist in planning targeted education programs.
PRIORITY: LINKING SERVICES

Many of our CLE projects were developed and delivered through strategic partnerships with other legal and non-legal services.

Highlights included:
- Developing What’s the law? education kits with National Legal Aid in partnership the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Kits are used by adult migrant education English teachers, English home tutors and settlement service workers.
- Delivering a number of innovative projects in partnership with Community Legal Centres including: To Tweet or Not to Tweet? with the National Children’s and Youth Law Centre; and the Migrant Women Workplace project with Kingsford Legal Centre and Asian Women at Work Inc.

Year ahead

Encourage professional development of staff so as to improve the quality of CLE.

Implement a new web-based community legal education management system, including instruction and support for staff.

Develop a new web-based resource for young people and parents about the risks of cyberbullying and sexting.

Develop an annual whole-of-organisation strategic plan for community legal education.

Key challenge

Ensuring the community legal education program is as effective as possible through a structured approach and strategic direction.

CLIENT DIVERSITY

Legal Aid NSW is committed to providing responsive, appropriate services to diverse people and communities in New South Wales.

A new Equity and Diversity Committee was established and the Multicultural Action Plan and Disability Action Plan for 2012–2013 finalised.

FACT FILE

| Percentage of case and inhouse duty clients born in non-English speaking countries | 13% |
| Amount spent on interpreters | $1,198,950 |

Brochures translated into 13 languages

Multicultural Action Plan

A summary of key performance highlights from the Multicultural Action Plan appears in Appendix 10.

Major achievements

PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

We made wide use of interpreters and translators, both face-to-face and over the telephone, for client interviews, community legal education sessions and court hearings. Expenditure on these services for the year was $1,198,950, an increase of 22% from the previous year ($983,899). Legal Aid NSW also contributed to the cost of interpreters in community legal centres, by way of $49,206.

Three new brochures were published in up to 13 community languages. We also delivered community legal education sessions on a range of topics to culturally diverse communities and recently arrived migrants.

The new Legal Aid NSW website was updated to include general information about our services in 32 languages, with both written and audio versions. We also produced the Welcome to Legal Aid DVD in 14 languages for emerging communities.

At a red carpet launch, family lawyer Hai-Van Nguyen is interviewed about her role in the new Best for Kids DVD.
Priority: Excellence in Legal Services

Our Commonwealth Crime Unit, established in 2011, provided expert legal services to Indonesian people charged with people smuggling offences. Despite the difficulties of managing multiple, high profile legal proceedings, the Unit demonstrated extraordinary skill and commitment in overcoming cultural, religious and linguistic barriers to work successfully with these vulnerable clients. See page 14.

Priority: Supporting Our People

We developed culturally appropriate guidelines and training to assist staff implementing new requirements for witnessing statutory declarations and affidavits. Amendments to the Oaths Act 1900 (NSW), effective 30 April 2012, create the potential for a witness to ask a declarant/deponent to remove their facial covering in order to confirm identity.

Priority: Linking Services

A train-the-trainer program, What’s the Law?, was delivered to community workers to build their capacity to assist newly arrived migrants and refugees with information about the Australian legal system. Topics include driving, car accidents, buying a car, interacting with police, renting a home, dealing with Centrelink, child protection, family law and family violence.

Disability Action Plan

A summary of key performance highlights from the Disability Action Plan appears in Appendix 10.

Major achievements

Priority: Access to Justice

We provided information in a range of accessible formats, including Braille, large print and audio. Our new Legal Aid NSW website, launched in 2011, was developed with a strong focus on accessibility. We also maintained this approach when producing innovative material, such as the Best for Kids multimedia resource, which included closed captioning for deaf and hearing impaired viewers.

Priority: Excellence in Legal Services

Through a partnership with the Intellectual Disability Rights Service, the Step by Step Guide to Making a Section 32 Application for a Person with Intellectual Disability was developed to assist lawyers representing clients with a disability, particularly in the Local Courts. The guide is being rolled out through a training program in a range of New South Wales locations.

The Mental Health Advocacy Service conducted a training day covering current and emerging issues in representing people with mental illness.

Priority: Supporting Our People

A new Health and Wellbeing Steering Committee was established to implement recommendations regarding issues adversely affecting our staff in the workplace (see page 46).

We launched our new training centre in the Central Sydney office, which includes improved facilities for people with a disability.

Priority: Linking Services

The Client Assessment and Referral Service conducted a pilot to assist private lawyers in making case plans in s32 matters for clients with intellectual disability or acquired brain injury in the Shoalhaven area (see page 25).

Year ahead

Identify and address barriers to legal help for people from culturally diverse communities by developing practical resources for staff assisting these communities.

Through a new partnership with Settlement Services International, deliver family and civil law outreach and advice services to people from newly arrived migrant communities and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Develop a plan for diversity that includes multicultural and disability action plans that meet the Principles of Multiculturalism and Guidelines for Disability Action Planning by NSW Government agencies.

Key challenge

Gaining a better understanding of clients who have special needs, particularly those from new and emerging migrant communities and people with a disability, and identifying opportunities to improve our services for those clients.

Research, consultation and surveys will be used to help achieve our goals.
One of the corporate priorities of Legal Aid NSW is improving access to justice through reforms to the legal system. Legal Aid NSW is regularly invited to contribute our expertise grounded in legal practice, to the development of legal and public policy. Law reform submissions provide an opportunity to comment on how changes to the law or government policies may impact on our clients. They improve the community’s confidence in the justice system by making sure the perspectives of our clients are included in decisions about changing laws. The day-to-day interaction of legal and non-legal staff with clients builds a unique perspective on the likely impact of law or policy reforms on our clients.

In 2011–2012, the Legal Policy Branch coordinated 46 submissions on law reform references, proposed legislation and reviews of legislation. See Appendix 8 for details.

In addition, Legal Aid NSW staff participated in a number of New South Wales and Commonwealth Government inter-agency policy and law reform committees.

Major achievements

**PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

*Young people*

One of our focus areas under this priority is advocating for reform where the legal system impacts significantly on the lives of disadvantaged people, particularly young people in detention.

In the last 12 months, Legal Aid NSW made several submissions regarding issues impacting on children and young people.

Two were in relation to children detained and charged with people smuggling. Our submission on the Crimes Amendment (Fairness to Minors) Bill (Cth) 2011 recommended that there be a statutory obligation on the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to provide all people held in immigration detention for criminal investigation with immediate access to a lawyer. Our submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission Inquiry into the treatment of individuals suspected of people smuggling offences who say they are children called for urgent reform to abolish wrist x-rays for age determination. We also argued for legislation to clarify that in age determination hearings a person is assumed to be under 18 if they so claim, unless the prosecution proves otherwise beyond reasonable doubt.

**Bail and sentencing**

Two significant Legal Aid NSW submissions were in relation to references from the NSW Attorney General to the NSW Law Reform Commission. Our submission on bail noted the steady rise in the remand population in New South Wales over the last 10 years, and the imposition of onerous bail conditions on defendants that, in combination with police compliance checking practices, have increased the number of bail breaches being dealt with by the courts.

The NSW Law Reform Commission is conducting a review of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 (NSW) through a series of Question Papers. Our submission in response to Question Papers 1 to 4 emphasised that the task of weighing up the diverse circumstances of the offence and of the offender in order to reach the most appropriate sentence is best achieved by the exercise of judicial discretion.

**General**

We advocated for the rights of consumers in insurance matters, particularly in relation to natural disasters such as floods. In September 2011, we made a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into the operation of the insurance industry during disaster events.
Our submission recommended that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission investigate the claims handling processes of insurers during the 2010–2011 natural disasters, particularly the rejection and withdrawn claims rates in the Queensland floods, and monitor the insurance industry claims handling processes during disaster events. We participated in a number of inter-agency policy and law reform committees including:

- the Legal Assistance Services Review, making recommendations on measures that could improve the delivery of legal assistance services to the New South Wales community; and
- the Licence Disqualification Working Party, which considered options for addressing the problem of long-term licence disqualification, especially its impact on rural and remote communities, including Aboriginal communities with acute needs.

**Year ahead**

Work with other Government agencies to contribute to law reform and develop alternative sentencing options to divert vulnerable defendants from the criminal justice system.

**Key challenge**

Using existing resources to harness our practice experience to influence changes to the law.

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**Communicating effectively with our audience**

Launching a new website in September 2011 became the first initiative to be completed under the new Communications Strategy for Legal Aid NSW. The main objective is to ensure relevant audiences, both external and internal, know about Legal Aid NSW activities and services.

**Major achievement**

**PRIORITY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

The new website provides clear pathways for members of the public who need legal help and for lawyers and service providers assisting clients with legal problems. Features include:

- Find a Legal Aid NSW advice service using a map and postcode search, which also allows us to track gaps in services and plan accordingly;
- Search for our factsheets by language and topics such as courts, debt and families; and
- Search for private lawyers who do legal aid work by postcode, town or suburb using the panel lawyer search.

The content, all of which is in plain language, includes all policies as well as frequently asked questions about legal advice, help at court and applying for legal aid. Most fact sheets are available in HTML as well as pdf, ensuring accessibility for people using screen readers. Information about Legal Aid NSW is available in 32 languages.

The number of internet pages accessed by the community in 2011–2012 was 2,042,208. The number of visitors was 577,757.

**Year ahead**

Survey users of the new website to make sure it is meeting their needs. Undertake a research project to determine whether social media can improve our reach to our target audience.