



*Our Connections* Melissa Spillman (Woods)

# Annual Report **2022 - 2023**

**Circle Green**   
**Community Legal**

We help with legal issues

**Humanitarian • Tenancy • Workplace**



# Acknowledgement

Circle Green Community Legal acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work, and particularly the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of the land where our office is located.

We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this nation, and we pay deep respect to Elders past and present.

Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

## Our Reconciliation Journey

During the year we finalised our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and began our journey to support reconciliation across the organisation.

This has seen us establish and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, with a collaboration in place with Aboriginal Legal Service WA and through regional and remote outreach.

Our staff were actively involved in NAIDOC week and we engaged Danny Ford to lead a cultural awareness session as part of our all-staff training day. We were also actively involved in supporting the Yes campaign and were deeply saddened by the result. We could see the value in this change in creating a more equitable voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

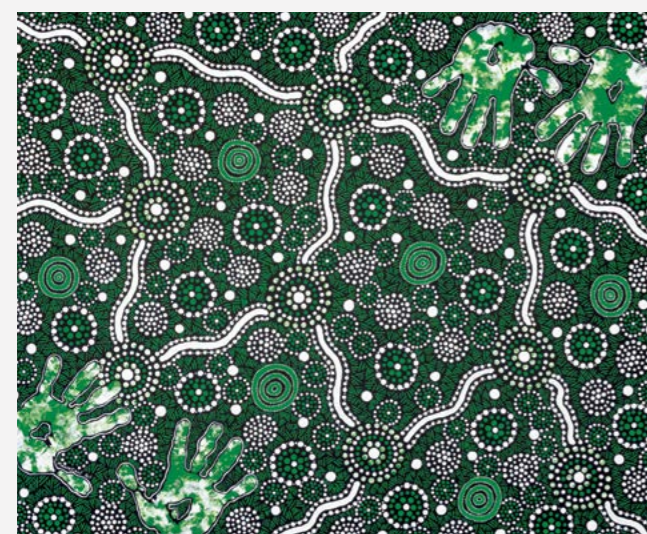
We are looking forward to moving towards our Innovate RAP to continue strengthening our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and exploring how we can support reconciliation through our services and programs.

## Feature Artwork

### Our Connections

Travelling through our country, meeting new family members, making new connections.

At gatherings, sharing and telling our stories to one another. Keeping our culture strong and respected.



### Artist Background

Kaya, I'm Mel, a Noongar Aboriginal Artist living on Whadjuk Country, Western Australia.

I was born in Nambour, Gubbi Gubbi Country in Queensland and moved to Western Australia at the age of 10. My Woods family heritage is from Gnowangerup, Goreng Country in South West WA.

Through a variety of mediums, I use paint as a tool to tell stories and share knowledge. Raised away from my Aboriginal heritage, I wasn't connected to my culture. Through painting I seek to rebuild that connection, with a self-taught practice that extends from acrylics on canvas to leather and enamel paints as well as large-scale mural based works.

I am incredibly passionate about sharing my heritage and culture to keep it alive, leading workshops and inspiring the younger generation by telling stories through art.

**Melissa Spillman (Woods)**, founder, Maarakool Art

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# Message from our Chair



Over the last year we set ourselves the challenge of broadening our financial base, in a sustainable way (for staff and financials) that would allow us to continue to improve and increase service provision. The first important step in this was to be able to take a 'social impact' lens to our work, particularly so we could open up partnership opportunities with corporate partners, philanthropists and new areas of Government who are equally as passionate as we are about the provision of justice to community members who are often overlooked. You will see from our emerging impact reports, that began with Sara Kane's tenure, that we are progressing well on this front.

Our focus in the coming year, beyond a continuous strive for excellent service delivery and advocacy around policy changes, will be on developing these partnerships. We know we are only as healthy as our sector, so we will continue to build, grow and share knowledge within the sector with mutually beneficial partnerships, and we will also be seeking to grow our Corporate and Philanthropic partners.

We have seen the immense value of the support of the Krishna Somers Charitable Trust, and how it allows us to more nimbly respond in a way that the Government cannot (and should not!). It is a constant challenge, but a challenge that staff, volunteers, our Board and our partners are beside us on.

I would like to take a moment to also thank our outgoing board members who were committed to us for many, many years prior to merger, and who saw us through the challenge of becoming Circle Green Community Legal before stepping down. Bob Horstman, you are so loved and respected for your many years of service with the Employment Law Centre of WA, and it was a pleasure to get to know you and work and receive your wise counsel through the merger and beyond - you were always available to contribute above and beyond. Maria Osman, a mentor to me from my time on The Humanitarian Group, your commitment to the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and your personal counsel to me on how I could be a better ally to women of colour was so greatly appreciated. Tim Dymond, who has provided a union voice, and been deeply involved with the Employment Law Centre for many years, your passion for rights was valued greatly. Thank you all for your commitment and volunteer service.

**Emma Watton**

Chair and Board of Circle Green



# Message from our CEO

In a year of significant growth, we have seen our capacity to improve the ability of those more at risk to access legal education and services increase. Unfortunately, many across our community are still unable to do so, so the push for not only us, but our Community Legal Sector to provide more effective and efficient services that change lives will continue.

Whether people are logging on to download advice sheets, calling advice lines, attending education or service support hubs or being escalated to receiving legal advice or representation, we are always aware that our services are being provided to people in a moment of crisis, and often with complex unmet legal and or social needs. This year we have been pleased to be given the opportunity to trial embedding a case worker and social worker which has been successful in providing more holistic service delivery and improving outcomes for our most vulnerable clients.

Under pressure from increased demand across the community, we continue to refine our internal systems and processes and work with our funders to extend our impact. We welcome and thank the Department of Justice and the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety for their additional support as well as further generous support from the estate of Krishna Somers.

It was also a significant year for law reform activity and advocacy, with 82 law reform and policy activities over the year. We continued to support the Make Renting Fair Campaign which included meetings with Ministers and Members of Parliament and multiple media appearances. The Humanitarian stream finalised a significant research piece in conjunction with Uniting Church and in collaboration with sector leaders across Australia titled 'Issues Encountered by Temporary Visa Holders who experience Family and Domestic Violence and Recommendations for Reform'.



Growth is always challenging on staff, and it certainly made my job as a new CEO easier knowing that 97% of staff aligns with our values and purpose. We would like to thank all our team for their continued dedication to supporting our clients, with special mention to our volunteers, legal administration staff and advocates who are usually the first person that our clients speak to when first interacting with our services.

We have been progressing our journey towards being a best practice service with the migration to a new client management system and the recruitment of a data and systems analyst. This will better enable us to integrate data into a timely service response and allow for better access to data for reporting, analysis, and advocacy.

In April our inaugural CEO Sara Kane left Circle Green. Sara was pivotal in bringing together three specialist centres to form our specialist community legal hub and was recognised for her valuable contribution at our Circle of Friends event at the end of March. As an incoming CEO it was comforting to see the high esteem people held Sara in. She left me with big shoes to fill and we again thank her for her contribution.

We look forward to continuing to work with our funders, stakeholders and staff to bring positive change to our clients and community in the coming year.

With thanks,  
**Celia Dufall**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Our Board

We have taken a very proactive approach to board embedding and development so that the new board members could be effective quickly. We held a strategy retreat that began in team development so the team could together build trust and unity so we could manage the strategic and governance processes without missing a beat. It was our pleasure to welcome in Chanda Parmar-Bonta, Courtney Fiddian, Melissa De Abreu and Paul Plowman who bring us a diverse range of skills and perspectives to round out our board and have hit the ground running.



**Emma Watton**  
CHAIRPERSON



**Dave Robinson**  
VICE CHAIR



**Nina Wild**  
TREASURER



**Cecily Court**  
SECRETARY



**Lamis Sabra**  
MEMBER



**Chanda Parmar-Bonta**  
MEMBER



**Paul Plowman**  
MEMBER



**Courtney Fiddian**  
MEMBER



**Melissa De Abreu**  
MEMBER

# Who we are

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

# Our Purpose

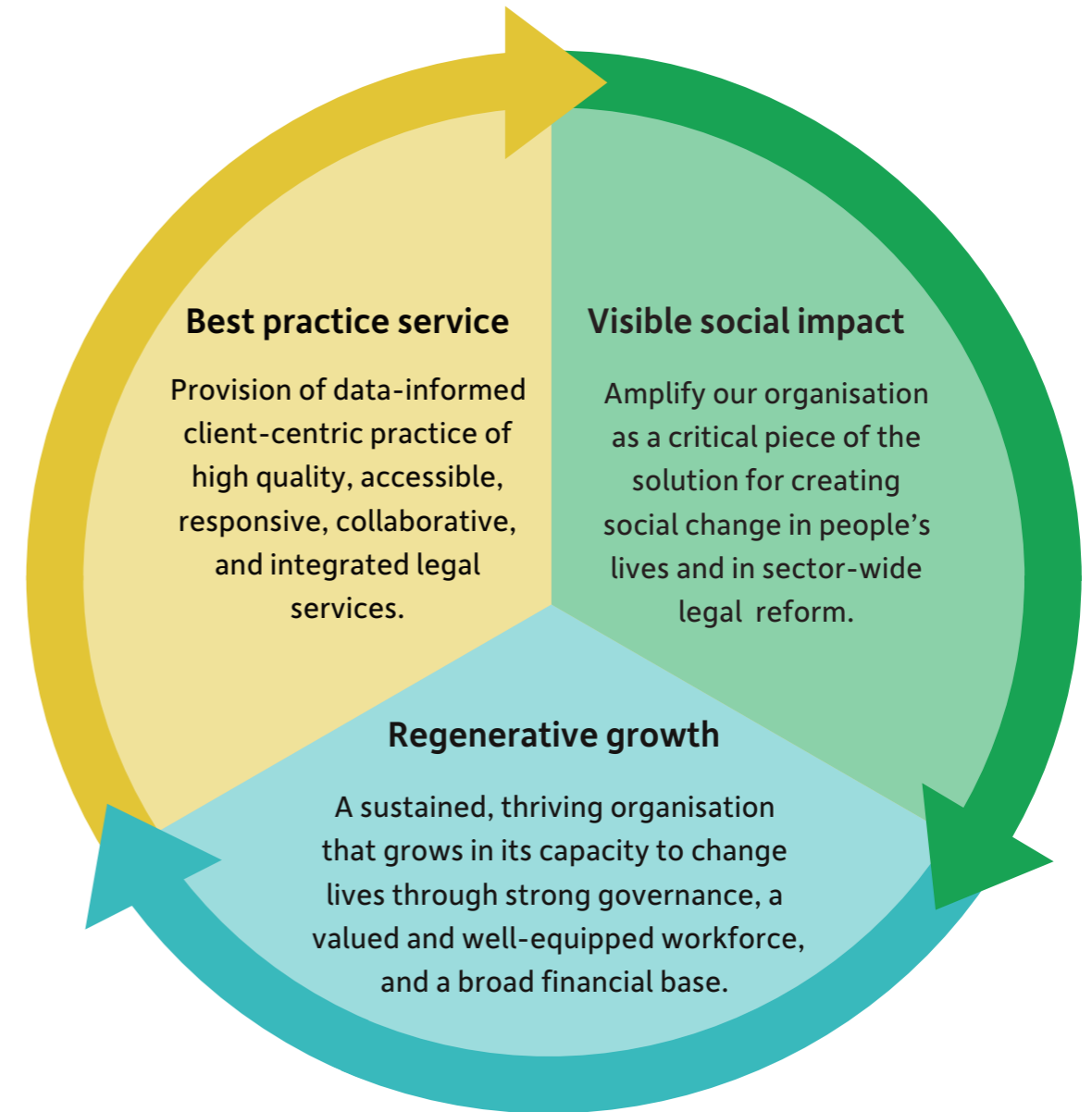
Accessible Justice. To create a system, place and space to ensure a safety net of best practice legal advice, education and advocacy in our specialist fields.

# Our Values



# Strategic Plan

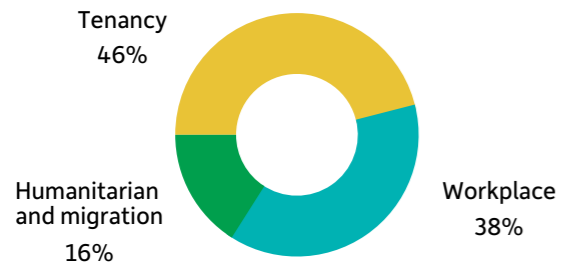
Circle Green's strategic focus areas for 2022 to 2025 are three intersecting core areas of best practice service delivery, sharing our impact, and regenerating our organisational capacity.



# Year in review

30,079 requests for assistance:

📞 23,530 calls  
🌐 6,549 online



"The online resources were helpful before even speaking to an advocate. The advocate supported what we had derived from the resources."



A number of initiatives were undertaken to support improved client experience and service delivery:

- Inclusion of in-house **social worker** support to clients across all service areas, delivered in partnership with RUAH.
- Implementation of a **new client database solution**.
- Established a **Lived Experience Advisory Panel** as part of the Workplace Respect Project.

"The advocate was awesome from start to finish. Advice was clear and easy to understand and welcomed my questions - nothing was too difficult for them."

- 6,619** Information and Referrals
- 4,436** Legal Advices
- 327** Legal Tasks
- 171** Duty Lawyer Services
- 198** Full Representations

We continued to survey our clients to assess service impact and identify areas for improvement:

**Overall satisfaction with service:**

**Workplace**  
★★★★★ **97 %** 4 or 5 stars

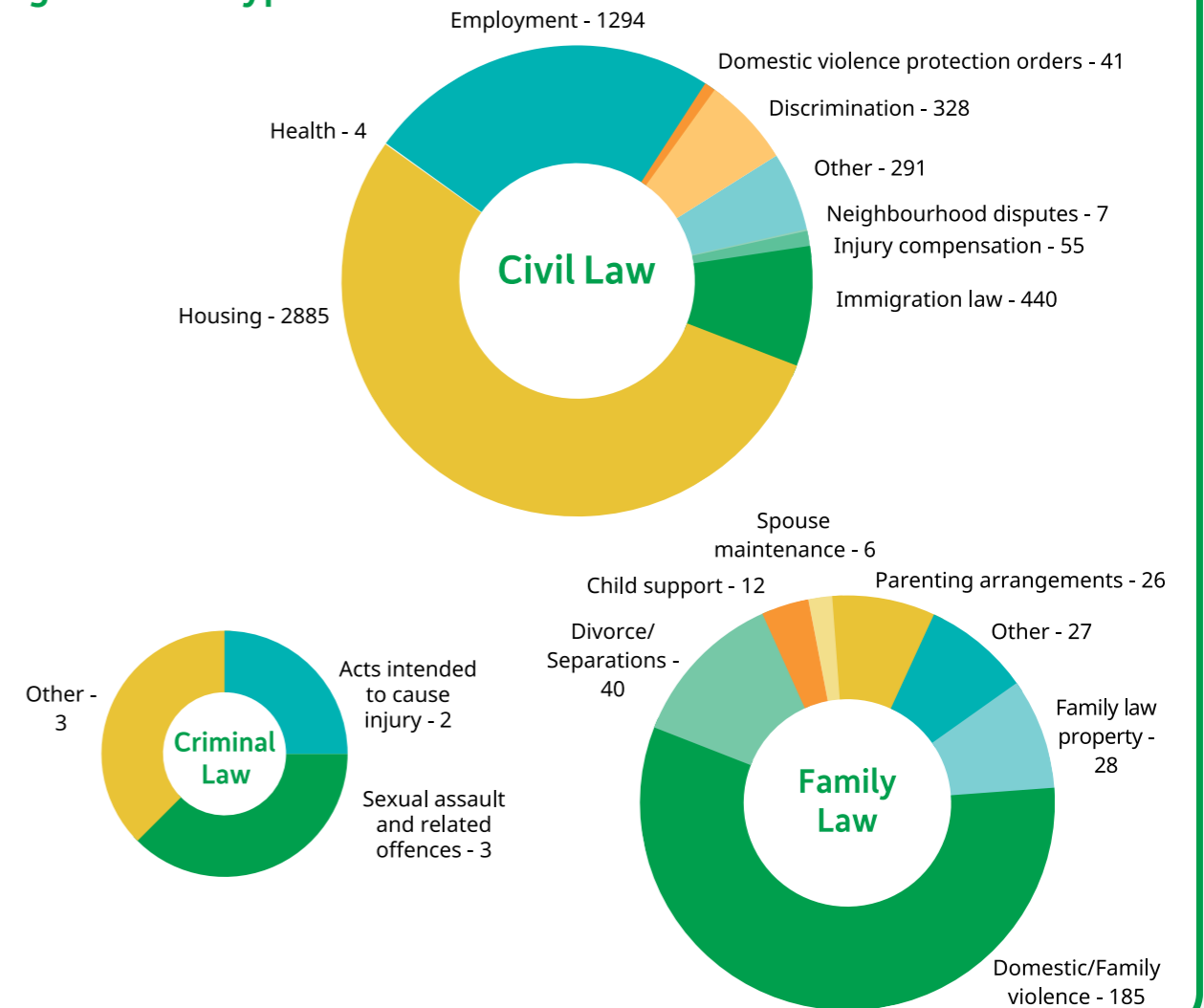
**Tenancy**  
★★★★★ **99 %** 4 or 5 stars

- 96** Community Legal Education Sessions
- 82** Law Reform Initiatives
- 448** Stakeholder Engagements

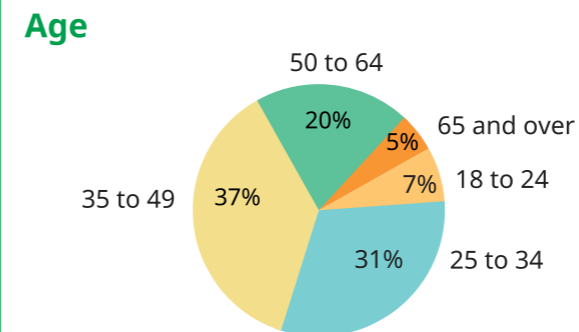
"Excellent service. The person who rang me, listened and advised me was very knowledgeable, helpful, empathetic, kind and most of all provided a first class service that will be of considerable help to my situation."

"The staff member was WONDERFUL. He was caring and compassionate and intelligent enough to read the subtleties and nuances of our particular situation. He deserves all the kudos because he's a real gem."

## Legal Matter Types



## Client Demographics



**Experiencing financial disadvantage** 66%  
**Living with a disability** 21%

"The advocate was amazing! They took the time to listen to me and to explain things thoroughly, never rushed or dismissed me. Very concise and patient!"

"The process was explained to me really well. I was given the opportunity to tell my story. I finally feel heard. Thank you so much."

"I have great peace of mind now and what was causing a lot of stress has been absolved thanks to the advice given. Thank you."



## Best Practice Service

We aim to provide **best practice service** through the provision of data-informed and client-centric integrated legal services that are high quality, accessible, responsive and collaborative.

### Progress:

- Implementation of Actionstep, a new client management system.
- Recruitment of a data and systems analyst.
- Recruitment of a social worker and case worker to support legal service provision and referrals.
- Continued focus on client feedback to feed into service improvement.



Siobhan Foley, Social Worker

## Taylor's Story

Taylor\* contacted the Circle Green Tenancy team as they had received a court appearance for termination of their Housing Authority lease. Initially Taylor contacted the phone advice line and then accessed the duty tenancy lawyer at court. Taylor is an Aboriginal tenant who had moved to Perth as they could no longer safely live in the remote community due to family and domestic violence. Taylor has been in the unit in Perth since 2018 and in recent years had been receiving strikes for disruptive behaviour. These incidents coincided when visitors arrived from the community. Taylor acknowledged that there had been incidents with the neighbours and attributed some of this to the neighbours not understanding "their ways". Taylor also noted that they didn't receive strikes when the community was unaware of their location.

Taylor had numerous agencies that they were working with including the Department of Communities they were aiming for reunification with their four children. Taylor was also attending groups and counselling sessions as well as receiving assistance with medical needs which include mental health issues and chronic pain. As Taylor was actively trying to work on these issues, the Tenancy team agreed to provide ongoing representation. The Tenancy lawyer requested assistance from the social worker to engage Taylor and liaise with other agencies that were involved.

As Taylor often presents in crisis, the social worker has been included in Circle Green appointments and has been able to listen and discuss Taylor's concerns. This has allowed the lawyer to focus on the tenancy issue. The social worker has liaised with other agencies and obtained support letters attesting to the importance of Taylor having housing and has also updated other agencies as to Taylor's change

of mobile number when they lost their phone. Discussions were initiated around practical options for accommodation should Taylor lose their home. The social worker has also been an additional resource in building rapport and engagement between Taylor and Circle Green. This case is ongoing. It is likely that Taylor will lose their home and Taylor has agreed that it is not appropriate for their needs. We are currently working with Taylor to find other accommodation options. This situation was a result of housing being provided that was not appropriate to support a family re-unification or for cultural needs given its size and close proximity to neighbours.

*\*Client's real names and photos have not been used. We have withheld our clients' identifying details to protect and respect their confidentiality.*

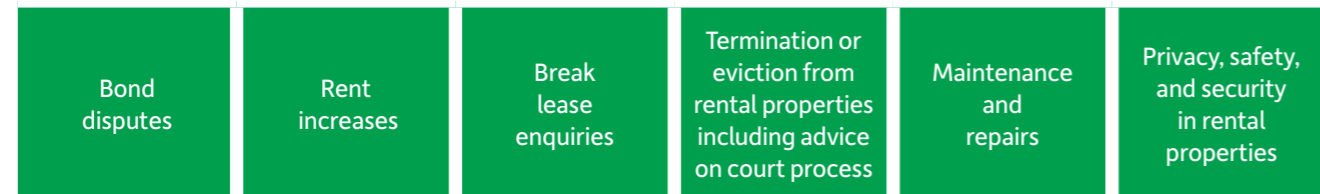




## Best Practice Service - Tenancy

Circle Green provides legal services to residential tenants across Western Australia including a state-wide telephone advice service, further assistance and casework, and a duty advocacy service at the Perth Magistrates Court. As part of the Central Resource Unit of the Tenant Advice and Education Services program, we deliver community legal education and professional development activities for lawyers and tenant advocates and lead law reform advocacy on behalf of the WA Tenancy Network.

### Most common issues we see:



### Key statistics



### Client feedback

Overall satisfaction with service.

186 Responses:



*“Whilst the advice wasn’t what I was hoping for, it was clearly articulated and made sense. I was able to grasp and process it and understand where I stood and what my possible options were for consideration.”*

*“They gave 110% and always left me feeling confident that everything was under control.”*

### Emerging trends

Continued use of without grounds notices of termination to end tenancies, not infrequently in circumstances where the tenant has requested repairs or challenged a proposed rent increase.

An increase in the number of clients in insecure housing arrangements, such as boarders and lodgers or flatmate agreements – likely attributable to the housing crisis.

Increased client complexity, including clients identifying as experiencing a disability or a mental health issue that affects their tenancy.

An increase in overcrowding situations in housing, particularly with tenants of the Housing Authority, often creating risks to the tenancy.

An increase in tenants being unable to vacate in accordance with notices of termination or event court orders to vacate due to a lack of any alternative housing options.

## Arthur’s Story

Arthur\* lived in a relocatable home on a site in a caravan park and rented the site from the park owner. He approached Circle Green for legal advice after receiving a notice of termination from a lawyer representing the caravan park owner. Arthur wanted to know if he was required to move out in accordance with the notice of termination.

The notice of termination was given under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA); a piece of legislation which governs residential tenancy agreements in WA. We advised Arthur that his agreement with the caravan park owner was not a residential tenancy agreement to which the RTA applies. Instead, it was a long stay agreement subject to the Residential Parks (Long Stay-Tenants) Act.

We advised Arthur that the caravan park owner (via their lawyer) had issued an invalid notice of termination, and Arthur did not need to move out in accordance with the notice of termination. We also wrote to the lawyer representing the caravan park and advised them of this and that Arthur would not be moving out of the property.

Arthur was satisfied and grateful for the advice and assistance because he was able to remain living at the caravan site.

This case study highlights the importance of community legal centres in providing free legal advice and advocacy to the WA community. If Arthur had not received advice from Circle Green, he probably would have moved out in accordance with the notice of termination when there was no legal requirement for him to do so.

*\*Client’s real names and photos have not been used. We have withheld our clients’ identifying details to protect and respect their confidentiality.*



## Tenancy Network

The Tenancy Network brings together the 15 providers of tenancy advice services to collaborate on issues facing tenants across Western Australian and to provide collegiate support, resources and legal education to tenant advocates and lawyers across the sector.

Regular meetings are facilitated by Circle Green and bring together tenant advocates and lawyers from across the state as a platform for peer support and learning and to feed into advocacy initiatives.

Circle Green also supports the Network through a monthly e-newsletter, training opportunities - including the opportunity to spend time with the team in Perth or individualised training on tenancy law from a tenancy lawyer for those in regional or remote locations and a dedicated community support workers advice line. Circle Green organised a tenancy network conference that took place in October 2023 and provided



significant training opportunities to advocates and lawyers across the network.

The Network collaborates on identifying and communicating key emerging issues and supporting advocacy initiatives, including the ongoing Make Renting Fair campaign and collaborating on law reform opportunities such as submissions for the recent Senate Inquiry into the worsening rental crisis and the Department of Social Services National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

## Jane's Story

Jane\* and her ex-partner Ben\* thought they had entered into a two year fixed term agreement which was in fact a one year fixed term. Ben was a perpetrator of Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) against Jane who is pregnant and caring for several other dependent children.

On one occasion, the landlord (who lives next door) witnessed an incident of FDV by Ben against Jane. Immediately following this incident, the landlord demanded rent arrears be paid by Jane and threatened to evict her if she did not. Jane was able to repay rent arrears by drawing on her superannuation early.

Soon after the landlord sought to conduct a rent inspection at an unreasonable time and day. The landlord subsequently applied to court for termination on the basis of s73 (serious damage or injury) of the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA) (RTA) despite Ben having moved out of the property and never having damaged the premises. The landlord also sought \$1,400 from Jane which appears to be the entire bond without any explanation for the claim made. The landlord's application to court appeared to be defective.

Jane was provided advice through the advice line service in relation to means by which a fixed term agreement can be terminated and in particular for rent arrears, and s73 RTA. Jane was advised about points she can raise to argue that landlord's application is defective. Jane was advised about the FDV provisions in the RTA in relation to removing her ex-partner from the agreement.

Jane was also advised about court procedure, specifically about seeking an adjournment of the first hearing because of an important medical appointment for her high risk pregnancy scheduled for the same day.

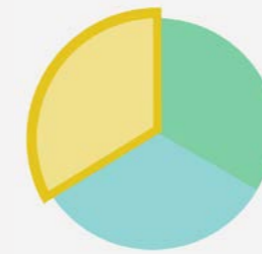
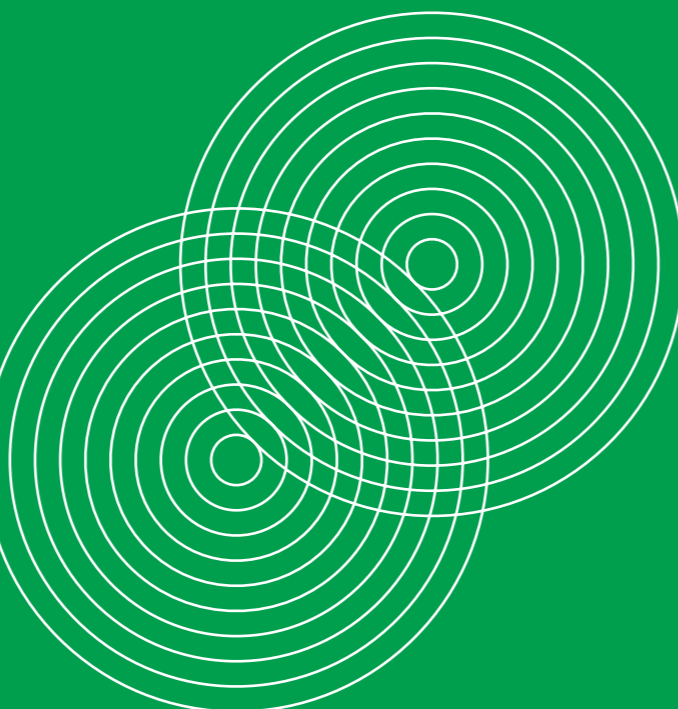
Jane was provided with cold referrals to housing

providers and other support services.

Jane appreciated the advice and was pleased to learn how she could respond to the termination application brought by the landlord.

This raises the issue of private landlords who do not understand tenants' and landlords' rights and obligations under the RTA and the impact that this has particularly on vulnerable tenants. It highlights the need for better education about the FDV provisions in the RTA amongst landlords and tenants and not just real estate agents. It also raises the challenges of a self-represented jurisdiction where people may make claims without any reasonable basis or understanding of the likelihood of the success of their application.

*\*Client's real names and photos have not been used. We have withheld our clients' identifying details to protect and respect their confidentiality.*



## Best Practice Service - Workplace

Circle Green is the only community legal centre in WA which has a specialist workplace law practice that provides state-wide employment and workplace discrimination law services to non-unionised vulnerable and disadvantaged WA workers.

Our workplace law service includes legal advice, case work, advocacy and education on state and federal employment and workplace discrimination laws.

We support WA workers through our telephone advice service, evening legal service, extended advice service, legal casework and legal representation.

### Most common issues we see:

Dismissal and termination of employment	Redundancy	Discrimination and equal opportunity	Sexual harassment	Workplace bullying
Occupational safety and health	Employment contracts	Unpaid wages or underpayment	Minimum conditions	Sham contracting

### Key statistics

Requests for support <b>11,531</b>	Information and referrals <b>4,021</b>	Legal advices <b>1,197</b>	Full Representations <b>18</b>
Community legal education sessions <b>47</b>	Legal education resources <b>36</b>	Law reform and advocacy initiatives <b>5</b>	Stakeholder engagements <b>293</b>

### Client feedback

Overall satisfaction with service.

127 Responses:



*"Helpful and patient, good advice and clear explanations."*

*"Understanding, informative, and professional"*

### Emerging and ongoing trends

Training bonds and penalty clauses for migrant workers.

Proportional increase in minimum entitlement breaches.

Lack of understanding of employment law.

Presentation of overseas born workers and females at proportions higher than general Australian demographics.



## Aisha's Story

Aisha\* was working full-time as a restaurant manager for a medium sized national system employer in the hospitality industry. She was pregnant and provided her employer with medical certificates confirming that she was not to work more than her ordinary hours each week. Despite this, she was consistently rostered to work overtime hours. She was not paid for these additional hours. Aisha was overworked to the point of extreme stress and exhaustion and was even admitted to hospital. She made countless complaints as she felt that the poor treatment only started after she told her employer she was pregnant.

Aisha was scheduled for a telephone advice appointment during which Circle Green provided a range of practical and legal options for addressing breaches of minimum conditions and pregnancy discrimination.

Aisha was also referred to Circle Green's case worker who provided non-legal support including counselling and referrals.

Aisha was grateful to know that she was protected by the law and had a range of options to address her workplace issues.

Support from the case worker gave the client the confidence to be able to deal with her legal issues. While Circle Green is often able to provide clients with legal options and practical strategies, clients may find it difficult to pursue these options. A case worker can empower the client by talking through the practical process and being available for follow up support. This type of holistic support improves outcomes and enhances the value of legal advice, particularly in relation to high volume services like telephone advice lines, where representation for all clients is impractical due to limited resourcing.



## Vicky's Story

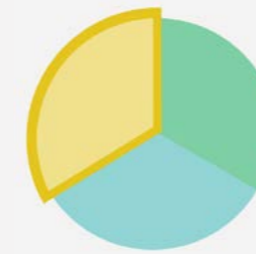
Vicky\* was a single parent and the sole income earner for two young children. Vicky's partner owned the business that Vicky worked for. When the relationship broke down, Vicky's partner refused to pay employment entitlements that were owed.

Circle Green provided an extended advice appointment with one of our lawyers. In the appointment, we provided advice on a variety of legal options. Due to various circumstances, including Vicky being targeted by family violence, it was determined that further assistance was necessary. Circle Green drafted Vicky's legal claim and provided further advice on how to navigate the legal process.

Vicky initially felt overwhelmed by the complexities of the legal system. However, providing extended assistance with initiating the claim gave her the required head-start and confidence to be able to continue with the matter independently.

Circle Green assesses and monitors each client's capacity to achieve an outcome. For some clients, an outline of legal options and a referral to our self-help information resources may be sufficient. For other clients, follow up discrete advice and assistance can bridge the gap between giving up on a matter, and feeling empowered to continue the process independently. While Circle Green offers representation in some circumstances, the significant resourcing necessary requires us to tailor a self-help and empowerment model for the majority of clients.

*\*Client's real names and photos have not been used. We have withheld our clients' identifying details to protect and respect their confidentiality.*



## Best Practice Service - Workplace Respect

Circle Green is the lead agency delivering the Workplace Respect Project, which is a Commonwealth Government-funded response to the Respect@ Work Report.

The Workplace Respect Project provides legal assistance services for people who have experienced workplace sexual harassment (WSH) and discrimination and delivers training and resources to empower workers and workplaces to understand, respond to and prevent workplace sexual harassment.



### The key priorities are:

Understanding legal need for assistance with workplace sexual harassment	Delivering accessible legal support with appropriate systems and pathways	Delivering effective legal support, with increased capacity across the legal assistance sector	Community capacity building	Fair legislation and policies to address systemic barriers faced by the people targeted by workplace sexual harassment
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 **84%** of our clients targeted by WSH were **women**.

**48%** of our clients targeted by WSH were 25-34 years old.

**42%** of our clients targeted by WSH had a disability or mental illness.

## Achievement and progress

Provided a total of 177 workplace sexual harassment legal services.

Delivered training on topics related to WSH to over 200 workers representing a range of industries and organisations across Western Australia. Outreach trips this year included visits to Broome, Bunbury, Karratha, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Northam, and Albany.

Developed a range of resources including a warm referral guide for community groups and organisations, a series of blog posts on Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) meeting findings, and a range of training resources.

Convened four meetings with our Lived Experience Advisory Panel, who utilise their lived experience of being targeted by workplace sexual harassment to guide the work of the Project.

Onboarded two new Project staff members. A Project Support Officer, and secondee lawyer from Legal Aid have been recruited in addition to the team's Project Manager and Project Officer.

*In June 2023, the Centre for Social Impact UWA finalised a research report for Circle Green that investigated the prevalence, nature, and occurrence of WSH in WA, helping to identify priorities and make recommendations for legal assistance services.*

## Next steps

The Centre for Social Impact UWA delivered the Workplace Respect Project's first annual impact report in September 2023, measuring Project impact across key activity areas.

**In the next year, the Workplace Respect Project will focus on:**



Developing an informational video on workplace sexual harassment, including information on how to get help from Circle Green.	Refining our WSH intake pathways for greater accessibility.
Developing our Hub webpage – an information directory designed for people targeted by WSH to learn more about their formal and informal options.	Creating and delivering training on topics related to WSH across Western Australia informed by lived experience voices, including a dedicated workshop for high school students, and training and resources on the new positive duty legislation.
Continuing to meet and collaborate with our LEAP, other community legal centres and community organisations for greater impact.	

## Lucia's Story

Lucia\* was a young woman on a low income, working her first casual retail job. Lucia's boss, who was more than double her age, sent her a text requesting her to be his friend and to hang out outside of work. Lucia found out from other female staff members that her boss was very inappropriate, and he had a track record of acting overly friendly and sexual at work including touching people's bottoms and invading their privacy.

Lucia felt extremely uncomfortable and was forced to quit a job she loved because of her boss's behaviour.

Lucia was first booked in for an advice appointment with a Circle Green lawyer. Circle Green reviewed her documents and advised her on her options. Lucia accepted Circle Green's offer to write a letter to send to her employer

stepping through potential legal options and a proposal for resolution. Circle Green provided further advice appointments taking Lucia through her negotiations for resolution with the employer.

In response to the letter, the employer fired Lucia's boss and compensation negotiations are still underway.

*\*Client's real names have not been used in case studies. We have withheld our clients' identifying details to protect and respect their confidentiality.*



## Supriya's Story

Supriya\* was a young migrant working at a restaurant for a rate far below the national minimum wage. Supriya lived with the director of the company and resigned after experiencing ongoing violence and exploitative behaviour including, being coerced into a sexual relationship, assault, threats, and having her intimate images shared without her consent.

She was referred to Circle Green from Legal Aid WA and was quickly booked in for an advice appointment with a Circle Green lawyer. After the initial appointment, Circle Green drafted an unfair dismissal claim for Supriya to file with the Fair Work Commission. Further appointments were scheduled to help Supriya with the conciliation process.

Circle Green was able to represent Supriya, get a settlement at conciliation and review her deed of release and settlement.

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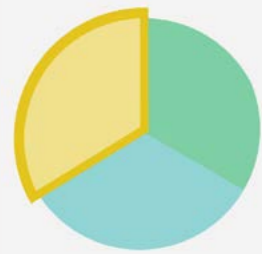
## Mining Industry Respect Infoline

In 2023 the Circle Green Workplace Stream introduced the Mining Industry Respect Infoline (MIRI) – a specialised telephone service to provide information, referrals and support to workers targeted by sexual harassment and sex discrimination in the mining industry. This group of workers can be difficult to reach, and we suspect that some feel the need to remain quiet, so we created a tailored digital campaign.

This allowed for geo-targeted marketing, as well as the trial of various messaging strategies which are constantly evaluated. Digital analytics were used to monitor efficacy and tailor messaging. Several crucial learnings emerged. Many potential clients who were interested in the issues or service did not necessarily want to engage with a telephone service. Real world imaging of women on mine-sites trended better than stylised graphics. Messaging that emphasised the non-committal nature of the service and the non-government nature of the service provider increased engagement.

This project is ongoing and the learnings from the marketing and analytics will inform future promotional activities as well as service delivery models across Circle Green, particularly in respect of vulnerable cohorts who may be reluctant to engage with service providers.





## Best Practice Service - Humanitarian

Circle Green provides professional and accessible specialist immigration and refugee legal services to people new to Australia from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds who are otherwise disadvantaged in their access to comprehensive and culturally informed legal assistance. We support people with legal advice and representation to the Department of Home Affairs and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), primarily to asylum seekers and people experiencing family violence seeking safety in Australia.

We are the legal service assisting those eligible to be granted a permanent Resolution of Status (RoS) following the conversion of temporary refugee status to permanency and provide two outreach services; the Asylum Seeker Hub (ASH) and at Women’s Health and Family Service’s (WHFS). The re-establishment of our health justice partnership with WHFS forms part of our Vulnerable Women’s Funding project. In addition, our Detention Advice Line provides people in prison and immigration detention access to legal advice and support.

We provide a family reunion advice service to newly arrived humanitarian arrivals and deliver community legal education across all our practice areas. We work with other community legal centres to support clients across Western Australia.

### We help with:

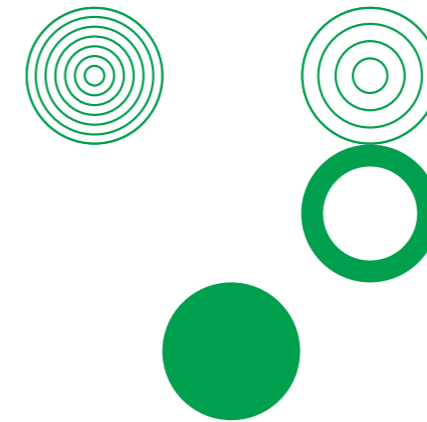
Protection visas (asylum seekers seeking refugee status)	Family reunion
Family and domestic violence (focused on those with temporary visa status)	Specialist immigration legal assistance (general legal and complex matters including modern slavery, AAT, appeals, work rights, FCC, Ministerial Intervention)
Family law	

### Key statistics



### Country of origin

**TOP FIVE:** Afghanistan • Myanmar • Iran • India • Sri Lanka



### Client feedback

“Circle Green helped me that time when I didn’t even know where to get help or whom to ask for help. Just to add on my positive experience with Circle Green, I felt listened to and not judged. I was made to feel accepted and appreciated.”

“I am immensely grateful for the exceptional help, support, compassion, kindness, passion, and professionalism displayed by the Circle Green Community Legal team in handling their clients’ legal issues. The staff have been remarkably helpful, and I would like to extend special thanks to the Humanitarian lawyer for her invaluable assistance with my legal matters. She is an exceptional professional and a truly kind-hearted individual. I highly recommend Circle Green Community Legal to anyone seeking legal assistance at such a high level of professionalism.”

### Emerging trends

Increase in international arrivals on temporary visa seeking protection visa advice and representation.

Increasing backlog of protection and AAT decisions making matters more complex and causing other legal issues which need to be supported.

Awareness of family violence issues for temporary visa holders including announcement by Minister Giles in May 2023 of major law reform to the visa framework in the next 12 months.

Increase in the humanitarian arrivals particularly from South and Central America, Myanmar and Afghanistan increasing demand for family reunion services.

Changes to NZ Citizen eligibility and the need for family law advice for temporary visa holder parents who wish to obtain citizenship for their child.

## Krishna Somers Humanitarian Settlement Project

Our family reunion work is named after the late Dr Krishna Somers who, as someone who had fled conflict himself, had a special interest in supporting legal assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and victims of human rights abuses, as well as dispersed migrant issues. The demand for family reunion assistance remains high and this continues to be an important part of our work.



## Mai's Story

Mai\* was in a relationship with an Australian citizen and had several children together. They lived in her home country for a long time and would visit family in Australia requiring her to travel on a visitor visa. They decided to move to Australia, and she was granted a temporary Partner, sub class 309 visa in the early 2010's. Her partner refused to complete the paperwork required for her permanent visa therefore her visa was refused and she was unlawful for around nine years. Mai experienced FDV throughout the relationship and was isolated in the community with her children. When police attended her partner said she had mental health issues. He was calm and Mai was recorded as being highly distressed, having no English language skills and having visa status issues. The details were recorded as a mental health incident and not as a potential FDV matter. This was despite the police being aware that she had experienced visa status issues. Mai was taken to hospital and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support interviewed the children who were old enough to speak to the authorities. They disclosed they were extremely fearful of their father and that he was highly violent towards their mother.

We immediately assisted Mai to apply for a bridging visa E and communicate with the WA Compliance Resolution Status so she was lawful and bring her circumstances to the attention of the Family Violence team at the Department of Home Affairs.

Initially Home Affairs indicted the circumstances experienced by the client were so egregious and compelling they would request the Minister of Immigration personally intervene in her case through an internal referral process. Therefore, she was likely to be granted permanent



residency without having to go through a prolonged visa process. However, this did not occur and after several months they advised our office to proceed through the regular visa processes.

Due to her circumstances, Mai's visa options are very limited. She is likely to require Ministerial Intervention, however this pathway requires the client applying for a Protection visa which is likely to be refused, an application to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to be made and again, likely to be refused. Then Mai will be able to make a request for Ministerial Intervention. We are assisting her with this pathway and representing her throughout the process.

*\*Client's real names and photos have not been used. We have withheld our clients' identifying details to protect and respect their confidentiality.*

## Abina's Story

Abina\* arrived in Australia on a short stay visa. She had no money, had been sleeping in the park and was fearful of returning to her home country as an LGBTQI+ woman from a country where homosexuality is illegal.

We assisted her in obtaining emergency relief from Red Cross and accommodation through Safe as Houses. Our lawyer provided her with advice regarding her eligibility to apply for a Protection visa and assisted her to lodge the application. We will be her representative through the visa process.

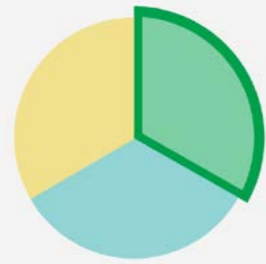
Following this, an appointment was arranged with our social worker. Abina was referred for specialist counselling with The Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS). We assisted her to obtain a tax file number and showed her how to use an ATM. She was assisted by Red Cross through their job café and Uniting WA assisted her to access more permanent accommodation.

Abina's visa process is likely to take several years to be processed. She is currently employed, has stable accommodation, access to specialist psychological support and full legal representation for her visa application.

Our team's ability to identify Abina's legal and non-legal needs was essential for Abina to access the support she needed. We have assisted her to navigate the complex legal system and understand her rights. Our relationships with our colleagues in other organisations are incredibly important and shows the impact we can have when working together.

*\*Client's real names and photos have not been used. We have withheld our clients' identifying details to protect and respect their confidentiality.*





# Visible Social Impact

We share our impact to amplify our organisation as a critical piece of the solution for creating social change in people's lives and in sector-wide legal reform.

## Law Reform, Advocacy and Campaigns

Our law reform and advocacy work is based on our experience and expertise providing legal assistance services to people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged in our areas of practice.

When possible, we amplify the impact of our work through collaboration with other organisations across the state as well as nationally.

**In 2022-2023 Circle Green engaged in 82 law reform and policy activities which included:**

- Contributed to Reform Proposal 'Family Separation and family reunion of refugees' supporting SCALES and Murdoch University Law Clinic.
- Submission on 'Issues Paper on designing a new federal administrative review body that is user-focused, efficient, accessible, independent, and fair.'
- Submission to UN OHCHR Committee on Enforced Disappearances – Comment on UN Draft Statement on Non-State Actors and Enforced Disappearance.
- Input on SPT Draft General Comment on Article 4 OPCAT for the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture.
- Drafted a significant research piece in conjunction with Uniting Church and in collaboration with sector leaders across Australia titled 'Issues Encountered by Temporary Visa Holders who experience Family and Domestic Violence and Recommendations for Reform'.
- Continued to actively participate in the Make Renting Fair campaign in collaboration with Shelter WA, Anglicare and WACOSS and various other stakeholder organisations.
- Submission for Senate Enquiry into Worsening Rental Crisis in Australia, National Housing and Homelessness Plan.
- Support for AHRC complaint brought by SCALES against Housing Authority practicing racial discrimination in use of without grounds termination.
- Collaboration with National Association of Renter's Associations to prepare expert report "The National Nine" for use by National Cabinet participants.
- Submissions on proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act.
- Submission for the Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2022.
- Submission for the Fair Work Amendment (Secure Jobs Better Pay) bill 2022.
- Submission for the Fair Work Commission Online Proceedings Framework.
- Submission for the Respect at Work Bill 2022.
- Submission for the Productivity Commission Carer's Leave Inquiry.
- Submission for the Fair Work Commission's draft sexual harassment benchbook.
- Submission for the Attorney-General's review into an appropriate cost model for Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws.
- Submission for the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' consultation on updating Fair Work Act anti-discrimination laws.
- Submission for the Federal Parliamentary Joint committee on Human Rights' Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework.



Make Renting Fair MP Roundtable

## Broadening our impact through:

### Updating and expanding our online resources to support people to understand their rights and self-advocate.

This year we undertook a complete re-write of all workplace publications to enhance access and reduce user reliance on legal advice for simple matters. The new publications have been drafted with plain English principles, significantly simplifying the language from previous publications. This is to enhance access for vulnerable persons and communities, particularly those with literacy issues or for whom English is an additional language.

### Raising awareness of our specialist areas of law and the services we provide through social media promotion and speaking at events.

In 2022 Circle Green expanded our social media presence to engage and raise awareness with young people, who are at disproportionate risk of exploitation in the workplace. The account has attracted over 1,500 followers, peaking with a post that attracted over 100,000 views and with regular posts frequently attracting in excess of 20,000 views.

This type of organic reach is invaluable in terms of the viewing number as well as the demographic. Recently, viewers were encouraged to complete a survey on workplace issues, providing crucial data on workplace issues faced by young people, at a negligible cost to the organisation.

### Providing community legal education through focussed training and presentations.

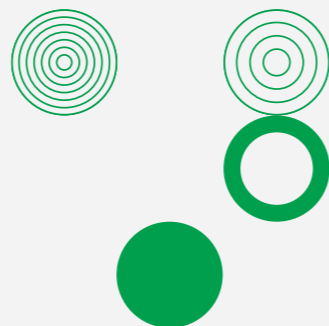
Circle Green continues to engage with the Adult Migrant English Program, delivering a total of 31 presentations in the first half of 2023. This relationship benefits students of the program and provides valuable feedback, informing the development of Circle Green's public education program. Feedback from past sessions has informed the continued simplification of language, the implementation of more visual assets and the creation of a simple glossary so that teachers can prep for the presentations, enhancing their utility through prior knowledge of key terms.



The Law Society of Western Australia's Young Lawyers Committee Social Justice Career Opportunities Evening

## New Sector Partnerships

- Re-established a fortnightly outreach service at **Women's Health and Family Services** delivering legal advice under the Vulnerable Women's Project. Co-located with other legal services, this provides a holistic supported environment to women whilst receiving advice.
- Collaborated with **Redfern Community Legal Centre** to update the WA content within the workplace law component of the "My Legal Mate" (MLM) app. This is a free legal resource for international students that provides guided information on a number of areas of law, including workplace law. Circle Green is also a referral point for students in WA.
- Entered into a partnership with the Student Legal Advice Centre (SLAC) at the **University of Western Australia (UWA)** to ensure affordable and accessible access to justice for UWA students. A pop-up clinic has been established on campus, staffed by Circle Green lawyers who provide one-off 45 minute legal advice appointments in relation to tenancy and workplace issues. In 2023, the program was expanded to include on site community legal education.
- Formed the **Hay Street Hub**, a collaboration of specialist community legal services operating out of 445 Hay Street with a vision of working together to improve justice for people who need assistance. The Hub includes **Women's Legal Service WA, Consumer Credit Legal Service, RUAH Legal Service** and **Circle Green Community Legal**.



# Regenerative Growth

We will regenerate our organisational capacity by amplifying our organisation as a critical piece of the solution for creating social change in people's lives and in sector-wide legal reform.

### Our People

We have a team of dedicated staff and volunteers that work together to enable us to deliver services and support our clients. Our team are the foundation of all we do.

### Our staff survey showed:

93%

I find my work meaningful and rewarding

97%

I feel that I align with Circle Green's purpose and values

97%

I have a good relationship with my supervisor

*"I love the client work and working with passionate people."*

*"I value the sense of purpose I get from helping those in need and the lovely team environment."*

*"I enjoy the people I work with and the impact that we can have on our clients. It is energising to work with people who are so committed to getting the best outcome for clients who would have very few other options."*

## Stuart's Story

I'm privileged to call clients and say 'Hi, I'm Stuart, I'm a lawyer at Circle Green'. It truly is an honour, given my journey.

In 2019 I was a law student studying property law. My lecturer mentioned the Residential Tenancy Act and that renters could get help from a tenant advocate. This piqued my interest immediately, because I was once unlawfully evicted and made homeless, and felt this was a way that I could help avoid this happening to others. So, I asked my lecturer how one gets to be a tenant advocate, my lecturer told me 'You just be one!'. The next day I went to the Tenancy WA website and applied to volunteer. I was lucky enough to be selected to volunteer one day per week.

Next the merger to Circle Green was announced. A job as tenant advocate was advertised. I decided to apply and happily was selected! I started the role on the day of merger in 2020 but helped with intake and triage for a few months whilst the merger settled.



Stuart Caporn with Circle Green lawyer Zoë Barham

I've really enjoyed being a tenant advocate – I've learned a heap, mostly that there is always more to learn. I cannot understate how much I love helping tenants!

I'm now building a career as a legal practitioner in Circle Green. Reflecting on my journey, I think I've created personal opportunity. But opportunity only exists with support. So, I'd like to say THANK YOU to everyone at Circle Green. I've built professional relationships with you all, and everyone has been supportive in my journey.



**THANK YOU**  
to the dedicated 60 volunteers and interns that contributed 4,701 hours and their skills to supporting our service and the community we serve.

Circle Green volunteers



## Volunteer Feedback

*"I got into volunteering at Circle Green to learn more about how to communicate with members of our community with certain vulnerabilities. I joined the humanitarian stream specifically for this reason. I wanted to improve my awareness of cultural sensitivities and learn to communicate in a respectful and empathetic way to individuals that have experienced family and domestic violence and other forms of discrimination or trauma."*

*"I would recommend volunteering, and specifically volunteering at Circle Green, to absolutely everyone. There is no better way to learn than to fully involve yourself in real-life work experience. Volunteering at Circle Green has been more valuable than I ever would have imagined."*

Our volunteers are mostly law students and Circle Green would like to thank the Student Law Societies for invitations to participate in the following Careers Fairs:

- Blackstone Society's Beyond Commercial Law Careers Fair
- Curtin Mini Careers Fair
- Curtin Opportunities Fair
- Perth Law Careers Fair
- Murdoch Law Society Careers Fair
- ECU Faculty of Business and Law Careers Fair
- The Law Society of Western Australia's Young Lawyers Committee Social Justice Career Opportunities Evening

*"I love getting immersed in helping those who are vulnerable and working with an amazing team who are all so friendly and welcoming. Volunteering has allowed me to gain invaluable new skills and knowledge. It is something I look forward to every week away from my busy and stressful life".*

## Circle of Friends

On 28 March 2023 we held our inaugural Circle of Friends event which brought together staff, board, sector partners, funders, key stakeholders and donors to share our impact, celebrate our partnerships and look towards the future, exploring new opportunities for collaboration to increase access to justice.

Guest speaker, Elizabeth Shaw (Partner - Diversity and Inclusion at PwC), shared her insights on the complex issues facing our communities and Vaughn from GVM Solutions donated a fantastic artwork that he created which now proudly resides at our reception. The generosity of partners is always uplifting.



We look forward to continuing to engage with our Circle of Friends. You can join by using the QR code to sign up for our mailing list. You can also stay in touch by following us on social media.



- Aboriginal Family Legal Services
- Aboriginal Legal Service WA
- Albany Community Legal Centre
- Allens
- Anglicare WA
- ASeTTS
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Australian Red Cross Society
- Centre for Social Impact UWA
- Commonwealth Attorney General's Department – National Legal Assistance Partnership
- Community Legal Centres Australia
- Community Legal WA
- Consumer Credit Legal Service (WA)
- Corrs Chambers Westgarth
- DayDawn Advocacy Centre
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Justice WA
- Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
- Edith Cowan University
- Estrin Saul
- Fair Work Ombudsman
- Fremantle Community Legal Centre
- Gilbert + Tobin
- Goldfields Community Legal Centre
- Gosnells Community Legal Centre
- Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC)
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- Kaldor Centre
- Kimberley Community Legal Services
- Kingston Reed
- Krishna Somers Charitable Trust
- Law Access
- Legal Aid
- MDC Legal
- MercyCare
- Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service (MIDLAS)
- Minter Ellison
- Modern Legal
- National Association of Renters' Organisations (NARO)
- Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- Peel Community Legal Services
- Pilbara Community Legal Service
- Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS)
- Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Refugee Legal
- Regional Alliance West
- Riverview Community Services
- RUAH
- SCALES Community Legal Centre
- Shelter WA
- South West Community Legal Centre
- Stirling Women's Refuge
- Street Law Centre
- Sussex Street Community Law Services Inc
- Tang Legal
- Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service
- The Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT)
- The Fred P Archer Charitable Trust
- The Law Society of WA, Public Purposes Trust
- The Salvation Army Australia
- The Uniting Church of Australia (Synod of Victoria and Tasmania)
- Tottle Partners
- United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture
- Uniting WA
- University of Western Australia
- WACOSS
- Welfare Rights and Advocacy Service
- Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre
- Women's Health and Family Service
- Women's Legal Service WA

## List of Funders

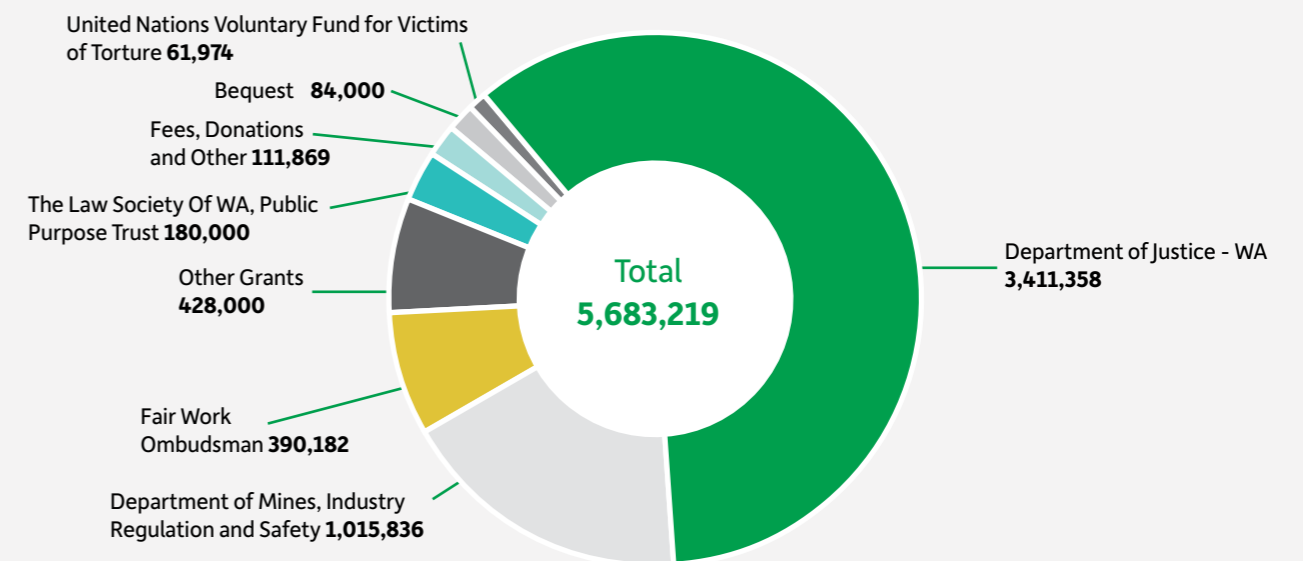


# Financial Summary

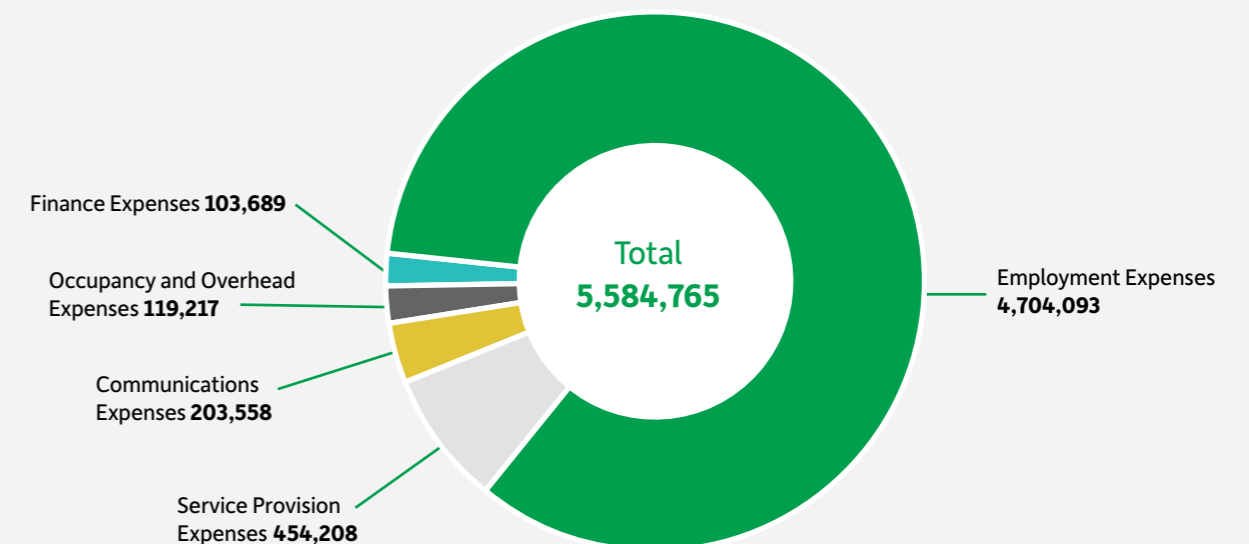
Profit and Loss	2023 \$	2022 \$	Balance Sheet	2023 \$	2022 \$
Grants	5,487,350	3,325,818	Fixed Assets	348,328	421,673
Fees, Donations, Bequests and Other	195,869	199,457	Current Assets	3,441,963	2,794,570
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>5,683,219</b>	<b>3,525,275</b>	Current Liabilities	-2,107,296	-1,608,627
Employment Expenses	4,704,093	2,970,282	Non-Current Liabilities	-447,668	-470,743
Other Expenses	880,672	489,906	<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>1,235,327</b>	<b>1,136,873</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>5,584,765</b>	<b>3,460,188</b>	<b>Current Year Surplus</b>	<b>98,454</b>	<b>65,087</b>
<b>Surplus for the Year</b>	<b>98,454</b>	<b>65,087</b>	Reserves	1,136,873	1,071,786
			<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>1,235,327</b>	<b>1,136,873</b>

Note: a full set of our audited financial reports are available upon request.

## Breakdown of Income



## Breakdown of Expenditure








# Circle Green Community Legal

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 [www.circlegreen.org.au](http://www.circlegreen.org.au)

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