

Protection Visa and Appeals Legal Service

8-month snapshot (1 Aug 24 to 31 Mar 25)

About us	How we help
Circle Green Community Legal provides an effective, government-supported legal service for protection claims and appeals. This reduces pressure on the protection visa system while upholding Australia’s humanitarian commitments.	Everyone that engages our service receives comprehensive legal advice . Full legal representation is provided to matters that are assessed as having merit . We use a framework for assessing merit that is quality controlled and aligned with professional obligations.
Challenges we face	Funding for our service ends on 30 June 2025 . Investing in our service reduces rework, appeals, and delays—saving the system time and money . We need extended and secure funding for this essential service to meet rising demand and deliver fair, efficient migration outcomes.

A data driven legal service addressing critical backlogs in Australia’s protection visa system

For the **first time ever, we have a clearer evidence base** demonstrating our Protection Visa and Appeals Legal Service as an effective, government-supported model. This snapshot supports the early findings in our [Six-Month Progress Report](#), demonstrating that **high-quality legal assistance can increase fair outcomes**. Stable funding means this success can scale. Service data from 1 Aug 2024 - 31 Mar 2025, supports the need for funded legal services to make fair and efficient protection systems real.



*Behind every number in the 50,000-case backlog is a person.
Our legal service is helping them navigate complex pathways—and preventing system failure.*

This snapshot outlines **3 recommendations** for ongoing funding for protection and appeal legal services.

Recommendation 1



We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to **invest in early intervention funding** for legal assistance programs proving to be effective in reducing the backlog of protection applications.

Recommendation 2



We recommend the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department **facilitate a shared data strategy** between legal service providers, the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) and Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA).

Recommendation 3



We recommend that the Commonwealth Government include, within its legal services funding, a **dedicated investment for data-driven service delivery** to support ongoing evaluation that ensures services are addressing and preventing backlogs.

Is our service making a difference to a client's decision to lodge?

All eligible clients engaging in our service receive a comprehensive merits assessment on their protection claim. We used a client survey to gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of our service in influencing clients' decision to lodge following the provision of no merit advice. For both services, our support was effective in helping the majority of clients—over 85%—develop a clear understanding of the likelihood of success of their claims.

Merits Assessments

PV Initial



69 total Merits Assessments



47% low or no merit



86% of clients **clearly understood** their claims' chance of success



73% **did not lodge** or **continue** with lodgment post no merit advice

Early intervention legal service means providing **comprehensive merits assessments** to clients **prior to lodgement**.

PV Appeals



49 total Merits Assessments



82% low or no merit



89% of clients **clearly understood** their claims' chance of success



21% **did not lodge** or **continue** with lodgment post no merit advice

Further data capture will be able to show the extent to which **early intervention** can **prevent backlogs** and **unmeritorious applications**.

Note: sample sizes. Initial dataset: 86% (n=13) understood claim success; 73% (n=14) did not proceed. Appeals: 89% (n=14) understood; 21% (n=19) did not proceed.



[Listen here](#) to the short data explainer for our March 2025 Snapshot



Learning Point

- This data suggests our service has a **greater influence** on a clients' decision to lodge **if we engage** with a client **prior to them lodging an application or appeal**.
- By looking at our protection initial dataset, **only 27% lodged after receiving a no merit advice** - a significant majority did not have a previously lodged application at the time they engaged our advice.
- Comparably, our **appeals dataset** shows a **higher number (79%) lodging** or continuing with a lodged application after receiving no merit advice. Most of this group had pre-existing lodged applications (some in the backlog for up to 4 years).
- **Seeing clients early** provides us an opportunity to **outline the law and educate on complex processes**, better equipping clients to make **informed decisions**.

Recommendation 1



We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to **invest in early intervention funding** for legal assistance programs proving to be effective in reducing the backlog of protection applications.

2 Does our service reduce decision-making times?

Our service provides critical support throughout stages of the protection visa and appeals application process. This results in greater efficiency and fairness in decision making. We are monitoring the impact of our services on decision-making times and look forward to collaborating with decision-makers on this.

Visa Lodgment Services

PV Initial



36 Representations



8 Statements



Links to further service information

- [Protection Visa and Appeals Service webpage](#)
- [Six-Month Progress Report](#)
- [Funding Priorities for Protection and Appeals Reform](#)

PV Appeals



7 Representations



5 Statements



5 Submissions (pre/post hearing)



4 Attendance at hearing/interview



Case study

Our case study of Yasmin's journey provides an example of a **client journey** through the appeals process. Notably, a **substantive hearing duration of 15 minutes** is an example of how our service is supporting **greater systemic efficiency**, through a **high-quality, evidence-informed** submission, and a **thorough merits assessment** process. Access the full case study infographic [here](#) for more information.



Learning Point

- Multiple components of our service collectively contribute to reducing decision-making times. For example:
 - Comprehensive legal representation for meritorious claims
 - Legal advice to clients with low merit throughout the appeal process
 - Provision of accessible, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and informative resources to empower clients with the knowledge required to navigate the protection visa process effectively.
- We are advocating for a **shared data strategy** that encourages the **collection and exchange of relevant information** among stakeholders in the protection visa system, with a goal of improving fairness, transparency, efficiency, and preventing future backlogs.

Recommendation 2












We recommend the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department **facilitate a shared data strategy** between legal service providers, the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) and Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA).

3 Why is a data driven approach needed to prevent backlogs?

In WA, our service sees an average of **3 new clients** per day **indicating a sustained, high demand** for Protection Visa legal services. This demand extends across varied and complex client needs.

Legal Need

PV Initial	Our Clients	PV Appeals
<div><div> 153 Primary applicants and 60 additional applicants</div><div> 257 Total legal services</div><div> 162 Legal Advices</div><div> 36 Representations</div></div>	<div><div> 3 new clients</div><div>on average each day, indicating high demand for this legal service</div></div>	<div><div> 104 Primary applicants and 15 additional applicants</div><div> 186 Total legal services</div><div> 127 Legal Advices</div><div> 7 Representations</div></div>

Top 5 Countries of Origin

PV Initial	PV Appeals
<div><div><div>Pakistan</div><div>8%</div><div>13</div></div><div><div>India</div><div>6%</div><div>10</div></div><div><div>Ukraine</div><div></div><div>9</div></div><div><div>Myanmar</div><div></div><div>8</div></div><div><div>Palestinian Authority</div><div></div><div>7</div></div></div>	<div><div><div>Malaysia</div><div>50%</div><div>50</div></div><div><div>Fiji</div><div></div><div>11</div></div><div><div>Pakistan</div><div></div><div>7</div></div><div><div>China</div><div></div><div>4</div></div><div><div>Indonesia</div><div></div><div>4</div></div></div>

Priority Groups

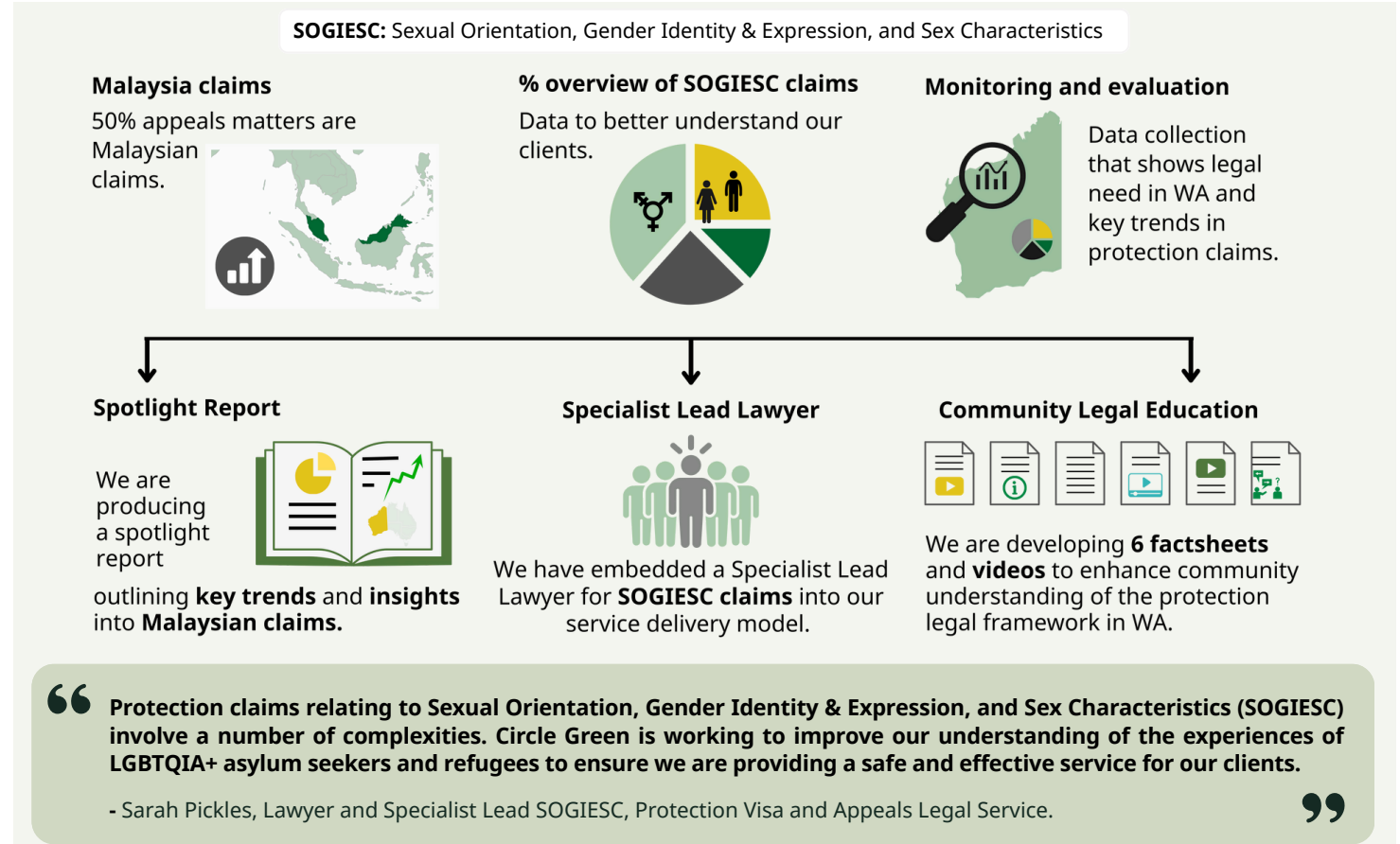
PV Initial	PV Appeals
<div><div><div>Family violence</div><div></div><div>14%</div></div><div><div>Single parent family</div><div></div><div>10%</div></div><div><div>LGBTQ+</div><div></div><div>7%</div></div><div><div>Client in custody</div><div></div><div>6%</div></div><div><div>People with a disability</div><div></div><div>3%</div></div></div>	<div><div><div>Family violence</div><div></div><div>9%</div></div><div><div>Single parent family</div><div></div><div>10%</div></div><div><div>LGBTQ+</div><div></div><div>8%</div></div><div><div>Client in custody</div><div></div><div>2%</div></div><div><div>People with a disability</div><div></div><div>5%</div></div></div>



“ Before talking to Circle Green, I had no idea what PV was about. I just read the info on the DoHA webpage. After this second appointment, I know how the process works and the likelihood that I will be successful or not. I think it's so important that I know this stuff before making a decision. It's really good because I didn't need to hire a lawyer. For me, that's something really good.

- Protection Visa Initial Client Feedback ”

How we are using data to inform service delivery



 **Learning Point**

- Our data-driven approach clearly demonstrates the **value of embedding data practices** to assess service effectiveness, develop and deliver targeted legal services, **inform backlog management, and improve decision-making**.
- Regular and systematic data capture is crucial for accurately identifying, understanding and addressing the **evolving legal needs** of protection visa clients.
- A focus on outcomes will enable our service-and the broader PV stakeholder community-to evaluate the longer-term impacts and strategies to address the backlog and enable a whole systems approach to tackling the backlog problem.

Overview of other data our service will report on

Data set	How is this useful for decision-makers?
Cost of service	It will provide an accurate insight into the nature and cost of services and resources needed to deliver a scalable and efficient PV legal service.
Community Legal Education resources and Evaluation Framework	Empower clients to understand their rights and options.
Social Impact and Social Return on Investment (SROI)	Clearly understand services’ effectiveness in addressing the backlog. Use Social Return on Investment (SROI) to quantify social and economic outcomes to demonstrate created value and avoided costs.

Recommendation 3



We recommend that the Commonwealth Government include, within its legal services funding, a **dedicated investment for data-driven service delivery** to support ongoing evaluation that ensures services are addressing and preventing backlogs.