

# 2019-2020

# Annual Report



## Contents

3 Overview

4 Snapshot 2019-2020

5 Report form the Chair

6 Sector Development Officer Report

7 Forecasting Legal Need

8 Leading Service Design

9 Strategic Priority

### **Acknowledgement of traditional owners**

Community Legal Centres South Australia affirms that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia and acknowledges their unique relationship with their ancestral country. In particular, we acknowledge the Karuna peoples, the traditional custodians of the land in and around Adelaide and pay respect to their elders, past and present.

## Community Legal Centres South Australia Inc. Overview

Community Legal Centres South Australia Inc. (CLCSA) is the peak body representing independent, community-led community legal centres operating across South Australia, including rural and remote areas. CLCSA provide free information, legal assistance and referral, representation and casework, community education and advocacy for vulnerable clients who are facing legal and social problems.

Established in 1993, our mission is to work with our centres towards a fair and just South Australia. We help community legal centres to provide effective, high-quality services to their communities. We help the network of community legal centres keep informed, united and relevant. We help disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the community to understand their legal and human rights, access legal help, and feel heard and respected.

## Our Members



## National Affiliation



**In 2019-20, Community Legal Centres South Australia's members helped approximately 9,500 individuals with over**

- **9682 Legal Advice, 295 legal information assistance 409 Legal Tasks**
- **almost 1296 other representations including financial counselling**
- **372 Court Tribunal matters**
- **assisting with over 201 dispute resolution and facilitated resolution services**



## Report from the Chair

It has been an extraordinary year for everyone, not only across the world but for our local communities. Community Legal Centres in SA have shown they can be flexible and adaptable in the face of unprecedented challenges this year.

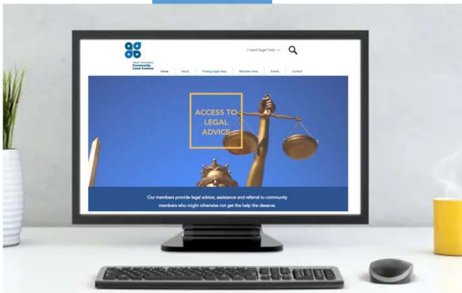
A new name for South Australian Council of Community Legal Centres which has officially become Community Legal Centres SA Inc as we look forward to continuing to support the sector.

This year support was provided to members in wrapping up of the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services and advocated on behalf of members for the new National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) to ensure greater funding security for the sector. It has been a welcomed decision to have 5-year funding cycles for members funded under the NLAP.

Support was also provided in engaging with both Commonwealth and State Governments to ensure ongoing financial support to members noting the unique challenges 2019/2020 has had for the community and Centres with the catastrophic impact of the bushfires and the global Covid-19 pandemic. I would like to acknowledge the work undertaken by Community Legal Centres Australia and our fellow State and Territory Peaks that have come together to advocate for greater resources to ensure our communities continue to receive much needed assistance.

It has been a pleasure again to work with the small but amazing team at CLCSA, the Executive and our members. A great deal was achieved this year because of the dedication and hard work of the sector in SA. I would also like to acknowledge the support of staff from the Attorney-General's Department, Law Society of SA and SACOSS.

Catherine McMorrine Chairperson 2020



## Sector Development Officer report

For CLCSA and our members, it has been a time of major change and upheaval, but it's also been a time of action and collaboration. This year's report reflects on an extraordinary period for our sector. Thankfully, the strength and quality of our community legal centres (CLC) and their dedicated staff adapted quickly to the unprecedented circumstances to continue to support vulnerable South Australians with increased complex needs who need free legal support to live in an inclusive community.

This reporting year we advocated our CLCs through the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement and welcomed this surety till 2025 with additional COVID 19 and Bushfire Legal Project funding to ensure services continue to be delivered and enhanced.

This year Legal Intake Officers Network (LION) subcommittee of CLC Intake Officers and volunteers was set up to improve CLC data and reporting quality and capacity building through training and information sharing which provides consistency, peer support, a better understanding of how services CLCs provide within their communities and identifying emerging and unmet legal need.

The bushfires at the end of 2019, pushing into 2020 devastated many South Australian communities. CLCSA, as part of Disaster Legal Assistance package appointed a dedicated lawyer to work with the local Recover SA to help identify community legal needs, raise awareness of the challenges and provide relevant support people, small business and pastoralists impacted by the devastating bushfires.

No sooner were the fires out, we were met with a virus unlike anything we have experienced. COVID-19 spread throughout the world, impacting us all like nothing before it. It forced our CLC to rethink how services were delivered, how manage risk to ensure we worked safely and how we operated together as a community. The pandemic continues to have wide ranging financial, economic and social impact on individuals and communities across South Australia potentially for years to come. It has, in equal measure, created significant areas of legal need especially around legal rights and obligations combined with mass job losses. These significant events has led to increase demand for trauma informed free legal assistance in relation to family violence, tenancy, employment and social security law matters. Collectively, we have achieved some real outcomes that continue to have a great impact on the communities serve.

Ippei Okazaki Sector Development officer.



## Forecasting Legal Need

It is expected demand for assistance with ever increasing complexity and volatility will remain at elevated levels during the post-crisis recovery period, while levels of client trauma in relation to legal and other problems will grow as restrictions and stimulus packages come to an end but financial and economic pressures remain.

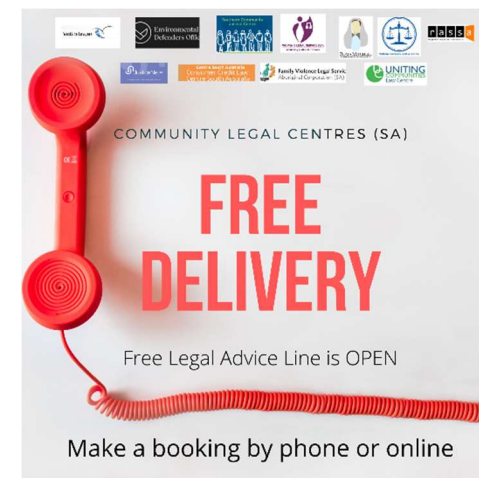
We know that during disasters instances of family violence rise, and the pandemic has proved no different. As well as violence against a partner, other types of family violence are also felt, including elder abuse, economic abuse and the exposure of children to seeing and/or experiencing violence directly.

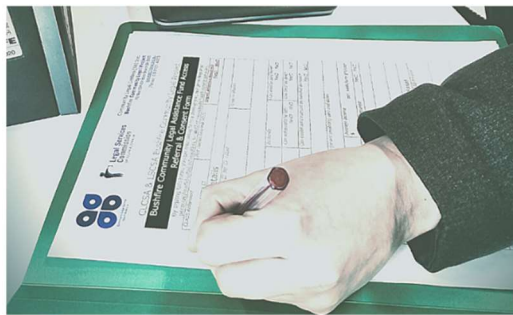
Tenancy issues have increased as tenants seek to better understand their legal rights when it comes to rental agreements.

As employers make workforce decisions that lead to redundancies, reduced work hours and disputes about entitlements, more and more people are seeking advice from community legal centres about employment, housing, debt, social security issues.

The virus has also increased the need for greater clarity and advice in relation to social security assistance. Changes to the national social security scheme, the introduction of JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments have led to greater uncertainty as more South Australians become in need of government support services than ever before, many of whom need help navigating the complex application and eligibility processes for the first time.

CLCs have navigated these changes providing advice and assistance to help the community make informed choices and build community resilience. This has required our sector support each other, reimagine how services are delivered and adopt/update technology to ensure access to justice is always available to people who need it most.





**FREE  
LEGAL HELP**

Community Legal Centres (SA)



## Leading Service Design – Rising to the challenges of Natural Disasters

At a time when communities were preparing for Christmas celebrations and the holiday season, Australians watched in horror as fires sparked across the country. The bushfires devastated local communities with homes being lost and livelihoods were destroyed or, at the least, heavily impacted. History tells us that when the threat is past, the full impact of the devastation can take months to be apparent. It's then that individuals, households and communities turn to their local recovery/support services to try and rebuild the threads of their lives. Community Legal Centres form a vital part of that recovery structure.

In the aftermath of the bushfires, Community Legal Centres began helping their local communities with a wide range of legal issues, from insurance law problems to tenancy and mortgages, social security, debts, fencing repairs and wills and estates, as well as family violence against the added complexity of COVID19.

With additional funding CLCSA secured for the next 18 months from 30 July 2020 CLCSA will appoint a full-time outreach lawyer to work with Local Recovery Centres on Kangaroo Island and Yorktown with project partner Legal Services Commission to help coordinate the local community legal sector's response to bushfire recovery.



## Strategic Priorities

The 2019-2021 Strategic Plan of CLCSA was developed in consultation with members and the Board. In developing the Strategic Priorities key funding and sustainability issues for the CLC sector in the immediate future was taken into account.

The Strategic Plan outlines 4 goals for CLCSA, which together represent a clear direction for the work over the three-year period from July 2019 to June 2021

