

We help with legal issues.

Employment, tenancy, migration
and family & domestic violence

Celebrating 6 months of service

1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021

Circle Green 
Community Legal

WHO ARE WE

Circle Green Community Legal is a community legal centre in Western Australia providing state-wide specialist legal services in employment, residential tenancy law, family and domestic violence, and migration services aimed at assisting people who are otherwise disadvantaged in their access to legal services.

Contact us:

Online: circlegreen.org.au/get-help/

Telephone: 6148 3636
9:30 am – 3:30 pm
Monday – Friday

In-person: Ground Floor
445 Hay Street, Perth
9:30 am – 12:30 pm
Monday – Thursday

Message From Chair And CEO



The three-merging community legal centres of Employment Law Centre of WA, The Humanitarian Group, and Tenancy WA to form T.H.E Community Legal Centre Inc. trading as Circle Green Community Legal on 1 October 2020 have experienced an extraordinary period of change and transition.

Achieving the merger, redefining an amalgamated service delivery model, reconnecting stakeholders, supporters and funding bodies with Circle Green Community Legal, transitioning staff to a new workplace environment, and managing continuation of services to clients through the COVID pandemic.

We are now in an exciting position where we can offer people in Western Australia, across the state, specialist legal services in the areas of employment, tenancy, migration, and family & domestic violence, in one organisation.

We understand we are the first to achieve a merger of specialist, state-wide, not for profit legal practices providing quality legal advice, education, advocacy and non-legal support, in Australia.

In the first six months of operation, we have delivered 3,951 legal and support services to 1,844 people. Thank you to the nine board members, 37 staff, and 32 volunteers who have helped achieve this impact and outcome for our clients and the community.

Cecily Court
Chairperson

Sara Kane
Chief Executive Officer

Our Story

Purpose

Accessible Justice. To create a system, place, and space to ensure a safety net of world-class legal advice, education, and advocacy in our specialist fields.

Values

It must be fair, it must be equitable – We are committed to creating access and inclusion to legal advice, education and advocacy so human and social rights can be upheld.

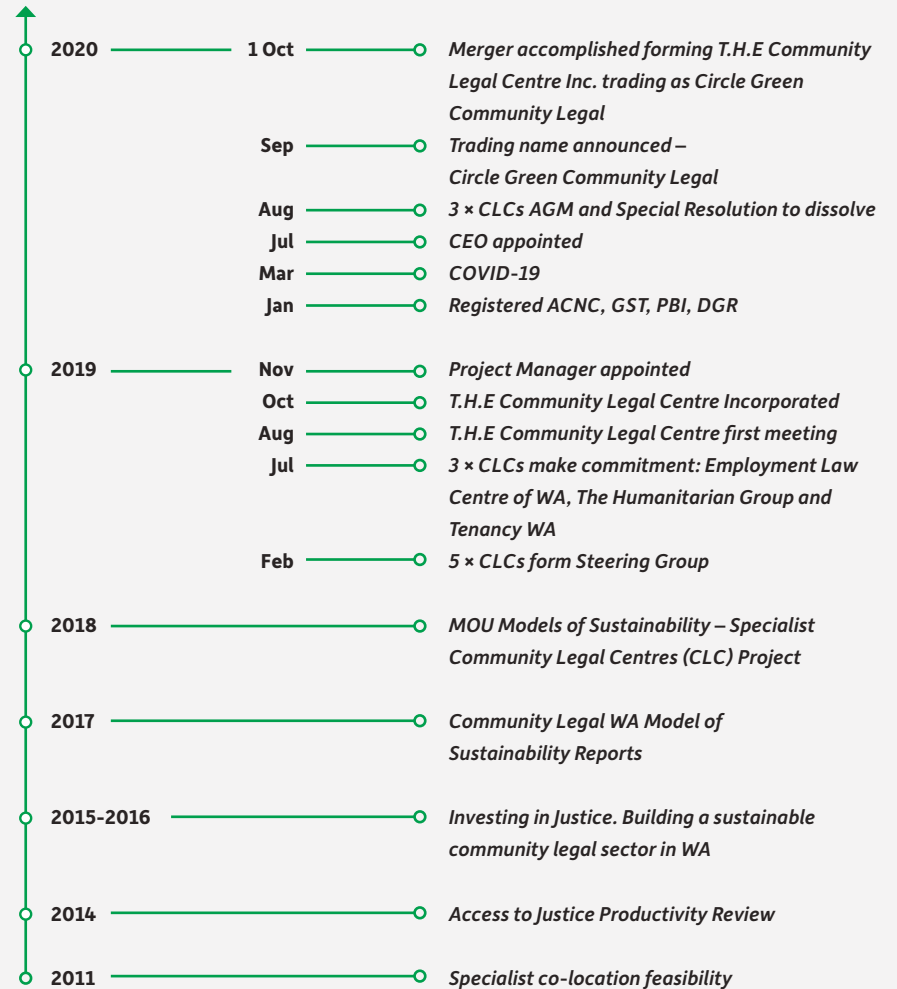
Our support is holistic – We do not process clients through linear legal advice. We create the space and system for a wraparound support that addresses client needs.

We collaborate for change – We are stronger together. We create the space for collaboration with our partners, our staff, our stakeholders, and with government and our clients. We hold this space, and welcome in partners who can help create better access and permanent solutions.

We get back up – We accept uncertainty, accept challenges time and again, and create a support system for each other so we can create a better world.

Merger Journey

Community legal centre sector lead



Merger Principles

The principles below were essential to achieve the successful merger of the Employment Law Centre of WA, The Humanitarian Group, and Tenancy WA to form T.H.E Community Legal Inc, trading as Circle Green Community Legal.

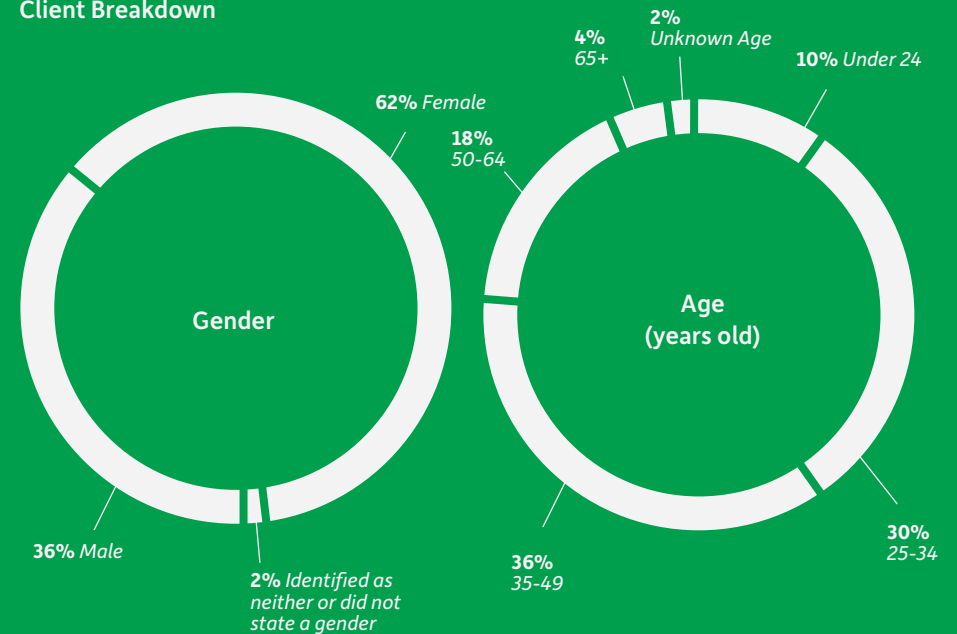
- Mission compatibility and focus
- Flexibility in pursuing the mission
- Support from the Boards of Management and Executive Leadership
- Clarity of desired outcomes
- Positive relationships between merging organisations
- Open to sharing and receiving ideas
- Cultural alignment
- Trust
- Maintain expertise
- Communication style

Who We Help

1844

People

Client Breakdown



53%

Experiencing Financial Disadvantage

34%

Low Income

13%

No Income

14%

Living with a disability

18%

Speak a first language other than English. 70% of migration clients require an interpreter to communicate.

4%

Indigenous Australian

7%

Live rural, regional or remote

10%

Experienced Family and Domestic Violence

3%

Homeless Indicator

What and How We Help

We provide legal advice, further assistance, representation, duty lawyer services, outreach, community legal education, and advocacy.

Service delivery model principles include:

- Client focus
- Access to service
- Sustainable
- Accountable
- Flexible and apply discretion
- Strengths based
- Culturally appropriate
- Trauma informed
- Continuous quality improvement
- Staff satisfaction and well-being
- Responsive to community needs and emerging trends



1844

Clients

3951

Services, including:

2057 1010

Legal Advice

Referrals

649 88 26

Information Services

Cases Opened
Clients taken for full
case work support

Legal Tasks

57	64	19630	2578
Duty Lawyer Services	Non-legal Support Tasks	Calls Recieved	Received and responded to online enquiries for assistance
		4862	
		Calls responded to	

We help people who have issues at WORK including:

- Unfair dismissal
- General protections
- Unlawful termination
- Redundancy
- Forced resignation
- Suspension and stand down
- Discrimination and equal opportunity
- Sexual harassment
- Workplace bullying
- Occupational safety and health
- Employment contracts
- Unpaid wages or underpayment
- Unauthorised deductions
- Minimum conditions of employment
- Misleading conduct in relation to employment
- Sham contracting



SERVICE

Advice, further assistance, and representation is provided based on eligibility criteria and is available by booking via phone, online enquiry or walk-in service.

CASE STUDY 1

Jenny was a casual employee but worked consistent rostered shifts every week for most of her employment. Jenny raised concerns with management about underpayment under her award, but these concerns were ignored. When COVID-19 hit, Jenny's employer stood down employees and Jenny was put on JobKeeper.

Jenny contacted the Fair Work Ombudsman and wrote a letter to her employer requesting an exact underpayment amount and notifying them that she had spoken to FWO. Jenny's employer paid Jenny what she was owed. When Jenny's employer was able to have employees back at work, Jenny was not asked to return. She was stood down without pay, despite her employer advertising Jenny's role.

Jenny contacted Circle Green seeking advice on her legal rights. Circle Green assisted with drafting a letter to Jenny's employer outlining why the stand down without pay was unlawful and putting her employer on notice regarding her legal rights. Jenny's employer responded to the letter proposing a settlement offer, and Circle Green assisted with editing a deed of settlement and release. Jenny was happy with the settlement outcome. Circle Green helped Jenny, and her employer come to an agreement early without spending time and money pursuing legal claims. Not only was this beneficial to both parties, but it also saved time for courts and commissions by avoiding litigation.

We help CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CaLD) people with:

- Protection visas (permanent and temporary)
- Family reunion
- Specialist immigration (including family violence and modern slavery)
- General legal assistance (civil law, criminal law, child protection, discrimination and equal opportunity)
- Family and domestic violence issues

SERVICE

Office

Assistance is provided based on eligibility criteria and is available by booking via phone – or walk-in service at our office.

Asylum Seeker Hub

Every Tuesday, 2-5 pm.

Riverview Community Service

Drop-in service in a holistic space providing migration advice to asylum seekers and refugees

Detention Advice Line

Every Thursday, 1-3 pm on

6148 3650

Assistance for people in prison or in detention with migration; visa cancellation and asylum seeker matters. Callers include detainees from Yongah Hill, Perth Immigration Detention Centre and WA prisons.

CASE STUDY 2 & 3

Shohreh is from Ethiopia and is a homosexual woman. She faced persecution, abuse, and harassment in her home country due to her sexuality. Shohreh was under threat from her family, the police, the wider Ethiopian community, and the Ethiopian authorities. When she came to Australia, The Humanitarian Group helped her to successfully apply for permanent protection. Her partner, who remains in Ethiopia has experienced similar trauma because of their relationship and they wish to be reunited. Circle Green is now helping Shohreh with an application for a Prospective Marriage visa to reunite her with her partner.

Farida and her Australian partner had a child, during her pregnancy she experienced physical violence. After giving birth her partner became very controlling over all aspects of her life. She spoke good English but was frightened to ask for help as her visa was dependent on her relationship with her partner. She thought if she left, as her child was Australian, she would have to leave him with her partner. There was an escalation in the violence and a neighbour called the police. Farida was taken to a refuge with her child. Circle Green assisted her to obtain a permanent visa so she could leave her violent relationship, eliminating her fear of being separated from her child due to her visa status.

We help people with TENANCY:

- Private rentals (renting through real estate agent or private landlord)
- Public rentals (renting through government housing department – the Housing Authority)
- Community housing (renting through community housing provider or specialist housing provider)
- Boarding, lodging or accommodation agreements
- Long-stay caravan park residents

We help with TENANCY issues:

- Bond disputes
- Rent arrears
- Break lease enquiries
- Termination or eviction from rental properties including advice on court process
- Maintenance and repairs
- Privacy and security in rental properties

SERVICE

We provide telephone advice to clients and a tenancy duty advocacy service at the Perth Magistrates Court every Wednesday and Thursday. The Tenancy Community Support Worker Hotline provides legal and technical advice to community workers who work with and support residential tenants.

CASE STUDY 4

Toby attended Perth Magistrates to dispute an application for his landlord to terminate for rent arrears. Toby had breached a mandatory conciliation order to repay the arrears, which resulted in the landlord commencing court proceedings.

Toby lives alone, is on the aged pension, is in his 70s and would have been homeless if evicted. Toby fell into rent arrears after lending a significant amount of money to a friend who never paid

it back. Toby paid off all the rent arrears two days before the hearing, but the landlord still wanted to proceed with termination, given that Toby had been in rent arrears on multiple prior occasions. Toby sought assistance from Circle Green to remain in the property. The Circle Green Duty Lawyer provided legal advice to Toby and provided further assistance by representing him in the pre-trial conference, making submissions to why the tenancy should not be terminated.

The real estate agent agreed to withdraw the application for termination, and the application was dismissed.

The Duty Lawyer also referred Toby to his local community legal centre to help him set up a

rental payment from his Centrelink payment to avoid missed rent payments in the future. Toby was grateful for the advice and additional assistance.

Case Management

Circle Green Community Legal provides case management support for our clients with complex legal and non-legal matters. Our Case Manager facilitates case coordination across our legal practice areas and relevant community services and government departments. We have also maintained and established effective referral arrangements and collaborative practices across community and government services. Circle Green Community Legal assisted 21 clients with 27 children with 64 non-legal support tasks such as sourcing furniture, kitchenware, food vouchers, childcare and baby car seats.

Community Legal Education

Circle Green provides community legal education, training and support to the general community, other community legal centres, community services and groups, organisations and agencies.

Since 1 October 2020, we have delivered community legal education sessions to:

- Circle Green staff and volunteers
- University/law students
- Staff in other community legal centres and non-for-profit organisations
- Tenant advocates and solicitors
- Migrants
- People with disabilities
- People who were preparing for conciliation in the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission
- Government agencies



Tenancy Network Support

Since October 2020, we have delivered two tenancy network meetings where we provided a range of professional development and training opportunities for tenant advocates delivered by a combination of external speakers including a representative from Consumer Protection (DMIRS) and Circle Green staff.

WA Tenancy Conference 2021

Circle Green is currently planning the WA Tenancy Conference, to be held in 18-19 November 2021. A key event for WA's housing and community sectors in particular, Tenancy Advice and Education Services, the conference welcomes professionals from the government, private and community sectors, along with people with personal lived experience of residential tenancy, unstable housing and homelessness issues.

The conference offers the opportunity for:

- Professional development and capacity building
- Cross-sector dialogue, sharing and collaboration
- Addressing the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 crisis
- Innovative approaches and new solutions for tenant rights
- Hearing diverse voices



Community Engagement

Media




Circle Green Community Legal has received 17 requests from media outlets since 1 October 2020, mainly in relation to the impact of COVID-19, tenancy, and the end of the rental moratorium.

Circle Green Community Legal has had 14 mentions across a range of media including online articles, TV and radio interviews.

Digital engagement

We are in the process of designing and building a new website. We have engaged Draw History, 'a strategy and design agency for social good organizations' to help us achieve this. This streamlined, user-friendly site is scheduled to go live in July 2021.

Follow us :

-  @CircleGreenCLC
-  @circlegreencl
-  in/circle-green-community-legal/

Community Partnerships

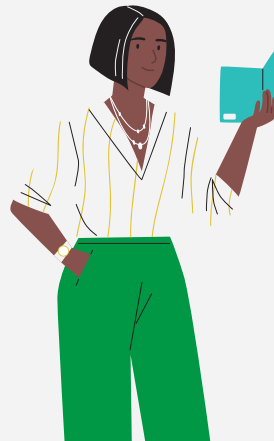
Circle Green Community Legal is fortunate to work with over 100 partner agencies for referrals, case management, supporting law reform and advocacy, responding to emerging legal and client needs, pro bono, and community legal education.



Law Reform and Advocacy

We have participated in the following law reform and advocacy activities since 1 October 2020:

- Assisted drafting, and signatory to a letter to various State Members of Parliament supporting the Industrial Relations Legislation Amendment Bill
- Written submission to the Residential Tenancies Division of the Magistrates Court of Western Australia in relation to residential tenancy matters
- Review and endorsement of JobWatch submission in relation to Industrial Relations Omnibus Bill
- Comments to the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety on the Draft Amendments to Form 1AA
- Written submission to the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia (LRCWA) in relation to a review of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA) (EO Act) (Project 111)
- Review and comment on draft Practice Notes of the West Australian Industrial Relations Commission
- Monash Forced Marriage Research Interview with Laura Videl
- National Advocacy Group for Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Family Violence – need for temporary visa holders to access financial support and migration advice. This has led to the Commonwealth pilot project funding announcement for community and women's legal centres
- Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligation for Removal) Bill 2021
- Migration and Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening Information Provisions) Bill 2020
- Migration Amendment (Streamlining Visa Processing) Bill 2019
- Migration Amendment (Strengthening the Character Test) Bill 2019
- Visa Cancellations Working Group – Family Violence and Direction No.90. Implications for Survivors of Family Violence



Campaigns

#LegalHelpMatters

We believe people with a legal problem should be able to get the legal help they need; at the time they need it most. That is why we joined Community Legal WA in asking all candidates in the WA State Election to commit to sustainable funding for community legal centres.



Unlock Housing

Circle Green partnered with Shelter WA in their Unlock Housing campaign. Unlock Housing is a new campaign which presents a united voice urging government to unlock the potential of all West Australians. The Unlock Housing Coalition is a broad partnership representing more than 20 organisations, developed with industry and people with lived experience.

Time for a Home #timeforahome

Circle Green Community Legal supports the release and resettlement of refugees and people seeking asylum in immigration detention in Australia.

Emerging Trends

Employment

- Employers providing clients with an requirement they accept a redeployment (often questionable whether redeployment is similar in terms of level, duties) or resign
- Disciplinary proceedings with people being stood down and ultimately dismissed
- Dismissal for being absent from work due to disability or illness
- Enquiries about mandatory COVID vaccinations
- Employee disclosure of sexual harassment giving rise to more claims

Migration

- COVID increasing complexity of legal matters and client needs
- Increase in temporary visa holders seeking assistance due to family violence
- Decrease in protection applicants due to border closure – However, increase in niche claims as a result of COVID
- Increasing awareness and prevalence of forced marriage and trafficking to stakeholders, government authorities and communities

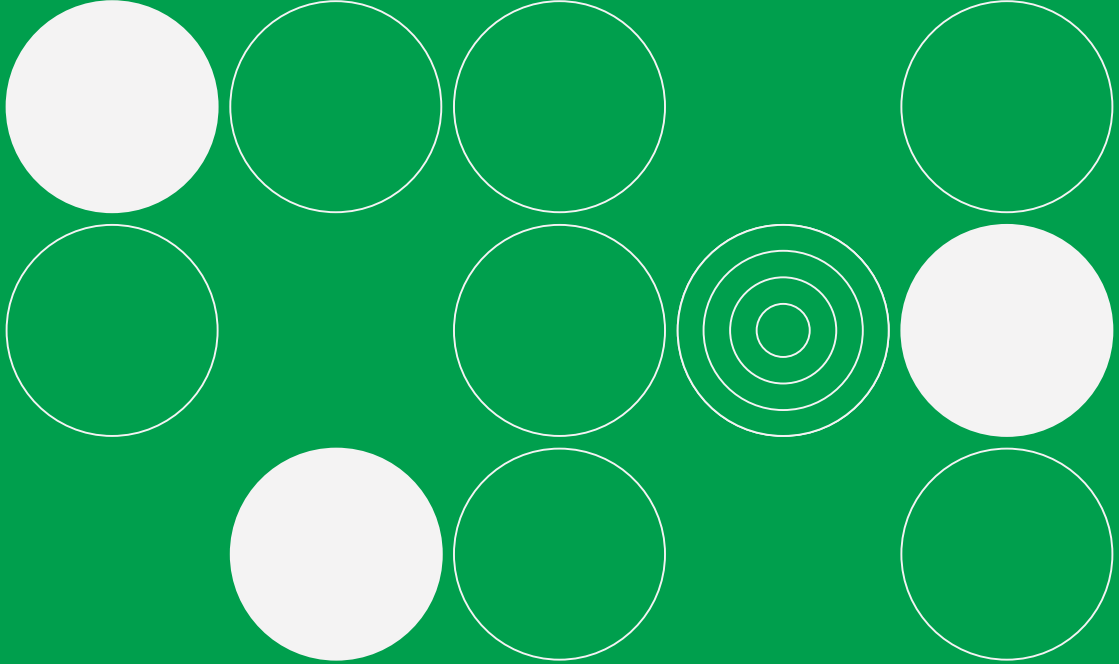
Tenancy

- In the months leading up to end of rental moratorium, key concerns received were from tenants who had received termination notices. Figures from February and March 2021 show we delivered double the number of advices in this area, compared to November to December 2020; and January 2021.
- We delivered more than three times the amount of advices in February to March 2021 compared to November to December 2020; and January 2021 in relation rent increase notices
- Clients reporting rent increases of around 20% but often as much as 30-35% in some cases. This highlights the need for rent control in WA as part of Residential Tenancy Act review.
- Increase in our staff numbers and skill development has enabled our service to be responsive and able to deliver more advices every week to vulnerable tenants during this period.

Our Impact

- Sector created and lead
- Better experience for clients
- One service, enable clients to tell their story once, and avoiding the referral round-about
- Supported by trauma informed case management
- Shared resources – access one website and resource platform
- Improved outreach and project targeting – new initiatives
- Improved use of technology
- Staff job security, better staff development and training opportunities; opportunity for career progression
- More staff have been re-directed to client service provision
- Specialist staff in legal practice & operations
- Consolidated funding – ability to leverage to create new initiatives and partnerships
- Streamline organisational obligations, reporting requirements and rationalise grant and project applications
- Creation of an evaluation and outcomes measurement framework
- Timely advocacy and law reform
- Combined community legal education opportunities
- Prevention or early intervention of legal issues = social and economic impact





Thank you

We could not have achieved the merger of three community legal centres, created Circle Green Community Legal and delivered six months of services without the significant contribution of: nine Board Members, 37 staff, 32 student volunteers (contributing 2,982 hours' worth \$119,280), 5 secondees from Corrs Chambers Westgarth, MinterEllison, Norton Rose Fulbright, and Tottle Partners (contributing 365 hours' worth \$91,250), supporting services providing many pro bono services including K&L Gates, Bizlynx, GVM Solutions, SumerDigital, Block Branding, CPSU/CSA, Aha! Consulting, Tony Beech.

Funding organisations and donor partners: Community Legal WA, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Fair Work Ombudsman, Department of Justice, Commonwealth Attorney General's Department – National Legal Assistance Partnership, Krishna Somers Charitable Trust, United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Perpetual Impact Philanthropy Application Program, Public Purposes Trust and the Kane Community Foundation.

