



Annual Report 2024–25

Legal services that make an impact on the justice system

About Legal Aid NSW

We are the largest legal aid commission in Australia. In this report, we refer to ourselves as Legal Aid NSW.

Legal Aid NSW provides legal services across NSW with an emphasis on assistance for socially and economically disadvantaged people. We run a network of 25 offices and two satellite offices, and a statewide phone legal service. Our team at LawAccess NSW also provide a statewide information and referral service over the phone and on webchat.

We work with private lawyers who receive funding from Legal Aid NSW to represent legally aided clients. We also work closely with community legal centres, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited and pro bono legal services.

Legal Aid NSW strives to support clients and improve access to justice through initiatives such as the Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program. We also administer funding for the state's 27 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services and for 34 organisations through the Community Legal Centres Program. We collaborate with other agencies providing social and support services to people experiencing disadvantage, helping us deliver integrated services to address clients' legal and non-legal needs.

Our Board establishes our broad policies and strategic priorities. The NSW Attorney General appoints Board members for terms of up to three years and our Chair for a period of up to five years.

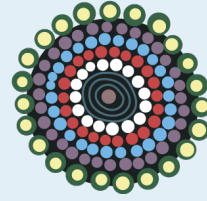
About this report

This annual report reviews and reports on our activities and performance, including what we set out to do in our Legal Aid NSW Strategic Plan 2023–28. To learn more about our five-year strategic plan, see page 23. This report outlines the operational activities of our organisation, including joint initiatives. It reflects our commitment to effective corporate governance through openness and accountability. It provides an account of our revenue and how we have used public funds. The report also looks to the year ahead and comments on the challenges facing Legal Aid NSW. This is our 46th annual report. It is available online, along with previous reports, at www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au.

Throughout this report, we use case studies to illustrate the impact of our work. The content in these case studies can be distressing, and readers should exercise caution as they engage with them.

Cover design

Our annual report's cover was designed by Sarah Byrne. It uses an abstract illustration of concentric circles to symbolise the beneficial flow-on effects of providing someone with legal support. These impacts can be felt by the individual, their community, the justice system and the state.



Acknowledgement of Country

Legal Aid NSW, along with our team at LawAccess NSW, is privileged to work and provide services to people living in remote, regional, and metropolitan locations across the state of NSW. Diverse, unique, and culturally strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have cared for Country, Culture and Community for thousands of years and continue to do so today, as will their descendants into the future. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, seas, and waterways in which we live, work and play. We pay our deepest respects to their Elders, past and present, who have shown strength in maintaining cultures, connections to Country and practicing lore. In our work Legal Aid NSW and LawAccess NSW are committed to advocating for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities through the law.

Artwork by Luke Penrith

The Hon. Michael Daley MP
Attorney General
52 Martin Place, Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Attorney,

In accordance with section 13 (1) of the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW) and section 7.13 of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* (NSW), I am pleased to submit the Legal Aid NSW annual report for the year ended 30 June 2025 to you for presentation to Parliament.

Our agency has self-assessed as a Level 1 agency and prepared our report in accordance with NSW Treasury's TPG25-10a framework document.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Hitter

Chief Executive Officer
October 2025

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Overview

Legal Aid NSW is an independent statutory body established under the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW). We report to the NSW Attorney General, Michael Daley MP.



Community Worker and LGBTQIA+ Elder Chantell Martin, Legal Aid NSW Solicitor Advocate Elizabeth Parkes, Legal Aid NSW Senior Caseworker Sid Pettitt and Chief Executive Officer of the Inner City Legal Centre Katie Green, who presented as part of a panel on 'Inclusion in criminal justice: representing trans and gender diverse clients' at the 2025 Criminal Law Conference.

Vision

A justice system that delivers fair outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage.

Purpose

To use the law and our expertise to inform and represent our clients, and advocate for social justice.

Outcomes

The Legal Aid NSW Strategic Plan 2023–28 sets out four priorities for our work over the period covered in this report and the following three years. These priorities cover our clients, our people, our justice system and our processes. They were chosen as a result of extensive consultation with our staff.

Our priorities provide a framework to ensure that we are an organisation that champions our staff and their wellbeing while delivering on our commitment to provide the best possible services to our clients.

Chair's report



I acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live and work and I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2024–25 annual report and to take the opportunity to give credit where credit is due.

Our vision is for a justice system that delivers fair outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage. Our priorities are our clients, our staff, the justice system and improving our processes.

Legal Aid NSW staff have a passion for social justice and derive satisfaction from helping our clients achieve fair outcomes. But I must say that acting for clients who have encountered significant disadvantages and who may exhibit unreasonable behaviour is stressful and resource-intensive.

The Board also derives satisfaction from its role of establishing policies and strategies to achieve the objectives of the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979*. We appreciate the tremendous work of Legal Aid NSW staff, private practitioners and our partners in the legal assistance sector. The Board seeks to establish policies that best achieve the goals of Legal Aid NSW while making the job of our staff and private practitioners as easy as possible.

The annual report records the actions taken by the Board during the year, the highlights, a look at the year ahead and significant challenges. The Board is pleased with the organisation's progress in implementing the 2023–28 strategic plan and is satisfied that the program of work for the plan's first year is delivering the outcomes expected.

There are increasing demands for legal aid services across the criminal, civil and family jurisdictions. Early intervention by Legal Aid NSW prevents problems from escalating and costing the community more in the long run. Legal Aid NSW clients often have complex problems spanning different areas of the law, and Legal Aid NSW is developing a holistic approach to addressing client needs. A strategic initiative is underway in collaboration with allied professionals to ensure clients can receive support beyond their legal issues.

Our governments recognise the importance of legal aid for a just society, and I acknowledge the financial and political support provided by the NSW and Australian governments.

Legal Aid NSW relies on suitably qualified and experienced private practitioners willing to undertake Legal Aid work at a significant discount to the market rate. The disenchantment of private practitioners with current fee levels was highlighted in a recent census commissioned by National Legal Aid. A major area of concern is low fees in Commonwealth family and civil law matters. A lack of skilled and experienced private practitioners means that vulnerable clients, including women and children who have experienced family violence, may be unable

to secure appropriate representation. The Board is seeking to address this issue but, based on current Commonwealth funding, was hard-pressed to increase the solicitors' hourly rate from \$165 to \$195. This funding issue remains a nationwide problem.

Our staff work in a challenging environment. Sixty-six percent of workplace health and safety issues arise from client threats or unreasonable client behaviour. The risks to our staff were clearly demonstrated by the fire-bombing of our Gosford Office in December 2024. The Board, with the assistance of our Audit and Risk Committee, is monitoring actions underway to support staff wellbeing and address physical and psychological risks for our staff.

In August 2024, following the passing of legislation allowing Legal Aid NSW to reform the process for managing appeals concerning grants of legal aid, the Board established the Legal Aid Review Panel Policy and guidelines. The Board also appointed members to the new Review Panels. The policy and guidelines will be reviewed by the Board after 12 months of operation.

The Board is closely monitoring cybersecurity and business continuity planning and has established a subcommittee to deal with preparation and response actions in the event of a significant cyber incident. A mock cybersecurity incident was conducted in December 2024 to test our current processes.

Opportunities to use Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) in legal practice are being investigated as part of our strategic planning, but in the meantime, the Board has been briefed on a policy introduced to address the workplace risks associated with Gen AI.

In October 2024, the Board was pleased to endorse the Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2024–28. It builds on the momentum established by the preceding strategy, which saw an increase in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce from 6% to 9%. I am also pleased to report that in February 2024 Board members completed the Aboriginal Cultural Capability Training course conducted by YarnnUp.

Personnel changes

In October 2024, Elizabeth McEntyre was appointed to the Board. Elizabeth replaced Anna Cody as the representative of bodies providing community legal services. Elizabeth is an Elder of the Guringai, Worimi and Wonnarua peoples and has extensive experience in issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the areas of health, wellbeing and justice. Elizabeth has brought additional knowledge and perspectives to the Board's work.

In May 2025, Alison McRobert resigned from the Board following her appointment as a commissioner of the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW. Alison served on the Board for six years as the nominee of Unions NSW. Alison brought outstanding skills and personal qualities to her work on the Board, and I thank her for her contribution to Legal Aid NSW.

In February 2025, Leah Fricke completed her three-year tenure as a member of our Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), and I acknowledge Leah's dedicated service in that role. Kristen Wydell was appointed by the Board as an independent member, effective from 1 March 2025.

In September 2024, Alex Colquhoun, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Family Law Division, was appointed a Judge of the Family Court of Australia. I thank Her Honour for her leadership and contribution to Legal Aid NSW. This appointment is indicative of the quality of the leaders at Legal Aid NSW.

Thank you

I take this opportunity to thank my Board colleagues, past and present, for their support and for the time and expertise they apply to their work on the Board.

I also thank our ARC, who play such an important role by providing independent assistance to the Board on governance processes, risk management and control frameworks.

In October 2024, CEO Monique Hitter celebrated 25 years at Legal Aid NSW. The Hon. Michael Daley MP, Attorney General of NSW, acknowledged this milestone and the Board recognised Monique's outstanding service to the cause of social justice.

I give credit for the achievements of Legal Aid NSW during the year in review to Monique Hitter, her management team and the staff of Legal Aid NSW.



Craig Smith

Chair, Legal Aid NSW

CEO's report

Legal Aid NSW provides a vital safety net for people in our community with legal problems and offers an array of services that prevent legal problems from arising or escalating. Across 25 offices and one satellite office in Walgett, our staff are embedded in communities – working in courtrooms, tribunals, at outreach locations, and disaster recovery centres during natural disasters.



In 2024–25 we saw demand for our services continue to grow. We provided more than half a million legal services – a 10 per cent increase on the previous year – and the need shows no signs of slowing. We are working hard to meet this rising demand within existing funding limits and continue to articulate the scale of legal need and the investment required to meet this need in the community.

This year's annual report showcases the breadth, depth and impact of our work. It's a testament to the dedication of our staff and the scale of our service delivery – from duty lawyer services in local court sittings across the state, to representation in the highest courts, and everything in between.

Legal Aid NSW is a hive of activity and advocacy. Through our work, we support domestic violence survivors, tenants facing eviction, families navigating separation and the care and protection system, children and adults charged with a criminal offence and those navigating a wide range of other complex legal matters. We also deliver community legal education, run training conferences, produce podcasts, and administer major government programs like the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program and the Community Legal Centres Program. This year we have also been asked to administer the Family Violence Prevention Legal Service Program under the new National Assistance Justice Partnership Agreement.

This year, we launched critical new services including the Disability Legal Support Service and Your Voice – Children's Out-of-Home Care Advocacy Service and embedded successful pilots including the Homeward Sisters Project for Aboriginal women in custody.

Supporting staff wellbeing remains a top priority for the Legal Aid NSW Board and Executive. We continue to provide a range of wellbeing information, supports, training and tools in addition to ongoing regular supervision for staff, as part of our Safety, Health and Wellbeing Framework.

It was my great pleasure this year to establish the CEO Awards to recognise excellence and outstanding contributions across our organisation. Following the event's success in 2024, it will remain a celebratory fixture in our calendar, and an important part of our Rewards and Recognition Framework, in 2025 and beyond.

Commitment to culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

We remain deeply committed to providing culturally sensitive, culturally aware and trauma-informed services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities. Our 15 Aboriginal Field Officers work closely with lawyers to meet the socio-legal needs of Aboriginal clients. We continue to provide a range of specialist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and provide best practice services for Aboriginal clients across all our practice areas and teams. Establishing a specialist team to support the Walama List in the District Court was a notable highlight this year.

Our Closing the Gap Project Board, chaired by two senior Aboriginal Legal Aid leaders, continues to provide a high level Aboriginal-led, decision-making voice to support, monitor and guide Legal Aid NSW contributions to Closing the Gap priority reforms and targets through our Strategic Plan and Aboriginal Client Services Strategy.

Creating a more accessible and inclusive Legal Aid NSW for clients and staff

In December 2024, we launched our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) demonstrating and consolidating our commitment to actively promote and ensure the inclusion and participation of people with disability, mental health conditions or care responsibilities. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank our external Disability Inclusion Advisory Panel for their guidance in shaping and implementing our DIAP, ensuring that our ambitious program of work is informed by the lived experience of people with disability.

Improving how we work with children and young people

Children and young people remain a high-priority client group for Legal Aid NSW. Over the coming year we will continue to focus on and improve how we work with and for children and young people, with a particular focus on those with high support legal needs and characteristics. This year we established the Your Voice – Children’s Out of Home Care Advocacy Service, an innovative interdisciplinary model supporting young people in care. The work this team is doing with clients exemplifies how Legal Aid contributes to the Government’s broader systems change and reform priorities.

Thank you

None of this would be possible without our people. To the staff of Legal Aid NSW, thank you for your diligence and dedication to our important work for our clients and the wider community.

Nearly 70 per cent of Legal Aid NSW representation is handled by private lawyers, who do this work at below-market rates. Their contribution is essential, and I thank the private solicitors and barristers on our panels for their ongoing commitment to enabling access to justice in the most practical and meaningful way across the state.

I also would like to acknowledge our partners in government and the legal assistance sector, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited and community legal centres across NSW.

To the Legal Aid NSW Board – thank you for your guidance and stewardship of the organisation. And to the Executive, Associate Directors, Solicitors in Charge, office and senior managers – thank you for your leadership and the collaborative, collegiate spirit you bring to the organisation and our work.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a long, horizontal stroke.

Monique Hitter

CEO, Legal Aid NSW

Charter

The Legal Aid Commission of NSW was established under the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW) as an independent statutory body with a mandate to provide effective, efficient and economical legal services that are available and accessible to disadvantaged people in NSW.

Legal Aid NSW has a Board that is responsible for establishing its broad policies and strategic plans.

Daily management and operations are overseen by the CEO, who reports to the NSW Attorney General. Our executive staff, listed on page 98, assist the CEO. The CEO is also a member of the Board.

Our work is supported by a range of plans and policies that establish procedural requirements, standards and priorities, as well as compliance with the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW).

Our staff

Staff locations



260 staff in regional NSW offices



698 staff in metropolitan offices



900 staff in Central Sydney

Staff profile



976 administrative and corporate services staff



882 lawyers

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff



85 field officers and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff



35 lawyers

Gender distribution



1,465 women



386 men



7 staff who use a different term

Total staff: 1,858

Reports and attestations

Report from the Audit and Risk Committee 2024–25

The objective of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is to provide independent assistance to the CEO and Board by monitoring, reviewing and providing advice about our governance processes, risk management and control frameworks, and external accountability obligations.

The committee comprised the following independent members in 2024–25:

- Michael Coleman – Chair
- Leah Fricke – Committee Member
- Nicola Davis – Committee Member, and
- Kristen Wydell – Committee Member.

The CEO, Director Legal Services & In-house Counsel (who also serves as the Chief Audit Executive), Executive Director Digital Transformation, Executive Director Corporate Services, Senior Internal Auditor and representatives from the NSW Audit Office attend each meeting. The committee also invites other key Executive staff and external service providers to attend as necessary.

The committee met on eight occasions in 2024–25 and assisted with a range of operational matters.

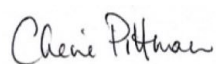
- Monitoring year two of the Legal Aid NSW Strategic Plan 2023–2028.
- Endorsing attestation statements on internal audit and risk, and cyber security.
- Reviewing financial reports including operating results, trends and commentary.
- Reviewing the overall state of internal controls at Legal Aid NSW.
- Monitoring compliance with circulars, guidelines and policies from NSW Treasury and the Independent Commission Against Corruption.
- Reviewing how the external exam, law practice declaration, and Legal Aid NSW trust account audit are managed.
- Reviewing the closing report and financial statements for the 2023–24 financial year.
- Reviewing the NSW Audit Office's letter and plan for auditing the financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2025.
- Assessing the performance of ARC members.
- Reviewing the ARC charter, internal audit charter, internal audit manual and ARC reporting cycle.
- Reviewing our internal audit function and its compliance with NSW Treasury requirements.

- Overseeing implementation of internal and external audit reports.
- Reviewing the annual internal audit budget and progress on the 2024–25 audit plan.
- Noting the People Matter Employee Survey results, including planned actions.
- Reviewing strategic risk register updates.
- Reviewing business continuity and service disruption planning.
- Reviewing risk profiles for our crime, civil and family divisions.
- Reviewing the framework for managing fraud, corruption, public interest disclosures, complaints, investigations, disputes and the gifts and benefits register.
- Reviewing work health and safety matters, including risks, policies and excess recreation leave.
- Reviewing progress on the cyber security uplift program, including the cyber security dashboard, emerging cyber threats and the cyber incident response exercise.
- Reviewing AI use at Legal Aid NSW, including its impact, risks and mitigations.
- Noting panel lawyer audits by the Legal Aid NSW Private Lawyer Quality Standards Unit.
- Reviewing the status of ICT digital transformation projects such as Project Delta.

In 2024–25, the committee oversaw eight audits which covered:

- biennial conflict of interest compliance
- complaints management
- flexible working arrangements
- Information Security Management System (ISMS) internal audit under ISO 27001:2013 and compliance with the NSW Cyber Security Policy
- accessibility
- monitoring and review of private practitioner service standards
- recertification audit under ISO 127001, and
- access to Transport for NSW (TfNSW) DRIVES.

Legal Aid NSW aims to complete eight audits in the 2025–26 financial year.



Cherie Pittman
 Director, Legal Service & In-house Counsel
 Chief Audit Executive
 30 June 2025

Internal Audit and Risk Management Attestation Statement for the 2024–25 Financial Year for Legal Aid NSW

I, Monique Hitter, am of the opinion that Legal Aid NSW has internal audit and risk management processes in operation that are, excluding the exemptions or transitional arrangements described below, compliant with the seven (7) core requirements set out in the [Internal Audit and Risk Management Policy for the General Government Sector](#), specifically:

Core requirements	Status*
Risk management framework	
1.1 The accountable authority shall accept ultimate responsibility and accountability for risk management in the agency.	Compliant
1.2 The accountable authority shall establish and maintain a risk management framework that is appropriate for the agency. The accountable authority shall ensure the framework is consistent with AS ISO 31000:2018.	Compliant
Internal audit function	
2.1 The accountable authority shall establish and maintain an internal audit function that is appropriate for the agency and fit for purpose.	Compliant
2.2 The accountable authority shall ensure the internal audit function operates consistent with the International Standards for Professional Practice for Internal Auditing.	Compliant
2.3 The accountable authority shall ensure the agency has an Internal Audit Charter that is consistent with the content of the 'model charter'.	Compliant
Audit and Risk Committee	
3.1 The accountable authority shall establish and maintain efficient and effective arrangements for independent Audit and Risk Committee oversight to provide advice and guidance to the Accountable Authority on the agency's governance processes, risk management and control frameworks and its external accountability obligations.	Non-compliant with respect to core requirement 3.1.16, which provides a maximum term of five years for the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)
3.2 The accountable authority shall ensure the Audit and Risk Committee has a charter that is consistent with the content of the 'model charter'.	Compliant

*For each requirement, please specify whether compliant, non-compliant or in transition.

**Core requirement 3.1.13 as per TPP 15-03.

Membership

The independent chair and members of the Audit and Risk Committee are:

Independent Chair, Mr Michael Coleman, 29 June 2016 to 26 September 2025
Independent Member, Ms Kristen Wydell, 26 February 2025 to 26 February 2028
Independent Member, Ms Nicola Davis, 28 June 2023 to 28 June 2026
Independent Member, Ms Leah Fricke, 1 March 2022 to 28 February 2025



Monique Hitter
Chief Executive Officer
13 August 2024

Departures from core requirements

I, Monique Hitter, advise that the internal audit and risk management processes for Legal Aid NSW depart from the following core requirement set out in the Internal Audit and Risk Management Policy for the General Government Sector.

The circumstances giving rise to this departure have been determined by the responsible minister, and Legal Aid NSW has implemented the following practicable alternative measure to meet the core requirement.

Departure	Reason for departure and description of practicable alternative measures implemented/being implemented
Non-compliance	
3.1.16 of TPP 20-08 "The chair of the ARC shall be appointed for one (1) term only for a period of at least three (3) years, with a maximum period of five (5) years. The term of appointment for the chair can be extended but any extension shall not cause the total term to exceed five (5) years as a chair of the ARC." The Chair of our ARC, whose maximum term of office of five years expired on 23 June 2021 has been given three extensions: one in February 2021 for the term up to 2 September 2022, the second in November 2022 for the term up to 28 October 2023 and the third in July 2023 for the term up to 26 September 2025.	Legal Aid NSW maintains a practice where a Board member is the chair of the ARC. Legal Aid NSW's Audit and Risk Committee Charter provides that an exemption from TPP 20-08 3.1.16 should be sought to ensure alignment between Board appointments and appointments to the ARC. Mr Coleman was reappointed to the Board in accordance with the <i>Legal Aid Commission Act 1979</i> for a term up to 26 September 2025. Mr Coleman is a highly respected member of the Board and has performed outstandingly as chair of the ARC. He has significant expertise and experience as a director and chairman in various organisations. His corporate experience in managing risk and finance would be very difficult to replicate. An exemption from the TPP 20-08 has been approved by the Attorney General to extend Mr Coleman as Chair of the ARC until the expiry of his Board appointment on 26 September 2025.

These processes, including the practicable alternative measures implemented, demonstrate that Legal Aid NSW has established and maintained frameworks, including systems, processes and procedures for appropriately managing audit and risk within Legal Aid NSW.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Monique Hitter
Chief Executive Officer
9 September 2025

Cyber security annual attestation statement for the 2024–25 financial year for Legal Aid NSW

I, Monique Hitter, CEO of Legal Aid NSW, am of the opinion that Legal Aid NSW has managed cyber security risks in a manner consistent with the mandatory requirements set out in the NSW Government Cyber Security Policy.

Governance is in place to manage the cyber security maturity and initiatives of Legal Aid NSW.

Risks to the information and systems of Legal Aid NSW have been assessed and continue to be reviewed and managed.

There exists a current cyber incident response plan for Legal Aid NSW which has been tested during the reporting period.

Legal Aid NSW has an ISO 27001 certified Information Security Management System (ISMS) in place.

Legal Aid NSW is doing the following to continuously improve the management of cyber security governance and resilience.

- Legal Aid NSW has successfully transitioned from ISO/IEC 27001:2013 to ISO/IEC 27001:2022, with the objective of continual information security improvements whilst supporting security policies and objectives.
- Developing our Cyber Security Strategy for the next three years.
- Escalating cyber security incidents, should they occur, to Cyber Security NSW as required and mandated.



Monique Hitter
Chief Executive Officer
17 October 2024

Strategy

Our five-year strategic plan sets our direction as an organisation, and we develop yearly implementation plans that reflect our goals. 2024–25 was the second year in our 2023–28 strategic plan.



Legal Aid NSW staff meet with then Commonwealth Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland. From left to right: Deputy Director Family Law Bianca Dufty, Blacktown Office Solicitor in Charge Lara Beach, Michelle Rowland, Senior Media Advisor Georgia Clark, Director Domestic and Family Violence Anna Baltins and Executive Director Client Service and Public Engagement Jane Cipants.

Our five-year strategic plan

Our 2023–28 strategic plan sets our priorities as an organisation and guides everything we do. Our four priorities reflect our five-year focus on uplifting staff wellbeing while maintaining high-quality services for clients and advocating for a fair and effective justice system. Dedicated resources were allocated to support the successful implementation of key projects under our strategic plan.

Vision

A justice system that delivers fair outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage.

Purpose

To use the law and our expertise to inform and represent our clients, and advocate for social justice.

Our priorities

- Our clients: high quality, consistent services tailored to meet client and community needs.
- Our people: a diverse workforce that is safe, supported and valued.
- Our justice system: a fair and effective justice system.
- Our processes: systems and processes responsive to our needs.

Our strategic initiatives

- 1. High quality, consistent services tailored to meet client and community needs**
 - 1.1. Strengthen service models that best serve our clients.
 - 1.2. Serve clients no matter where they live in NSW.
 - 1.3. Streamline client pathways for legal assistance.
 - 1.4. Deliver consistent, high-quality services through both in-house and private practitioners.
- 2. A diverse workforce that is safe, supported and valued**
 - 2.1. Prioritise staff safety, health and wellbeing.
 - 2.2. Embed an inclusive and respectful culture.
 - 2.3. Attract, retain, develop and reward a highly engaged workforce.
 - 2.4. Transform our recruitment.
- 3. A fair and effective justice system**
 - 3.1. Strengthen our partnerships to achieve better outcomes for our clients.
 - 3.2. Drive justice system reform and innovation.

3.3. Action Closing the Gap priority reforms.

3.4. Communicate and promote the value of our work.

4. Systems and processes responsive to our needs

4.1. Enhance business processes for our clients, our people and private practitioners.

4.2. Transform our digital technology to support our work.

4.3. Strengthen data governance.

4.4. Optimise data security and privacy.

Our 2024–25 performance highlights

Our Strategic Plan 2023–28 is our road map for providing the best possible legal help to the people of NSW in the face of growing demand. Pursuing the priorities outlined in our strategic plan led to some of our most exciting achievements in 2024–25.

Priority 1: our clients

Launching our Disability Inclusion Action Plan

In December 2024, we launched our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024–2028 (DIAP) on the International Day of People with Disability. It provides a blueprint to eliminate discrimination and create a more accessible and inclusive Legal Aid NSW for clients and staff with lived and living experiences of disability and mental ill health. The DIAP extends to carers of people with disability in their capacity as staff members and as service users of Legal Aid NSW.

The DIAP is strongly informed by lived experience and has already led to a range of service improvements that benefit people with disability.

- We have introduced training for our ICT Team on digital assistive technology that supports the delivery of inclusive services for clients with disability.
- We have formalised our Disability Inclusion Advisory Panel, an ongoing client lived experience panel that provides guidance and advice on DIAP projects.
- We have improved intake processes that ask for and record client needs and adjustments. We've developed prompts and shared resources for staff, strengthened our LawAccess NSW Quality Assurance Framework and updated our call waiting recordings to encourage callers to let us know about any required adjustments.
- We have expanded our intake guidelines so that clients with a disability and/or mental health condition are treated as high-priority clients alongside clients with an acute mental health condition, intellectual disability, and/or cognitive impairment. This ensures they are prioritised for a legal advice session.
- We have developed and promoted an intranet page on working with clients with disability that includes resources, tipsheets and guidelines on best practice.
- We have created a Workplace Adjustment Policy and a permanent Workplace Adjustment Officer position.
- We are continually improving our recruitment processes to increase accessibility for candidates with disability.

Improving how we work with children and young people

We undertook extensive stakeholder consultations about our services to children and young people in 2024–25. We spoke to external stakeholders in the legal assistance sector, internal staff and, most importantly, past and current clients.

It was the first time we had sought feedback specifically from young people about their experiences of our services. The findings show there is room for improvement, and we have developed a plan that we will begin implementing in the coming year.

Supporting young people in out-of-home care

Your Voice – Children’s Out of Home Care Advocacy Service (Your Voice) commenced in late 2024. It was established in response to reports highlighting the poor experiences and outcomes for young people in care, including the fact that many young people do not feel they have a voice in their care experience.

Your Voice was established from Law Society Public Purpose Funding with the intention of creating an interdisciplinary team to provide holistic socio-legal support to children and young people in care to resolve their unmet legal and wellbeing needs. The team comprises civil and family lawyers, who work in collaboration with two senior caseworkers and an Aboriginal Field Officer (AFO).

The team has spent its first year developing and refining its unique and innovative service model, exploring and promoting targeted referral pathways and delivering trauma-informed, child-centred and culturally safe services to children and young people.

Your Voice has been able to expand its services to support all children and young people in high-cost emergency arrangements statewide, as well as young people living in intensive therapeutic care accommodation in selected regions. The service has built a strong, collaborative relationship with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). With the support of the President of the Children’s Court, Your Voice will also soon begin trialling a direct referral pathway from children’s courts on the Central Coast.

Your Voice has been successful in securing funding from the Public Purpose Fund until 30 June 2026 and recently celebrated receiving its 100th client referral.

Helping Kaylah* access a safe living situation

Kaylah*, a 17-year-old, was referred to Your Voice due to a conflict with her out-of-home care caseworkers. After several failed placements, Kaylah had self-placed with her boyfriend and his family. Kaylah wanted to travel interstate with her boyfriend, but her caseworkers believed it was unsafe and would not support it.

Your Voice worked with Kaylah to understand her wishes, including that the travel was important and she would go regardless of her caseworker’s support. Care lawyers negotiated protocols that allayed safety concerns and allowed Kaylah to travel.

Your Voice developed rapport and trust with Kaylah, allowing her to share broader concerns about her living situation. While Kaylah had self-placed with her boyfriend, she recognised this was not a safe place or relationship. Her traumatic experiences

in residential homes meant her other options felt even worse, and she felt stuck. Care lawyers were able to assist Kaylah to create a suitable leaving care plan that included access to independent accommodation.

Civil lawyers in the team were able to help Kaylah with social security and income support and to seek a waiver of a Centrelink debt. A senior youth caseworker worked with Kaylah to help her understand what a safe relationship might look like, to create a plan to safely leave her relationship, and facilitate her transition to independent living.

*name has been changed

Improving service delivery and communication with prisoners

Our communication with prisoners has always been impacted by significant barriers. While prisoners can phone Legal Aid NSW directly, we are not able to phone, message or email clients in custody. We can only send letters or book an audio-visual link call with a prisoner, a long process that often includes delays.

This year, we worked with the Department of Corrective Services to design a trial where grant letters could be emailed to two correctional facilities and uploaded to prisoner tablets. We have received approval to run the trial later in 2025.

We also trialled adding messages and questions from clients calling us from prison to our internal client and case management system. Questions are assigned to the relevant lawyer or team in the system, and they provide a response to be shared if the prisoner calls again. Early results from this trial are promising.

We've also shared information with prisoners about applying for legal aid, working with lawyers and transfer requests by preparing new podcasts to be placed on prisoner tablets.

Priority 2: our people

Rewards and recognition program promotes excellence

In 2024–25, we successfully launched our Rewards and Recognition Framework. The framework demonstrates ways staff can recognise their peers and celebrate great work at every level of our organisation. It contributes to a positive workplace culture, helping us to live our values and to acknowledge the ways our everyday work makes a difference for clients, the community and our colleagues.

The framework encourages teams to implement their own praise and reward systems to acknowledge staff members who go above and beyond. It also entrenches existing award systems, including awards presented at our annual criminal and family law conferences.

In November 2024, we held our inaugural CEO Awards at our Central Sydney Office. Our CEO Awards are designed to be the pinnacle of our recognition system at Legal Aid NSW. Finalists were nominated by staff from across the state, and awards were presented in five categories.

- Excellence and Commitment: Team
- Excellence and Commitment: Individual
- Excellence and Commitment: Strengthening Workplace Culture
- Excellence and Commitment: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice, and
- NSW Attorney General's Award for Leadership in Social Justice.

We plan to hold another awards ceremony in 2025.

Talent Acquisition Business Partners uplift recruitment

In January 2024, we introduced Talent Acquisition Business Partners – a new role that guides recruitment processes across the organisation in partnership with local leaders. They support with talent sourcing, project management and workforce planning. They provide hiring managers with invaluable advice on following NSW Government hiring practices and offer tailored advice on market conditions, capability alignment and candidate experience.

In 2024–25, Talent Acquisition Business Partners continued to uplift recruitment by providing proactive, specialised and high-touch support. Their application of talent acquisition best practice has attracted top talent to Legal Aid NSW, and they have become trusted partners across the organisation.

Priority 3: our justice system

Aboriginal Field Officer Program improves access to justice

Aboriginal Field Officers (AFOs) engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, attend community outreach with lawyers and offer community legal education. AFOs work with lawyers to support clients with both their legal matters and their unmet underlying social needs.

Over the past three years, Legal Aid NSW has invested in the AFO Program to ensure our services are tailored to meet the needs of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients as part of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Fifteen AFOs, up from four in 2020–21, are now in offices across the state, including in regional and remote areas.

AFOs often assist clients to apply for birth certificates under the memorandum of understanding between Legal Aid NSW and NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages. In 2024–25, AFOs submitted 225 birth certificate applications, up from 91 in 2023–24.

In 2024–25, we reviewed and updated our Aboriginal Field Officer Guidelines to ensure that the AFO Program continues to operate in a client-centred, culturally responsive way that acknowledges the important complementary work AFOs do within the communities in which

they live and work. Updates made to the guidelines provide greater clarity on legal professional privilege, client consent, privacy and confidentiality, and allow AFOs to work with independent children's lawyers, independent legal representatives and direct legal representatives on family law and care and protection matters.

Improving the legal system for disadvantaged people

We have developed and progressed a strategic law reform agenda that helps us to work proactively with the government to influence policies and services that reduce systemic disadvantage, and work with other agencies to improve the operation of the legal and justice systems.

Our strategic law reform agenda advocates for legislative, policy and operational reforms. As part of one of our law reform projects, our staff are working with various stakeholders to strengthen oversight, transparency and accountability within the NSW social housing system, aiming to ensure consistency and fair treatment for vulnerable tenants.

Priority 4: our processes

Redesigning how we deliver legal aid

We're in the middle of Project Delta, a multi-year transformation of the way we administer grants of legal aid. This new system will streamline the administration of grants of legal aid for our clients, private practitioners and in-house staff.

We'll review our policies to simplify our eligibility criteria, reduce processing times and ensure clients get the legal support they need when they need it. We'll be launching updates to our client processes progressively over the next year. This year, we:

- designed and started to build our new grants management system
- commenced a targeted program of engagement with private practitioners who undertake legal aid work
- started rewriting the letters we send to clients, so they are easier to understand
- started developing a webchat feature for people wanting to apply for aid, and
- undertook research on the experiences of Aboriginal clients in custody applying for or seeking changes to a grant of aid.

Improving the administration of legal aid

In February 2024, we restructured our grants administration function to support our new system and processes. Our grants staff assess applications for legal aid and, if an application meets our criteria, approve a 'grant' of aid for the client that sets out a scope of legal aid-funded work that their lawyer can help them with.

In 2024–25, we moved legal roles in our grants team into the relevant legal practice areas, created a centralised Grants Administration Team within the Client Service Division and added new roles to support consistency, governance and outcomes for Aboriginal clients.

Ensuring fair review of legal aid decisions

We're committed to ensuring procedural fairness and transparency in our decision-making processes. In December 2024, following amendments to the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979 (NSW)*, we transitioned to a new appeals framework that replaces our previous system of Legal Aid Review Committees (LARC) with newly established Legal Aid Review Panels (LARP).

Panel members now hear appeals individually or as a panel of two for complex appeals, replacing the three-member LARCs. Panel members conduct impartial reviews of decisions to refuse or terminate grants of legal aid, applying the Legal Aid NSW eligibility criteria and ensuring fair and consistent outcomes.

The change streamlines our appeal processes and improves our efficiency and responsiveness to client needs. A pool of 24 private practitioners with experience in family, criminal and civil law were appointed to the panels. You can read more about our appeal processes in Appendix 10 on page 177.

Modernising our HR technology systems

We're committed to investing in our people by building a more agile, connected and future-ready organisation that empowers staff and supports continuous growth. In 2024–25, we transitioned from SAP HR to myWorkZone and moved our payroll function to a shared services model as part of the DCJ cluster.

Supporting the entire employee journey with SuccessFactors

Our new HR system reduces manual tasks and supports staff with recruitment, onboarding, performance and learning. The system works seamlessly with our existing tools, avoiding double-handling and improving data accuracy. It brings key HR tasks together in one place, reducing administrative burden and enhancing transparency across the organisation.

The year ahead

- We will transform the way we administer grants of aid so that eligible clients receive the legal support they need, when they need it.
- We will trial emailing letters to prisoners about their grant of aid to reduce wait times, frustration and uncertainty.
- We will establish a community of practice and hold webinars on working with children and young people to enable us to uplift our skills, knowledge and resources.
- We will work hard to improve pay and conditions so we can attract, retain and support private lawyers.
- We will continue to pursue a business case for a Legal Aid NSW South Coast Office.
- We will deliver the next phase of work on our client portal.

Key challenge

- Delivering a complex transformation of our grants administration system, including policies, business processes, operations and technology, while staff continue to manage high workloads using our current, outdated system. We are managing this by making changes incrementally and engaging regularly with impacted staff.

Measuring our performance

We measure a range of key performance indicators to ensure we're meeting the standards required of us under our federal funding agreement.

Reporting under our national partnership obligations

Legal aid commissions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services and community legal centres receive Commonwealth funding to improve access to justice for disadvantaged people. In the 2024–25 financial year, we received funding under the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020–2025 (NLAP).

As part of our responsibilities under the NLAP, we report the number of legal assistance services we provide to the Australian Government. We report on service and law types, facilitated resolution processes and their outcomes, and the number and proportion of representation services we deliver to priority clients.

This year, as required by the NLAP, we provided data about our services to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for publication in the second release of its legal assistance services experimental data. We will continue to work with the ABS and other legal assistance providers so we can keep improving the quality and value of our data.

National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–2030

The National Access to Justice Partnership agreement was signed by the Australian Government and the states and territories in November 2024. This agreement sets out our Commonwealth funding for five years from 2025 to 2030.

We welcomed the increase in funding in the agreement for the legal assistance sector broadly, but we were disappointed that legal aid commissions did not receive the additional funding we had been seeking to enable us to raise private lawyer fees. We will continue to work with National Legal Aid and the Commonwealth Government to advocate for the funding we need to increase fees and expand eligibility for legal aid.

Selected national partnership performance indicators

Key performance indicators	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Community awareness of legal rights and responsibilities			
Client satisfaction*	N/A	82%	N/A
Information services provided	143,819	163,517	163,682
Advice and minor assistance services provided	117,891	121,220	123,384
Printed legal information publications distributed	420,598	431,452	368,614
Accessibility of legal aid			

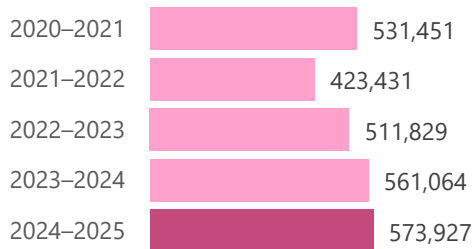
Means test income limit as a % of the national minimum weekly wage	55.4%	51.0%	51.0%
Percentage of local court sittings served by duty solicitor schemes	100%	100%	100%
Representation service standards			
Percentage of satisfactory comprehensive in-house file reviews	99.2%	99.2%	96.4%
Number of Legal Aid NSW lawyers with specialist accreditation	64	59	58
Services delivered			
Proportion of Legal Aid NSW Commonwealth representation services delivered to people experiencing financial disadvantage	99.1%	99.2%	98.8%
Proportion of facilitated resolution conferences held by Legal Aid NSW that resulted in either partial or full settlement**	72.6%	72.6%	72.7%

**We measure client satisfaction through surveys conducted every few years. The next survey will be conducted in 2025–26.*

***Commonwealth conferences only. The combined total for NSW and Commonwealth conferences was also 72.7%.*

How our key services tracked over the last five years

Total client services



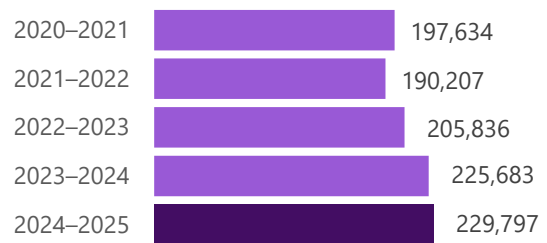
Legal representation*



Legal advice services



Duty services at courts and tribunals



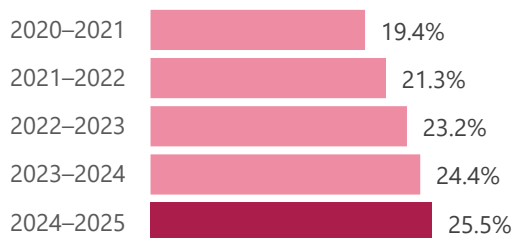
Family law mediations



Minor assistance services



Representation services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients



*Legal Representation is the total of grants of aid, extended legal assistance and early resolution assistance.

Year-on-year trends – a snapshot

Legal advice and assistance



We provided **123,384** advice and minor assistance services



1.8% increase on the previous year

We offer free, targeted legal advice across many areas of law at our 25 offices and two satellite offices. We offer advice clinics, primarily over the phone, that cover the whole state. In some circumstances, our lawyers will also provide minor assistance by writing a letter or helping clients fill out court documents.

Legal representation



We provided **57,064** representation services*



12.7% increase on the previous year



Our in-house lawyers provided 18,717 representation services



We funded private lawyers to provide 37,347 representation services

Legal Aid NSW represents eligible clients in criminal law, family law and civil law matters. In most cases, our legal representation services are means-tested, and most people who receive a grant of legal aid will be required to pay a contribution towards their grant of aid.

*Legal representation includes grants of aid, extended legal assistance and early resolution assistance

On-the-spot help in courts and tribunals



We provided **229,797** on-the-spot duty services



1.8% increase on the previous year



Of these services, **135,077** were provided by Legal Aid NSW lawyers



and we funded private lawyers to provide the remaining **94,720** services

We make duty lawyers available in courts and tribunals throughout NSW to provide free legal help and representation to eligible clients.

Family dispute resolution



We held **3,157** conferences



4.5% decrease on the previous year

We helped parties reach an agreement in 72.7%* of conferences.

Legal Aid NSW is the largest provider of legally assisted dispute resolution mediations in Australia. We provide family dispute resolution services to help separating families resolve disputes, such as parenting, adoption or property matters, early on in proceedings and without the need to go to court.

*This includes family law conferences in both NSW and Commonwealth jurisdictions. The Commonwealth-only settlement rate was also 72.7%. The percentage of Commonwealth-only matters was 99.8%.

Hotline for young people



We answered **16,146** calls to our hotline for young people



3.46% increase on the previous year

The Legal Aid NSW Youth Hotline provides legal advice, minor assistance and information to young people aged under 18. Lawyers are available from 9am until midnight on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays.

Resources and community legal education



We distributed **368,614** printed factsheets, brochures and other legal information publications



14.5% decrease on the previous year



Pages on our website that provide legal information for the public were viewed **3.51 million** times and had **1.24 million** unique visitors*



24.9% more views and **24%** more visitors than the previous year



We provided 2,006 community legal education sessions



16.5% increase on the previous year

*This includes visitors to our website's My Problem is About, LawPrompt, Representing Myself and Guided Pathways sections, as well as our Legal Words webpage and webpages that reproduce the content of our legal information publications.

Operations and performance

Our key organisational goal is to provide legal help to clients with diverse needs who are experiencing disadvantage. Our three in-house practice areas work alongside private practitioners, sector stakeholders and teams with specialist skills to ensure the best possible outcomes.



Our Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program Team with master of ceremonies Chris Bath at the annual Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service Forum in June 2025.

Our clients and services

Our clients*



25.5%

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



9.7%

Born in non-English speaking countries



3.9%

Interpreter required



35.7%

Female



11.6%

Under 18



83.4%

Aged 18–60



5.0%

Over 60



51.1%

On Commonwealth benefits



36.5%

Rural and regional (includes Newcastle and Wollongong)

*This page shows the percentage of legal representation services provided to each group of clients. Legal representation services consist of grants of aid, extended legal assistance and early resolution assistance.

Providing services to those who need them most

We continually review and amend our eligibility policies to reflect changes in the legal system and ensure we target our limited resources to those most in need.

Language we use when discussing eligibility

It's important that the way we provide our services is fair. Deciding who we help and how they qualify sometimes requires us to use technical language. In this section you might see the terms below.

Means test: our means test asks questions about a client's income and assets to help us decide if they qualify for a grant of aid. Different means tests apply to different kinds of cases.

Merit test: our merit test asks questions about a client's case to help us decide if they qualify for a grant of aid. It considers the benefits of the client receiving help, the potential harms if they don't and whether their case is likely to be successful.

Extended legal assistance (ELA): ELA involves a lawyer assisting a client to resolve a legal issue without the need to go to court.

Early resolution assistance (ERA): ERA means a lawyer will represent a client at dispute resolution or a conciliation process so the client's case can be resolved without going to court.

Legal advice: sometimes we can provide one-off advice services to help a person understand their legal issue and options to resolve it without the ongoing assistance of a lawyer.

Removing barriers to help in family law and care and protection matters

We have removed the means test for ELA in care and protection matters to reflect the disadvantage clients who are accessing these services face.

We're also running a pilot that removes the Means Test for clients of the Family Law Service for Aboriginal Communities (FamAC), ensuring Aboriginal clients can access ongoing help from a lawyer as early as possible across all family law matters. We will evaluate the pilot later in 2025.

Reviewing our means test to better align with the cost of living

Our means test is based on how much you earn and what assets you have, for example savings or a home that you own. We allow certain deductions for housing costs and dependants, and we exclude certain assets. As an example, we use the NSW Department of Community and Justice's Rent and Sales report to calculate the housing costs we allow for under our test.

To ensure our means test remains in line with increases in the cost of living, we developed a methodology for a biennial review. We completed our first review in May 2025. The Board has approved the review's recommendations, which we will implement in September 2025.

Supporting those involved in civil law guardianship matters

We have updated the civil law policy for guardianship matters to reflect changes in tribunal processes and our commitment to funding matters where the Guardianship Division of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) has ordered the subject person be appointed a separate representative.

A separate representative is an independent person, usually a lawyer, appointed by NCAT to represent the interests of the person a guardian is being appointed for. A person's guardian can make decisions about their health, accommodation, services or other lifestyle matters.

Unlike in other jurisdictions, parties are not entitled to legal representation in NCAT guardianship matters. Our policy changes reflect current NCAT practices and simplify the application processes to ensure vulnerable clients get the representation they need.

Legal aid under the Commonwealth Community Safety Order scheme

In November 2023, the High Court ordered the immediate release of NZYQ, a stateless man convicted of child sex offences, finding that holding him in immigration detention indefinitely was unlawful. In response, legislation was passed in December of the same year establishing the Commonwealth Community Safety Order (CSO) scheme.

The CSO scheme applies to non-citizens who, like NZYQ, have no real prospect of removal from Australia in the foreseeable future and pose an unacceptable risk of committing a serious violent or sexual offence. One hundred and forty-nine other detainees were also released because of the High Court decision. This year, we introduced a new policy making legal aid available for people who are the subject of an application for a CSO.

Targeting our assistance at the Administrative Review Tribunal

In October 2024, the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) replaced the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) as the forum that reviews decisions made by Australian Government agencies, departments and ministers. The ART retained a two-stage review process for social security matters and established a Guidance and Appeals Panel.

To reflect the new ART process, the Board approved changes to the policy for Commonwealth benefit matters to begin in March 2025. The changes expand the availability of aid for first reviews and for matters before the Guidance and Appeals Panel and target our help to the matters and clients where we can provide the most benefit.

Clarifying our verification of means guidelines

In May 2024, we introduced a revised verification of means policy. It presents verification requirements in a more user-friendly format, making it easier for solicitors and clients to navigate. It introduces a new guideline waiving verification for clients in custody facing indictable matters where clients are genuinely unable to provide financial documentation.

Solicitors are now prompted to consider additional contextual questions beyond those on the application form, ensuring aid is granted only to those who are eligible and unable to verify their means. This allows staff to make consistent, confident decisions that are in line with our financial assessment processes.

New civil law policies better target services

New civil law ELA and ERA policies commenced on 1 July 2024 covering assistance provided before problems escalate to a court or tribunal. Overhauling these policies was an action under our Civil Law Blueprint.

The new policies complement changes to legal advice triage made in May 2023 to better target our assistance to those who need it most and the matters where we can make the greatest impact. Together, the changes shift our service delivery towards higher-impact, ongoing representation services – 15 percent of advice services now result in an ongoing service, up from five percent before the Civil Law Blueprint.

The new policies have made an impact in their first year of operation. ELA services have increased by 77 percent on the previous financial year, with housing matters accounting for more than one third of provided services. Forty-five percent of ELA services were provided to Aboriginal people and 47 percent to people with disability.

Almost three quarters of ERA services, which cover formal conciliation and mediation, relate to discrimination, sexual harassment and workplace problems.

The year ahead

- We will implement changes that reduce the administrative burden for lawyers and clients applying for and administering grants of aid ahead of the launch of our new grants management system, LA Apply. We will streamline eligibility, expand delegations to panel lawyers, simplify fee scales and embed a compliance and quality assurance framework.
- We will implement the recommendations from our means test review to better align our income and asset tests with the cost of living in 2025 and beyond.
- We will create a more streamlined and transparent payment system for private lawyers across all jurisdictions.

Key challenges

- Ensuring our eligibility policies and services continue to target the most socially and economically disadvantaged people in NSW with limited resources and within funding constraints.
- Meeting emerging demand for legal support while refining and simplifying pathways to a grant of aid.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience heightened levels of disadvantage and are one of the most over-represented groups in our justice system as a result.

Our Aboriginal Client Services Strategy 2024–2028 commits us to delivering culturally appropriate and accessible services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. We engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the state to ensure clients understand their rights and how Legal Aid NSW can help. We partner with and advocate for communities to ensure our services are based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs and expectations.

Applying our Best Practice Standards for Representing Aboriginal Clients

In 2023–24, we reviewed and updated our Best Practice Standards for Representing Aboriginal Clients. The standards provide both in-house and private practitioners with practical information and guidance on topics related to their representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2024–25, we delivered training to lawyers on how to provide trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, high-quality and adaptable services tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We incorporated training into staff induction to ensure all staff know how to follow the standards right from the start. We released a podcast on how to apply the standards in criminal law matters and developed a tip sheet for LawAccess NSW on applying the standards to legal information services.

Advocating for a young Aboriginal client's right to be heard

A lawyer from our Albury Office acted for a 13-year-old Aboriginal person in NSW police custody. The young person was arrested on a Victorian warrant under their care act. Our lawyer stepped in after it became clear no other legal assistance would be available to the client. She worked quickly and was resilient in the face of resistance to the client receiving assistance.

Our lawyer made submissions to the court based on her client's instructions and assisted the court to understand its powers. Ultimately, our lawyer's advocacy meant that the child was not returned to Victoria in the back of a paddy wagon – which would have occurred without the court's knowledge. The lawyer's actions spared the client further trauma and upheld the client's right to be heard and participate in the legal process.

Homeward Sisters Project becomes business as usual

The Homeward Sisters Project began as an innovative pilot to address homelessness among Aboriginal women in custody. The project is a partnership between the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities (CLSAC), the specialist housing and homelessness team in Legal Aid NSW, Homes NSW, and women's correctional centres statewide.

From February to May 2025 the project supported 248 referrals, with 169 women achieving life-changing results that promote housing stability. A hundred and sixty women were approved for priority housing, 50 had housing-related debts waived and 64 had negative classifications removed, restoring access to essential services. The project successfully reactivated 32 housing applications that had previously been closed due to lack of contact. Eight women have been housed since transitioning from custody to the community.

The pilot has helped women clear housing-related debt and provided holistic legal support to clients with care and protection matters and will now become business as usual. The collaborative, culturally responsive model will continue to tackle entrenched disadvantage in pursuit of Closing the Gap targets. We'll continue to build on our strong partnerships with government agencies and work with them to tackle the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal women in custody.

Homes secured under the Homeward Sisters Project

Kirsty* is an Aboriginal woman in her 50s with an intellectual disability who exited custody into homelessness. She was previously a social housing tenant but relinquished her tenancy when she went into gaol. She was unable to satisfy lease conditions that required her to empty and clean her property as she was in custody at the time and so ended up with a housing debt. Through Homeward Sisters, her debt was waived, and she was approved for priority housing. After her release we referred Kirsty to a Legal Aid NSW support worker who will help her connect with NDIS supports.

Pip* is an Aboriginal woman in her 30s. She relinquished her social housing property around five years ago and has been homeless and couch surfing since. Her daughter has been living with family because Pip has been homeless. Since her release, Pip has had somewhere safe and stable to live and will work towards having her daughter restored to her care.

*Name has been changed.

Sacred Stories Project pilot aims to reduce re-traumatisation

The Sacred Stories Project provides guidance and training to lawyers on how to interview Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in bail and sentencing hearings in a culturally safe and trauma-informed way. It tries to ensure clients only need to tell their story once to

minimise re-traumatisation and encourages the use of resources like the Bugmy Bar Book to strengthen arguments used in hearings.

The project was piloted in 2024–25 with the Port Macquarie and Liverpool crime teams. In 2025–26, the project will be evaluated and further opportunities to expand the pilot will be explored with CLASC and our Newcastle Civil Law Team.

Securing a Stolen Generations Reparation Scheme payment

Our client Alice* was the oldest of seven children and lived with her parents and extended family on a mission. She lived on food rations and had to sneak around as she has fair skin and was afraid she would be taken away from her family.

When Alice was 11, she decided not to go to school and walked into town. She was seen by welfare board officers and was detained in a police cell. She was sent to Rathgar Girls Home for 18 months where she was physically and psychologically abused. Alice was allowed to return home to visit her dying younger brother, and her parents sent her to live with family in a remote town away from the authorities.

Alice applied for a Stolen Generations Reparation Scheme payment on the basis that she had been deprived of living with her parents. Her original application was refused on the basis that her circumstances were out of the scheme's scope.

Legal Aid NSW assisted Alice to put together a statutory declaration about her early life and being taken to Rathgar Girls Home. We argued her application should fall within the scheme's guidelines. Our submissions and supporting evidence were successful and Alice received a \$75,000 payment under the Stolen Generations Reparation Scheme and a \$7,000 funeral benefit.

*Name has been changed.

Providing specialist support for Walama List clients

The Walama List is an alternative sentencing procedure for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants in the District Court of NSW.

'Walama' is a word from the Dharug language meaning 'come back' or return. The Walama List uses a holistic and intensive approach to sentencing that includes input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Respected Persons. It aims to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody by increasing engagement with the court, increasing compliance with court orders, and reducing recidivism.

The Walama List is distinct from typical District Court sentencing procedures. It involves extended engagement with clients, development of a tailored case plan and active participation from Elders and support services that are embedded in the court sentencing

process. This year, we established a dedicated team of specialist legal practitioners, administrative staff and a senior case worker to support clients in these proceedings.

The senior caseworker in the Walama Unit works closely with legal staff and clients to provide a holistic wraparound service. They support clients to participate and engage social services to allow clients to meet the goals in their case plans.

Aboriginal Social Justice Conference educates Newcastle

In 2024–25, we partnered with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to host an Aboriginal Social Justice Conference in Newcastle. The conference explored how the local community can best work together to provide both legal and non-legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Newcastle and Hunter regions.

It provided both in-house and private practitioners with an opportunity to hear and learn from their colleagues in the legal profession, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, lived experience experts and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations. In 2025–26, Aboriginal Social Justice Conferences will be expanded to additional regions, including Western Sydney and Wagga Wagga.

Returning a child to the care of their father

A distressed father contacted our Family Law Service for Aboriginal Communities (FamAC). DCJ was imminently planning to remove his child from the care of the child's mother. DCJ held significant concerns about the child and had not sighted the mother or the child for some time.

One of our senior family lawyers began discussions with DCJ, who agreed to halt the removal to allow us to ask the Sydney Specialist Indigenous List to return care of the child to our client. The matter was listed the following day.

We were able to demonstrate the significant concerns that were held for the child's safety and the need for them to be placed in the care of their father. The court agreed and issued a recovery order.

FamAC's advocacy did not stop there. While waiting for the order to come through, documents were prepared for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and we began conversations around actioning the recovery order. With the AFP's help the child was returned to our client at about 8.30pm that same night.

The year ahead

- We will develop an Aboriginal data sovereignty governance framework under priority reform four of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

- We will hold Aboriginal Social Services Justice Hubs in Wagga Wagga and Western Sydney in partnership with DCJ and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited.

Key challenges

- To build and maintain the momentum needed to implement our Aboriginal Client Services Strategy 2024–2028 and Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2024.
- To continue to think outside the box to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing inform our work.

Meeting the needs of diverse clients

Many of our services are targeted at people experiencing significant disadvantage.

Our diverse client base includes children, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and LGBTQIA+ people. We advocate for law and policy reform that protects disadvantaged clients in pursuit of a more just society.

Fact file

- 9.7% of our casework services were provided to clients born in non-English speaking countries.
- We spent \$2,181,108.18 (excluding GST) on interpreting and translation services.
- We presented 214 community legal education events for people from CALD backgrounds and newly arrived migrants.

Implementing our Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework

We launched our Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework in June 2024. The framework reflects our commitment to deliver high-quality services to clients of all cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds, increase diversity in our workplace and ensure the cultural competence of our staff and services.

As we began implementation of the framework in 2024–25, we focused on embedding cultural safety, cultural responsiveness and cultural proficiency.

- We updated our guidelines on working with interpreters and shared these with frontline staff in training sessions co-designed with Multicultural NSW. We held 27 sessions for solicitors and administrative staff, including 12 at regional offices and with specialist units.
- We designed a Community Engagement and Communications Strategy for CALD communities for staff. We developed tip sheets on regions in NSW where culturally diverse clients live and in the most common languages they speak.
- We developed a video resource on what cultural competence looks like in civil law practice and will develop similar resources about crime and family practice by October 2025.

Couple released from door-to-door sales contract

Our clients were a couple from a regional area who both receive Disability Support Pensions. They received an unsolicited visit at home from a solar panel company salesperson. The couple advised the salesperson they weren't interested and asked

them to leave. One of them walked the salesperson to the edge of their driveway. On returning to the house, they said they'd signed a document but didn't have a copy.

The couple were distressed to find out the documents they signed created a \$16,000 buy now pay later contract with the solar panel company. A few days later, they phoned the company and cancelled the contract.

The original salesperson returned to their home and asked them to speak with his boss on the phone. One of them took the phone and heard a female voice tell them to say "yes". They were confused and said "yes". This reinstated the solar panel agreement. When the solar panel installers turned up three weeks later, the clients told them they were not paying for the panels as they had cancelled the agreement. However, the panels were installed.

The couple then found out that a buy now pay later company was debiting money from their bank account. They couldn't afford the payments and closed the account. No further money was taken but they later received a statement of claim from a debt collection company.

The couple approached Legal Aid NSW for help. Their lawyer tried to negotiate with the buy now pay later provider, but the matter wasn't resolved. We lodged a complaint with the Australian Financial Complaints Authority on their behalf, and the debt was waived.

New civil law service for clients with disability

Established in late 2024, the Disability Legal Support Service (DLSS) provides accessible, inclusive and flexible civil law services and casework support to people with disability, their families and carers. The service assists with a wide range of legal issues, including NDIS access, disability discrimination, housing, and healthcare in prisons. Its interdisciplinary team, which includes lawyers and a caseworker, work alongside clients to deliver holistic, person-centred support.

DLSS prioritises clients with accessibility or communication needs, reduced capacity to self-advocate, multiple legal issues or limited support networks. It plays a key role in implementing our Disability Inclusion and Access Plan, with a focus on delivering flexible legal support, integrating legal and social services, and building staff capability through ongoing training. In 2024–25, the DLSS also engaged with the community at the South-West Sydney Disability Forum, Beyond Barriers National Conference and the Sydney Disability Connection Expo.

The DLSS has already delivered meaningful outcomes for clients, many of whom had previously faced significant barriers to justice. It is preserving rights and restoring confidence, dignity and agency to people with disabilities navigating the legal system. One client

expressed their thanks by gifting their lawyer an artwork. Another gave their lawyer a sign name – a mark of trust in the Deaf community.

Seeking fair custody arrangements for a domestic violence victim-survivor

Our Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) supported a client on a temporary visa to finalise complex parenting proceedings after five years of escalating physical, emotional, and financial abuse by her partner, with whom she had three children. She was isolated, monitored, denied financial independence and manipulated through her children. With no access to services or income due to her visa status, she was at one point forced to live in her car and coerced into degrading conditions to meet basic needs.

Despite being the victim, she was repeatedly mischaracterised as the aggressor and was facing assault charges and multiple apprehended domestic violence orders.

The DVU intervened when the children's father initiated parenting proceedings seeking sole care and limited contact for the mother. At the interim hearing, the court increased contact but didn't allow the children to spend time with their mother overnight. The DVU prepared extensive evidence ahead of the final hearing and the matter resolved by consent, allowing our client to care for her children overnight, progressing to weekend and holiday arrangements.

Throughout, the client was supported by allied professional staff as well as criminal and civil lawyers. The DVU's wraparound support helped her create a stable life in which she could have meaningful contact with her children.

Providing legal help to asylum seekers with complex appeals

In late 2023, following a funding injection from the Australian Government, we expanded our Immigration Team and Refugee Service to support legal services for asylum seekers dealing with complex appeals in the ART and federal courts.

This financial year, we delivered nearly 3,000 immigration legal services, including over 2,855 legal advice sessions and 158 grants of aid for court or tribunal representation. Many clients were highly vulnerable – up to 15 percent had experienced family violence, 63 percent were in custody and 35 percent lived with disability.

Targeted legal assistance improves outcomes, reduces delays and enhances the fairness of Australia's refugee protection system. In one case, we identified a procedural error, fixed it and secured a visa grant – avoiding costly litigation. In another case, a woman fleeing domestic violence received trauma-informed support that helped her articulate her protection claims and succeed in her appeal.

Diverse and fair training and data collection

We're developing a suite of training and resources called Diverse & Fair to help staff understand and respond to the personal and cultural needs of clients. We're also making changes to the way we request and record personal information about our clients, to help us become more focused on their needs.

Diverse & Fair eLearning modules will include interactive scenarios and videos, and resources are also being developed to help teams and people leaders better accommodate diverse staff.

The year ahead

- We'll continue to implement our DIAP and Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework.
- We will launch our Diverse & Fair training during the Diversity Council of Australia's Inclusion at Work Week in November 2025.

Highlights from our practice areas

We have three areas of legal practice: criminal law, family law and civil law. Each practice includes specialist services. Staff from different practice areas regularly collaborate to better serve clients with multiple legal needs and apply a wide lens to law reform initiatives. Increasingly, our specialist services follow a multidisciplinary model.

Criminal law

Our Criminal Law Division is the largest criminal defence practice in Australia. It provides legal information, advice, minor assistance, extended legal assistance, duty services, and representation at local, district, supreme and appellate courts, as well as the State Parole Authority and NSW Drug Court.

The practice provides community legal education throughout NSW and contributes to law reform initiatives. It is responsible for many statewide specialist criminal law services, including the Children’s Legal Service, Prisoners Legal Service, High Risk Offender Unit, Indictable Appeals Unit, Walama Unit and Commonwealth Crime Unit.

Fact file

Total staff: 380

Total expenditure on criminal law services: \$269.5m

Proportion of overall expenditure on criminal law services: 44.3%

We provided 271,019 criminal law services to clients in 2024–25*

Legal service type	In-house	Assigned	Total
Legal representation	11,711	23,223	34,934
Duty services	119,437	79,619	199,056
Legal advice	30,032	–	30,032
Minor assistance	6,855	–	6,855

*Information services are not included in service counts in this section.

Expanding our allied professional support to defendants

Over the last three years, we have placed allied professional staff such as social workers, case workers and Aboriginal Field Officers in specialist teams within the Criminal Law Division with the aim of providing wraparound support services to defendants in criminal matters.

This year, we have established an allied professional services team leader role to provide internal professional support, supervision, training and education to our growing team of allied professional staff.

Allied professional staff provide information and warm referrals to defendants. Expanding our allied professional services workforce allows us to provide appropriate wraparound services to defendants at a critical stage in the court process and improve outcomes for everyone.

Domestic violence defendants in particular often have issues with imminent homelessness, drugs and alcohol, gambling, their mental health, or a history of violence, abuse and neglect. Support from an allied professional protects complainants at a time when risk is elevated, within a few weeks and months of the defendant being charged with an offence.

Help and a path to a visa for a human trafficking victim-survivor

In January 2025, our Campbelltown Office supported a person who was going to be sentenced on charges of affray and failing to leave licensed premises as an excluded person.

On meeting the client, our lawyer had concerns for their ability to communicate and for their safety after their partner displayed controlling behaviour. Following an adjournment in the case, the client was admitted to hospital, and it was suspected that they were a victim of human trafficking and sex slavery.

Over the next few months, more information came to light, revealing that the client was trafficked into sexual slavery at the age of six and brought to Australia by a convicted paedophile. The client had been admitted to hospital on multiple occasions due to hypoxic brain injury and assault and was ultimately diagnosed with a major neurocognitive disorder.

The client had no capacity to understand the charges and court process or give meaningful instructions. Our lawyer obtained a neuropsychological report and hospital records and listed the matter for a permanent stay, which was granted. This acknowledged that a fair trial was not possible and prevented the client's case from being taken any further, effectively ensuring they did not receive a sentence. The client remains in a safe house and is receiving assistance to work towards obtaining their citizenship.

Training up crime graduates for regional practice

Introduced for the first time in 2024–25, the Crime Regional Graduate Program ensures high-achieving young lawyers are effectively mentored in their early criminal law practice and use their skills to advise and represent clients in some of the most disadvantaged areas of NSW.

Over 190 applications were narrowed down over three full days of interviews, and six successful applicants commenced in the program on 23 June 2025.

Graduates attended a two-day welcome to the organisation, where they met regional managers from all the offices where they might be placed and were able to ask questions about the practice of criminal law and regional life. The rest of the week was spent meeting the entire Criminal Law Division and our colleagues in private practice at the Criminal Law Conference.

The second week of the program was spent with specialist trainers learning the fine art of advocacy and criminal law fundamentals like bail and sentencing. Graduates also observed the new centralised bail courts in Parramatta during mid-year recess and met with the metropolitan managers they will work with for the next six months.

After their six-month induction to criminal law in metropolitan Sydney offices, graduates will be placed on a 12-month rotation in Broken Hill, Dubbo, Moree, Tamworth or Wagga Wagga. At the completion of 12 months, they will have the option to remain in their regional area or return to Sydney.

It is hoped that the program will spark a lifelong love of criminal law and an appreciation for the differences in practice in metropolitan and more remote settings. Graduates will also meet staff from all over the state who will remain colleagues and supporters.

Partnership improves access to psychiatric reporting

Under an agreement between Legal Aid NSW and Justice Health, in-house crime solicitors can now request a report from a registered Justice Health trainee psychiatrist for their client.

Three trainees provide independent forensic psychiatry reports, increasing access to independent and timely assessments. Reports may be used in criminal matters to establish whether a client has a mental health impairment and how it may have impacted their behaviour. In appropriate cases, it may support diversion from the justice system into mental health treatment.

Reports are developed under the supervision of qualified forensic psychiatrists and funded by Legal Aid NSW. Initially trialled at Broken Hill, Dubbo, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and in the High Risk Offender Unit, the service has since been expanded to all in-house crime teams and will be re-evaluated after 12 months.

Ensuring a fair sentence for a client with autism

Our client was a 19-year-old from the UK who flew to Sydney in February 2024. He was arrested at Sydney International Airport with a large, locked suitcase full of an illegal drug. Our client didn't have the combination to the lock. He had no criminal record and had autism spectrum disorder and mental health issues.

Prior to his trip to Australia, our client rarely left the family home. His mother was shocked when she received a call from the AFP to say that her son was in custody in Australia for drug importation.

Our client pleaded guilty to importing a commercial quantity of border-controlled drugs – an offence carrying a maximum of life imprisonment. The prosecution accepted that he was “reckless” as to the presence of the drug but did not have “actual knowledge”.

A psychological assessment diagnosed our client with post-traumatic stress disorder. His mother and sister flew to Australia to give evidence at his sentencing hearing. His mother said the family lived in a housing estate with a high crime rate and significant drug violence. She told the court about her anguish at how her son was coping in custody and his need to hide his autism in gaol. The family was devastated and had not celebrated Christmas without him.

Our client was found to have excellent prospects of rehabilitation and a heightened risk of institutionalisation due to his autism. He received a sentence of 40 months imprisonment, or just over three years. He was given a non-parole period of 20 months, or just under two years.

Bail centralisation

With the passage of the *Bail and Other Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Act 2024*, the Local Court of NSW has started the process of centralising bail courts. This will streamline bail matters previously handled by registrars and attempt to apply bail decisions consistently across the state.

As of November 2024, all weekend adult bail matters across the state have been heard from a centralised court by audio visual link. Legal Aid NSW has been a key stakeholder in working with the courts, the police and the private profession to ensure that this transition runs as smoothly as possible.

The local court intends to roll this system out for regional weekday bail hearings in July 2025 and Sydney metropolitan bail hearings in early 2026.

The year ahead

- Continue to expand our allied professional workforce to ensure we can provide appropriate wraparound services to domestic violence defendants and reduce the risk to complainants during the high-risk period just after a charge is laid.
- Meet our obligations under Closing the Gap by proactively integrating place-based training for Aboriginal cultural competency, building relationships with local Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, promoting appropriate policies and programs and advocating for therapeutic and diversionary programs for our clients.

- Continue to strengthen and enhance service models that best serve our clients by building and strengthening relationships with private practitioners, encouraging and supporting development opportunities for staff, reviewing in-house local court duty workload principles and exploring training and development opportunities for private practitioners.
- Use our specialist expertise to proactively advocate in areas requiring significant law reform, while continuing to collaborate with other legal policy stakeholders to coordinate on strategic law and policy reforms.

Key challenge

- Continue to work with the courts, the police and the private profession to ensure that the new bail centralisation system works effectively for all involved.

Family law

Legal Aid NSW is home to the largest family law practice in Australia. It provides legal information, advice and minor assistance, extended legal assistance, early resolution assistance, duty services, dispute resolution, case representation and social support from allied professionals.

The division supports clients with care and protection and domestic violence matters as well as family law matters. It provides community legal education throughout NSW and contributes to law reform initiatives.

Our specialist family law services include the Family Law Service for Aboriginal Communities, Early Intervention Unit, Domestic Violence Unit, Child Support Service, Appeals and Complex Litigation Unit, Family Dispute Resolution Unit and the Your Voice – Children’s Out of Home Care Advocacy Service.

Fact file

Total staff: 353

Total expenditure on family law services: \$156.2m

Proportion of overall expenditure on family law services: 25.7%

We provided 82,852 family law services to clients in 2024–25*

Legal service type	In-house	Assigned	Total
Legal representation	1,252	7,825	9,077
Duty services	14,318	2,073	16,391
Legal advice	38,675	–	38,675
Minor assistance	11,167	–	11,167

*Information services are not included in service counts in this section.

Ensuring families receive legal support when engaging with DCJ

Over the last financial year, we have seen a 251 percent increase in referrals under the Legal Assistance for Families Partnership Agreement (LAFPA).

LAFPA is an agreement between Legal Aid NSW, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited (ALS) and DCJ. It ensures families are guided towards and receive early legal advice if, for example, there is a risk of a child being removed from their care.

As of 25 June 2025, we had received 3,029 LAFPA referrals, up from 862 at the end of last financial year. Referrals are triaged and confidential legal advice is arranged for those referred. This financial year, 888 people, or 29 percent of those referred, were assisted by a lawyer from

our Early Intervention Unit. Thirty-three percent of the people referred via LAFPA identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Working closely with the ALS and DCJ, we've conducted training at various DCJ sites, including Orange, Tamworth, Bega, Batemans Bay, Charlestown and Mayfield to showcase the work of LAFPA. Ensuring it is at the forefront of the minds of departmental casework teams is supporting high rates of referrals.

Intervening to keep a baby with her family

We acted in a mediation for the parents of a baby born prematurely who was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. The baby's parents had multiple disabilities, and her multicultural family included Aboriginal family members. Prior to mediation, the family believed that the baby couldn't live with her family due to previous discussions with DCJ.

We organised an urgent LAFPA mediation at an accessible venue prior to the baby being discharged from hospital. DCJ had concerns about the capacity of the parents to care for their baby, including alcohol abuse and a history of sexual harm to a child. The mediation worked through significant mistrust between the family and DCJ.

The parties were able to formulate a parenting plan that enabled the baby to live with her mother and grandmother. This addressed the concerns held by DCJ; and upheld the baby's right to enjoy her culture. A parenting plan was drafted and signed on the day by all parties, and DCJ planned to close the file.

Piloting culturally appropriate mediation

In 2024–25, we launched our Specialist Indigenous Mediation Program. It provides a more culturally appropriate and sensitive mediation model for Aboriginal families who have a matter before the Specialist Indigenous List of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

Under the new model, clients receive help from an in-house Aboriginal mediator and an Aboriginal project officer and get additional time with their solicitor. They are provided with tailored, culturally appropriate communication materials such as factsheets and intake documents. Mediations are conducted flexibly over two sessions.

The model has commenced in Northern NSW and will expand to the rest of the state in 2025–26. Feedback from stakeholders and outcomes for families accessing the model have been positive. We will provide cultural training to existing panel members and work to expand the Aboriginal Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners panel to ensure the continued success of the program.

Providing a high volume of domestic violence support

We continued to support clients impacted by domestic violence with both their legal and non-legal problems. Demand for services remained high, with 14,842 calls made to our specialist domestic violence hotline. Lawyers from our Domestic Violence Unit delivered over 10,000 duty lawyer services, 3,835 advice services, and 2,970 minor assistance services. Caseworkers, financial counsellors and mental health workers assisted over 450 clients.

We welcomed the announcement of ongoing funding for Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) and the Temporary Visa Project under the National Access to Justice Partnership. FASS provides crucial in-person services, including duty lawyer services in regional and remote NSW, and the Temporary Visa Project advocates for those on temporary visas who are at risk of or experiencing domestic and family violence.

Ensuring a fair property settlement for a victim-survivor

We assisted a woman in a property settlement who was neurodivergent and had experienced domestic violence during her 13-year marriage. Early resolution assistance in 2023 didn't result in a property settlement, so she commenced proceedings in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

Her primary objective was to avoid a final hearing, but her ex-husband was committed to litigation and was seeking unreasonable proportions of the asset pool, even though our client had contributed approximately 50% of the total purchase price of their former home.

Our client wanted to accept a settlement that was well below what she could expect in court. She was anxious about the court process, but our team worked with her over the course of 18 months to improve her confidence. We advocated strongly for her to seek a settlement that reflected her contributions and her future needs.

Before the matter reached a final hearing our team negotiated a settlement of 55 percent of the net property pool in her favour, primarily in cash. This relieved the financial stress our client had experienced because of the separation and provided her with the opportunity to consider purchasing a new home.

Continuing partnerships with local health providers

We collaborate with hospitals, community health centres, Aboriginal medical services, drug and alcohol services and public housing estates to deliver Health Justice Partnerships. Those with long-term illness or disability are more than twice as likely to report one or more legal problems. Providing legal services in a health setting enables early identification and resolution of legal problems, which can improve health outcomes.

This year, we successfully negotiated with the Sydney Children's Hospital Network and We Help Ourselves at Rozelle to continue providing family law services to patients.

Attracting regional students to care and protection work

In February 2025, we established a fellowship in partnership with the University of Newcastle to address a shortage of care and protection lawyers in regional areas.

The current fellow has been assisting the Newcastle Office in their care casework and performing to a high standard. She has attended several training workshops offered by Legal Aid NSW in Sydney, including care induction, care basics, the child representation workshop and more.

It is hoped that fellows will be well-prepared and competitive for roles as paralegals and legal officers upon completion of the fellowship. We hope to continue and expand this program to other regional areas in the coming financial year.

The year ahead

- Develop and roll out training on apprehended violence orders (AVOs) for in-house and panel practitioners to ensure clients receive legal advice about AVOs in a consistent, timely and trauma-informed way.
- Complete a review of family law duty services that considers how we can adjust and streamline our ways of working to ensure clients receive a high-quality, consistent, efficient and tailored service while balancing workload and wellbeing issues for in-house staff.
- Secure long-term funding for our Your Voice service so it can continue to meet the socio-legal needs of children and young people in out-of-home care.
- Review and evaluate our approach to property, care and protection mediations and specialist Indigenous mediations to ensure these programs meet client best practice and business needs.
- Better understand the needs of incarcerated people with family law issues so we can begin a program of service improvement.

Key challenge

- Attracting, retaining and supporting private lawyers. In several regional locations, we are in market failure or close to market failure, which poses a significant access to justice issue. We will implement the Care and Protection Professional Development Initiative to attract private lawyers through a program of training, mentoring and an exemption from some eligibility requirements. We'll work with universities to ensure that care and protection is part of the curriculum and seen as a viable career option for students.

Civil law

Our Civil Law Division is the largest publicly funded civil practice in Australia. Its purpose is to “improve the lives of people experiencing deep and persistent disadvantage or dislocation by using civil law to meet their fundamental needs”.

We provide advice and representation related to a wide range of everyday legal problems that impact fundamental needs such as housing, social security, NDIS, employment, discrimination, consumer protection, immigration, mental health, fines and coronial inquests. We have specialist services who run complex matters in each of these areas, lead law reform and systemic advocacy and support our generalist lawyers statewide.

In addition to our specialist legal teams, we have targeted services for specific client groups, including Aboriginal clients and communities, children and young people, refugees, prisoners, veterans, people experiencing elder abuse or impacted by disaster. This financial year, we established the Disability Legal Support Service to assist clients who live with disability.

Civil law services are available in most Legal Aid NSW offices, as well as by phone and at outreach locations throughout NSW. We also provide duty services at the Mental Health Review Tribunal and the Youth Koori Court.

Fact file

Total staff: 291

Total expenditure on civil law services: \$69.8m

Proportion of overall expenditure on civil law services: 11.5%

We provided 56,374 civil law services to clients in 2024–25*

Legal service type	In-house	Assigned	Total
Legal representation	2,021	838	2,859
Duty services	1,322	13,028	14,350
Legal advice	30,159	–	30,159
Minor assistance	6,496	–	6,496

*Information services are not included in service counts in this section

Respect at Work Legal Service becomes the Workplace Rights Service

2024–25 was the final year of the Respect at Work Legal Service (RAWLS), established in 2023 under the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP).

RAWLS provided a statewide, trauma-informed service focused on supporting people who had experienced sexual harassment or workplace discrimination. RAWLS provided 778 advice

services and 90 representation services in 2024–25. RAWLS clients received over \$1.5 million in total compensation. Non-financial wins included employers agreeing to provide training to staff on discrimination and sexual harassment.

RAWLS employed community engagement officers to reach people and communities less likely to seek help, including CALD and Aboriginal communities. It developed and delivered 315 community legal education sessions to 9,597 people. It also developed an innovative community legal education program for young people – Work Ready. The team delivered 163 sessions to 86,609 students and staff across NSW in 2024–25.

From 1 July 2025, the work of RAWLS and our existing Employment Law Team will be incorporated into our new Workplace Rights Service, a specialist employment, workplace discrimination and sexual harassment service. The Workplace Rights Service will continue with a dual focus on community engagement and legal casework and will include staff based in Sydney, Gosford, Nowra, Wagga Wagga and Coffs Harbour.

Social housing tenancy saved and debt waived

Our client, Joey*, faced eviction when their social housing provider determined that the repairs their property needed were so extensive that the tenancy was legally “frustrated” and could not continue. The housing provider alleged that Joey was responsible for \$35,000 of repairs and cleaning costs.

Joey had been requesting repairs for several years that had not been completed. Joey experiences anxiety and depression and did not want to leave the property as they had close connections and supports in place in the area.

We represented Joey at the NCAT. As a result, the housing provider withdrew the termination application, agreed not to pursue the cost of the repairs and clean up and offered to transfer Joey to a newly renovated property nearby. The housing provider agreed to pay their moving costs and to a rental abatement where they would only pay \$5 per week in rent for six weeks.

Joey was very relieved that they would not be chased for the repair costs and that they could stay in their local community.

*Name has been changed.

Central Sydney gains a local civil law team

This year, we brought central Sydney in line with other Legal Aid NSW offices by creating a local civil law team to provide a generalist service.

The central Sydney team provides a wide range of civil legal assistance and leads engagement with local stakeholders and communities. Staff deliver advice clinics most days of the week and undertake considerable casework in consumer, housing and employment law, and social

security. The team has saved tenancies for clients at risk of homelessness, recovered wage entitlements, ensured clients received their statutory benefits and had debts waived.

Our specialist civil law teams based in central Sydney, who previously serviced this catchment, can now focus on clients statewide who require specialist help.

Getting a client a refund for a lemon car

Mary Daley v Budget Auto Group Pty Ltd

Our client Mary is an Aboriginal woman from Brewarrina whose sole form of income is a Centrelink benefit. She travelled for nine hours to purchase a second-hand vehicle in Sydney for \$7,500. As she was driving home, the vehicle broke down.

Mary contacted the dealer, who refused to give her a refund. She paid \$2,500 for repairs, but the car broke down twice more within three months. This left Mary owing towing and repair costs, but with no working car.

Our Dubbo Office assisted Mary to formally reject the vehicle and commence NCAT proceedings for breach of consumer guarantee. Mary drove for nine hours from Brewarrina to Liverpool as her request to attend the NCAT hearing via audio-visual link was refused. The NCAT member told Mary that she didn't have rights under Australian Consumer Law in her situation and \$1,000 was the best outcome she could expect.

Mary's lawyer appealed NCAT's decision. The appeal panel found that the tribunal member who heard Mary's case "made statements that were incomplete and/or incorrect".

At a contested NCAT final hearing, NCAT found the dealer failed to provide goods of acceptable quality and made orders for the refund of the full purchase price of Mary's car.

Working towards banning non-compete clauses in employment contracts

In late 2023, the Australian Government launched its two-year Competition Review aimed at promoting productivity and wage growth during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. They released data revealing that nearly one in four businesses use non-compete clauses, which have the greatest impact on low-paid and vulnerable workers.

Non-compete clauses contribute to wage stagnation by discouraging workers from transitioning to better jobs or starting their own businesses. They also deter individuals from leaving exploitative workplaces, even when clauses are unlikely to be legally enforceable.

In collaboration with Treasury and the taskforce, our Employment Law Team created the largest dataset of client experiences in New South Wales, illustrating the widespread impact of

non-compete clauses across a range of jobs and industries. Impacted clients were predominantly women earning minimum award wages. They included casual workers, gig economy workers, hairdressers, and employees in the disability support, aged care, and childcare sectors. Many reported declining better job offers due to fear of legal repercussions under non-compete clauses.

We submitted comprehensive responses to the taskforce advocating for policy reform to prohibit the use of non-compete clauses for low-paid and vulnerable workers. Our submissions drew on client case studies and international examples of successful reform.

The government endorsed our recommendations and committed to banning non-compete clauses from 2027 for workers earning under \$175,000. This change will impact nearly three million Australians and will empower low-paid and vulnerable workers to pursue improved employment opportunities without fear of legal consequences.

Leave granted to intervene in test case on income apportionment

Matthew Chaplin v Secretary, Department of Social Services

Legal Aid NSW was granted leave to intervene in a test case in the Full Federal Court that challenged the way the Department of Social Services (DSS) sought to resolve Centrelink debts arising from income apportionment.

Under many Centrelink payments, such as Youth Allowance, Newstart Allowance or Jobseeker, recipients report their income fortnightly so Services Australia can determine benefit entitlements. Between at least 2003 and 2020, income apportionment was used to spread income across multiple instalment fortnights, which could result in either overpayments or underpayments depending on how the income was calculated. This method was found to be unlawful by the AAT, the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Full Court of the Federal Court. The Full Federal Court affirmed a calculation method proposed by DSS in a decision from July 2025; *Chaplin v Secretary, Department of Social Services* [2025] FCAFC 89.

Our intervention drew on our expertise in social security law and our collaboration with Victoria Legal Aid and Economic Justice Australia to scrutinise Services Australia's approach. The Chaplin proceedings impact a significant number of our clients. There are at least three million Australians who have or may have had an income apportionment affected debt raised against them, worth a total of \$4.4 billion.

Providing legal help to those impacted by disasters

Over the past year, the Disaster Response Legal Service (DRLS) delivered statewide legal help to communities impacted by several disasters – the power outage in Broken Hill in October

2024, storms in the Hunter and Harden in January 2025, Tropical Cyclone Alfred in March 2025 and the May 2025 floods in the Mid North Coast, Central Coast and Hunter regions.

An independent evaluation of the DRLS completed in February 2025 praised its proactive, adaptable and inclusive service model, which ensures that individuals and communities receive the legal support they need.

This financial year, with 12 months of temporary funding from the NSW State Government, the DRLS provided 2,877 legal services to 1,550 people across 73 local government areas and delivered 263 community legal education sessions. Seventy percent of legal services were provided in person at outreach locations across the state. Five hundred and twenty-three calls and web chats were answered by LawAccess NSW on the DRLS's 1800 helpline.

The DRLS coordinated legal assistance sector responses through the NSW Disaster Legal Assistance Group and worked with community legal centres in the Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast, Hunter and Central Coast to deliver services on the ground.

In addition to responding to new disasters, the DRLS continued to assist communities in the Northern Rivers and Central West still recovering from the 2022 floods. It delivered 600 legal services in the Central West with temporary funding under the Australian Government-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Twelve months of temporary funding from the NSW Public Purpose Fund will allow the DRLS to continue to help communities recover in 2025–26.

Giving a cyclone-affected family a place to stay

Following Tropical Cyclone Alfred, Rosalyn* sought advice at a Recovery Centre. She and her family were living in their severely damaged home, without walls or floor coverings, in sweltering conditions.

She was unaware that her insurance policy included up to \$200,000 in temporary accommodation benefits. With DRLS support, she approached her insurer at the Recovery Centre and left with a hotel booked from that night onwards while the insurer carried out repairs.

*Name has been changed.

Fee-free birth certificate partnership

We have partnered with the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages since February 2022 to offer people experiencing disadvantage access to free birth certificates. An estimated 500,000 Australians do not have a birth certificate, which can make it difficult for them to get a driver licence, access essential services, resolve debt or secure safe housing.

The free certificates were distributed by our Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities, by AFOs and at Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) regional events. Staff submitted 902 applications, and 720 birth certificates were issued.

Improving our civil law policies and workflows under our Civil Law Blueprint

The Civil Law Division has undergone significant transformation over the past two years as a result of the Civil Law Blueprint, which prompted an expansion of higher-impact representation services and a reduction in advice and minor assistance services. This allows us to assist the clients who need us most in a way that will have the greatest impact.

We continued to make changes to our policies and workflows in 2024–25 that embedded our blueprint as ‘business as usual’ across the division.

- We introduced new civil law extended legal assistance (ELA) and early resolution assistance (ERA) policies that commenced on 1 July 2024. These policies better align the work of the division with its purpose. You can read more about the impact of these policies in our ‘Providing services to those who need them most’ section on page 41.
- We created new internal referral processes that will commence on 1 July 2025. These processes will ensure clients can be seamlessly matched with the team best placed to help them. We embedded these processes in our client and case management system and published internal referral criteria.
- We created and shared workload expectations for all teams to provide greater clarity about what constitutes a reasonable workload and mix to assist staff in managing their workload and provide guidance on when matters should be referred.

This financial year, we started to see the Civil Blueprint having its intended impact on service delivery. Compared to 2022–23, the year before the Civil Blueprint was introduced, we delivered 17% more advice services to children and young people and 20% more advice services to people experiencing homelessness. We gained statewide reach, providing advice and representation to clients in every single local government area in NSW this financial year through phone advice, outreach and stakeholder engagement.

Our new policies have helped us to reach a more targeted group of clients. Ninety-seven percent of total civil services were provided to priority clients, up from 82 percent before the Civil Law Blueprint. We have seen a 20 percent increase in services to people who are homeless, a 35 percent increase to people experiencing domestic and family violence and a 19 percent increase to young people under 21.

New, more efficient Mental Health Advocacy Service Back Up Duty Scheme

The Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS) allocates lawyers throughout NSW to represent people in proceedings conducted before the civil division of the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT). Members of the Legal Aid NSW Private Practitioners Mental Health Panel provide a significant proportion of that representation.

On 30 September 2024, we implemented the MHAS Back Up Duty Scheme (MHAS BUDS), an automated system that allocates Sydney-based MHRT duty work to members of our Mental Health Panel when in-house lawyers are not available.

Prior to the commencement of the scheme, administrative staff manually allocated MHRT duty work. MHAS BUDS is more transparent and efficient and reduces the administrative workload of the MHAS team.

Client to leave mental health ward after 18 months indoors

Laxale by his tutor Johnson v Sydney Local Health District Legal Aid NSW

We successfully argued for our client to gain access to supervised leave after 18 months detained in a hospital ward where he only had access to a small courtyard.

The client was subject to a District Court order made under the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) that he be detained in a ward at Concord Centre for Mental Health for one year and 11 months. That order followed a finding that the client was unfit to stand trial because of mental illness and cognitive impairment, and that there was a prima facie case against him in relation to a Commonwealth offence.

The client and doctors at Concord wanted the client to exercise leave for therapeutic and rehabilitation reasons and support his eventual transition to the community. The Commonwealth Attorney-General refused the request, arguing that the order required the client to be detained in the ward 24/7.

The MHAS successfully sought a Supreme Court declaratory ruling that the client could be absent from the ward while under the supervision of staff and still be considered 'detained'.

Justice Button granted the relief sought, which allowed the client to visit places such as shopping centres and cafes.

The year ahead

- We will establish the Workplace Rights Service to provide specialist statewide assistance to clients experiencing loss of employment, unpaid wages and entitlements, sexual harassment and discrimination.
- We will review the Homeward Sisters Project and embed its principles into our everyday work, to ensure Aboriginal women leaving custody have access to safe and stable housing.
- We will pilot the Sacred Stories approach in the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities and the Newcastle Civil Law Office to provide culturally safe, trauma-

informed methods for interviewing and taking instructions that reduce the need for Aboriginal clients to retell their stories.

Key challenge

- Continuing to manage surges in demand for legal help following increasingly frequent and severe disasters. Disasters compound the impacts of the ongoing housing crisis and have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged people and communities. Legal issues related to disasters are becoming more complex, protracted and challenging to resolve and are impacting a wider range of clients. Continuing to meet this need in addition to delivering everyday civil law services will be an ongoing challenge.

Community legal education

Legal Aid NSW provides targeted community legal education (CLE) for priority client groups and community professionals.

CLE events are delivered by staff across Legal Aid NSW. Our Community Legal Education Branch coordinates and manages the delivery of CLE and related projects.

In 2024–25, we delivered 2,006 CLE sessions. We delivered 918 CLE events face-to-face. We hosted 208 online CLE events, including 20 Law for Community Workers webinars that reached 5,447 attendees. We distributed thousands of educational resources.

We published 13 episodes of the Law for Community Workers podcast. Episodes on our channel were downloaded over 5,670 times. Our most popular podcast episode was ‘Til the violence ends – Episode 4: Coercive Control’ with 605 downloads.

We uploaded 27 CLE videos to the Legal Aid NSW YouTube channel. Videos on our channel were viewed 120,029 times – a 53 percent increase from the previous year. Our channel gained 1,225 new subscribers.

Our Law for Community Workers email alert informs our 3,400 subscribers about upcoming events, new podcasts, webinars and publications. We promote events and resources by Legal Aid NSW, community legal centres and others in the sector. This year, our 19 alerts highlighted special events like NAIDOC Week, Seniors Festival, Refugee Week and more.

CLE sessions by area of law*

Area of law	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	Change from previous year
Criminal law	312	286	405	41.6%
Family law	322	362	344	-4.97%
Civil law	1,401	1,073	1,257	17.1%
Total	2,035	1,721	2,006	16.5%

Preventing crime by educating young people

Our Youth CLE program delivers crime prevention workshops for young people in schools, youth services and to Youth Justice NSW clients. It’s an important early intervention measure that aims to reduce the number of young people in court and at police stations.

In 2024–25, we delivered 202 face-to-face workshops across the state, a 42 percent increase from last year. We spoke to a total of 9,278 young people, 26 percent of whom were in rural and regional areas. Workshops covered consent, sexting and police powers. Our ‘Let’s Talk About Consent’ workshop was our most requested program.

We expanded our workshop series in 2024–25 to cover legal issues that equip young people for adulthood, such as workplace rights, buying a car, and discrimination.

After our face-to-face workshops, young people may approach facilitators for legal advice, which provides a pathway to further legal help and support.

“Big thank you for delivering your very informative sessions to the students at Allegra. The year 10 students were keen to go home and look up the award for their casual jobs. The staff were impressed by your professionalism and knowledge.”

– Coordinator of Student Wellbeing at Allegra School, Coffs Harbour

Upskilling the community during Law Week

NSW Law Week is a program of community events and activities designed to help people understand their rights, the law, the legal system and the legal profession.

This year, we partnered with the State Library of NSW, Marrickville Legal Centre and the Tenants’ Union of NSW to host a webinar series titled ‘Lunch and the Law’. We ran five webinars on renting, mobile phones, traffic fines, parenting arrangements and used cars.

We had 1,042 people register for our Law Week webinars, which were live-streamed on YouTube. We created five short videos for Instagram and YouTube to promote the webinars and help viewers understand their rights, which were viewed a total of 4,832 times.

Sharing legal information in our most beloved format

Our ‘Legal topics for seniors diary’ is our most popular publication and meets an identified need to provide legal information to older people in an accessible and easy-to-use way.

This year, we produced the diary with funding support from DCJ and the Law Society of NSW. We distributed 50,000 diaries, with 10,000 distributed to seniors who attended the Sydney Seniors Festival Expo in March 2025.

Working with interpreters to explain legal jargon

For the past 10 years, we’ve delivered workshops for interpreters and bilingual workers to help them understand tricky legal terminology they may encounter when assisting Legal Aid NSW clients. This year, we ran two in-person workshops for 52 people. One was on mental health and housing, and the other was a special session for women on domestic violence and sexual offences. We have more events scheduled for next year, including a session about domestic violence and sexual offences for men.

Training locals to support young people in custody

We continued training community workers to confidently support young people in custody, with the aim of reducing the amount of time young people spend on remand. We held workshops with a focus on rural and regional areas and contributed to the development of training material for DCJ's Short-Term Remand Project.

Helping people do their own divorce

We launched Do Your Own Divorce – a free step-by-step guide to help people complete their divorce application online. The guide helps people understand and navigate the online divorce form through videos, checklists and resources.

We also created a toolkit for community workers and lawyers on using the guide to support their clients. You can view Do Your Own Divorce at info.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/divorceguide.

Giving victim-survivors a voice

We launched a new podcast series titled 'Til the Violence Ends', which focuses on raising awareness about domestic violence. The series delves into the legal challenges victim-survivors face, highlights the support services available, and showcases the diverse professionals and organisations working in the sector.

We released five episodes that were downloaded 1,609 times and feature compelling interviews with representatives from Lucy's Project, the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service and the Tenants' Union of NSW.

The year ahead

- We will continue to deliver CLE to young people across the state through our legal life skills and custom workshops.
- We will continue to promote and grow our Law for Community Workers platforms so more community and health workers can spot legal issues and know where to refer their clients for legal help.

Key challenge

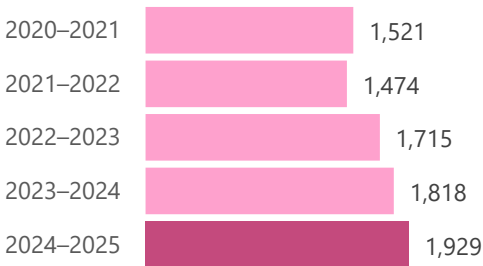
- Engaging our staff to deliver CLE, particularly our Law for Community Workers webinar series. We plan to meet regularly with staff from our practice areas so we can identify lawyers to deliver CLE.

Private lawyers

Legal Aid NSW works in partnership with private lawyers, who receive funding from us to represent legally aided clients in assigned matters.

To be appointed to one of the panels of practices assigned legal aid work under the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW), private law practices need to meet set criteria. This year, 68.0 percent of legal aid grants were assigned to private law practices, and private lawyers provided 41.2 percent of all Legal Aid NSW duty lawyer services. Further details appear in Appendix 5.

Number of law practices who are members of our panels



Number of law practices on each Legal Aid NSW panel*

Panel	Total law practices
Appellate Criminal Law Barrister Panel	74
Care and Protection Panel	143
Children’s Criminal Law Panel	502
Civil Law Panel	418
Complex Criminal Law Barrister Panel	225
Domestic Violence Panel	667
Family Law Panel	761
Independent Children’s Lawyer Panel	138
Indictable Criminal Law Panel	779
Indictable Criminal Law Barrister Panel	461
Mental Health Panel	434
Summary Criminal Law Panel	1,463

*Some law practices are members of more than one panel. Figures include panel members whose memberships were active as at 30 June 2025.

The lawyers who sit on our panels



1,405 solicitors



524 barristers

Where our private lawyers are located*

*Based on the panel member's primary office location



1,254 located in Sydney metropolitan area



623 located in regional NSW



52 located interstate or territory

Monitoring quality and supporting private lawyers

Private lawyers provide approximately half of all Legal Aid NSW services, with some regional and remote areas of NSW serviced exclusively by private lawyers.

Making it easy for private lawyers to provide services to our clients and ensuring clear and reasonable expectations are crucial to effective service delivery to Legal Aid NSW clients. We proactively monitor the quality of services our clients receive to ensure we are supporting private lawyers on our panels to provide excellent service.

In 2024–25, we continued implementing our Private Lawyer Quality Framework. We monitored the application process for our panels, undertook audits and complaints investigations and continued to engage with our stakeholders to identify areas for quality improvement.

Increasing fees for our private lawyers

We increased the hourly rate paid for Commonwealth family and civil law matters from \$150 to \$165 from 1 July 2024, after the Australian Government provided additional indexation for legal assistance providers.

We did not receive additional funding for private lawyer fees in the new National Access to Justice Partnership, but the Legal Aid NSW Board recognised the urgent need to increase fees for Commonwealth family and civil law matters. In February 2025, the Board increased the rate paid in these matters to bring it into parity with rates paid in state matters and Commonwealth crime matters. The hourly rate increased from \$165 to \$195 from 7 April 2025.

New role strengthens partnerships with private lawyers

We've introduced the role of Manager of Practitioner Relations to strengthen collaboration and enhance support for private practitioners. The role will engage with private practitioners, understand their unique challenges, and ensure they are well supported in delivering services.

The creation of this role reflects our commitment to valuing the contributions of private practitioners and recognising their integral role in delivering high-quality legal services across the state. Through stronger partnerships and tailored support, we aim to foster a collaborative culture that creates great outcomes for clients.

Engaging with lawyers through regional visits

Each year, our Private Lawyer Quality Standards Unit conducts regional visits to speak with panel members, engage with stakeholders, gather feedback and identify areas where service delivery needs exist and where support and training could benefit panel members. In 2024–25, our team visited the Mid North Coast.

Conducting audits and spot checks

In 2024–25, we audited over 300 files from 122 law practices. We conducted audits on child crime files to check that assigned practitioners were meeting with a young person in custody as soon as possible after they received the grant of legal aid. We spot-checked the requirement for valid Working with Children Checks for relevant panels and undertook an audit of duty services provided by private lawyers on our Mental Health Panel.

Total audits completed in 2024–25

Type of audit	Law practices and files
Quality audits	8 law practices (44 files)
File reviews	18 law practices (58 files)
Spot check audits	96 law practices (209 claims and files)

Complaints

Complaints are the main way we identify concerns about private lawyers. The complaints handling process is continually refined to ensure consistent and fair investigations and outcomes. We are committed to engaging with clients and stakeholders to ensure they are aware of our complaints process.

Number of complaints received

Year	Total complaints
2022–23	262
2023–24	422
2024–25	459

Outcomes

In 2024–25, a total of 10 law practices were removed from Legal Aid NSW panels for serious breaches of the Legal Aid NSW Panel Service Agreement or our quality standards.

The year ahead

- We will continue to investigate and respond to complaints against private practitioners.
- We will revise our audit framework in line with the development of our new system for administering legal aid, Project Delta.
- We will continue to engage with external and internal stakeholders to improve how we gather feedback and monitor the quality of services provided by private lawyers.

Key challenges

- Ensuring that legal aid clients receive a consistent quality of service, whether they are supported by a private or in-house lawyer.
- Developing an audit framework that makes it easy for private lawyers to submit files and other requested information for review.
- Maintaining and increasing the number of private practitioners on our panel to respond to market failure in some regional locations, especially in family law and care and protection.

National Legal Aid

National Legal Aid (NLA) represents the eight state and territory legal aid commissions in Australia, including Legal Aid NSW. We work with NLA to deliver significant national projects and advocate for resourcing for legal aid commissions.

Over the past year, NLA has engaged with the Attorney-General's Department and key parliamentarians to advocate for increased investment under the new National Access to Justice (NAJP) funding agreement, with an emphasis on support for family law services.

Launching the private practitioners census report

NLA conducted a national census of legal aid private practitioners in 2024 in partnership with the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. This landmark study was the first of its kind in Australia and only the second globally.

The report revealed that most legal aid work is being carried out by women as sole practitioners or in very small firms. It confirmed a growing shortage of private practitioners undertaking legal aid work, particularly in rural and remote areas of Australia. Despite strong and compassionate commitment to delivering legal aid, private practitioners are largely unable to continue their work due to unsustainably low fees. They also shared frustrations that some of our processes aren't clear or easy to follow.

NLA launched the report at the Legal Aid NSW Central Sydney Office, joined by representatives from the Law Council of Australia and the NSW Attorney General's office. The launch also included a pre-recorded address from then Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus.

As a result of the findings, NLA is calling on the Standing Council of Attorneys-General to commit to a review of private lawyer fees, grants and funding options. NLA aims to secure increased Commonwealth funding to address the fee disparity for private practitioners and prevent the loss of experienced legal aid lawyers.

Promoting trauma-informed practice

With You is a national training program that promotes the provision of trauma-informed, rights-based legal services to people experiencing distress, mental health concerns, or suicidality.

Launched in 2022, the program was co-designed by people with lived experience, legal professionals and academics. Sessions are co-facilitated by trainers with lived experience.

More than 200 organisations in the legal assistance sector have participated in training on trauma-informed and rights-based practice, through a mix of:

- in-person workshops

- facilitated online sessions, and
- self-paced eLearning modules.

Workshops have been delivered in every capital city and in regional centres, including Alice Springs, Cairns, Townsville, Bunbury and Launceston. Online training sessions have helped expand the program to regional and remote areas.

Over 800 lawyers, support staff and allied professionals have attended sessions, and more than 2,600 eLearning courses have been completed. The team have held leadership workshops with every legal aid commission to support trauma-informed organisational culture and practice.

This year, the project won a LearnX Platinum Award and was a finalist in the 2025 Australian Institute of Training and Development Excellence Awards in the Best Blended Learning Solution category. An independent evaluation in 2025 found the program has had a substantial impact on participants at both an individual and organisational level.

A one-stop shop for child support

NLA partnered with child support teams across jurisdictions to create their Legal Aid National Child Support webpage. The page provides contact information for services in every state to enable those seeking legal advice or assistance with a child support matter to get help.

The year ahead

- Continue developing and launch a strategic plan in collaboration with the directors of each of the state and territory legal aid commissions.

Programs we administer

We administer funding for several organisations that provide legal help to clients.

We also coordinate the Cooperative Legal Service Delivery (CLSD) Program, which supports 12 regional justice partnerships in NSW. Each partnership builds and nurtures a network of legal assistance and community services. This network helps increase access to justice and improve legal and social outcomes for people experiencing social or economic disadvantage, or dislocation.

A regional coordinator hosts a network meeting four times a year, and partnerships develop an action plan every second year to guide their work.

Community legal centres

Legal Aid NSW administers funding for the Community Legal Centres (CLC) Program in NSW on behalf of the NSW Government, Commonwealth Government and Public Purpose Fund.

The CLC Program funds 34 organisations through the Community Legal Centres Program, including generalist and specialist community legal centres, the state peak body Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW) and the Court Support Scheme. The CLC Program also funds the Aboriginal Legal Access Program and the Children’s Court Assistance Scheme, which provide complementary non-legal support services in courts and local communities.

CLCs are independent, non-government organisations that provide free legal services to the public, focusing on people facing social and financial disadvantage. In addition to funding available through the CLC Program, centres may also receive funding from various other government and non-government sources.

Funding and services

This year, we administered \$50,359,995 of CLC Program grant funding to community legal centres and CLCNSW. This includes some one-off Commonwealth and state funding for disaster-related legal assistance, migration services, and a statewide financial abuse service. For further details regarding this funding, see Appendix 4.

Funding by source

Source	Total funding
NSW Government and Public Purpose Fund	\$18,520,078
Commonwealth funding	\$31,839,917

Fact file

In 2024–25, CLCs funded through the CLC Program:

- assisted 34,169 people
- provided 39,859 legal advice services and performed 10,871 legal tasks for clients
- opened 3,460 representation services and closed 3,196 representation services, including 962 court and tribunal services
- provided 4,654 duty lawyer services
- delivered 1,029 community legal education activities and created 299 resources
- made 73,413 referrals, and
- provided 20,752 information services.*

**Service and client data provided by national peak body, Community Legal Centres Australia.*

First Nations Cadetship Program celebrates a successful year

The CLC Program continued to administer funding to the Community Legal Centres First Nations Cadetship Program in 2024–25. Managed by peak body CLCNSW, the cadetship aims to address the underrepresentation of First Nations people working in the legal sector. It provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students with the opportunity to undertake paid work experience at CLCs across NSW.

Cadets are in their final two years of a degree in law, social work, communications or community development. Cadets undertake 90-day paid placements at a specialist or generalist community legal centre, with optional two-week placements in rural, regional and remote centres.

In 2024–25, the cadetship employed nine students in CLCs across NSW. The cadets and the 15 CLCs involved in the cadetship program have shared overwhelmingly positive feedback, highlighting the program's success in delivering meaningful outcomes.

Cadets observed court proceedings and Aboriginal court models, received legal training at Sydney law firms, and engaged in mentoring, networking and judiciary interactions. The program is supported by a cadetship administrator and the CLCNSW Aboriginal Advisory Group, who provide training and guidance.

Additional Commonwealth funding improves the migration system

In 2024, the Australian Government allocated \$9.2 million of Commonwealth funding to expand services supporting people seeking asylum for two years to address visa backlogs.

Two specialist CLCs, the Immigration Advice and Rights Centre and the Refugee Advice and Casework Service, received funding. They were able to assist clients appealing Permanent Protection Visa decisions made by the Department of Home Affairs or the ART, previously known as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Most of the funding was provided in 2024–25, with the CLCs receiving \$7.302 million. Funding allowed CLCs to hire additional staff to deliver legal services to people seeking asylum.

Over the funding period, the two CLCs assisted 980 clients, provided 1,238 legal advice sessions, completed 499 legal tasks and provided 195 representation services.

Improving our financial management processes

One of the primary roles of the CLC Program Unit is to ensure accountability in how public funds are used. In early 2025, the program worked with an external accounting firm to improve the way the program receives and reviews financial information from CLCs.

The program's financial services project aimed to improve policies and processes and develop simple and easy-to-use reporting templates based on requirements from CLCs and CLCNSW.

The accounting firm reviewed the CLC Program's financial reporting requirements and advised on best practice principles. New templates were developed and were well received. We will continue to work with the accounting firm to create tailored resources for CLCs in 2025–26.

Visiting CLCs across the state

In 2024, we visited a mix of regional and metropolitan CLCs in NSW and met teams in Dubbo, Armidale, Wollongong, Nowra and Sydney. Visits help us connect with CLC staff, understand their work and gain insight into the challenges impacting clients, teams and the services we provide.

The year ahead

- We will work with CLCs, CLCNSW and DCJ to deliver the objectives of the new National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–30.
- We will support the NSW Government tendering process to allocate new Commonwealth funding for CLCs and for the Far West region.
- We will work with the CLCs and CLCNSW to deliver the Aboriginal Legal Access Program which will co-design a consultation process that enhances culturally safe services and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across the CLC sector.

Key challenge

- Over the next 12 months, CLCs will continue to transition to new case management systems. We will work closely with the national and state peak bodies and CLCs to support this change and ensure we meet requirements under the National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–30.

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program

Legal Aid NSW administers funding for specialist domestic and family violence support services across the state through our Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program (WDVCAP) Unit.

The WDVCAP Unit administers state government funding for Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCASs), the largest frontline service for women experiencing domestic and family violence in NSW. These services provide women with information, advocacy, safety planning, referrals, case management and support through the court process at all NSW local courts. In 2024–25, WDVCASs assisted 69,801 clients, including 40,800 new clients.

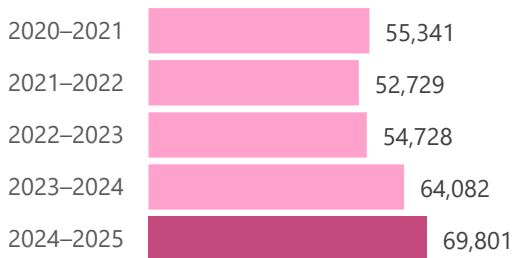
WDVCASs play a key role in the NSW Government's Safer Pathway program, including providing secretariat support and victim-survivor liaison for Safety Action Meetings (SAMs) across the state. SAMs are local interagency meetings that aim to reduce the risk to victim-survivors at serious threat of injury or death due to domestic and family violence.

We also administer Commonwealth funding for the social support component of the Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS), a national scheme of integrated legal and social support for families affected by domestic and family violence and going through the family law process. In 2024–25, FASS social support workers assisted 3,062 clients.

Fact file

- 13% of WDVCAS clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- 9% of WDVCAS clients identified as being from a culturally diverse background.

Number of women supported by Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services



Successful forums bring frontline domestic and family violence staff together

In June 2025, the WDVCAP team organised two successful forums for specialist domestic and family violence practitioners from across the state.

On 23 and 24 June, over 25 staff gathered for the inaugural FASS Social Support Service Forum. The Honourable Chief Justice William Alstergren provided an opening address, and Senior Judicial Registrar Brian Glendenning spoke about the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia's approach to domestic and family violence matters. Attendees heard a victim-survivor speak about the help the FASS had provided to her, as well as from a range of other speakers.

On 25 and 26 June, over 350 WDVCS staff came together for two days of networking and learning. Chris Bath, journalist and ABC radio presenter, was master of ceremonies and keynote speakers included Jelena Dokic, tennis champion and broadcaster, and Grace Tame, advocate for victim-survivors of child sexual abuse and former Australian of the Year. These speakers embodied the forum's theme of strength, resilience and courage, and reflected on the power of using one's voice for positive change.

Training roadshow launches the Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool

In March and April 2025, WDVCS Unit team members successfully delivered in-person training to over 300 frontline staff on a road trip to 27 locations across the state. Training sessions prepared specialist domestic and family violence services for the launch of the redesigned Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool on 31 May 2025.

Team members had the pleasure of visiting WDVCSs in person and seeing the amazing communities in which these vital frontline services work, from Lightning Ridge to Albury, and Broken Hill to Maroubra.

The year ahead

- We will work with WDVCSs to continue the WDVCS and NSW Police Force Co-location Pilot and the WDVCS Hearing Support Pilot at their current sites. The NSW Government has committed funding to extend these pilots until 30 June 2027 as part of a \$272.7 million investment in domestic and family violence responses in the 2025–26 budget.
- We will support WDVCS and FASS staff as they embed the new Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool for specialist domestic and family violence support services in their daily practice.
- We will continue to improve DFV Connect, the online client and case management system used by WDVCS and FASS staff, with a particular focus on reporting.

Key challenge

- Continuing to improve frontline responses for people impacted by domestic and family violence amid rising demand. We will work with our key partners to demonstrate client need and the value of WDVCS and FASS engagement.

Creating accessible and efficient office spaces

This year, we managed several detailed projects to make our facilities more efficient, productive and welcoming while ensuring that essential services continued without interruption.

Establishing a full-service office in Moree

Originally designed as a fly-in-fly-out operation, our Moree Office has been transitioned into a full-service site. The office was established in response to strong community need and extensive consultation with community partners and other organisations. It reflects our shared commitment with the government to improving access to justice in rural and regional areas. The new office will be officially opened and commence operations in July 2025.

Our Facilities Team worked closely with the local Aboriginal community and created a dedicated Aboriginal culturally safe area: a relaxed, informal space with comfortable seating where clients can meet with staff in a respectful and familiar way. This has been well received and will be considered in future fit-outs across the organisation.

Innovative office conversion at Parramatta

We converted a level of our existing Marsden St space, allowing us to bring 100 additional staff into one state-of-the-art office. We installed specialised acoustic roof-cloud panelling above each workstation to ensure confidentiality and a comfortable auditory environment.

Staff have praised the new space, and the project's success offers a model for how we can implement open-plan accommodation more widely.

A boardroom that reflects our purpose and people

In 2025, we completed a long-overdue refurbishment of our boardroom. The new boardroom is bright, modern and fully accessible, with state-of-the-art technology, improved acoustics and Australian-made, sustainably sourced furniture.

The year ahead

- We will move our Coffs Harbour Team into their new office before the end of 2025, and our Blacktown Team into their new office by April 2026.
- We will continue to co-design our new Albury Office in partnership with the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

Key challenge

- Meeting electric vehicle requirements under the NSW Government's net zero emissions plan. We don't own our buildings and rely on landlords to install chargers. We're working with the DPE to address barriers and ensure all new buildings we lease include facilities for electric vehicles.

Technology

Innovative, secure and user-centred technology solutions support and enhance service delivery for our staff and clients across Legal Aid NSW.

Building our new system for administering legal aid

We continued work on our new legal aid application system, LA Apply – the new digital platform that will replace our 18-year-old ATLAS grants management system. LA Apply aims to simplify the application process, reduce administrative delays and provide a consistent, user-friendly experience for clients, staff and private lawyers. It will enable faster decisions and more timely access to services.

Staff from across the organisation have played a vital role in shaping the design of LA Apply. It is expected to improve decision-making, communication, and application tracking, making legal support easier to access and navigate. It is a key part of our broader digital transformation and supports our strategic goal of improving access to justice through inclusive, future-ready technology.

Modernising our equipment and systems

We delivered a range of technology improvements directly informed by staff feedback. These improvements allow staff to work more efficiently, enhancing service delivery to clients. We:

- sourced a new laptop model and replaced over 350 devices
- transitioned to Windows 11, enhancing system performance and security
- introduced biometric login options to streamline access and reduce reliance on passwords
- upgraded Always On VPN remote access
- increased office bandwidth and expanded Wi-Fi coverage
- conducted more in-person visits to regional offices, complementing remote support and strengthening engagement with frontline teams
- expanded technology training, and
- refreshed our meeting room technology to better support hybrid meetings and video conferencing.

The year ahead

- We will continue our work to replace our legacy grants management system with our new, modern digital platform, LA Apply.
- We will develop stage two of our online client portal, introducing secure document sharing and enhancing appointment features.

- We will replace our existing telephone system with a hybrid solution that integrates Microsoft Teams and extended Genesys call centre software.
- We will analyse opportunities to safely integrate AI to make services more efficient and inclusive.

Key challenge

- Managing the transition to LA Apply, our new system for administering legal aid, in a way that minimises disruption for staff, clients and private lawyers. We'll focus on clear communication, tailored training and strong engagement with teams across the organisation and private lawyers, listening to feedback and adapting where required.
- Incorporate the use of AI to help our staff to do their work.

Management and accountability

Providing clients with exceptional legal help requires our Board's support, our Executive Team's guidance, and strong, fair governance and management processes. We need a diverse workforce that is supported to build their skills and stay physically and mentally healthy.



Legal Aid NSW CEO Monique Hitter congratulates Wagga Wagga Solicitor in Charge Emille Thomas on her win at our 2024 CEO Awards.

Key activities of the Board

The Board of Legal Aid NSW comprises 10 members, including the Chair and the CEO of Legal Aid NSW. The members of the Board determine our broad policies and strategic priorities, and they monitor risks.

Meetings of the Board

The Board held six meetings in 2024–25.

Engagement with the Board

The Board is advised by:

- the Legal Aid NSW Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), which advises on budgetary and internal audit matters, and other areas of organisational risk, and
- the Closing the Gap Project Board, which monitors and guides our strategies to meet the socio-economic outcome targets under Closing the Gap.

At each meeting, the Board is provided with financial statements, the minutes from ARC meetings and reports on complaints, safety, health and wellbeing, cybersecurity, organisational performance and achievements against the strategic plan.

Decisions of the Board 2024–25

27 August 2024

- Agreed to participate in the Board Observership Program and appointed Sharon Bennett as an observer under the program.
- Approved changes to the fee scales for expert evidence.
- Approved the Legal Aid Review Panels Policy and guidelines.
- Approved a new policy for applicants subject to the Commonwealth Safety Order Scheme.
- Wrote to members of the dissolved Legal Aid NSW Racism and Inclusion Consultative Subcommittee to provide them with feedback on our progress in the first year of our Diversity Equity and Inclusion Project Plan. Items implemented under the plan include the launch of our Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework.
- Noted proposed policy work included in Project Delta, a Strategic Law Reform Unit update and a review of Legal Aid NSW external communications.

29 October 2024

- Welcomed Elizabeth McEntyre to her first meeting of the Board and acknowledged Monique Hitter's 25 years of service to Legal Aid NSW.
- Approved the establishment of the Legal Aid Review Panels (LARPs) and the appointment of members.

- Noted an update on a review of progress on Project Delta conducted by independent reviewers nominated by the Department of Customer Service.
- Noted the results of the NSW Government Customer Experience Survey.
- Noted updates on the 2024 People Matter Employee Survey, the Legal Aid NSW Client Portal, Civil Law Blueprint implementation, service disruption and crisis plans, and the development of new Aboriginal employment and client service strategies.

28 November 2024

- Approved the appointment of Kristen Wydell as an independent member of the ARC from 1 March 2025.
- Noted a report from the ARC on its annual activities.

4 February 2025

- Attended Aboriginal cultural safety training.

25 February 2025

- Approved an increase in the base hourly rate for private solicitors in Commonwealth family and civil law matters.
- Approved an 18.2 percent increase in fees for counsel and in solicitor fees not based on the hourly rate.
- Approved a new policy for Commonwealth pensions, benefits and allowance matters.
- Approved miscellaneous policy changes to reflect the processes of the new Administrative Review Tribunal.
- Noted a comparative analysis of private lawyer fees and eligibility policies in Commonwealth family law matters across the eight legal aid commissions.
- Proposed eligibility policies for care and protection matters and for crime matters, including related updates to the simplified means test.
- Proposed new fee scales for care and protection matters and district court appeals.
- Noted a presentation on the regional graduate program for crime solicitors, an update on the development of an AI policy for legal practice, an update on the enterprise risk register and an update on suicide prevention initiatives.

29 April 2025

- Approved the simplified means test for local court criminal matters and district court appeals.
- Approved a new civil law policy on subpoenas to a complainant and incidental amendments to additional civil law policies.
- Noted a paper on the comparison of family law fees and policies across jurisdictions and a paper on the current state of private practitioner panels.

24 June 2025

- Acknowledged Alison McRobert's appointment as a commissioner to the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW.
- Approved changes to the civil law policy for guardianship matters.
- Approved the appointment of Sue Gilchrist as Chair of the ARC subject to confirmation of Board re-appointment and acceptance on the NSW Treasury ARC chair and member pre-qualified list.
- Approved increases to the housing deduction for metropolitan areas and to allowable asset amounts under our means test.
- Approved changes to allow for new emergency payments under the means test and associated changes to the simplified means test.
- Noted updates on generative AI and legal practice, bail centralisation and psychological workers' compensation claims.

Updating fees for expert evidence

To increase consistency and transparency, we reviewed fees paid to experts across civil, family and criminal law in 2024–25. Following this review, the Board approved several changes to the fees paid for expert evidence from psychologists and psychiatrists. It increased fees paid for single expert reports in family law matters, formalised fees paid in some crime matters and published a fee scale for expert evidence in civil law matters for the first time.

The year ahead

- We will continue to establish policies that simplify Legal Aid NSW processes and improve client services.
- We will establish strategies to address the unavailability of private practitioners for legal aid work in some parts of the state.
- We will improve our external communications.

Key challenges

- Meeting the increasing need for legal aid services given the shortage of private practitioners available for legal aid work in some parts of the state.
- Managing cybersecurity and AI-related risks.
- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff.

Board members | 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025



Craig Smith

Dip Law (BAB), Dip Crim (SYD)

Chair

Attended six of six meetings

Craig Smith was appointed by the NSW Attorney General as Chair of the Legal Aid NSW Board in February 2013. Mr Smith has been reappointed until 26 September 2025.

A former judicial registrar of the District Court of NSW, Mr Smith has four decades of experience in the administration of justice in NSW. He has held various government legal and policy positions, including senior positions with the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. He was a director of court services and then director of judicial support before his appointment as a judicial registrar in 2010.



Monique Hitter

BSW, Dip Law

Chief Executive Officer

Attended six of six meetings

Monique is currently the CEO of Legal Aid NSW and was appointed to the role in July 2022. Prior to this, she was the Acting CEO from November 2021. Monique was our Deputy CEO from November 2018 to November 2021 and prior to that was the Director, Civil Law for 11 years.

Monique has been practising law since 1997 and has also served as a senior member of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal in the Administrative and Equal Opportunity Division.

In over 30 years working in social justice, Monique is especially proud of having established the Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities and the Children's Civil Law Service, and of expanding the reach and scope of the Legal Aid NSW Civil Law Program, such that the Productivity Commission in its landmark Inquiry into Access to Justice Arrangements stated that it set the national benchmark for the provision of civil law services.

More recently, in her role as Deputy CEO, Monique led a process to establish new policies in response to sexual harassment and unacceptable behaviour, the development of the Family Law Blueprint and the Legal Aid NSW response to the pandemic.



Peggy Dwyer

BA LLB (ANU), PhD (University of Edinburgh)

Board member

Attended three of six meetings

Peggy Dwyer was appointed as a representative of the NSW Bar Association by the NSW Attorney General and has been reappointed until 26 September 2025.

Dr Dwyer was called to the bar in 2010 after more than 10 years as a solicitor and was appointed Senior Counsel in 2023.

She has a busy practice in criminal law, inquests, commissions of inquiry and medical disciplinary law. She appeared as Senior Counsel Assisting the NSW Coroner in the Inquest into the Deaths at Bondi Junction and for the Northern Territory Coroner in the inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker. She appeared as Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission into the Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse and as Counsel for NAAJA in the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

Dr Dwyer appears in a wide range of criminal matters, including jury trials, appeals, the Children's Court and State Parole Authority hearings.

As a solicitor, she worked for the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited, the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) in the Northern Territory and the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office. Dr Dwyer was an Associate to Justice Michael Kirby in the High Court of Australia between 1995 and 1996.



Ainslie van Onselen

LLB (UWA), MAppFin, GDipAppFin (Finsia), GAICD

Board member

Attended six of six meetings

Ainslie van Onselen was appointed by the NSW Attorney General as a representative of consumer and community interests, with her current term extended to 26 September 2025.

For more than 20 years, Ms van Onselen enjoyed a parallel career as a law partner and non-executive director before progressing into senior executive roles at Westpac. Since May 2020, she has served as the Chief Executive Officer of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CAANZ).

Ms van Onselen is passionate about social justice, inclusion and diversity. She previously held the role of Global Director of Women's Markets, Inclusion and Diversity for Westpac and currently chairs Kambala Girls School and Chartered Accountants Worldwide, a global network of 15 leading chartered accountancy institutes with 1.8 million members and students across more than 190 countries. She is a non-executive director of Global Accounting Alliance and share registry company Automic Group, and a former Deputy Chairperson of the Insurance Commission of Western Australia.

A member of Chief Executive Women Australia, an Australian Financial Review Women of Influence winner and a former 40 under 40 WA Business News and University of Western Australia Award winner, Ms van Onselen was invited to represent CAANZ and the accounting and auditing professions at the Australian Government's 2022 jobs summit.

As well as steering CAANZ's strategy and digital and data transformation, Ms van Onselen drives CAANZ's inclusion and diversity agenda and is a prominent advocate for global sustainability and environmental, social and corporate governance standards.



Michael Coleman

M Comm, B Comm, FAICD Life, FCA, FCPA

Board member

Attended five of six meetings

Michael Coleman was appointed as a representative who, in the opinion of the NSW Attorney General, possesses skills and experience that would benefit Legal Aid NSW. Mr Coleman has been reappointed until 26 September 2025.

The Board also appointed Mr Coleman as Chair of the ARC from 29 June 2016.

Mr Coleman is a chartered accountant. He retired from KPMG in 2011 following a career that included 30 years as an audit partner and practice leader.

Mr Coleman sits on several other boards and audit committees and was a board member of Macquarie Bank Limited, having been a director and Chair of the audit committees of Macquarie Group and Macquarie Bank from 2012 until 2022. He was Chair of Bingo Industries Limited from listing in 2017 until its takeover in 2021, was a member of the Reserve Bank of Australia's audit committee and previously held several significant roles with the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Mr Coleman is an Adjunct Professor at the University of New South Wales Australian School of Business, Deputy Chair and Audit Committee Chair of Planet Ark Environmental Foundation, a Governor and Chairman of the Risk and Audit Committee of The Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine and Cell Biology and a director of the Bionics Institute. He is also Chair of the Advisory Board of The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife.



Richard Henry

AM, MB BS, MD, FRACP, Dip Clin Epi

Board member

Attended six of six meetings

Richard Henry was appointed as a representative who, in the opinion of the NSW Attorney General, possesses skills and experience that would benefit Legal Aid NSW. Dr Henry has been reappointed until 26 September 2025.

Dr Henry is an Emeritus Professor at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). He was a Professor of Paediatrics at both the University of Newcastle and UNSW and has held senior leadership roles in both the university and health sectors. From 2006 to 2012, he was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Vice-President at UNSW.

Since his retirement from UNSW, he has worked as a consultant in health and higher education. He is currently Professor of Health Leadership in the Macquarie Business School at Macquarie University. Dr Henry's current unpaid roles include Director of the Children's Cancer Institute and Director of Luminesce Alliance. He was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia in 2007 for service to paediatric respiratory medicine as a clinician, researcher, educator and mentor, and for serving in a range of roles with professional medical organisations.



Sue Gilchrist

LLM, BA LLB (Hons)

Board member

Attended five of six meetings

Sue Gilchrist was appointed as a representative who, in the opinion of the NSW Attorney General, possesses skills and experience that would benefit Legal Aid NSW. Ms Gilchrist has been reappointed until 26 September 2025.

Ms Gilchrist is a senior disputes partner at Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, specialising in intellectual property and tech. She has been a lead support partner for the firm's pro bono team. She is

experienced in all areas of intellectual property, including patents, designs, copyright, trademarks, passing off and confidential information. She is regularly recognised in the top ranking of legal profession directories for intellectual property litigation.

Ms Gilchrist has strong management experience, having previously served as the Regional Managing Partner of Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer for Asia and Australia. She served two terms as an elected member of the Global Council for Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer and was a member of its Audit and Risk Committee. She has also been the Chair of her firm's global governance body for Pro Bono and Responsible Business, and Co-Chair of the firm's Reconciliation Action Plan Steering Committee.

She is also a member of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee of the Art Gallery of NSW.



Elizabeth McEntyre

BSW (Hons 1 UoN), MIndigHlth, Grad Cert IRTP, PhD Social Work and Criminology (UNSW)

Board member

Attended five of six meetings (appointed 21 October 2024)

Elizabeth McEntyre was appointed to the Board on 21 October 2024 by the NSW Attorney General as a representative of bodies providing community legal services.

Elizabeth is a Worimi Guringai and Wonnarua Elder belonging to Lands, Seas and Waters spanning Port Stephens, the Myall Lakes, the Barrington Tops and the Hunter Valley in NSW.

Elizabeth is a mental health social worker in disability and justice, a research consultant and a member of the NSW Mental Health Review Tribunal conducting civil and forensic hearings. Her career portfolio involves employment in leadership positions with the Aboriginal community-led sector and the Commonwealth and NSW public service, providing her with broad knowledge and experience in primary health, social and emotional wellbeing, criminal justice, disability, community capacity uplift, Aboriginal cultural fishing, small business, strengthening Aboriginal families and Aboriginal ageing and aged care. For her significant contribution to Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing and criminal justice research, Elizabeth received the 2024 Indigenous Allied Health Australia Excellence in Research Award.

Elizabeth serves on several boards and committees, and is an advisor to professional associations, health consultants, universities, and consultative groups, including the

Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Health and Aged Care. She volunteers her time to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Port Stephens Great Lakes Marine Park.



Alison McRobert

BA LLB (Wollongong University)

Board member

Attended four of six meetings (resigned 23 May 2025)

Alison McRobert was appointed by the NSW Attorney General as a representative of Unions NSW.

Ms McRobert was the legal counsel and manager of legal services at the Public Service Association of NSW from 2019 until May 2025. She has specialised in employment and industrial law in the NSW public sector for over 20 years and previously worked at several employment law firms including McNally Jones Staff and Haywards Solicitors. Ms McRobert previously served as a director at Federation Law from 2013 to 2016. In November 2020, Ms McRobert was appointed as an advisory member of the Rule Committee of the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales. On 2 June 2025, Ms McRobert was appointed as a commissioner to the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW.



Jacqueline Dawson

MA, LLB (University of Sydney), GAICD

Board member

Attended six of six meetings

Jacqueline Dawson is the Principal of Sexton Family Law and an Accredited Specialist in Family Law. Admitted to practice as a solicitor in 1994 and an Accredited Specialist since 2001, Ms Dawson began practice in early 1995 with the firm then known as Robyn Sexton & Associates and remained as a principal of the firm when Judge Sexton was appointed to the Federal Magistrates Court.

Ms Dawson is a Councillor of the Law Society of NSW. Within the NSW Law Society, she is presently Chair of the Specialist Accreditation Board, Co-Chair of the Family Law Committee, Chair of the Professional Conduct Committee and a member of the Audit Risk and Finance Committee.

She also serves as a committee member of the Sydney University Law Extension Committee and the Legal Qualifications Committee of the Legal Profession Admission Board.

Organisational structure – as at 30 June 2025



Senior Executive

Key data on our Senior Executive

Number of Senior Executives

Band	2023–24	2024–25
Band 3 Senior Executives	1	1
Band 2 Senior Executives	5	6
Band 1 Senior Executives	15	10
Total number of Senior Executives	21	17

Average Executive remuneration

Band	2023–24	2024–25
Band 3 Senior Executives	\$391,189	\$391,189
Band 2 Senior Executives	\$297,324	\$302,332
Band 1 Senior Executives	\$241,482	\$245,990

Percentage of total employee expenditure related to Senior Executives

Band	2023–24	2024–25
Band 3 Senior Executives	0.2%	0.2%
Band 2 Senior Executives	1.3%	0.8%
Band 1 Senior Executives	2.4%	1.2%
Total for all Senior Executives	3.9%	2.2%

Changes to our Senior Executive in 2024–25

Departures

- Alexandra Colquhoun, former Executive Director, Family Law, departed Legal Aid NSW.
- Jocelyn Flanagan, former Director, Grants, departed Legal Aid NSW.
- Michael Brodie, former Director of Finance, departed Legal Aid NSW.
- The National Legal Aid roles of Director, Disability Royal Commission and Director, Defence and Veterans Legal Service, held by Susannah O'Reilly and Jasmine Stanton, ended when these services concluded.

Appointments

- Anna Baltins was permanently appointed Director, Domestic and Family Violence.
- Bianca Dufty was appointed Deputy Director, Family Law.

- Katie Kelso, former Deputy Director, Family Law, was appointed Executive Director, Family Law.
- Stuart Crawford was appointed Executive Director, Corporate Services and CFO.

Our senior executive as at 30 June 2025

Band 3 Legal Aid NSW staff

- Monique Hitter, CEO.

Band 2 Legal Aid NSW staff

- Jane Cipants, Executive Director, Client Service and Public Engagement.
- Katie Kelso, Executive Director, Family Law.
- Meredith Osborne, Executive Director, Civil Law.
- Robert Hoyles, Executive Director, Criminal Law.
- Stuart Crawford, Executive Director, Corporate Services and CFO.
- Trent Wilson, Executive Director, Digital Transformation.

Band 1 Legal Aid NSW staff

- Anna Baltins, Director, Domestic and Family Violence.
- Bianca Dufty, Deputy Director, Family Law.
- Cherie Pittman, Director, Legal Service & In-house Counsel.
- Jackie Finlay, Deputy Director, Civil Law.
- Kimberley Hamer, Director, Aboriginal Services.
- Koshala Nishaharan, Director, Enterprise Project Management.
- Melissa Burgess, Deputy Director, Criminal Law.
- Michelle Jones, Director, Human Resources.
- Wayne Gale, Director, Information and Communications Technology.

Band 1 National Legal Aid staff

- Katherine McKernan, Executive Director National Legal Aid.

Governance framework

Code of Conduct

Our Legal Aid NSW Code of Conduct addresses the requirements of the Public Service Commission and the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW) ethical framework provisions. The code:

- sets the legal, ethical and institutional context for ethical conduct
- provides advice to all employees on demonstrating ethical good practice in leadership, decision-making and other responsibilities, and
- clearly outlines the responsibility of all employees to know, understand and comply with the ethical and legal obligations that apply to them.

The Code of Conduct has been included in the Legal Aid NSW induction program and individual planning.

All our lawyers are bound by professional practice standards and comply with continuing professional development requirements.

Financial performance

Legal Aid NSW has a strong financial focus, robust budgets and clear, concise reporting to internal and external stakeholders.

Detailed monthly financial reports, including commentary and analysis, are prepared for the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and the Board. Members of the Executive also provide expert advice at ARC and Board meetings.

Members of the Audit and Risk Committee

Michael Coleman is a chartered accountant. He retired from KPMG in 2011 following a career that included 30 years as an audit partner and practice leader. Mr Coleman is the Chair of the Legal Aid NSW ARC and is also a member of the Legal Aid NSW Board. He also sits on several other boards and audit committees and was a director and chair of the Board Audit Committee at Macquarie Group Limited. He is currently an Adjunct Professor at the Australia School of Business, University of New South Wales.

Leah Fricke has had a 20-year executive career as a lawyer, governance professional and lecturer and has 10 years of experience as a non-executive director. She is an independent non-executive director of Columbus Capital and Forager Funds, the Independent Chair of the audit and risk committee for Western NSW Local Health District and an independent member of the audit and risk committee of Sydney Local Health District. Ms Fricke holds a Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne and an MBA from the University of Sydney. She is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia and a member of the Association of Professional Futurists.

Nicola Davis is a chartered accountant. She retired from KPMG in 2021 following a career that included 35 years as an audit and advisory partner and practice leader, specialising in providing services to state and federal Governments. Ms Davis is an independent non-executive director of Mutual Trust Pty Ltd, where she is Chair of the Audit Committee, the Cash Fund Compliance Committee and the Trustee Compliance Committee and a member of the Risk Committee. Ms Davis holds a Master of Arts (Economics) from the University of Cambridge, is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD) and is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia and New Zealand. She has previously held a number of other Board roles for various charities and foundations.

Kristen Wydell is a chartered accountant. She is currently General Manager, Professional Standards at Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand. Before working for the peak body, Ms Wydell was a partner at Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu in Audit, Advisory Quality and Risk. Ms Wydell holds a Bachelor of Business from the University of Technology Sydney and is a fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand. She is currently Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee for Pymble Ladies College and sits on its board.

Risk Management Framework

Legal Aid NSW conforms to the NSW Treasury requirement to have a risk management framework. We actively develop our risk maturity each year. This year, we finalised a comprehensive review of our Risk Management Framework in consultation with our ARC. We also completed our annual review of our enterprise risk register.

Fraud and corruption processes

Legal Aid NSW is committed to conducting business with honesty and transparency. Our Fraud and Corruption Control Framework outlines the steps we take to prevent fraud and other corrupt behaviour. Controls include responsibility structures, risk assessment, reporting systems, investigation standards and conduct and disciplinary standards. Our Fraud and Corruption Control Framework implements key parts of the framework and complements related policies, including the Code of Conduct and Public Interest Disclosure Policy.

The year ahead:

- We will conduct seven to eight audits and finalise a new three-year internal audit plan.
- We will continue to mature our Risk Management Framework, including conducting a comprehensive review of our Enterprise Risk Register.
- We will implement the third year of the Legal Aid NSW Strategic Plan 2023–28.

Legislative compliance and fair processes

Significant judicial decisions relating to the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW)

Malek & Kambar (2024) FedCFamC2F 1519

Section 117 of the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) says that the court must not order someone to pay costs related to the independent children's lawyer who worked on their case if they have "received legal aid in respect of the proceedings". In *Malek & Kambar (2024) FedCFamC2F 1519*, the court held that this was true if the person had received legal aid at any time during their case. They didn't need to be receiving legal aid at the time the order was made.

Legislative amendments that have impacted our work

Reviewing appeals where we have refused legal aid

In December 2024, amendments to the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW) enabled our Board to establish Legal Aid Review Panels to hear and determine appeals. You can read more about the new panels in our highlights section on page 30.

Protecting privacy and personal information

Legal Aid NSW manages personal information in accordance with our Privacy Management Plan. The plan explains how we manage personal information under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW) and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* (NSW).

In 2024–25, we updated our Privacy Management Plan to reflect system changes including the introduction of My Work Zone. We also updated our privacy policy.

We include privacy notices in our application forms and other public documents, and the In-house Counsel Unit guides staff in dealing with privacy issues and queries. We received no applications for internal review during the reporting period.

Right to information

Legal Aid NSW adopts a proactive approach to releasing information where possible. We review our published information regularly, and routinely upload information to our website that may be of interest to the public. We add and update policy documents, law reform submissions and a wide range of legal information publications and resources. Our legal information publications are available in a variety of community languages.

During the 2024–25 reporting period, we received 43 formal applications under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) (GIPA Act). Most of these were requests by individuals for their own personal information or applications made by legal representatives. The full details of these applications are set out in Appendix 7: Right to Information on page 171.

The year ahead

- We will present privacy training to ensure that all staff are aware of and comply with their obligations to protect personal and health information.
- We will seek to reform our processes under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act) to further protect client confidentiality.

Key challenge

- Ensuring consistently high-quality service delivery in light of evolving regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations, particularly in the areas of privacy and access to information.

Complaints handling

An open and efficient complaints process helps us improve our services and remain accountable to the people we serve.

In 2024–25, we received 205 frontline complaints. These included 69 complaints about wait times and customer service issues, three privacy-related complaints, 101 complaints about solicitor conduct (both in-house and private lawyers), 14 complaints about staff conduct and 18 other non-categorised complaints. These were handled locally and did not require a formal response or investigation.

We received 264 escalated complaints. These complaints required investigation and often a further explanation or action.

We received 175 enquiries from third parties querying another person's grant of aid.

We encourage all types of feedback – complaints, compliments and suggestions help us improve the quality of the services we provide and identify risks. This year, we received 95 compliments.

Complaints training for staff

All new Legal Aid NSW staff complete an induction, which includes training on feedback and complaints. We also train managers in complaints handling during our annual Managers Essentials course.

In 2024–25, we began facilitating iCare's Respect and Resilience, a three-and-a-half hour training session focused on de-escalation and managing wellbeing in the face of unreasonable client conduct.

In May 2025, the NSW Ombudsman provided a bespoke masterclass in managing unreasonable conduct by complainants to some of our senior managers with responsibility for responding to escalated complaints.

Our complaints and client services officers also work one-on-one with teams to support staff to better understand and respond to challenging client behaviour.

Complaint response times

Our complaints policy has two performance targets for complaint response times:

- 15 business days, or
- 60 business days for complaints about private lawyers.

Where we do not meet these response times for a complaint, we report this to the Legal Aid NSW Executive monthly. For information on complaints about private lawyers, see page 74.

Supporting our staff to provide outstanding customer service

We continued to invest in our people to ensure we deliver the best results for clients.

Legal help for all who need it

Our team at LawAccess NSW provides a range of legal information and referrals to anyone in NSW with a legal problem. In 2024–25, LawAccess NSW staff answered more than 165,684 calls from the public, an increase of two percent from the previous year.

LawAccess NSW refers callers to organisations across the legal assistance sector to ensure that people get the help and support they need. In 2024–2025, 18.7 percent of customers were booked into Legal Aid NSW advice services and 24.5 percent were referred to community legal centres for advice.

This year, 37.2 percent of calls were completed without the need for a further legal referral.

Chatting, the new way to get help

In 2024–2025, LawAccess NSW staff participated in 41,050 webchat sessions, an increase of almost 25 percent from the previous year.

Webchat sessions help Legal Aid NSW clients having technical issues registering for our client portal and provide members of the public with legal information and referrals. Where their issue is complex, customers can receive a call back from our phone service to continue their conversation and book an advice session with a Legal Aid NSW lawyer.

Demand for webchat support continues to grow. Users are increasingly familiar with engaging with services over webchat, and find it convenient, private and easy. Users who have completed post chat surveys about their experience using webchat gave us an average rating of four out of five stars.

Uplifting learning opportunities across our organisation

In 2024–25, we created opportunities for both legal and non-legal staff to develop their skills through leadership, learning and recognition initiatives.

- We launched the Learning Lab, a new self-directed portal that allows staff to access quality learning at their own pace.
- We began working on new career development initiatives, including cadetships, sponsored internships and scholarships aimed at building career pathways and increasing access to the legal profession for underrepresented groups.
- We launched a Leadership Development Framework which provides a clear, staged approach to leadership growth across Legal Aid NSW.

- We piloted a refreshed version of our Manager Essentials course and started developing a program for leaders of leaders.

Staff numbers over five years

Ensuring we have adequate staff helps us offer the best possible services to our clients.

Year	Full-time equivalent* staff as at the end of the financial year	Actual staff as at the end of the financial year
2020–21	1,272.00	1,440
2021–22	1,312.50	1,428
2022–23	1,407.00	1,591
2023–24	1,642.01	1,772
2024–25	1,672.02	1,858

*Under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW).

The year ahead

- We will improve the way we ask clients for their personal information and about their support needs and ensure all staff receive training on how to tailor services for clients.
- We will implement a revised quality assurance framework that embeds person-first service at LawAccess NSW. We will renew our focus on seeing the person before the problem and adjusting the service we provide to meet the customer where they are.
- We will support staff to access relevant training in our learning management system by expanding user guides and improving usability and accessibility.
- We will build an internal coaching capability to support mid-career leaders in line with our Leadership Development Framework.
- We will continue to strengthen our leadership development offerings, modernise our learning systems and embed a culture of recognition.

Keeping staff healthy and safe at work

Workers' compensation claims and associated costs

Staff recorded 397 workplace incidents in the 2024–25 financial year compared to 384 incidents last financial year, a 3.38 percent increase.

Of these incidents, 69.7 percent were related to unreasonable client conduct or threats from clients, a decrease of 4.2 percent since 2023–24.

There were 95 injury and illness notifications reported to our insurer, of which 65 progressed to a workers compensation claim. The total net amount paid for these 65 claims was \$345,161.51. Twenty-four were physical and 41 were psychological.

We spent a total of \$1,481,249 on all active workers compensation claims in 2024–25, with an overall claims breakdown of:

- 25 physical injuries totalling 9 percent of claims costs, and
- 46 psychological injuries totalling 91 percent of claims costs.

Legal Aid NSW was not involved in any prosecutions under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* in 2024–25. We experienced one notifiable incident under the Act, which is outlined below under the heading 'Responding to a serious security incident'.

Reportable workers compensation claims by mechanism

Mechanism	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Chemicals and other substances	-	-	1
Vehicle incidents and other	3	3	1
Falls, trips and slips	6	14	9
Hitting objects with a part of the body	4	4	3
Being hit by moving objects	5	1	2
Body stressing	8	6	7
Heat, electricity and other environmental factors	1	1	-
Biological factors	-	-	1
Mental stress	96	43	41
Total	123	72	65

Responding to a serious security incident

We responded swiftly and decisively following a serious security incident involving a homemade explosive device at our Gosford Office, ensuring the safety of staff and clients and continued service delivery.

Legal Aid NSW relocated operations within days and supported affected teams with interim resources and additional onsite security. A complex rebuilding program then began, including damage assessment, insurance claims and procurement of repairs.

The incident became the catalyst for an organisation-wide security review which has strengthened protections for staff and clients, particularly those in high-risk service areas. We reminded staff about our employee assistance program in the days following the incident to ensure they were aware of the supports available for them, and for their families.

Supporting staff through professional group supervision

Professional supervision has become a core element of our broader commitment to staff wellbeing. Facilitated by experienced external clinicians, group supervision sessions create a space for staff to reflect on the emotional and psychological dimensions of their work.

In 2024, we formalised and added structure to our existing supervision program to improve consistency and accessibility across the organisation. Twenty-two teams are actively involved, with 44 groups receiving quarterly sessions. As interest continues to grow, more teams are adopting this proactive approach to staff wellbeing.

Ongoing support for staff wellbeing

Our Safety, Health and Wellbeing Team oversee a suite of policies, procedures and guidelines that support workplace safety. Ongoing oversight continues for the Vicarious Trauma Framework, our Incident Reporting and Investigation Guidelines, and guidelines on managing work health and safety risks. The team continues to monitor policies addressing infectious diseases, work-related violence and aggression, and broader safety, health and wellbeing matters.

In 2024–25, several existing documents were reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aligned with compliance requirements. We made updates to our First Aid Guidelines, Managing Psychosocial Risks in the Workplace Policy, Safety, Health and Wellbeing Framework, Work Health and Safety Consultation Guidelines.

New resources were developed to further strengthen compliance and support the wellbeing of staff. These included a psychosocial hierarchy of controls, Hazardous Manual Tasks Guideline, critical incident support procedure, and a new poster on serious threats to staff safety. Tailored training was provided for staff on their due diligence obligations.

The year ahead

- We will transition to the SafetySuite system, a consistent platform for reporting and managing incidents, hazards and proactive safety initiatives to support our commitment to create a safe and responsive workplace.

Workforce diversity and equity

We are committed to recruiting and training diverse staff to ensure our organisation reflects our client base and our state.

Our staff networks

Legal Aid NSW has five staff networks that allow staff from diverse backgrounds to connect, share their experiences and provide feedback and advice to the Legal Aid NSW Executive.

- Aboriginal Staff Network.
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Staff Network.
- Disability and Carer Network.
- Legally Queer Staff Network.
- Young Professionals Network.

Our staff networks were crucial contributors to our Legal Aid NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan and Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework. You can read more about these documents in our 'Meeting the needs of diverse clients' section on page 48.

Celebrating at the Australian Disability Network awards

In 2025, our Disability and Carer Network was a finalist in the staff network category of the 2025 Australian Disability Network Impact Gala Awards. Network leaders attended the gala alongside human resources staff and Executive.

Creating our Respectful Workplace Support Team

The Respectful Workplace Support Team was established in July 2024 as a result of recommendations arising from Project Respect. The team provides advice and guidance to support staff in resolving workplace culture and conflict issues. They aim to reduce these issues by providing training, shaping policy and driving positive cultural change.

The team have supported 134 staff, conducted 85 presentations and created a new person-centred Complaints and Resolution Procedure to empower staff to resolve concerns early. The procedure will be published alongside new policies that clearly outline our commitment to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful workplace.

Developing our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028

In 2024–25, we developed our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028. It was a key outcome from Project Respect and a focus of our strategic plan. The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy establishes our vision to be "a diverse and fair organisation where employees belong and are proud to work, clients are supported, and all are empowered to thrive".

Partnering with the Australian Disability Network

We have maintained our Disability Confident Recruiter status with the Australian Disability Network for five years and we are working towards our sixth year of renewal, demonstrating our commitment to inclusive and accessible recruitment.

In 2024, we participated in the Australian Disability Network's Access and Inclusion Index for the first time. The index gives organisations insights into their strengths and suggests opportunities to increase accessibility and inclusivity for people with disability.

While we scored well in our first Access and Inclusion Index, we are now implementing the report's recommendations to further improve accessibility and inclusion for all staff. We are doing this in conjunction with implementation of our DIAP.

Achieving Carers NSW accreditation

Carers NSW is a peak body representing and supporting carers across NSW. Their Carers + Employers program defines best practice standards for supporting staff with caring responsibilities. It is the only accreditation program that formally recognises carer-friendly employers in Australia.

In 2024, Legal Aid NSW achieved Level 1 Activate accreditation, demonstrating our commitment to supporting our staff who are carers. We celebrated our accreditation during National Carers Week with an educational presentation by Carers NSW. Our disability staff network changed its name to better welcome and acknowledge carers. We are working towards achieving Level 2 Commit accreditation in 2025–26.

Providing managers with guidance on inclusive practice

As part of our ongoing commitment to diversity we created a Manager's Guide to Inclusive Practice. The guide provides practical information about what inclusion means and contains chapters focusing on specific staff groups, such as staff with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, staff who identify as LGBTQIA+ and culturally diverse staff. We are currently seeking staff feedback about the guide before it is finalised and launched.

Sharing pronouns using Microsoft Teams

Correctly using pronouns is an easy way to show that we value inclusion and are respectful of our trans and gender diverse colleagues.

In 2024, we turned on the Microsoft 365 pronoun feature, giving employees the option of including their pronouns on their profile card and making them visible on Microsoft Teams.

Advancing accessibility through workplace adjustments

In August 2024, a new workplace adjustment request form was launched. The form was developed in close consultation with the Workplace Adjustment Working Group and the

Disability and Carer Network. It was designed to simplify processes for staff requesting adjustments and improve accessibility and support.

In April 2025, our Workplace Adjustments Guidelines were reviewed and renamed the Workplace Adjustments Policy. The Workplace Adjustments intranet page was also refreshed and expanded with resources and guides to support both managers and staff.

We established a Workplace Adjustment Officer role to centralise requests and provide dedicated support for staff seeking workplace adjustments.

We approved just under 50 workplace adjustments, most of which covered ergonomic equipment, flexible working hours, and dimmable lighting.

The year ahead

- We will work towards the goals in our DIAP, including sharing resources and training modules on disability, carers and workplace adjustments on our intranet and providing and promoting contact points for managers within the Human Resources Division.
- We will monitor and report on the number of people who identify as having lived and living experience of disability and those who are carers through self-reporting and the People Matters Employee Survey.
- We will improve our Access & Inclusion Index score in partnership with the Australia Disability Network.

Key challenges

- Coordinating the successful implementation of the DIAP across a statewide organisation while continuing to prioritise ongoing service provision.

Legal education and capability development

We continued to upskill our staff to ensure they can deliver the best possible services to our clients.

Training for criminal lawyers

New training and development solicitor roles

The Criminal Law Division has established two roles to support the onboarding and development of new solicitors, particularly those new to criminal law.

Training and development solicitors provide advice and support on policies and practices and advise new solicitors on case law, legislation and advocacy.

They provide opportunities to enhance the skills and capabilities of new solicitors through training and learning, and support them to look after their wellbeing.

One-on-one mentoring support has been made available to 28 new solicitors, and three weeklong induction courses have been held for mentees.

Training for family lawyers

Supporting lawyers to implement legislative changes

During 2024–25, the Australian Government continued to reform the family law system, with significant changes to the *Family Law (Amendment) Act 2024* commencing on 10 June 2025. These changes:

- expanded the definition of economic and financial abuse
- added family violence as a factor for the court to consider when assessing contributions in property settlements and making spousal maintenance orders
- added family violence, wastage, liabilities and house needs as factors for the court to consider when assessing current and future needs in property settlements
- created frameworks for family pets in property settlements, and
- introduced frameworks designed to protect clients' sensitive information.

The Family Law Division created training webinars and resources to support in-house and panel lawyers to understand and apply these changes in their day-to-day practice and achieve the best possible outcomes for Legal Aid NSW clients.

Upskilling panel and in-house lawyers to perform new roles

We conducted training in February 2025 for panel lawyers seeking to be allocated work under the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme. The scheme protects victims of family violence by requiring that cross-examination must be conducted by a legal

representative. The day-long training covered the impacts of family violence, working with victims and perpetrators of violence, and the focus and parameters of the scheme.

We also conducted training for independent children's lawyers (ICLs). Twenty-six in-house and panel lawyers completed the three phases of NLA training and became eligible for the ICL panel.

Sustainability

We are committed to ensuring our procurement practices reflect our values by choosing suppliers with fair and sustainable business practices.



Disaster Response Legal Service Community Engagement Officer Melanie Townsend and Senior Solicitor Ma'ata Solofoni at the Woodbury Recovery Assistance Point ready to provide support to locals impacted by storms and floods in the Hunter region in January 2025.

Environmental responsibility

In December 2024, the NSW Government replaced the Government Resource Efficiency Policy with the Net Zero Government Operations Policy (NZGOP). This new policy sets broader, more ambitious targets for reducing emissions, improving energy efficiency, and supporting the circular economy.

We are six months into implementation and will continue to align our operations with these updated priorities.

Net zero focus area	Action	2024–25 progress
Circular economy and emissions reduction	Re-use workstations and furniture to reduce waste and emissions.	Durable, transferable furniture used in all fit-outs. Items refurbished through Corrective Services Industries to extend their lifespan.
Fleet decarbonisation	Transition to low-emission vehicles.	70% of our fleet is now hybrid, with 35 new hybrids added or replaced. All new vehicles meet mandated fuel efficiency standards.
Fleet electrification	Prepare for transition to electric vehicles.	We're exploring electric vehicle options for our city fleet. Infrastructure limitations are being addressed in partnership with the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).
Operational efficiency	Reduce fuel consumption despite fleet growth.	Our fuel use decreased due to our hybrid uptake. We're planning a full hybrid transition (excluding remote diesel vehicles) to commence next year.
Building energy performance	Maintain or improve National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) ratings for leased office space.	NABERS ratings are considered in all new leasing decisions. An audit of our current NABERS ratings is underway in partnership with DPE to inform future leasing and upgrade strategies. New and renewed leases aim to meet minimum energy performance standards under the NZGOP.

Ensuring a fair supply chain

Legal Aid NSW supports the NSW Government's commitment to addressing modern slavery through the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW). The Act recognises modern slavery as a severe violation of human rights that encompasses exploitative practices like human trafficking, slavery, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage and forced marriage.

Modern slavery describes situations where an offender undermines a victim's right to freedom using coercion, threats or deception. It is a human rights violation and a serious crime.

The Anti-slavery Commissioner did not raise any issues with Legal Aid NSW related to our obligations under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) during this reporting period.

Our key commitments

Zero-tolerance approach

Legal Aid NSW maintains a zero-tolerance stance on all forms of modern slavery, reflecting our commitment to uphold human rights and eliminate exploitative practices.

Support for legislation

We support the robust legal framework the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) provides to address and penalise modern slavery practices. We use the Act to guide our actions as an organisation.

Our key actions

As required by the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW), Legal Aid NSW has taken reasonable steps to combat modern slavery within its operations and supply chains.

These steps reflect a comprehensive approach to prevention, identification, mitigation, remedy and reporting. We are actively working towards creating a safer and more ethical operational environment, reducing the risk of modern slavery and fostering a culture of awareness and responsibility.

In 2023–24, we developed a modern slavery policy to provide a formal framework for addressing modern slavery issues. Implementation of this policy was placed on hold pending the release of the shared implementation plan being developed for NSW Government agencies with the support of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner.

We closely follow and attempt to mirror requirements published on buy.NSW and have recently reviewed and updated relevant provisions in our procurement policy.

The year ahead

- We will review our modern slavery risk profile to identify and implement any required new initiatives.

Financial performance

Key facts

- Our total income was \$609.7 million.
- Our total expenses were. \$608.5 million.
- Our net equity was \$62.4 million.

The year ahead

- We will continue to provide timely and relevant financial information to stakeholders.

Key challenge

- We will ensure Legal Aid NSW has the financial resources to fund the delivery of services to our clients.

In understanding our financial statements, it is helpful to note that the Legal Aid Commission of NSW (Legal Aid NSW) economic entity consists of two separate reporting entities: the Legal Aid NSW Commission (a statutory body) and the Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency (a government department). The Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency provides personnel services to the Legal Aid Commission.

Financial overview

Financial summary

Our net financial result was a surplus of \$591,000.

Category	2023–24 (\$M)	2024–25 (\$M)	Change %
Operating revenue	545.1	609.7	11.9%
Operating expenses	527.5	608.5	15.4%
Assets	124.8	88.47	(29.1%)
Liabilities	62.9	74.2	18.0%
Surplus	15.6	0.6	(96.2%)
Net equity	61.8	62.4	1.0%

Funding

Legal Aid NSW receives its government funding as a grant from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. The grant comprises income from the NSW Government and the Commonwealth Government. In addition, income is received from the Public Purpose Fund and client contributions.

Total income for 2024–25 was \$609.7million, and expenditure was \$608.5 million.

Key developments

Our financial result was a surplus of \$591,000, which is \$5.6 million more than our budgeted deficit of \$6.2 million.

We ended the year with net equity of \$62.4 million. Payments of \$183.7 million were made to private lawyers who provide legal aid services to our clients. These payments include disbursements for other professional services.

Where our money came from

Funding received in 2024–25	(\$M)
State appropriation, including Commonwealth funding provided under the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP)	\$457.3
Public Purpose Fund grant	\$47.0
Other grants	\$79.5
Acceptance by the Crown Entity of employees' benefits and other liabilities	\$6.0
Other sources	\$19.9
Total	\$609.7

How we spent our money (\$M)

Expense	(\$M)
Employee-related expenses	\$244.2
External legal services	\$187.7
Grants and subsidies	\$113.1
Other	\$63.5
Total	\$608.5

How we spent our money by program (\$M)

Program	(\$M)
Criminal law	\$269.5
Family law	\$156.2
Civil law	\$69.8
Community partnerships	\$113.0
Total	\$608.5

Financial results

Our financial result was a surplus of \$0.591 million, which is \$6.76 million more than our budgeted deficit of \$6.17 million.

Income

Total income for 2024–25 was \$609.7 million, and expenditure was \$608.5 million.

Funding from the NSW Government was \$314.27 million. Funding from the Commonwealth under the NLAP was \$159.4 million.

Acceptance by the Crown Entity of employees’ benefits and other liabilities was \$6.0 million.

Funding from other sources includes \$47.0 million from the Public Purpose Fund, \$63.5 million from other grants received and \$19.6 million from other sources.

Further details may be found in the notes to the financial statements that begin on page 121.

Expenses

Our major expenses for 2024–25 were:

- employee-related expenses of \$244.2 million (\$209.0 million in 2023–24), and
- payments to private lawyers and other professional services of \$187.6 million (\$171.6 million in 2023–2024).

Our financial performance over five years

Total expenses (\$M)

Year	Total expenses (\$M)
2020–2021	404.7
2021–2022	426.0
2022–2023	479.3
2023–2024	527.5
2024–2025	608.5

Surplus or deficit (\$M)

Year	Surplus or deficit (\$M)
2020–2021	-11.3
2021–2022	13.5
2022–2023	10.9

2023–2024	15.6
2024–2025	0.6

Budget outline 2024–25 (\$M)

Operating statement

Category	(\$M)
Revenue (including government contributions)	609.7
Expenditure	608.5
Other gains or losses	(0.6)
Net result	0.6

Balance sheet

Category	(\$M)
Current assets	88.5
Non-current assets	48.2
Total assets	136.7
Current liabilities	65.0
Non-current liabilities	9.2
Total liabilities	74.2
Net assets	62.4
Equity	62.4

Audited financial statements

Legal Aid Commission of NSW Statement by Members of the Board

Pursuant to *Division 7.2, part 7.6(4)* of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* and in accordance with a resolution of the Board of the Legal Aid Commission of NSW we declare on behalf of the Legal Aid Commission of NSW that in our opinion:

- 1 The Legal Aid Commission of NSW's financial statements are prepared in accordance with:
 - applicable Australian Accounting Standards (which include Australian Accounting Interpretations);
 - the requirements of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* and *Government Sector Finance Regulation 2024*; and
 - the Treasurer's Directions issued under the Act.
- 2 The accompanying financial statements present fairly the financial position, financial performance and cashflows of the Legal Aid Commission of NSW as at 30 June 2025.

Craig Smith

Chair



Date: 5 September 2025

Monique Hitter

Chief Executive Officer



Date: 5 September 2025



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales

To Members of the New South Wales Parliament

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales (the Commission), which comprise the Statement by the Members of the Board, the Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2025, the Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025, the Statement of Changes in Equity and the Statement of Cash Flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a Statement of Material Accounting Policy Information and other explanatory information of the Commission and the consolidated entity. The consolidated entity comprises the Commission and the entity it controlled at the year's end or from time to time during the financial year.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the applicable financial reporting requirements of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* (GSF Act), the *Government Sector Finance Regulation 2024* (GSF Regulation) and the Treasurer's Directions
- presents fairly the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the Commission and the consolidated entity.

My opinion should be read in conjunction with the rest of this report.

Basis for Opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under the standards are described in the 'Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements' section of my report.

I am independent of the Commission and the consolidated entity in accordance with the requirements of the:

- Australian Auditing Standards
- Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 'Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)' (APES 110).

Parliament promotes independence by ensuring the Auditor-General and the Audit Office of New South Wales are not compromised in their roles by:

- providing that only Parliament, and not the executive government, can remove an Auditor-General
- mandating the Auditor-General as auditor of public sector agencies
- precluding the Auditor-General from providing non-audit services.

I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with APES 110.

I believe the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

The Board's Responsibilities for the Financial Statements

The members of the Board are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the GSF Act, GSF Regulation and Treasurer's Directions. The Board's responsibility also includes such internal control as the Board determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Board is responsible for assessing the ability of the Commission and the consolidated entity to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

My objectives are to:

- obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error
- issue an Independent Auditor's Report including my opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but does not guarantee an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect material misstatements. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error. Misstatements are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions users take based on the financial statements.

A description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: www.auasb.gov.au/media/apzlwn0y/ar3_2024.pdf. The description forms part of my auditor's report.

The scope of my audit does not include, nor provide assurance:

- that the Commission and the consolidated entity carried out their activities effectively, efficiently and economically
- about the assumptions used in formulating the budget figures disclosed in the financial statements
- about the security and controls over the electronic publication of the audited financial statements on any website where they may be presented
- about any other information which may have been hyperlinked to/from the financial statements.

Joan Rey Uyanguren A/Director,
Financial Audit

Delegate of the Auditor-General for New South Wales 9

September 2025
SYDNEY

Legal Aid Commission of NSW
Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2025

		Consolidated			Commission	
		Budget	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
		2025	2025	2024	2025	2024
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses excluding losses						
Employee-related expenses	2(a)	226,425	244,157	209,010	546	768
Personnel services	2(a)	-	-	-	243,942	208,939
Operating expenses	2(b)	46,221	54,388	43,606	54,026	42,871
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	2(c)	8,631	9,506	8,422	9,506	8,422
Grants and subsidies	2(d)	115,327	113,084	94,992	113,084	94,992
Finance costs		10	(296)	(142)	(296)	(142)
Services provided by private practitioners	2(e)	187,644	187,664	171,630	187,664	171,630
Total expenses excluding losses		584,258	608,503	527,518	608,472	527,480
Revenue						
Sale of goods and services	3(a)	4,668	15,029	8,648	15,029	8,648
Investment revenue		-	235	414	235	414
Grants and contributions	3(b)	569,194	583,798	527,391	583,798	527,391
Acceptance by the Crown of employee benefits and other liabilities	3(c)	4,085	6,028	5,402	5,997	5,364
Other revenue		306	4,563	3,239	4,563	3,239
Total revenue		578,253	609,653	545,094	609,622	545,056
Operating result		(6,005)	1,150	17,576	1,150	17,576
Gain/(loss) on disposal		35	(6)	(42)	(6)	(42)
Other gains/(losses)		(200)	(553)	(1,885)	(553)	(1,885)
Net result from continuing operations	19	(6,170)	591	15,649	591	15,649
Total comprehensive income		(6,170)	591	15,649	591	15,649

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Legal Aid Commission of NSW
Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2025

		Consolidated			Commission	
		Budget 2025 \$'000	Actual 2025 \$'000	Actual 2024 \$'000	Actual 2025 \$'000	Actual 2024 \$'000
	Notes					
Assets						
Current assets						
Cash and cash equivalents	5	46,740	79,096	68,611	79,096	68,611
Receivables	6	10,781	9,369	11,571	9,369	11,571
Total current assets		57,521	88,465	80,182	88,465	80,182
Non-current assets						
Receivables	6	9,129	11,632	8,986	11,632	8,986
Plant and equipment	7	11,281	14,383	12,859	14,383	12,859
Right-of-use assets	8	734	321	489	321	489
Intangible assets	9	26,900	21,893	22,261	21,893	22,261
Total non-current assets		48,044	48,229	44,595	48,229	44,595
Total assets		105,565	136,694	124,777	136,694	124,777
Liabilities						
Current liabilities						
Payables	10	26,376	34,792	27,732	34,792	27,732
Borrowings	11	598	224	234	224	234
Provisions	12	19,403	30,013	25,830	30,013	25,830
Total current liabilities		46,377	65,029	53,796	65,029	53,796
Non-current liabilities						
Payables	10	-	1,600	1,548	1,600	1,548
Borrowings	11	47	-	372	-	372
Provisions	12	11,489	7,627	7,214	7,627	7,214
Total non-current liabilities		11,536	9,227	9,134	9,227	9,134
Total liabilities		57,913	74,256	62,930	74,256	62,930
Net assets		47,652	62,438	61,847	62,438	61,847
Equity						
Accumulated funds	15	47,652	62,438	61,847	62,438	61,847
Total equity		47,652	62,438	61,847	62,438	61,847

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Legal Aid Commission of NSW
Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Notes	Consolidated Accumulated Funds \$'000	Commission Accumulated Funds \$'000
Balance as at 1 July 2024		61,847	61,847
Net result for the year		591	591
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		591	591
Balance as at 30 June 2025		62,438	62,438
Balance as at 1 July 2023		46,198	46,198
Net result for the year		15,649	15,649
Total comprehensive income for the year		15,649	15,649
Balance as at 30 June 2024		61,847	61,847

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Legal Aid Commission of NSW
Statement of cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Notes	Consolidated			Commission	
		Budget	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
		2025	2025	2024	2025	2024
		\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Cash flows from operating activities						
Payments						
Employee-related		(222,339)	(231,750)	(199,022)	(231,750)	(768)
Personnel services		-	-	-	-	(199,108)
Grants and subsidies		(115,327)	(113,084)	(104,491)	(113,084)	(104,491)
Private practitioners		(234,000)	(183,722)	(168,775)	(183,722)	(168,775)
Other		(10)	(49,343)	(51,187)	(49,343)	(50,247)
Total Payments		(571,676)	(577,899)	(523,475)	(577,899)	(523,389)
Receipts						
Sale of goods and services		4,468	10,343	8,556	10,343	8,556
Interest received		-	235	414	235	414
Grants and contributions		569,194	583,798	528,046	583,798	528,046
Other		306	4,559	15,313	4,559	15,227
Total Receipts		573,968	598,935	552,329	598,935	552,243
Net cash flows from operating activities	17	2,292	21,036	28,854	21,036	28,854
Cash flows from investing activities						
Proceeds from sale of plant and equipment		35	-	-	-	-
Purchases of plant and equipment, and intangibles		(11,986)	(10,154)	(9,077)	(10,154)	(9,077)
Net cash flows from investing activities		(11,951)	(10,154)	(9,077)	(10,154)	(9,077)
Cash flows from financing activities						
Proceeds from borrowings and advances		-	-	-	-	-
Payment of principal portion of lease liabilities		(93)	(397)	(41)	(397)	(41)
Net cash flows from financing activities		(93)	(397)	(41)	(397)	(41)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		(9,752)	10,485	19,736	10,485	19,736
Opening cash and cash equivalents		56,492	68,611	48,875	68,611	48,875
Closing cash and cash equivalents	5	46,740	79,096	68,611	79,096	68,611

The accompanying notes form part of these statements.

Legal Aid Commission of NSW
Notes accompanying and forming part of the financial
statements for the financial year ended 30 June 2025

1 Statement of material accounting policy information

(a) Reporting Commission

The Legal Aid Commission of NSW (the Commission) is a NSW Government entity and is controlled by the State of New South Wales, which is the ultimate parent. The Commission is an independent statutory body, established under the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979*. The Commission is a not-for-profit commission (as profit is not its principal objective) and it has no cash generating units. The Commission's main objective is to improve access to justice for the most disadvantaged people in our society, responding to their legal needs.

The Commission, as a reporting entity, comprises all entities under its control, namely, the Commission and the Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency. Transactions relating to the Legal Aid Commission Trust Account are not included in the financial statements of the Commission, as the Commission does not control or use these funds for the achievement of its objectives (refer note 18).

In the process of preparing the consolidated financial statements for the economic entity consisting of the controlling and controlled entities, all inter-entity transactions and balances have been eliminated and like transactions and other events are accounted for using uniform accounting policies.

The consolidated financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2025 were authorised for issue by the Chair, Legal Aid Commission of NSW and the Chief Executive Officer on 5 September 2025.

(b) Basis of preparation

The Commission's financial statements are general purpose financial statements which have been prepared on an accrual basis and in accordance with:

- applicable Australian Accounting Standards (AAS) (which include Australian Accounting Interpretations)
- the requirements of the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 (GSF Act) and the Government Sector Finance Regulation 2024 (GSF Regulation) and
- the Treasurer's Directions issued under the GSF Act.

Plant and equipment and intangible assets are measured at fair value where there is an active market. Where there is no active market, the asset is carried at cost less any accumulated amortisation and impairment losses. Other financial statement items are prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention except where specified otherwise.

Judgments, key assumptions and estimations management has made are disclosed in the relevant notes to the financial statements.

All amounts are rounded to the nearest thousand and are expressed in Australian currency, which is the Commission's presentation and functional currency.

(c) Statement of Compliance

The financial statements and notes comply with Australian Accounting Standards, which include Australian Accounting Interpretations.

(d) Accounting for the Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Income, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except that:

- the amount of GST incurred by the Commission as a purchaser that is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of an asset or as part of an item of expense, and
- receivables and payables are stated with the amount of GST included.

Cash flows are included in the Statement of Cash Flows on a gross basis. However, the GST components of cash flows arising from investing and financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to, the Australian Taxation Office are classified as operating cash flows.

(e) Budgeted amounts

The budgeted amounts are drawn from the original budgeted financial statements presented to Parliament in respect of the reporting period. Subsequent amendments made to the original budget (e.g. adjustment for transfers of functions between entities as a result of Administrative Arrangement Orders) are not reflected in the budgeted amounts. Major variances between the original budgeted amounts and the actual amounts disclosed on the primary financial statements are explained in Note 16.

(f) Comparative information

Except when an AAS permits or requires otherwise, comparative information is presented in respect of the previous period for all amounts reported in the financial statements.

(g) Changes in accounting policy, including new or revised Australian Accounting Standards

Effective for the first time in 2024–25

The accounting policies applied in 2024–25 are consistent with those of the previous financial year. Management has assessed all new or revised accounting standards (including those issued but not yet effective) and has concluded that these do not have a material impact on the financial statements of the Legal Aid Commission of NSW.

AASB 2022-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Fair Value Measurement of Non-Financial Assets of Not-for-Profit Public Sector Entities

- AASB 2022-6 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Non-current Liabilities with Covenants
- AASB 2023-1 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Supplier Finance Arrangements

Issued but not yet effective

NSW public sector entities are not permitted to early adopt new Australian Accounting Standards, unless Treasury determines otherwise. The following new Australian Accounting Standards have not been applied and are not yet effective.

- AASB 17 Insurance Contracts
- AASB 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements
- AASB 2014-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Sale or Contribution of Assets between Investor and its Associate or Joint Venture
- AASB 2022-9 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Insurance Contracts in the Public Sector
- AASB 2023-5 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Lack of Exchangeability
- AASB 2024-2 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Classification and Measurement of Financial Instruments
- AASB 2024-3 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Annual Improvements Volume 11
- AASB 2024-4B Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Effective Date of Amendments to AASB 10 and AASB 128 [deferred AASB 10 and AASB 128 amendments in AASB 2014-10 apply]

It is considered that the impact of the above new Standards and Interpretations in future periods will have no material impact on the financial statements of the Commission for the year ending 30 June 2025.

(h) Impact of climate-related matters on financial reporting for 2024–25

Legal Aid NSW has no assets or liabilities which are likely to be affected by write-offs or impairments.

Legal Aid NSW does not anticipate any material-related financial risks or opportunities over the reporting period. Management is monitoring developments in climate-related matters for future impacts on its financial statements and operations.

2 Expenses excluding losses

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
(a) Employee-related expenses and personnel services				
Salaries and wages (including annual leave)	200,033	171,747	-	-
Superannuation – defined benefits plans	825	690	-	-
Superannuation – defined contributions plans	22,249	19,102	-	-
Long service leave	5,765	4,465	-	-
Workers' compensation insurance	2,724	1,874	-	-
Payroll tax and fringe benefits tax	12,015	10,364	-	-
Agency staff costs	546	768	546	768
Total	244,157	209,010	546	768

No employee-related expenses have been capitalised to assets in 2024–25 or 2023–24.

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Personnel services				
Personnel services provided by the Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency	-	-	243,942	208,939
Total	-	-	243,942	208,939

(b) Other operating expenses

Auditors' remuneration – audit of the financial statements	188	172	188	172
Auditors' remuneration – other	6	-	6	-
Cleaning	655	570	655	570
Consultants	276	343	276	343
Contractors	2,430	1,066	2,068	1,066
Electricity and gas	374	308	374	308
Information technology (includes licensing and support)	13,972	11,377	13,972	11,377
Insurance	680	432	680	432
Internal audit	295	171	295	171
Lease and occupancy agreement	15,217	14,119	15,217	14,119
Library resources	1,063	1,003	1,063	1,003
Maintenance	441	456	441	456
Postage	731	692	731	692
Practicing certificates	1,509	766	1,509	766
Printing	806	834	806	834
Records management	1,169	965	1,169	965
Shared services	3,367	-	3,367	-
Stationery stores and provisions	998	805	998	805
Telephone	1,773	408	1,773	408
Travel	3,337	3,239	3,337	3,239
Other	5,101	5,880	5,101	5,145
Total	54,388	43,606	54,026	42,871

Recognition and measurement

Maintenance expense

Day-to-day servicing costs or maintenance are charged as expenses as incurred, except where they relate to the replacement of a part or component of an asset, in which case the costs are capitalised and depreciated.

Insurance

The Commission's insurance activities are conducted through the NSW Treasury Managed Fund Scheme of self insurance for Government entities. The expense (premium) is determined by the Fund Manager based on past claims experience.

Lease and Occupancy Agreement expense

The entity recognises the lease payments associated with the following types of leases as an expense on a straight-line basis:

- Leases that meet the definition of short-term, i.e. where the lease term at commencement of the lease is 12 months or less. This excludes leases with a purchase option.
- Leases of assets that are valued at \$10,000 or under when new.

Variable lease payments not included in the measurement of the lease liability (i.e. variable lease payments that do not depend on an index or a rate, initially measured using the index or rate as at the commencement date). These payments are recognised in the period in which the event or condition that triggers those payments occurs. Office accommodation arrangements operate under a substantive substitution right. These agreements are not within the scope of AASB16 Leases.

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
(c) Depreciation and amortisation expenses				
Depreciation				
Leasehold improvements	2,610	2,679	2,610	2,679
Right of use of leased assets	168	137	168	137
Plant and equipment	285	386	285	386
Total	3,063	3,202	3,063	3,202
Amortisation				
Software	6,443	5,220	6,443	5,220
Total	6,443	5,220	6,443	5,220
Total depreciation and amortisation expense	9,506	8,422	9,506	8,422

Refer to Notes 7, 8 and 9 for recognition and measurement policies on depreciation and amortisation.

(d) Grants and subsidies

Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program	57,789	48,911	57,789	48,911
Community Legal Centres	50,980	40,668	50,980	40,668
Grants to other organisations	4,315	5,413	4,315	5,413
Total	113,084	94,992	113,084	94,992

Grants to Community Legal Centres are funded by way of specific Commonwealth and discretionary State funds.

(e) Services provided by private practitioners¹

Solicitor services provided by private practitioners	125,338	112,351	125,338	112,351
Barrister services provided by private practitioners	44,319	41,944	44,319	41,944
Disbursements	18,007	17,335	18,007	17,335
Total	187,664	171,630	187,664	171,630

¹ Includes an estimate of the net cost of work in progress by external legal practitioners who have provided services but not submitted an invoice to the Commission at the end of the reporting period. Refer to Note 10.

3 Revenue

Recognition and measurement

Income is recognised in accordance with the requirements of AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers or AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities, dependent on whether there is a contract with a customer defined by AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers.

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
(a) Sale of goods and services				
Rendering of services				
Criminal law	9,925	4,931	9,925	4,931
Family law	4,401	3,478	4,401	3,478
Civil law	703	239	703	239
Total	15,029	8,648	15,029	8,648

Recognition and measurement

Rendering of services

Revenue from rendering of services is recognised when the contribution is levied. The Commission has determined that income from the rendering of services is recognised in accordance with AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit *Entities* as the granting of aid to a client has been determined as not being a contract.

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
(b) Grants and contributions				
Grants without sufficiently specific performance obligations:				
Cluster Agency recurrent contribution	447,617	398,370	447,617	398,370
Cluster Agency capital contribution	8,136	10,282	8,136	10,282
Law Society Public Purpose Fund i)	46,968	43,624	46,968	43,624
Other capital grants	1,600	1,151	1,600	1,151
Cluster Agency recurrent contribution – CLC specific ii)	15,942	14,277	15,942	14,277
Other grants and contributions iii)	63,535	59,687	63,535	59,687
Total	583,798	527,391	583,798	527,391

Recognition and measurement

Grants and contributions

Revenue from grants with sufficiently specific performance obligations is recognised as and when the Commission satisfies a performance obligation by transferring the promised goods. Revenue from these grants is recognised based on the grant amount specified in the funding agreement/funding approval, and revenue is only recognised to the extent that it is highly probable that a significant reversal will not occur. No element of financing is deemed present as funding payments are usually received in advance or shortly after the relevant obligation is satisfied. Income from grants without sufficiently specific performance obligations is recognised when the Commission obtains control over the granted assets (e.g. cash).

The Commission has determined that Grants and Contributions revenue is general in nature and within the scope of AASB 1058 and will be recognised immediately on receipt.

- (i) This fund provided a grant of \$10.543m (\$14.276m in 2023–24) to provide legal aid services in specific State matters.
- (ii) Community Legal Centres (CLC) specific funding received from the Commonwealth Government via the National Partnership Appropriation. In 2024–25, \$15.942m was received (2023–24 \$14.277m). These funds were earmarked for distribution to various Community Legal Centres.

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
(iii) Other State or Commonwealth grants and contributions include:				
Commonwealth	8,914	11,818	8,914	11,818
State	54,621	47,869	54,621	47,869
Total	63,535	59,687	63,535	59,687

The following liabilities and/or expenses have been assumed by the Crown or other government agencies:

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
(c) Acceptance by the Crown of employee benefits and other liabilities				
The following liabilities and/or expenses have been assumed by the Crown or other government entities:				
Superannuation – defined benefit	825	690	825	690
Long service leave	5,172	4,674	5,172	4,674
Payroll tax	31	38	-	-
Total	6,028	5,402	5,997	5,364

4 Disaggregated disclosure statements for the year ended 30 June 2025

Consolidated expenses and revenues	Group 1 *		Group 2 *		Not Attributable		Total	
	Legal Services		Community Partnerships					
	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses excluding losses								
Employee-related/personnel services	238,968	203,288	5,189	5,722	-	-	244,157	209,010
Operating expenses	48,520	39,414	5,868	4,192	-	-	54,388	43,606
Depreciation and amortisation	9,246	8,191	260	231	-	-	9,506	8,422
Grants and subsidies	2,432	1,844	110,652	93,148	-	-	113,084	94,992
Finance costs	(288)	(138)	(8)	(4)	-	-	(296)	(142)

Services provided by private practitioners	185,110	171,181	2,554	449	-	-	187,664	171,630
Total expenses excluding losses	483,988	423,780	124,515	103,738	-	-	608,503	527,518
Revenue								
Sale of goods and services	15,029	8,648	-	-	-	-	15,029	8,648
Investment income	229	398	6	16	-	-	235	414
Grants and contributions	459,896	425,360	123,902	102,031	-	-	583,798	527,391
Acceptance by the Crown and employee benefits and other liabilities	5,898	5,243	130	159	-	-	6,028	5,402
Other revenue	3,049	1,790	1,514	1,449	-	-	4,563	3,239
Total revenue	484,101	441,439	125,552	103,655	-	-	609,653	545,094
Operating result	113	17,659	1,037	(83)	-	-	1,150	17,576
Gain/(loss) on disposal of non-current assets	(6)	(41)	-	(1)	-	-	(6)	(42)
Other gains/(losses)	(510)	(1,868)	(43)	(17)	-	-	(553)	(1,885)
Net result	(403)	15,750	994	(101)	-	-	591	15,649
Total comprehensive income	(403)	15,750	994	(101)	-	-	591	15,649

Consolidated assets and liabilities	Group 1 *		Group 2 *		Not Attributable		Total	
	Legal Services		Community Partnerships					
	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Current assets								
Cash and cash equivalents	-	-	-	-	79,096	68,611	79,096	68,611
Receivables	8,651	10,193	718	1,378	-	-	9,369	11,571
Total current assets	8,651	10,193	718	1,378	79,096	68,611	88,465	80,182
Non-current assets								
Receivables	10,740	7,916	892	1,070	-	-	11,632	8,986
Plant and equipment	14,077	12,507	306	352	-	-	14,383	12,859
Right-of-use assets	314	476	7	13	-	-	321	489
Intangible assets	21,428	21,652	465	609	-	-	21,893	22,261
Total non-current assets	46,559	42,551	1,670	2,044	-	-	48,229	44,595
Total assets	55,210	52,744	2,388	3,422	79,096	68,611	136,694	124,777
Current liabilities								
Payables	33,818	27,055	974	677	-	-	34,792	27,732
Borrowings	219	228	5	6	-	-	224	234
Provisions	29,375	25,123	638	707	-	-	30,013	25,830
Total current liabilities	63,412	52,406	1,617	1,390	-	-	65,029	53,796
Non-current liabilities								
Payables	1,566	1,506	34	42	-	-	1,600	1,548
Borrowings	-	362	-	10	-	-	-	372
Provisions	7,465	7,016	162	198	-	-	7,627	7,214
Total non-current liabilities	9,031	8,884	196	250	-	-	9,227	9,134
Total liabilities	72,443	61,290	1,813	1,640	-	-	74,256	62,930
Net assets	(17,233)	(8,546)	575	1,782	79,096	68,611	62,438	61,847

* The names and purposes of each program group are summarised below.

Disaggregated disclosure descriptions

Group 1 – Legal Services

This group covers the provision of legal services to eligible persons under Commonwealth law and State legislation, provision of community legal education and provision of advice to the socially and economically disadvantaged.

Group 2 – Community Partnerships

This group covers funding of community organisations for specific purposes. It includes providing legal assistance to disadvantaged people, undertaking law reform activities, and providing specialised court-based assistance for women and children seeking legal protection from domestic violence.

5 Current assets – Cash and cash equivalents

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Cash at bank	79,096	68,611	79,096	68,611
Total cash	79,096	68,611	79,096	68,611

For the purposes of the Statement of Cash Flows, cash and cash equivalents include cash at bank, cash on hand, short-term deposits with a maturity of three months or less, which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value, and net of outstanding bank overdraft.

Cash and cash equivalents (per Statement of Financial Position)	79,096	68,611	79,096	68,611
Cash and cash equivalents (per Statement of Cash Flows)	79,096	68,611	79,096	68,611

Refer Note 19 for details regarding credit risk and market risk arising from financial instruments.

The Commission has a business credit card facility of \$0.450m (2023–24: \$0.300m) with Citibank, which is the total of the credit limit for all issued credit cards. The balance in this facility is cleared monthly.

6 Current/non-current assets – Receivables

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Current				
Sale of goods and services	5,739	5,384	5,739	5,384
Less: - Allowance for expected credit losses	(903)	(947)	(903)	(947)
	4,836	4,437	4,836	4,437
Other debtors	8	201	8	201
GST recoverable from Australian Taxation Office	2,463	2,260	2,463	2,260
Prepayments	2,062	4,673	2,062	4,673
Total current	9,369	11,571	9,369	11,571
Non-current				
Sale of goods and services	15,649	12,612	15,649	12,612
Less: - Allowance for expected credit losses	(4,017)	(3,626)	(4,017)	(3,626)
Total non-current	11,632	8,986	11,632	8,986

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Movement in the allowance for expected credit losses				
Balance at beginning of the year	4,573	3,391	4,573	3,391
Amounts written off during the year	(206)	(594)	(206)	(594)
Amounts recovered during the year	-	1	-	1
Increase/(decrease) in allowance recognised in net result	553	1,775	553	1,775
Balance at end of the year	4,920	4,573	4,920	4,573

Details of credit risk, liquidity risk and market risk, including financial assets that are either past due or impaired, are disclosed in Note 19.

Receivables from the sale of goods and services (both current and non-current) in the amount of \$9.430m (2023–24: \$11.631m) are secured by way of caveat.

Recognition and measurement

All 'regular way' purchases or sales of financial assets are recognised and derecognised on a trade date basis. Regular way purchases or sales are purchases or sales of financial assets that require delivery of assets within the time frame established by regulation or convention in the marketplace.

Receivables are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs.

Trade receivables that do not contain a significant financing component are measured at the transaction price.

Subsequent measurement

The Commission holds receivables with the objective of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore measures them at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairment. Changes are recognised in the net result for the year when impaired, derecognised or through the amortisation process.

Impairment

The Commission recognises an allowance for expected credit losses (ECLs) for all debt financial assets not held at fair value through profit or loss. ECLs are based on the difference between the contractual cash flows and the cash flows that the entity expects to receive, discounted at the original effective interest rate.

For trade receivables, the entity applies a simplified approach in calculating ECLs. The entity recognises a loss allowance based on lifetime ECLs at each reporting date. The Commission has established a provision matrix based on its historical credit loss experience for trade receivables, adjusted for forward-looking factors specific to the receivable.

7 Non-current assets – Plant and equipment

	Consolidated 2025 \$'000	Commission 2025 \$'000
At 1 July 2024 – fair value		
Gross carrying amount	57,445	57,445
Less: - Accumulated depreciation and impairment	(44,586)	(44,586)
Net carrying amount	12,859	12,859
At 30 June 2025 – fair value		
Gross carrying amount	61,770	61,770
Less: - Accumulated depreciation and impairment	(47,387)	(47,387)
Net carrying amount	14,383	14,383

A reconciliation of the carrying amounts of plant and equipment at the beginning and end of the current reporting period is set out below:

	Office equipment \$'000	IT hardware \$'000	Leasehold improvements \$'000	Total \$'000
Year ended 30 June 2025				
Net carrying amount at beginning of year	615	266	11,978	12,859
Additions	372	1	4,811	5,184
Disposals	(6)	-	-	(6)
Transfers ⁽¹⁾	120	-	(879)	(759)
Depreciation expense	(164)	(121)	(2,610)	(2,895)
Net carrying amount at end of year	937	146	13,300	14,383

Further details regarding the fair value measurement of property, plant and equipment are disclosed in Note 19.

A reconciliation of the carrying amounts of plant and equipment at the beginning and end of the previous reporting period is set out below:

	Office equipment \$'000	IT hardware \$'000	Leasehold improvements \$'000	Total \$'000
Year ended 30 June 2024				
Net carrying amount at beginning of year	828	368	11,062	12,258
Additions	-	113	3,595	3,708
Disposals	(30)	(12)	-	(42)
Transfers ⁽¹⁾	-	-	-	-
Depreciation expense	(183)	(203)	(2,679)	(3,065)
Net carrying amount at end of year	615	266	11,978	12,859

⁽¹⁾ Transfers are from assets under construction where construction is complete.

Recognition and measurement

Acquisition of plant and equipment

Plant and equipment are initially measured at cost and subsequently revalued at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Cost is the amount of cash or cash equivalents paid or the fair value of the other consideration given to acquire the asset at the time of its acquisition or construction, or, where applicable, the amount attributed to that asset when initially recognised in accordance with the requirements of other AAS.

Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at measurement date.

Where payment for an asset is deferred beyond normal credit terms, its cost is the cash price equivalent; i.e. deferred payment amount is effectively discounted over the period of credit.

Assets acquired at no cost, or for nominal consideration, are initially recognised at their fair value at the date of acquisition.

Capitalisation thresholds

Plant and equipment and intangible assets costing \$5,000 and above individually (or forming part of a network or group costing more than \$5,000) are capitalised.

Restoration costs

The present value of the expected cost for the restoration or cost of dismantling of an asset after its use is included in the cost of the respective asset if the recognition criteria for a provision are met.

Depreciation of plant and equipment

Depreciation is provided for on a straight-line basis for all depreciable assets so as to write off the depreciable amount of each asset as it is consumed over its useful life to the Commission. Leasehold improvements are amortised over the unexpired period of the lease or estimated useful life, whichever is the shorter. Refer Note 2(c).

	2025	2024
	%	%
Applicable depreciation rates for each class of depreciable assets are listed below:		
Computer equipment	20–25	20–25
Office equipment	15–25	15–25
Leasehold improvements (includes furniture and fittings)	Term of the lease or 10 years, whichever is the lesser	

Right-of-use assets acquired by lessees

The Commission has elected to present right-of-use assets separately in the Statement of Financial Position. Further information on leases is contained at Note 8.

Revaluation of plant and equipment

Physical non-current assets are valued in accordance with the 'Valuation of Physical Non-Current Assets at Fair Value' Policy and Guidelines Paper (TPP 21-09). This policy adopts fair value in accordance with AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement, AASB 116 Property, Plant and Equipment and AASB 140 Investment Property.

Plant and equipment is measured at the highest and best use by market participants that is physically possible, legally permissible and financially feasible. The highest and best use must be available at a period that is not remote and take into account the characteristics of the asset being measured, including any socio-political restrictions imposed by government. In most cases, after taking into account these considerations, the highest and best use is the existing use. In limited circumstances, the highest and best use may be a feasible alternative use, where there are no restrictions on use or where there is a feasible higher restricted alternative use.

The Commission's plant and equipment are non-specialised assets with short useful lives and are measured at depreciated historical cost, as an approximation of fair value. The Commission has assessed that any difference between fair value and depreciated historical cost is unlikely to be material.

Impairment of plant and equipment

As a not-for-profit entity with no cash generating units, impairment under AASB 136 Impairment of Assets is unlikely to arise. As plant and equipment is carried at fair value, or an amount that approximates fair value, impairment can only arise in rare circumstances, such as where the costs of disposal are material.

8 Leases

The Commission leases motor vehicles. Lease contracts are typically made for three years. Lease terms are negotiated on an individual basis. The lease agreements do not impose any covenants, but leased assets may not be used as security for borrowing purposes. The entity does not provide residual value guarantees in relation to leases.

The following table presents right-of-use assets:

Right-of-use assets under leases	Plant and equipment \$'000
Balance as at 1 July 2024	489
Additions and/or reassessment of leases	-
Depreciation expense right-of-use asset	(168)
Balance as at 30 June 2025	321
Balance as at 1 July 2023	290
Additions and/or reassessment of leases	336
Depreciation expense right-of-use asset	(137)
Balance as at 30 June 2024	489

The following table presents liabilities under leases:

	2025 \$'000	2024 \$'000
Balance as at 1 July	606	375
Additions and/or reassessment of leases	(55)	108
Interest expense on lease liabilities	12	14
Payments	(242)	(268)
Derecognition of lease liabilities (see Note 13)	-	377
Balance as at 30 June	321	606

The following amounts were recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income in respect of leases where the Commission is the lessee:

	2025 \$'000	2024 \$'000
Depreciation expense of right-of-use asset	126	136
Interest expense on lease liabilities	12	14
Expense relating to short-term leases	-	16
Expense relating to low-value assets	183	477
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income	321	643

The Commission had total cash outflows for leases of 0.242m in 2024–25 (2023–24 \$0.542m).

Recognition and measurement

(i) Right-of-use assets

The Commission recognises right-of-use assets at the commencement date of the lease (i.e. the date the underlying asset is available for use). Right-of-use assets are initially measured at the amount of initial measurement of the lease liability (refer below), adjusted by any lease payments made at or before the commencement date and lease incentives, any initial direct costs incurred, and estimated costs of dismantling and removing the asset or restoring the site. The right-of-use assets are subsequently measured at cost.

They are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the shorter of the lease term and the estimated useful lives of the assets, as follows:

- Motor vehicles – 3 years

9 Intangible assets

	Consolidated 2025 \$'000	Commission 2025 \$'000
At 1 July 2024 – fair value		
Cost (gross carrying amount)	54,544	54,544
Less: - Accumulated amortisation and impairment	(32,283)	(32,283)
Net carrying amount	22,261	22,261
At 30 June 2025 – fair value		
Cost (gross carrying amount)	60,619	60,619
Less: - Accumulated amortisation and impairment	(38,726)	(38,726)
Net carrying amount	21,893	21,893

Reconciliation

A reconciliation of the carrying amounts of intangible assets at the beginning and end of the current reporting period is set out below.

	IT software \$'000	IT software under construction \$'000	Total \$'000
Year ended 30 June 2025			
Net carrying amount at beginning of year	20,976	1,285	22,261
Additions	501	4,815	5,316
Disposals	-	-	-
Transfers	759	-	759
Amortisation (recognised in "depreciation and amortisation")	(6,443)	-	(6,443)
Net carrying amount at end of year	15,793	6,100	21,893

A reconciliation of the carrying amounts of intangible assets at the beginning and end of the previous reporting period is set out below.

	IT Software \$'000	IT Software under construction \$'000	Total \$'000
Year ended 30 June 2024			
Net carrying amount at beginning of year	19,922	2,392	22,314
Additions	4,138	1,029	5,167
Disposals			-
Transfers	2,136	(2,136)	-
Amortisation (recognised in "depreciation and amortisation")	(5,220)	-	(5,220)
Net carrying amount at end of year	20,976	1,285	22,261

Recognition and measurement

The Commission recognises intangible assets only if it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to the Commission and the cost of the asset can be measured reliably. Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Where an asset is acquired at no or nominal cost, the cost is its fair value as at the date of acquisition. Following initial recognition, intangible assets are subsequently measured at fair value only if there is an active market. If there is no active market for the Commission's intangible assets, the assets are carried at cost less any accumulated amortisation and impairment losses.

All research costs are expensed. Development costs are only capitalised when certain criteria are met.

The useful lives of intangible assets are assessed to be finite. The Commission's intangible assets are amortised using the straight-line method over a period of generally 4 to 10 years.

Intangible assets are tested for impairment where an indicator of impairment exists. If the recoverable amount is less than its carrying amount the carrying amount is reduced to recoverable amount and the reduction is recognised as an impairment loss.

10 Current/non-current liabilities – Payables

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025 \$'000	2024 \$'000	2025 \$'000	2024 \$'000
Accrued salaries, wages and on-costs	6,833	4,704	-	-
Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency – accrued salaries wages and on-costs	-	-	6,833	4,704
Creditors	544	1,082	544	1,082
Accrued expenses	3,979	2,400	3,979	2,400
Accrual of estimated legal expenses – current ¹	23,436	19,546	23,436	19,546
Total – current payables	34,792	27,732	34,792	27,732
Accrual of estimated legal expenses – non-current ¹	1,600	1,548	1,600	1,548
Total – non-current payables	1,600	1,548	1,600	1,548

¹ The Commission has accrued the cost of work in progress by external legal practitioners using calculations performed by an actuary. The actuary was able to satisfactorily reconcile historical payment information received at June 2025 with that received 12 months earlier and LANSW have undertaken an independent reconciliation of payments made in the last 12 months. The liability is calculated using the Paid Chain Ladder method which analyses the past pattern of payments to predict future payments. The actuary has made no allowance for the impact of inflating or discounting the value of Outstanding Creditors. Given the relatively short-term nature of payments for this type of business, the effects of inflating and discounting do not have a material effect on the valuation result.

Details regarding liquidity risk, including a maturity analysis of the above payables are disclosed in Note 19.

Recognition and measurement

Payables represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the Commission and other amounts. Short-term payables with no stated interest rate are measured at the original invoice amount where the effect of discounting is immaterial.

Payables are financial liabilities at amortised cost, initially measured at fair value, net of directly attributable transaction costs. These are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Gains and losses are recognised in the net result when the liabilities are derecognised as well as through the amortisation process.

11 Current/non-current liabilities – Borrowings

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Lease liability – current	224	234	224	234
Lease liability – non-current	-	372	-	372
Total (see Note 8)	224	606	224	606

Details regarding liquidity risk, including a maturity analysis of the above payables are disclosed in Note 19.

Recognition and measurement

Borrowings classified as financial liabilities at amortised cost are initially measured at fair value, net of directly attributable transaction costs. These are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Gains and losses are recognised in net result when the liabilities are derecognised as well as through the amortisation process.

12 Current/non-current liabilities – Provisions

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Current				
Employee benefits and related on-costs				
Annual leave	15,948	13,602	-	-
Annual leave expected to be taken after 12 months	3,294	2,810	-	-
Parental leave	456	473	-	-
Provision for related on-costs	10,315	8,945	-	-
Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency – provision for personnel services	-	-	30,013	25,830
Total current	30,013	25,830	30,013	25,830
Non-current				
Employee benefits and related on-costs				
Provision for related on-costs	471	404	-	-
Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency – provision for personnel services	-	-	471	404
	471	404	471	404
Other provisions				
Restoration Costs	7,156	6,810	7,156	6,810
	7,156	6,810	7,156	6,810
Total non-current provisions	7,627	7,214	7,627	7,214

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Aggregate employee benefits and related on-costs				
Provisions – current	30,013	25,830	-	-
Provisions – non-current	471	404	-	-
Accrued salaries, wages and on-costs (Note 12)	6,833	4,704	-	-
	37,317	30,938	-	-

Movements in provisions (other than employee benefits)

Restoration provision

Carrying amount at start of financial year	6,810	6,870	6,810	6,870
Additional provisions recognised	96	300	96	300
Amounts recognised/(used) in provision	657	(202)	657	(202)
Unwinding/change in the discount rate	(407)	(158)	(407)	(158)
Carrying amount at end of financial year	7,156	6,810	7,156	6,810

Recognition and measurement

Employee benefits and related on-costs

To enable the Commission to carry out its functions, all personnel service requirements are provided by Legal Aid Commission Staff Agency which is a special purpose service Commission that is a Division of the Government of New South Wales. The personnel service is charged at cost.

Salaries and wages, annual leave and sick leave

Salaries and wages (including non-monetary benefits) and paid sick leave that are expected to be settled wholly within 12 months after the end of the period in which the employees render the service are recognised and measured at the undiscounted amounts of the benefits.

Annual leave is not expected to be settled wholly before 12 months after the end of the annual reporting period in which the employees render the related service. As such, it is required to be measured at present value in accordance with AASB 119 Employee Benefits (although short-cut methods are permitted). Actuarial advice obtained by Treasury has confirmed that using the nominal annual leave balance plus the annual leave entitlements accrued while taking annual leave (calculated using 8.4% of the nominal value of annual leave) can be used to approximate the present value of the annual leave liability. Legal Aid has assessed the actuarial advice based on the Commission's circumstances and has determined that the effect of discounting is immaterial to annual leave. All annual leave is classified as a current liability even where the Commission does not expect to settle the liability within 12 months as the Commission does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement.

Unused non-vesting sick leave does not give rise to a liability as it is not considered probable that sick leave taken in the future will be greater than the benefits accrued in the future.

A current liability provision for paid parental leave is recognised to reflect paid parental leave conditions that allow for 14 or 16 weeks of leave to be taken until the child is two.

Long service leave and superannuation

The Commission's liabilities for long service leave and defined benefit superannuation are assumed by the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales (Crown). The Commission accounts for the liability as having been extinguished, resulting in the amount assumed being shown as part of the non-monetary revenue item described as 'Acceptance by the Crown Entity of employee benefits and other liabilities'.

Long service leave is measured at the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided up to the reporting date. Consideration is given to certain factors based on actuarial review, including expected future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures, and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using Commonwealth Government bond rate at the reporting date.

The superannuation expense for the financial year is determined by using the formulae specified in the Treasurer's Directions. The expense for certain superannuation schemes (i.e. Basic Benefit and First State Super) is calculated as a percentage of the employees' salary. For other superannuation schemes (i.e. State Superannuation Scheme and State Authorities Superannuation Scheme), the expense is calculated as a multiple of the employees' superannuation contributions.

Consequential on-costs

Consequential on-costs to employment are recognised as liabilities and expenses where the employee benefits to which they relate have been recognised. This includes outstanding amounts of payroll tax, workers' compensation insurance premiums and fringe benefits tax.

Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the Commission has a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event; it is probable that an outflow of resources will be required to settle the obligation; and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. When the Commission expects some or all of a provision to be reimbursed, for example, under an insurance contract, the reimbursement is recognised as a separate asset, but only when the reimbursement is virtually certain. The expense relating to a provision is presented net of any reimbursement in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

If the effect of the time value of money is material, provisions are discounted at 4.10% (2024: 4.40%), which reflects the current market assessments of the time value of money and the risks specific to the liability. When discounting is used, the increase in the provision due to the passage of time (i.e. unwinding of discount rate) is recognised as a finance cost.

Other provisions

Restoration costs refers to the present value of estimated cost of make good obligations (in accordance with AASB 137 and TPG23-21) that will arise when existing office accommodation leases expire. The provision is adjusted annually for unwinding and changes in discount rates. Any cost variations in make good expenses at the time of implementation will be recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

13 Equity

Recognition and measurement

Accumulated funds

The category 'accumulated funds' includes all current and prior period retained funds.

14 Commitments for expenditure

Capital commitments

Aggregate capital expenditure contracted for at balance date and not provided for:

No later than one year

Total (including GST)

Consolidated		Commission	
2025	2024	2025	2024
\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
4,440	1,688	4,440	1,688
4,440	1,688	4,440	1,688

The total commitments above include input tax credits of \$0.403m (2024: \$0.153m) that are expected to be recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office.

15 Contingent liabilities and contingent assets

At the date of this report, there is no current litigation involving the Legal Aid Commission of NSW from which a contingent liability or contingent asset may arise (2024: \$0).

16 Budget review

The budgeted amounts are drawn from the original budgeted financial statements presented to Parliament in respect of the reporting period. Subsequent amendments to the original budget are not reflected in the budgeted amounts. Major variances between the original budgeted amounts and the actual amounts disclosed in the financial statements are explained below.

Net result

The total surplus result for the year of \$0.6m (2024: surplus of \$15.7m) shows a \$6.8m favourable variance to the original budget deficit of \$6.2m. The main contributors to the surplus are a \$10.3m increase in client contributions and increase in grant funding of \$14.6m due to more Commonwealth funding. This is partially offset by an increase in employee-related expenses of \$17.8m due to filling vacant positions and an increase in operating costs of \$8.2m due to increasing ICT software support costs.

Assets and liabilities

Actual net assets of \$62.4m are more than the budget due to the favourable operating result. The main contributors are: current assets of \$88.5m which is \$31m more than the budget of \$57.5m. Non-current assets of \$48.2m are in line with the budget of \$48.0m.

Payables of \$34.8m are more than the budget of \$26.4m; current provisions of \$30.0m is \$10.6m higher than the budget of \$19.4m. Non-current employee benefits of \$0.5m and restoration costs of \$7.2m being office accommodation make-good make up the non-current provisions.

Cash flows

The year-end cash balance was \$79.1m compared to the budget of \$46.7m. Total operating activities receipts were \$599.5m compared to operating activities payments of \$578.4m. The net cash outflow from investing activities of \$10.2m is lower than the budget of \$12.0m due to under-spend on the purchase of plant and equipment. The closing cash actual balance of \$79.1m was \$32.4m higher than budget.

17 Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to net result

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to the net result as reported in the Statement of Comprehensive Income as follows:				
Net cash used on operating activities	21,036	28,854	21,036	28,854
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(9,506)	(8,422)	(9,506)	(8,422)
Interest expense from lease liabilities	(15)	(14)	(15)	(14)
Decrease/(increase) in provisions	(4,561)	(4,150)	(4,561)	(4,150)
Decrease/(increase) in creditors	(7,112)	(1,011)	(7,112)	(1,011)
Increase/(decrease) in prepayments and other assets	444	655	444	655
Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, plant and equipment	(6)	(42)	(6)	(42)
Additions/(write-backs) to lease restoration provision	311	(221)	311	(221)
Net result	591	15,649	591	15,649

18 Trust funds

The Legal Aid Commission of NSW does not control the funds in the following Trust Account:

	Consolidated		Commission	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Legal Aid Commission Trust Account¹				
Cash balance at the beginning of the financial year	506	624	-	-
Add: Receipts	3,764	1,903	-	-
Less: - Expenditure	(2,748)	(2,021)	-	-
Cash balance at the end of the financial year	1,522	506	-	-

As the Legal Aid Commission of NSW performs only a custodial role in respect of trust monies, and because the monies cannot be used for the achievement of its objectives; that is, the definition criteria for assets are not met, trust funds are not brought to account in the financial statements, but are shown in the notes for information purposes.

¹ Pursuant to Section 64A of the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979*, a Legal Aid Commission Trust Account is maintained for verdict and settlement moneys held on behalf of legally aided persons represented by Commission in-house practitioners. The Legal Aid Commission of NSW may recover some costs upon finalisation of these matters.

19 Financial instruments

The principal financial instruments of the Commission are outlined below. These financial instruments arise directly from the operations of the Commission or are required to finance the operations of the Commission. The Commission does not enter into or trade financial instruments, including derivative financial instruments, for speculative purposes.

The main risks arising from financial instruments for the Commission are outlined below, together with the objectives of the Commission, policies and processes for measuring and managing risk. Further quantitative and qualitative disclosures are included throughout the financial statements.

The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for the establishment and oversight of risk management and reviews and agrees to policies for managing each of these risks. Risk management policies are established to identify and analyse the risks faced by the Legal Aid Commission of NSW, to set risk limits and controls and to monitor risks. Compliance with policies is reviewed by Management and by the Internal Auditors on a continuous basis.

(a) Financial Instrument Categories	Note	Category	Carrying amount 2025 \$'000	Carrying amount 2024 \$'000
Financial assets class:				
Cash and cash equivalents	5	Amortised cost	79,096	68,611
Receivables ¹	6	Amortised cost	16,476	13,624
Financial liabilities class:				
Payables ²	8, 10	Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost	36,616	28,998

¹ Excludes statutory receivables and prepayments (i.e. not within scope of AASB 7)

² Excludes statutory payables and unearned revenue (i.e. not within scope of AASB 7)

The Commission determines the classification of its financial assets and liabilities after initial recognition and, when allowed and appropriate, re-evaluates this at each financial year end.

(b) Derecognition of financial assets and financial liabilities

A financial asset is derecognised when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the financial assets expire; or if the Commission transfers its rights to receive cash flows from the asset or has assumed an obligation to pay the received cash flows in full without material delay to a third party under a 'pass-through' arrangement; and either:

- the Commission has transferred substantially all the risks and rewards of the asset; or
- the Commission has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards of the asset, but has transferred control.

When the Commission has transferred its rights to receive cash flows from an asset or has entered into a pass-through arrangement, it evaluates if, and to what extent, it has retained the risks and rewards of ownership. Where the Commission has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards or transferred control, the asset continues to be recognised to the extent of the Commission's continuing involvement in the asset. In that case, the Commission also recognises an associated liability. The transferred asset and the associated liability are measured on a basis that reflects the rights and obligations that the Commission has retained. Continuing involvement that takes the form of a guarantee over the transferred asset is measured at the lower of the original carrying amount of the asset and the maximum amount of consideration that the Commission could be required to repay.

A financial liability is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged or cancelled or expires. When an existing financial liability is replaced by another from the same lender on substantially different terms, or the terms of an existing liability are substantially modified, such an exchange or modification is treated as the derecognition of the original liability and the recognition of a new liability. The difference in the respective carrying amounts is recognised in the net result.

(c) Offsetting financial instruments

Financial assets and financial liabilities are offset and the net amount is reported in the Statement of Financial Position if there is a currently enforceable legal right to offset the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis, or to realise the assets and settle the liabilities simultaneously.

(d) Financial Risks

(i) Credit Risk

Credit risk arises when there is the possibility of the counterparties of the Commission defaulting on their contractual obligations, resulting in a financial loss to the Commission. The maximum exposure to credit risk is generally represented by the carrying amount of the financial assets (net of any allowance for credit loss or allowance for impairment).

Credit risk arises from the financial assets of the Commission, including cash and receivables. The Commission has secured a portion of its receivables by way of caveat. The Commission has not granted any financial guarantees.

Credit risk associated with the financial assets of the Commission, other than receivables, is managed through the selection of counterparties and establishment of minimum credit rating standards.

The Commission considers a financial asset in default when contractual payments are 90 days past due. However, in certain cases, the entity may also consider a financial asset to be in default when internal or external information indicates that the entity is unlikely to receive the outstanding contractual amounts in full before taking into account any credit enhancements held by the Commission.

Cash

Cash comprises the Commission's funds that are held in the general operating bank account within the NSW Treasury Banking System (TBS). Refer Note 5.

Accounting policy for impairment of trade receivables and other financial assets – Receivables

Collectability of receivables is reviewed on an ongoing basis with appropriate follow-up letters sent.

The Commission applies the AASB 9 Financial Instruments simplified approach to measuring expected credit losses which uses a lifetime expected loss allowance for all trade receivables.

To measure the expected credit losses, receivables have been grouped based on shared credit risk characteristics and the days past due.

The expected loss rates are based on historical observed loss rates. The historical loss rates are adjusted to reflect current and forward-looking information on macroeconomic factors affecting the ability of the customers to settle the receivables.

The Commission has calculated the value of debtors impairment of receivables using calculations performed by an actuary. The actuary was supplied with individual contributions data for each client and individual repayment information as at 30 June 2025. The actuary subdivided the debtors portfolio into two groups (secured and unsecured) and made separate estimates of the outstanding legal debtors for each group. The actuary estimated the value of the debt for each cohort using the incurred cost development method. The incurred cost development method estimates the ultimate incurred cost of debts in each contribution period by analysing the past pattern of debt development and estimating a pattern for the future. Further to this, as future repayments will be made over a number of years the actuary has discounted the expected future contributions to calculate a present value as at 30 June 2025. The discount rate was assumed to be 4.10% p.a. for secured debtors and 3.85% p.a. for unsecured debtors, derived from prevailing yields on Commonwealth government bonds as at the balance date.

Receivables are written off when there is no reasonable expectation of recovery. Indicators that there is no reasonable expectation of recovery include, amongst others a failure to make contractual payments for a period after the matter has been closed. Interest is charged on overdue trade debtors' accounts under section 71A of the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* as amended and applicable interest rates were as follows:

	01/01/2025 to 30/06/2025	01/07/2024 to 31/12/2024
Overdue debt (section 71A of the <i>Legal Aid Commission Act</i>)	5.18%	5.18%
Local Court judgments (section 101 of the <i>Civil Procedure Act 2005</i>)	10.35%	10.35%
Family Court judgments (section 117B of the <i>Family Law Act</i>)	10.35%	10.35%

The Commission is not materially exposed to concentrations of credit risk to a single trade debtor or group of debtors. Based on past experience, debtors that are not past due (2025: \$0.753m 2024: \$0.532m) and not less than one month past due (2025: \$0.370m 2024: \$0.984m) are not considered impaired and together these represent 5.55% of the total debtors (2024: 8.70%).

The only financial assets that are past due or impaired are "Sales of Goods and Services" in the "Receivables" category of the Statement of Financial Position.

As at 30 June, the ageing analysis of trade receivables is as follows:

	Total \$'000	Past due but not considered loss allowance (Note ^{1,2}) \$'000	Considered loss allowance (Note ^{1,2}) \$'000
2025			
< 3 months overdue	753	753	-
3 months – 6 months overdue	1,273	370	903
> 6 months overdue	18,219	14,202	4,017
2024			
< 3 months overdue	984	984	-
3 months – 6 months overdue	1,355	408	947
> 6 months overdue	15,070	11,444	3,626

¹ Each column in the table reports 'gross receivables'

² The analysis excludes statutory receivables, prepayments, as these are not within the scope of AASB 7. Therefore, the 'total' will not reconcile to the sum of the receivables total in Note 6.

Authority deposits

The Commission did not have any deposits with TCorp during the financial year.

(ii) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Commission will be unable to meet its payment obligations when they fall due. The Commission continuously manages risk through monitoring future cash flows and maturities planning to ensure adequate holding of high quality liquid assets. The objective is to maintain a balance between continuity of funding and flexibility through the use of overdrafts, loans and other advances.

Liabilities are recognised for amounts due to be paid in the future for goods and services received, whether or not invoiced. Amounts owing to suppliers (which are unsecured) are settled in accordance with the policy set out in NSW TC 11/12. For small business suppliers, where terms are not specified, payment is made not later than 30 days from date of receipt of a correctly rendered invoice. For other suppliers, if trade terms are not specified, payment is made no later than the end of the month following the month in which an invoice or a statement is received. For small business suppliers, where payment is not made within the specified time period, simple interest must be paid automatically unless an existing contract specifies otherwise. For payments to other suppliers CEO may automatically pay the supplier simple interest. The Commission did not incur any penalty interest for late payment of claims.

The table below summarises the maturity profile of the financial liabilities of the Commission, together with the interest rate exposure.

Maturity analysis and interest rate exposure of financial liabilities	Consolidated and Commission			
	Nominal amount ¹	Maturity < 1 year	Maturity 1 to 5 years	Maturity > 5 years
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
2025				
<i>Payables</i>				
Accounts payable	36,392	34,792	1,600	-
<i>Borrowings</i>				
Lease liabilities	224	224	-	-
2024				
<i>Payables</i>				
Accounts payable	28,998	27,450	1,548	-
<i>Borrowings</i>				
Lease liabilities	606	234	372	-

¹ The amounts disclosed are the contractual undiscounted cash flows of each class of financial liabilities based on the earliest date on which Legal Aid can be required to pay except for Borrowings which are discounted at weighted average effective interest rate of 4.10%

(iii) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. The exposure to market risk of the Commission is minimal. The Commission has no exposure to foreign currency risk and does not enter into commodity contracts.

(iv) Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. Exposure to interest rate risk arises primarily through the entity's interest-bearing liabilities. The Commission does not account for any fixed rate financial instruments at fair value through the comprehensive income statement. Therefore, for these financial instruments, a change in interest rates would not affect profit or loss or equity. Exposure to interest rate risk arises primarily through the Commission's interest-bearing liabilities. The interest rate risk impact is not significant.

	2025		2024	
	-1%	1%	-1%	1%
Lease liabilities	(156)	156	(156)	156
Equity	(618)	618	(618)	618

(e) Fair value measurement

(i) Fair value compared to carrying amount:

Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurement is based on the presumption that the transaction to sell the asset or transfer the liability takes place either in the principal market for the asset or liability or in the absence of a principal market, in the most advantageous market for the asset or liability.

(ii) Fair value recognised in the Statement of Financial Position

Management assessed that cash and short-term deposits, trade receivables, trade payables, and other current liabilities approximate their fair values, largely due to the short-term maturities of these instruments.

(f) Uncertainty in WIP and Debtor valuation

The actuarial assessment of WIP and Debtors includes a sensitivity analysis (see table below). This analysis is intended to provide an indication of the general level of uncertainty within the actuarial valuation. It should be noted that these sensitivities are illustrations only – they are not necessarily mutually exclusive and outcomes outside of these ranges are possible. See table below.

- For the assessment of outstanding legal creditors (WIP), the actuarial valuation assumes work was completed on average "half way" between the service from and service to date (if available) or the start and end date as denoted on the invoice. If this assumption was changed to allow for lumpiness in the schedule of work between the start and end dates, the liability may also change by around 12% or \$2.5m.
- For the assessment of outstanding legal debtors, a 1% (absolute) increase in discount rates will decrease the value of the secured debtors asset by \$0.4m.

Sensitivity analysis

Creditors		Net Provision	Impact	
Scenario		\$m	\$m	%
Base scenario				
Work completed date assumed to be midway between start and end date		20.8		
Work completed date assumed to be 2/5ths way between start and end date		23.2	2.4	12%
Work completed date assumed to be 3/5ths way between start and end date		18.2	(2.6)	-12%
Secured debtors				
Scenario		Net Provision	Impact	
		\$m	\$m	%
Base scenario				
Ultimate debt recoverability	-2%	8	-0.03	-4%
	+1%	7.9	-0.4	-5%
Discount rate (absolute change)	-1%	8.7	0.5	6%

20 Related party disclosure

The Commission's key management personnel compensation is as follows:

	2025	2024
	\$'000	\$'000
Short-term employee benefits:		
Salaries	2,195	470
Other monetary allowances	-	-
Long-term employee benefits:		
Termination benefits	-	-
Total remuneration	2,195	470

The key management personnel (KMP) and their compensation disclosures are limited to the key decision makers, being the Chief Executive Officer, Executive Directors and Board Members of the Commission. The definition of KMP was extended to include Executive Directors for the first time in 2025 causing a variation in expense from last year's total of \$0.470m. During the year, no transactions were entered into with KMP, their close family members and controlled or jointly controlled entities thereof.

Government-related entities

During the year, the Commission entered into transactions with other entities that are controlled/jointly controlled/significantly influenced by the NSW Government. These transactions in aggregate are a significant portion of the Commission's rendering of services and receiving of services.

These transactions include:

- Long service leave and defined benefit superannuation assumed by the Crown
- Transactions relating to the Treasury Banking System
- Employer contributions paid to defined benefit superannuation funds
- Payments into the Treasury Managed Fund for workers' compensation insurance and other insurances
- Significant transactions with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- Occupancy agreement rental payments to Property and Development NSW.

21 Events after reporting period

No events have occurred subsequent to the reporting date, which will materially affect the financial statements.

End of audited financial statements

Other information (unaudited)

1 Payment performance

(a) Payment to creditors

Legal Aid NSW processed 97.53% of invoices received within 30 days in 2024–25, a decrease compared with 99.51% in 2023–24.

Period	2024–25		2023–24	
	Invoices	%	Invoices	%
Within 30 days	154,170	97.53%	150,179	99.51%
Over 30 days	3,903	2.47%	739	0.49%
Total	158,073	100%	150,918	100%

Accounts paid within 30 days by quarter is as follows:

Accounts paid within 30 days by quarter	Target %	Achieved %	Amount paid within 30 days \$'000	Total Amount Paid \$'000
September	100.00	97.09%	67,088	70,745
December	100.00	98.06%	80,514	83,880
March	100.00	97.28%	108,912	113,867
June	100.00	97.67%	112,018	117,530

(b) Ageing of creditors

Aged creditors analysis at end of each quarter is as follows:

Quarter	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	Current	31–60 days	61–90 days	> 90 days
September	2,218	10	0	0
December	3,340	11	6	0
March	1,940	0	0	0
June	511	0	0	0

(c) Consultancies

Consultancy projects equal to or more than \$50,000:

One

Consultancy projects less than \$50,000:

Legal Aid NSW engaged six consultants for individual projects costing less than \$50,000 per project during 2024–25. The total cost of these consultancies was \$163,303.

2 Annual reporting legislation requirements

As required by the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW), Legal Aid NSW administers a Legal Aid Fund and a Trust Account. All monies received for and on behalf of legally assisted clients are deposited into the Trust Account. All other monies are paid into the Legal Aid Fund.

Overseas visits

Four

Charitable and deductible gifts

Recipient institution

Legal Aid NSW is a charitable institution and a deductible gift recipient institution under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* (Cth). Gifts to Legal Aid NSW of monies or property with a value of \$2, or more, may be claimed by the donor as a tax deduction.

Unclaimed monies

Pursuant to the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* (NSW), all unclaimed monies are forwarded to the Treasury for credit to the Consolidated Fund and are available for refund from that account. No unclaimed amounts have been held in the accounts of Legal Aid NSW.

Risk management

Legal Aid NSW maintains insurance policies for workers compensation, motor vehicles, miscellaneous property and public liability with iCare NSW. The 2024–25 premium for workers compensation insurance increased by 46.0% from \$1,842,530 in 2023–24 to \$2,690,868 in 2024–25. The premium for the other insurance types increased to \$680,062 compared to \$431,835 in 2023–24.

Motor vehicle claims

The number of motor vehicle claims in 2024–25 was 28, an increase from 39 in 2023–24. This incurred a net cost of \$176,533, a decrease from \$176,894 from 2023–2024. The average number of vehicles in the Legal Aid NSW fleet is 80, which is the same as 2023–24. This results in an average claim cost per vehicle of \$6,304.76 compared with \$4,535.70 in 2023–24.

The 2024–25 deposit premium for motor vehicles was \$89,653, an increase from the 2023–24 deposit premium of \$420.

Investment performance

Legal Aid NSW is authorised under section 65 of the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW) to invest funds that are not immediately required. The avenues of investment are restricted to any securities approved by the Treasurer on the recommendation of the Minister. Legal Aid NSW is part of the Treasury Banking System. Legal Aid NSW provides for its daily expenditure needs via an on-call bank account. Legal Aid NSW's current banker is Westpac Banking Corporation.

Compliance index

Acknowledgement of Country

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Acknowledgement of Country	TPG25-10a	Yes	3

Letter of submission

Letter to responsible Minister signed by the accountable authority.

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Stating report submitted to Minister for presentation to Parliament	TPG25-10a	Yes	3
Provisions under which the report has been prepared	TPG25-10a	Yes	3
Stating that the agency has self-assessed as a group 1 agency and has prepared an annual report in accordance with this TPG.	TPG25-10a	Yes	3
Where reporting deadlines have been missed, length of lateness in submitting report and reasons	TPG25-10a	N/A	
Where reporting deadlines have been missed and there was no application for extension, reasons for lateness and lack of application	TPG25-10a	N/A	

Overview

Who are we as an agency?

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Purpose, vision and values (or equivalent)	TPG25-10a	Yes	7
If the agency is established under legislation, name of the Act or Regulation.	TPG25-10a	Yes	6 14
Aims and objectives	TPG25-10a	Yes	7 23–24
Management and structure (including names, offices and responsibilities of principal officers)	TPG25-10a	Yes	90–95 96 98 99
High-level description of functions and services	TPG25-10a	Yes	2 8–10 11–13
Controlled entities and subsidiaries, other related agencies	TPG25-10a	Yes	76–77 78–82 128
If the annual reporting information is combined or consolidated, include information on which agencies the report represents and any notes on how consolidated/combined information is presented throughout the annual report.	TPG25-10a	N/A	
Details on application for extension of time for submission of report (if applicable)	TPG25-10a	N/A	

If the agency has an exemption from including certain information, include details of and reasons for the exemption(s).	TPG25-10a	N/A	
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Strategy

What are we trying to achieve as an agency?

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Strategic objectives and outcomes	TPG25-10a	Yes	23–24 25–31
Current and future strategic plans to accomplish outcomes and objectives	TPG25-10a	Yes	23–24 30
Systems and processes to measure the target outcomes	TPG25-10a	Yes	32–33 34 35–36
Resource allocation to implement strategic plans	TPG25-10a	Yes	23–24 25–31

Operations and performance

What have we done to improve the lives of the people of NSW and what impact did we have? Summary of operations conducted to achieve the defined outcomes.

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Key products and services	TPG25-10a	Yes	43–47 48–51 52–68
Service delivery models	TPG25-10a	Yes	39–42
Narrative summary of significant programs and operations, supported by any financial and/or other quantitative information for programs and operations	TPG25-10a	Yes	39–42 43–47 48–51 52–68 69–71 72–75 78–82
Performance metrics regarding targeted outcomes/objectives from the strategy and/or corporate plan.	TPG25-10a	Yes	15 32–33 34 35–36 158 159 164–168 169–170
Economic or other factors affecting achievement of operational objectives.	TPG25-10a	N/A	
Use of technology (e.g. artificial intelligence, automated decision-making, machine learning techniques)	TPG25-10a		30 84–85
How the agency approaches innovation and continuous improvement	TPG25-10a		23–24
Infrastructure program, including major works, asset acquisitions and disposals	TPG25-10a		83 114 137–139
Events arising after the end of the annual reporting that significantly affect operations, or the community served.	TPG25-10a	N/A	

Implementation of price determination or recommendation according to section 18(4) of the <i>Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992</i> (IPART Act)	TPG25-10a; section 18(4) of the IPART Act	N/A	
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Management and accountability

What is the management and accountability structure we have? What are the risks that affect us?

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Numbers and remuneration of senior executives	TPG25-10a; Public Service Commission Circular 2014-09	Yes	97–98 158
If the agency has a board or committee that is appointed by the agency's Minister, include details of the board structure, members (name, position and term of appointment) and meetings.	TPG25-10a	Yes	87–89 90–95
Organisational chart indicating functional responsibilities	TPG25-10a	Yes	96
People	TPG25-10a	Yes	15 105 159
Consultants	TPG25-10a	Yes	130 152 180
International travel	TPG25-10a	Yes	152 180
Requirements arising from employment arrangements	TPG25-10a	Yes	128
Legislation administered by the agency	TPG25-10a	Yes	6 14
Changes to legislation, changes to subordinate legislation, or significant judicial decisions that affect the agency or users of its services	TPG25-10a	Yes	101–102
<i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</i> (PIPP Act) requirements	TPG25-10a	Yes	101–102
<i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i> (GIPA Act) requirements	TPG25-10a; section 125(4), (6) of the GIPA Act; clause 8, Schedule 2 and clause 13, Schedule 3 of the GIPA Regulation	Yes	101–102 171–173
Risk management and insurance activities	TPG25-10a	Yes	16–20 99–100 131 153
Internal audit and risk management policy attestation	TPG25-10a; TPP20-08	Yes	18–20

Sustainability

How has achieving our objectives/outcomes impacted economic, social, environmental and other sustainability matters?

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Climate-related financial disclosures, if part of the phased implementation program	TPG25-10a; TPG24-33	Yes	129
Disability inclusion action plans	TPG25-10a; <i>Disability Inclusion Act 2014</i>	Yes	25–26 48–51 108–110 174–175
<i>Modern Slavery Act 2018</i> requirements	TPG25-10a; <i>Modern Slavery Act 2018</i>	Yes	115
Work health and safety	TPG25-10a	Yes	106–107
Workforce diversity	TPG25-10a; PSC Circular 2014-09	Yes	15 108–110 159 174–175

Financial performance

What is our financial performance and financial position?

Compliance requirement	Source of requirement	Completed	Page reference
Summary narrative and analysis of the agency's financial performance during the period. Concise overview that is accessible to the agency's stakeholders (non-financial readers).	TPG25-10a	Yes	116–120
Annual GSF financial statements	TPG25-10a	Yes	121–153
Controlled entities' financial statements (if applicable)	TPG25-10a	Yes	121–153
Audit report concerning the annual GSF financial statements	TPG25-10a	Yes	122–123
Clearly identify where the audited information starts and finishes	TPG25-10a	Yes	121–153
Costs and benefits associated with machinery of government changes	TPG25-10a; Chapter 11 of the NSW Machinery of Government Changes Guide	N/A	

Appendices

Appendix 1 Human resources information

FTE staff as at 30 June 2025

Central Sydney	829.45
Metropolitan offices	610.40
Regional offices	232.16
Total staff FTE	1,672.02

FTE staff as at 30 June 2025

CEO/Executive*	16.94
Legal officers	808.35
Administration and support staff*	846.72
Total staff FTE	1,672.02

*Includes National Legal Aid (NLA) staff

Number of actual staff by employment type	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Ongoing full-time	1,031	989	1,134	1,097
Ongoing part-time	114	368	113	249
Temporary full-time	193	163	371	373
Temporary part-time	67	48	119	104
Contract Executive	11	15	21	17
Non-Executive	0	0	0	0
Casual	7	4	9	12
Other	5	4	5	6
Total	1,428	1,591	1,772	1,858

'Temporary' includes staff seconded to us and staff in graduate roles.

'Other' includes cadets.

Number of actual staff by type of work	Central Sydney	Metropolitan	Regional	Total
Lawyers	358	369	155	882
Administration and support staff	542	329	105	976
Total	900	698	260	1,858

Number of Executive roles

Band	Salary range (\$)	Average remuneration		2023–24		2024–25		
		2023–24	2024–25	Female	Male	Female	Male	Non-binary
Band 3 (Chief Executive Officer)	\$391,189	\$391,189	\$391,189	1		1	0	
Band 2 (Executive Director)	\$302,332–\$315,000	\$299,427	\$304,443	3	2	3	3	
Band 1 (Director)*	\$210,061–\$270,000	\$236,721	\$245,991	12	3	8	1	1
Total				16	5	12	4	1

*Includes NLA staff

Appendix 2 Workforce diversity groups

Number of actual staff in different workforce diversity groups*	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Men	306	353	454	386
Women	1,121	1,236	1,314	1,465
Unspecified gender	1	2	4	7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	98	124	134	120
People from racial, ethnic, ethno-religious minority groups	324	367	419	403
People whose first language is not English	213	247	277	258
People with disability	103	124	135	121
People with disability requiring a work-related adjustment	24	34	35	37
Total staff	1,428	1,591	1,772	1,858

*Data includes casual staff

Parliamentary annual report tables

Table 1: Trends in the representation of workforce diversity groups

Workforce diversity group	Benchmark or target (%)	% Total staff			
		2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Women	50	78.5	77.6	74.2	78.8
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	3.3	8.7	9.5	9.3	8.1
People whose first language spoken as a child was not English	23.2	19.7	19.6	19.5	17.0
People with disability	5.6	9.4	9.8	9.6	8.0
People with disability requiring a work-related adjustment	N/A	2.3	2.7	2.5	2.5

Table 2: Trends in the distribution of workforce diversity groups

Workforce diversity group	Benchmark or target (%)	Distribution index			
		2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Women	100	93	94	98	96
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	100	86	88	93	92
People whose first language spoken as a child was not English	100	98	97	99	98
People with disability	100	100	98	98	97
People with disability requiring a work-related adjustment	100	104	97	96	95

Notes

A distribution Index of 100 indicates that the centre of the distribution of the named workforce diversity group across salary levels is equivalent to that of other staff. Values less than 100 mean that the group tends to be more concentrated at lower salary levels than is the case for other staff. The more pronounced this tendency is, the lower the index will be. In some cases, the index may be more than 100, indicating that the group is less concentrated at lower salary levels.

The distribution index is not calculated where workforce diverse group or non-workforce diverse group numbers are less than 20.

Appendix 3 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program funding

The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program provides funding to 27 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCASS) and 11 Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS) Social Support Services.

Service	Provider	Base WDVCAS funding (\$)	FASS Social Support Service funding (\$)	Other funding (\$)	Total funding (\$)
Burwood	Community Action for Better Living	1,335,215		491,856	1,827,071
Central Coast	Central Coast Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service	1,605,248		771,562	2,376,811
Central North-West	Plus Community	741,485		232,423	973,908
Central West	Plus Community	1,413,870		673,528	2,087,398
Coffs-Clarence	Warrina Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services	1,479,318	142,896	368,199	1,990,413
Cumberland	Western Sydney Community Legal Centre	1,615,925	397,806	682,037	2,695,768
Far West	Plus Community	744,282		233,014	977,296
Hunter Valley	Carrie's Place Domestic Violence and Homelessness Services	1,897,696		602,082	2,499,778
Illawarra	Women Illawarra	1,614,281	213,559	641,118	2,468,958
Macarthur	Macarthur Legal Centre	1,334,041		849,534	2,183,575
Mid-Coast	Mid Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy	1,490,513	142,896	727,463	2,360,873
Monaro-Hume	Molonglo Women's and Children's Services	835,815		307,735	1,143,550
Murray River	Linking Communities Network	852,580		378,425	1,231,005
Murrumbidgee	Linking Communities Network	714,756		374,763	1,089,519
Nepean-Blue Mountains	Blacktown Women's and Girls' Health Centre	1,829,185		734,175	2,563,360
New England	Tamworth Family Support Service	1,018,858		403,406	1,422,263
Newcastle	Hunter Women's Domestic Violence Court Service	1,811,344	213,559	922,828	2,947,732
North-West Sydney	Blacktown Women's and Girls' Health Centre	2,346,389		713,422	3,059,811
Northern Rivers	Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre	1,678,463	142,896	560,399	2,381,758
Northern Sydney	CatholicCare Broken Bay	1,310,095		705,666	2,015,761
Oxley	Tamworth Family Support Service	908,890	142,896	331,960	1,383,746
Riverina	Linking Communities Network	859,884	142,896	569,814	1,572,594
South Coast	Southern Women's Group	1,344,921		559,675	1,904,596
South-West Sydney	Justice Support Centre	2,631,734		995,193	3,626,927
Southern Sydney	The Family Co	1,592,044		815,146	2,407,190
Sydney	Justice Support Centre	2,070,447	213,559	796,188	3,080,194
Western	Plus Community	1,265,752	142,896	487,161	1,895,810
FASS Social Support Service for Men	Relationships Australia NSW		1,615,196		1,615,196
Total		38,343,031	3,511,056	15,928,773	57,782,859

Notes

The funding streams included in the figures in the 'Base WDVCS funding' column are:

- baseline WDVCS funding
- Uplift funding
- Safer Pathway funding, and
- Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award equal remuneration order supplementation funding.

The funding streams included in figures in the 'Other funding' column are:

- \$8,233,551 in case management funding received by WDVCSs for clients with complex needs
- \$6,110,500 in case management funding received by the WDVCS Hearing Support Pilot
- \$1,429,347 received by 10 WDVCSs to fund the NSW Police Force and WDVCS Co-location Pilot, and
- \$155,375 received by four WDVCSs to run the Hunter New England & Central Coast Primary Health Network GP Pilot.

Appendix 4 Community Legal Centres Program funding

The Community Legal Centres Program administers funding to 32 community legal centres (CLCs), the peak body Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW), and the Court Support Scheme.

Organisation	Commonwealth funding – NLAP (\$)	Commonwealth funding – other (\$)	NSW funding (\$)	Public Purpose Fund funding (\$)	Financial Abuse Service NSW funding (\$)	Total funding (\$)
Australian Centre for Disability Law	708,721		234,239	58,396		1,001,356
Central Coast Community Legal Centre	770,722		340,275	86,135		1,197,132
Central Tablelands and Blue Mountains Community Legal Centre	375,249	250,000	342,963	78,406		1,046,618
Community Legal Centres NSW			805,097	195,894		1,000,991
Community Restorative Centre (for the Court Support Scheme)	53,966		25,224	6,221		85,411
Environmental Defenders Office			188,664	42,752		231,416
Financial Rights Legal Centre	1,087,084		184,917	42,752		1,314,753
HIV/AIDS Legal Centre	110,687		301,758	74,057		486,502
Hume Riverina Community Legal Service	877,382		168,264	42,882		1,088,528
Hunter Community Legal Centre	1,078,154		499,845	118,900		1,696,899
Illawarra Legal Centre	749,358	250,000	327,168	76,689		1,403,215
Immigration Advice & Rights Centre	294,853	2,434,000	355,451	82,524		3,166,828
Inner City Legal Centre	486,553		536,831	59,140		1,082,524
Intellectual Disability Rights Service	188,757		119,152	30,366		338,275
Justice and Equity Centre (formerly Public Interest Advocacy Centre)	186,637		174,469	40,384		401,490
Justice Support Centre	840,623		837,811	101,237		1,779,671
Kingsford Legal Centre	898,331		609,531	42,331		1,550,193
Macarthur Legal Centre	1,016,614		795,369	121,533		1,933,516
Mallee Family Care Community Legal Centre	691,283		302,641	41,403		1,035,327
Marrickville Legal Centre	618,055		350,389	79,730		1,048,174
Mid North Coast Legal Centre	1,019,022	250,000	596,013	43,804		1,908,839
North & North West Community Legal Service	713,873		249,771	63,068		1,026,712
Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre	861,089	250,000	191,367	47,093		1,349,549
Redfern Legal Centre	925,228		646,821	74,634	2,200,000	3,846,683
Refugee Advice & Casework Service		4,868,000	300,965	74,317		5,243,282
Seniors Rights Service	169,595		253,577	64,541		487,713

South Coast & Country Community Law (formerly Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre)	756,869	250,000	581,294	140,626		1,728,789
Tenants' Union of NSW	122,695	250,000	174,122	40,305		587,122
University of Newcastle Legal Centre			271,540			271,540
Welfare Rights Centre	506,729	250,000	281,920	67,740		1,106,389
Western NSW Community Legal Centre	1,696,149		309,197	77,112		2,082,458
Western Sydney Community Legal Centre	1,688,769		900,060	215,356		2,804,185
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre	582,688		652,914	150,795		1,386,397
Women's Legal Service NSW	2,712,182		757,651	171,685		3,641,518
Total	22,787,917	9,052,000	13,667,270	2,652,808	2,200,000	50,359,995

Notes

Table excludes:

- \$660,000 of CLC Program funding received by 32 CLCs and the Court Support Scheme as one-off information technology grants in June 2025, and
- \$156,560 of funding provided to Community Legal Centres NSW to contract an employee assistance program provider from 2025–30.
- \$196,516 in unspent funds. Funding totals in our report's financials include these returned funds.

The funding streams included in figures in the 'Commonwealth funding – NLAP' column are:

- National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020–25 baseline funding
- National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020–25 bilateral schedule funding
- 2024–25 federal budget funding for pay parity and one-off indexation, and
- \$810,812 received by Western NSW Community Legal Centre to operate a domestic violence unit.

The funding streams included in figures in the 'Commonwealth funding – other' column are:

- \$1,750,000 received by seven CLCs for flood and disaster-related legal assistance, and
- \$7,302,000 received by two CLCs for migration-related legal assistance addressing protection visa backlogs.

The funding streams included in figures in the 'NSW funding' column are:

- baseline funding
- Critical Service Gaps funding, and
- Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award equal remuneration order supplementation funding.

Funding streams included in figures in the 'Financial Abuse Service NSW funding' column are:

- \$1,955,997 from the NSW Government and \$244,003 from the Public Purpose Fund received by Redfern Legal Centre to fund the statewide Financial Abuse Service NSW.

Appendix 5 Legal practice operational statistics

Legal Aid NSW total	2022–23	2023–24	% change from previous year	2024–25	% change from previous year
Case matters					
Applications received	53,181	59,658	12.2%	56,235	-5.7%
Applications refused	7,638	8,280	8.4%	8,854	6.9%
In-house grants	11,513	13,789	19.8%	14,984	8.7%
Assigned grants	26,430	28,667	8.5%	31,886	11.2%
Total case grants	37,943	42,456	11.9%	46,870	10.4%
Grant rate	83.2%	83.7%	0.5%	84.1%	0.5%
Applications determined	45,581	50,736	11.3%	55,724	9.8%
Applications undetermined at year end	852	2,722	219.5%	1,713	-37.1%
Grants finalised	43,072	40,879	-5.1%	31,897	-22.0%
Current grants on hand at year end	43,888	53,417	21.7%	51,977	-2.7%
Duty services					
In-house duty services	123,055	137,840	12.0%	135,077	-2.0%
Assigned duty services	82,781	87,843	6.1%	94,720	7.8%
Total duty services	205,836	225,683	9.6%	229,797	1.8%
Other services					
Advice	93,968	95,812	2.0%	98,866	3.2%
Minor assistance	23,923	25,408	6.2%	24,518	-3.5%
Extended legal assistance	1,305	1,627	24.7%	2,670	64.1%
Early resolution assistance	5,035	6,561	30.3%	7,524	14.7%
Information	143,819	163,517	13.7%	163,682	0.1%
Total other services	268,050	292,925	9.3%	297,260	1.5%
Total client services	511,829	561,064	9.6%	573,927	2.3%

Criminal law	2022–23	2023–24	% change from previous year	2024–25	% change from previous year
Case matters					
Applications received	33,961	37,873	11.5%	34,512	-8.9%
Applications refused	4,906	5,650	15.2%	6,016	6.5%
In-house grants	9,581	11,073	15.6%	11,711	5.8%
Assigned grants	18,672	20,791	11.3%	23,223	11.7%
Total case grants	28,253	31,864	12.8%	34,934	9.6%
Grant rate	85.20%	84.94%	-0.3%	85.3%	0.4%
Applications determined	33,159	37,514	13.1%	40,950	9.2%
Applications undetermined at year end	577	1752	203.6%	1,040	-40.6%
Grants finalised	29,712	29,601	-0.4%	22,780	-23.0%
Current grants on hand at year end	24,073	26,440	9.8%	26,031	-1.5%
Duty services					
In-house duty services	109,925	121,118	10.2%	119,437	-1.4%
Assigned duty services	68,108	72,795	6.9%	79,619	9.4%
Total duty services	178,033	193,913	8.9%	199,056	2.7%
Other services					

Advice	30,366	29,576	-2.6%	30,032	1.5%
Minor assistance	6,125	6,338	3.5%	6,855	8.2%
Extended legal assistance	145	137	-5.5%	142	3.6%
Information	33,439	38,959	16.5%	40,636	4.3%
Total other services	70,075	75,010	7.0%	77,665	3.5%
Total client services	276,361	300,787	8.8%	311,655	3.6%

Civil law	2022–23	2023–24	% change from previous year	2024–25	% change from previous year
Case matters					
Applications received	3,080	4,130	34.1%	5,374	30.1%
Applications refused	685	644	-6.0%	721	12.0%
In-house grants	674	1461	116.8%	2,021	38.3%
Assigned grants	679	695	2.4%	838	20.6%
Total case grants	1,353	2,156	59.3%	2,859	32.6%
Grant rate	66.4%	77.0%	16.0%	79.9%	3.7%
Applications determined	2,038	2,800	37.4%	3,580	27.9%
Applications undetermined at year end	12	36	200.0%	53	47.2%
Grants finalised	1,450	1,849	27.5%	3,692	99.7%
Current grants on hand at year end	1,815	3,350	84.6%	3,535	5.5%
Duty services					
In-house duty services	1,002	1,705	70.2%	1,322	-22.5%
Assigned duty services	12,508	13,051	4.3%	13,028	-0.2%
Total duty services	13,510	14,756	9.2%	14,350	-2.8%
Other services					
Advice	34,234	32,086	-6.3%	30,159	-6.0%
Minor assistance	10,252	9,090	-11.3%	6,496	-28.5%
Extended legal assistance	1,044	1,329	27.3%	2,348	76.7%
Early resolution assistance	0	6	N/A	162	N/A
Information	83,503	92,925	11.3%	89,602	-3.6%
Total other services	129,033	135,436	5.0%	128,767	-4.9%
Total client services	143,896	152,348	5.9%	145,976	-4.2%

Family law	2022–23	2023–24	% change from previous year	2024–25	% change from previous year
Case matters					
Applications received	16,140	17,655	9.4%	16,349	-7.4%
Applications refused	2,047	1,986	-3.0%	2,117	6.6%
In-house grants	1,258	1,255	-0.2%	1,252	-0.2%
Assigned grants	7,079	7,181	1.4%	7,825	9.0%
Total case grants	8,337	8,436	1.2%	9,077	7.6%
Grant rate	80.29%	80.94%	0.8%	81.1%	0.2%
Applications determined	10,384	10,422	0.4%	11,194	7.4%
Applications undetermined at year end	263	934	255.1%	620	-33.6%
Grants finalised	11,910	9,429	-20.8%	5,425	-42.5%
Current grants on hand at year end	18,000	23,627	31.3%	22,411	-5.1%
Duty services					
In-house duty services	12,128	15,017	23.8%	14,318	-4.7%
Assigned duty services	2,165	1,997	-7.8%	2,073	3.8%
Total duty services	14,293	17,014	19.0%	16,391	-3.7%
Other services					
Advice	29,368	34,150	16.3%	38,675	13.3%
Minor assistance	7,546	9,980	32.3%	11,167	11.9%
Extended legal assistance	116	161	38.8%	180	11.8%
Early resolution assistance	5,035	6,555	30.2%	7,362	12.3%
Information	26,877	31,633	17.7%	33,444	5.7%
Total other services	68,942	82,479	19.6%	90,828	10.1%
Total client services	91,572	107,929	17.9%	116,296	7.8%

Commonwealth and state allocation of legal aid services	State matter	State matter %	Commonwealth matter	Commonwealth matter %	Total
Family law					
Grants	3,754	41.4%	5,323	58.6%	9,077
Duty appearances	6,731	41.1%	9,660	58.9%	16,391
Advice	7,960	20.6%	30,715	79.4%	38,675
Minor assistance	2,553	22.9%	8,614	77.1%	11,167
Extended legal assistance	118	65.6%	62	34.4%	180
Early resolution assistance	334	4.5%	7,028	95.5%	7,362
Total	21,450	25.9%	61,402	74.1%	82,852
Criminal law					
Grants	34,229	98.0%	705	2.0%	34,934
Duty services	196,723	98.8%	2,333	1.2%	199,056
Advice	29,356	97.7%	676	2.3%	30,032
Minor assistance	6,713	97.9%	142	2.1%	6,855
Extended legal assistance	22	15.5%	120	84.5%	142
Total	267,043	98.5%	3,976	1.5%	271,019
Civil law					
Grants	2,601	91.0%	258	9.0%	2,859

Duty services	14,340	99.9%	10	0.1%	14,350
Advice	20,178	66.9%	9,981	33.1%	30,159
Minor assistance	4,394	67.6%	2,102	32.4%	6,496
Extended legal assistance	1,641	69.9%	707	30.1%	2,348
Early resolution assistance	37	22.8%	125	77.2%	162
Total	43,191	76.6%	13,183	23.4%	56,374

Legal Aid NSW total

Grants	40,584	86.6%	6,286	13.4%	46,870
Duty services	217,814	94.8%	11,983	5.2%	229,797
Advice	57,494	58.2%	41,372	41.8%	98,866
Minor assistance	13,660	55.7%	10,858	44.3%	24,518
Extended legal assistance	1,781	66.7%	889	33.3%	2,670
Early resolution assistance	371	4.9%	7,153	95.1%	7,524
Total	331,704	80.9%	78,541	19.1%	410,245

*A breakdown of information services by jurisdiction is not available.

In-house and private practitioner allocations of legal work	In-house practitioner	In-house practitioner %	Private practitioner	Private practitioner %	Total
Family law					
Duty services	14,318	87.4%	2,073	12.6%	16,391
Grants of legal aid	1,252	13.8%	7,825	86.2%	9,077
Total	15,570	61.1%	9,898	38.9%	25,468
Criminal law					
Duty services	119,437	60.0%	79,619	40.0%	199,056
Grants of legal aid	11,711	33.5%	23,223	66.5%	34,934
Total	131,148	56.0%	102,842	44.0%	233,990
Civil law					
Duty services	1,322	9.2%	13,028	90.8%	14,350
Grants of legal aid	2,021	70.7%	838	29.3%	2,859
Total	3,343	19.4%	13,866	80.6%	17,209
Legal Aid NSW total					
Duty services	135,077	58.8%	94,720	41.2%	229,797
Grants of legal aid	14,984	32.0%	31,886	68.0%	46,870
Total	150,061	54.2%	126,606	45.8%	276,667

Community legal education	2022–23	2023–24	% change from previous year	2024–25	% change from previous year
Criminal law	312	286	-8.3%	405	41.6%
Family law	322	362	12.4%	344	-5.0%
Civil law	1,401	1,073	-23.4%	1,270	18.4%
Total	2,035	1,721	-15.4%	2,019	17.3%

Family dispute resolution	2022–23	2023–24	% change from previous year	2024–25	% change from previous year
Number of conferences	2,753	3,307	20.1%	3,157	-4.5%
Agreements reached	2,001	2,400	19.9%	2,296	-4.3%
Agreement rate	72.7%	72.6%	-0.2%	72.7%	0.2%

Appendix 6 Law reform submissions

In 2024–25, Legal Aid NSW made 107 law reform submissions (32 public and 75 confidential) to a range of government and non-government consultations on issues that affect our clients and our organisation.

Public submissions included the below.

- NSW Sentencing Council's preliminary review of good character in sentencing, July 2024.
- NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 1 Premier and Finance's inquiry into the Alcohol Consumption in Public Places (Liberalisation) Bill 2024, July 2024.
- Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's review of bail compliance checks in NSW, August 2024.
- Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into family violence orders, August 2024.
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice's systems review into out-of-home care, September 2024.
- Australian National Audit Office's audit of the management of complaints by the Australian Human Rights Commission, September 2024.
- Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department's review into enhancing civil protections and remedies for forced marriage, September 2024.
- Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport's inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia, September 2024.
- NSW Children's Court consultation on a potential consolidated practice note, October 2024.
- Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department's consultation on the remake of the *Family Law (Dispute Resolution Practitioners) Regulations 2007* (Cth), October 2024.
- NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry into the prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in NSW, November 2024.
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice's review of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal's role in tenancy disputes, November 2024.
- NSW Drug Summit 2024, November 2024.
- Australian Financial Complaints Authority's consultation titled 'Approaches in general insurance', November 2024.
- Homes NSW consultation on the discussion paper to inform the Homes for NSW Plan, January 2025.
- NSW Sentencing Council's review of good character in sentencing, February 2025.
- NSW Parliament Modern Slavery Commission's inquiry into the modern slavery risks faced by temporary migrant workers in rural and regional NSW, February 2025.
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice's review of the *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013* (NSW), February 2025.
- Supreme Court Adoption Working Party review of Supreme Court Practice Note SC EQ 13 (the adoptions practice note), August 2024.
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice's consultation on a legislated framework for regulating the use of restrictive practices on people with disability in NSW, March 2025.
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice's consultation on Apprehended Domestic Violence Order condition 6, March 2025.
- Australian Financial Complaints Authority's updated consultation titled 'Approach to family violence' and 'Approach to elder financial abuse', April 2025.
- Commonwealth Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee inquiry into compensation and income support for veterans, May 2025.
- NSW Fair Trading's consultation on amendments to the *Motor Dealers and Repairers Act Regulations 2014* (NSW), May 2025.

- Australian Financial Complaints Authority consultation on proposed amendments to the Complaint Resolution Scheme Rules (2024), June 2025.

Submissions on behalf of National Legal Aid (NLA) included the below.

- Commonwealth Select Committee on the Impact of Climate Risk on Insurance Premiums and Availability inquiry into the impact of climate risk on insurance premiums and availability, July 2024.
- Commonwealth Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee's review of the Family Law Amendment Bill 2024, October 2024.
- Commonwealth Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system, October 2024.
- The Commonwealth Treasury's consultation on the exposure draft of the National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Low Cost Credit) Regulations 2025 (Cth) (the 'buy now pay later' regulations), February 2025.
- Australian Securities and Investments Commission's consultation on 'buy now pay later' regulatory guidance, March 2025.

Appendix 7 Right to information

Obligations under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*

Under section 7 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*, agencies must review their programs for the release of government information to identify the kinds of information that can be made publicly available. This review must be undertaken at least once every 12 months.

Legal Aid NSW proactively releases information to foster transparency and accountability. We uploaded additional documents to our Legal Aid NSW website during this reporting period and will continue to update the site regularly.

Number of access applications received

During the reporting period, our agency received a total of 43 formal access applications, including withdrawn applications but not invalid applications.

Number of refused applications for Schedule 1 information

During the reporting period, our agency refused five formal access applications (either wholly or partly) because the information requested was information referred to in Schedule 1 to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*.

Table A: Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome

	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private sector business	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not-for-profit organisations or community groups	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of the public (by legal representative)	4	7	1	4	0	1	0	4
Members of the public (other)	3	6	3	3	1	3	0	2
Total	7	14	4	7	1	4	0	6

Table B: Number of applications by type of application and outcome

	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	1	3	3	0	1	0	0	0
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly other	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	1
Personal information applications*	5	8	0	7	0	3	0	5
Total	7	14	4	7	1	4	0	6

*A personal information application is an access application for personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule 4 to the Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual).

Table C: Invalid applications

Reason for invalidity	Number of applications
Application does not comply with formal requirements (section 41 of the Act)	6
Application excluded information of the agency (section 43 of the Act)	0
Application contravenes restraint order (section 110 of the Act)	0
Total number of invalid applications received	6
Number of invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	3

Table D: Conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure – matters listed in Schedule 1 to the Act

	Number of times consideration used*
Overriding secrecy laws	2
Cabinet information	0
Executive Council information	0
Contempt	0
Legal professional privilege	3
Excluded information	0
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	0
Transport safety	0
Adoption	0
Care and protection of children	0
Ministerial code of conduct	0
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	0
Total	5

*More than one public interest consideration may apply in relation to a particular access application and, if so, each such consideration is to be recorded (but only once per application). This also applies in relation to Table E.

Table E: Other public interest considerations against disclosure – matters listed in the table to section 14 of the Act**Number of occasions when the application was not successful**

Responsible and effective government	1
Law enforcement and security	0
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	3
Business interests of agencies and other persons	2
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	0
Secrecy provisions	2
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation	0
Total	8

Table F: Timeliness**Number of applications**

Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	43
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with the applicant)	0
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	0
Total	43

Table G: Number of applications reviewed under Part 5 of the Act (by type of review and outcome)

	Decision varied	Decision upheld	Total
Internal review	1	0	1
Review by Information Commissioner*	0	1	1
Internal review following recommendation under section 93 of the Act	1	0	1
Review by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal	0	1	1
Total	2	2	4

*The Information Commissioner does not have the authority to vary decisions, but can make recommendations to the original decision maker. The data in this case indicates that a recommendation to vary or uphold the original decision has been made by the Information Commissioner.

Table H: Applications for review under Part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)**Number of applications for review**

Applications by access applicants	0
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see section 54 of the Act)	1
Total	1

Table I: Applications transferred to other agencies under Division 2 of Part 4 of the Act (by type of transfer)**Number of applications transferred**

Agency-initiated transfers	0
Application-initiated transfers	0
Total	0

Appendix 8 Report on diverse clients including multicultural and disability-related matters

The reporting below follows requirements under the Multicultural NSW Multicultural Policies and Services Program Multicultural Framework and the NSW Family and Community Services Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines.

Our diverse clients cover a broad range of groups, including people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people from rural and regional areas and people from LGBTQIA+ communities.

Focus area: Service delivery

We have several key documents that guide our service delivery to diverse clients. Many of these documents are discussed in more detail elsewhere in our annual report.

- Aboriginal Client Services Strategy 2024–2028 – covered on page 43.
- Best Practice Standards for Representing Aboriginal Clients – covered on page 43.
- Cultural Competence and Diversity Framework – covered on page 48.
- Disability and Inclusion Action Plan – covered on page 25.

Focus area: Planning

Our Legal Aid NSW Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Board is chaired by our CEO. It brings together the voices of the Chairs of our staff networks, members of our Executive and a Public Service Association representative.

Focus area: Leadership

Legal Aid NSW has a number of internal networks that have been established for the purpose of elevating the voices of diverse staff and creating a safe space for them to connect. These include the:

- Aboriginal Staff Network
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Staff Network
- Disability and Carer Network
- Legally Queer Staff Network, and
- Young Professionals Network.

Focus area: Engagement

It's important to us to make sure Legal Aid NSW services are available to members of the community who speak a language other than English. We support culturally and linguistically diverse clients to access our services by:

- training our lawyers on how to work with interpreters, and interpreters on how to best translate legal language
- recognising the skills of staff who can provide on-the-spot language assistance through our Community Language Allowance Scheme, which pays an allowance to employees who have a basic level of competency in a language other than English, and
- providing legal information publications in a range of community languages.

Focus area: Disability

Key outcome: Liveable communities

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024–2028 provides a blueprint to eliminate discrimination and create a more accessible and inclusive Legal Aid NSW for clients and staff with lived and living experiences of disability and mental ill health. The DIAP extends to carers of people with disability in their capacity as staff members and as service users of Legal Aid NSW.

Key outcome: Employment

It is important to us that all staff feel they belong, are valued and have the support required to thrive at work. Our Workplace Adjustment Guidelines direct staff to take a proactive and person-centred approach to workplace adjustments.

Legal Aid NSW encourages any member of staff with disability, a non-work-related injury or a health condition to request any assistance or adjustment that enables them to perform the inherent requirements of their job safely, reduces or eliminates barriers, and ensures genuine participation and contribution, regardless of seen or unseen individual differences.

Key outcome: Systems and processes

Our Disability Inclusion Advisory Panel includes clients with lived experience of disability and mental ill health as well as knowledge or experience of legal assistance services. Staff are encouraged to seek feedback from the Disability Inclusion Advisory Panel on projects and service delivery. The panel is intersectional and includes members who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and non-binary and gender diverse. The panel contributed to the development of our DIAP and was then formalised as an ongoing lived experience panel for the organisation.

Key outcome: Community attitudes and behaviours

We support staff to better understand the experiences of people with disability by:

- supporting our Disability and Carer Network to run events where staff share their experiences with their colleagues
- promoting relevant training, including NLA's With You training, which you can read about on page 76 and
- celebrating days of significance for diverse staff including people with disability on our intranet.

Appendix 9 Private law firm expenditure

Dollar value of claims certified during 2024–25 by assigned firm, for the top 20 firms

Ranking	Firm name	Counsel fees	Solicitor fees	Disbursements total	Casework total	Duty	Grand total
1	Crimcorp Defence Lawyers Pty Ltd	677,773	625,173	76,650	1,379,596		1,379,596
2	Ross Hill & Associate Solicitors	661,776	461,329	72,620	1,195,725		1,195,725
3	Phillip A Wilkins & Associates	254,290	819,109	84,471	1,157,869	3,998	1,161,867
4	Alzaim Keane Legal Pty Ltd	165,827	654,166	96,053	916,046	146,638	1,062,684
5	Resolve Legal Professionals	241,756	696,748	90,779	1,029,282	13,164	1,042,446
6	David Barron Solicitor	327,682	551,279	119,314	998,275	40,575	1,038,851
7	Ryan Payten Le	221,734	501,948	62,267	785,949	240,614	1,026,563
8	First Choice Legal Pty Ltd	441,303	490,999	74,627	1,006,929		1,006,929
9	Mason Mia & Associates	152,313	699,743	125,269	977,325		977,325
10	Blaxland Law Pty Ltd	345,537	522,008	92,726	960,271		960,271
11	Fay Rose Legal	41,353	786,254	73,764	901,371	50,213	951,584
12	George Sten & Co	405,092	490,372	53,465	948,930		948,930
13	Abbas Jacobs Lawyers	421,915	453,341	41,330	916,586		916,586
14	Proctor & Associates	429,083	411,992	74,435	915,510		915,510
15	Peter Ryan Solicitor & Attorney	88,462	678,617	55,107	822,185	53,284	875,469
16	Gonzalez & Co	65,086	712,827	54,903	832,816	4,680	837,496
17	McGirr & Associates Pty Ltd	534,614	272,149	19,410	826,173	5,574	831,746
18	Rice More & Gibson	98,809	513,170	160,549	772,527	27,430	799,957
19	Sans Law Pty Ltd	302,664	423,244	60,379	786,287		786,287
20	Obrien Winter Partners Pty Ltd	252,786	324,047	63,540	640,373	143,634	784,006

Notes

- Legal Aid NSW administers Commonwealth funding for the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme. Matters funded under this scheme do not form part of these results.
- The case payment figures in this table represent payments for files assigned by Legal Aid NSW to the specified firms. In some cases, funds are paid directly to other providers involved with those files, for example barristers and expert witnesses, rather than being made through the assigned firm.

Appendix 10 Appealing decisions about legal aid

Legal Aid NSW is committed to ensuring procedural fairness and transparency in our decision-making processes. In 2024–25, we completed a major reform of our appeals framework, transitioning from Legal Aid Review Committees (LARCs) to our newly established Legal Aid Review Panels (LARPs) on 2 December 2024. This required an update to the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* (NSW), which establishes our appeal processes.

In 2024–25, both LARCs and LARPs provided independent reviews of decisions made by Legal Aid NSW to ensure procedural fairness for our clients. Both conducted impartial reviews of decisions to refuse or terminate grants of aid by applying our eligibility criteria, ensuring consistency and fairness in outcomes. You can read more about the transition from committees to panels in the 'Our 2024–25 performance highlights' section on page 25.

Legal Aid Review Committee members 1 July 2024 to 1 December 2024

Legal Aid Review Committee One

- Angela Stewart
- Anna Buduls
- Anna Johnson
- Helen Maamary
- Jane Sanders
- Kellie Stares
- Lucy Pinnock
- Paul Blacket SC

Legal Aid Review Committee Two

- Andrew Boog
- Anna Buduls
- Anne Healey
- Brett Thomson
- Donald Sword
- Karen McLean
- Kathleen Hainsworth
- Stephanie Koch

Legal Aid Review Committee Three

- Anna Buduls
- Ellyse McGee
- Hannah Roberts
- Jonathan Prowse
- Nicholas Broadbent
- Philip O'Keefe
- Richard Pontello SC
- Tram Nguyen

Family Law Legal Aid Review Committee One

- Christopher Frommer

- Elena Berrocal Capdevila
- Emma Moss
- Gregory Kenny
- Greta Bromwich
- Lina Rapone
- Lorelle Longbottom
- Michelle Hayward

Family Law Legal Aid Review Committee Two

- Christopher Othen
- Emily Azar
- Hannah Fordham
- Joplin Higgins
- Kathleen Lamoureux
- Melanie Faithfull
- Michelle Meares
- Nick Mitrevski

Family Law Legal Aid Review Committee Three

- Claire Cantrall
- Kayte Lewis
- Lina Rapone
- Martha Barnett
- Nicole Hailstone
- Patrick Mullane
- Stephen Van Der Mye

Legal Aid Review Panel members 2 December 2024 to 30 June 2025

Civil Law Legal Aid Review Panel Members

- Andrew Boog
- Craig Mulvey
- Neil Jones
- Stephanie Fowler
- Talitha Fishburn

Criminal Law Legal Aid Review Panel Members

- Catherine Hunter
- Eiad Diyab
- Graham Lamond
- Gregory Scragg
- Matthew Hammond
- Rebecca Domingue
- Richard Pontello SC
- Steven Shneider
- Stewart Holt

- William Hussey

Family Law Legal Aid Review Panel Members

- Betul Turgut
- David Heilpern
- Ellyse McGee
- Jo Markham
- Joplin Higgins
- Kieran Fitzgerald
- Lang Goodsell (resigned March 2025)
- Nicholas Gad
- Sarah Reid

Appeal statistics and trends for 2024–25

Appeals allowed

In 2024–25, 18 appeals were allowed, representing 4.25 percent of all appeals lodged.

Appeals disallowed

In 2024–25, a total of 391 appeals were disallowed. This represents 92.22 percent of all appeals lodged during the reporting period. This reflects the rigorous application of our eligibility criteria by Legal Aid NSW staff.

Appeals deferred

A total of 15 appeals were deferred in 2024–25. Deferrals typically occur when additional information is required or when a matter is pending resolution in another forum.

Appeals and outcomes in 2024–25

Law type	Allowed	Disallowed	Deferred	Withdrawn	Total appeals
Civil	2	65	2	0	69
Criminal	10	191	7	0	208
Family	6	135	6	0	147
Total	18	391	15	0	424

Appeals and outcomes over five years

Review outcome	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Appeal allowed	34	18	27	24	18
Appeal disallowed	681	461	367	407	391
Deferred	32	28	37	12	15
Withdrawn	21	11	21	8	0
Total	768	518	452	451	424

**Due to a change in reporting procedures, figures on non-appellable outcomes are not available for 2024–25.*

The year ahead

- We will focus on embedding our new Legal Aid Review Panels and monitoring their effectiveness. We will continue to provide training and guidance to panel members and refine internal processes to ensure the system remains responsive, fair, and efficient.

Appendix 11 Compliance appendix

We take our compliance obligations seriously. Information on compliance is included throughout our annual report. Our compliance index on page 178 shows where it is located. Additional compliance disclosures appear below.

Use of consultants

This year, we worked with consultants to complete one project over \$50,000.

Consultancies engaged for projects over \$50,000 in 2024–25

Consultancy	Project	Cost
Alvarez & Marsal Australia and New Zealand Pty Ltd	Remuneration project	\$74,017

International travel

This year, four staff members travelled overseas in the course of their work.

Overseas trips completed by Legal Aid NSW staff

Purpose of trip	Destination	Total staff	Participating staff
Attendance at the International Legal Aid Group Conference 2025	Germany	2	Care and Protection staff member from the Family Law Division Special Counsel to the CEO
Participating in the Executive Masters of Public Administration (EMPA) run through the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG)	New Zealand	2	Staff member specialising in grants of legal aid Staff member from the Criminal Law Division

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Note: Entries in bold are reported in accordance with the *Annual Reports (Departments) Regulation 2010* (NSW), *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Regulation 2010* (NSW) and the Commonwealth, State, and Territory Disability Agreement.

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TTY: 9219 5126

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Burwood 2134
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Campbelltown

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Tel: 4628 2922

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Fairfield 2165
Tel: 9727 3777

Liverpool

Level 4, 45–47 Scott St
Liverpool 2170
Tel: 9601 1200

Parramatta Civil and Family Law

Level 4, 128 Marsden St
Parramatta 2150
Tel: 9891 1600

Parramatta Criminal Law

Parramatta Justice Precinct, Level 1
160 Marsden St Parramatta 2150
Tel: 9066 6000
TTY: 9687 7538

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Tel: 08 8004 9600

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Tel: 4929 5482

Newcastle Criminal Law

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