



northern suburbs
community
legal centre



Northern Suburbs
Community Legal Centre

2022 • 2023

Annual Report

Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre

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Acknowledgement of Country



We would like to acknowledge that our programs operate from the lands of the Noongar people of the Whadjuk Nation, the traditional custodians of this land.

We would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community.

We pay full respects to all First Nations People and their cultures, as well as their Elders past, present and emerging.

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About Us

Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre (NSCLC) is a not-for-profit legal centre, established in 1996. We aim to provide client centred services that are offered primarily across the northern metropolitan area, with some programs extended further across the State. There are offices in Mirrabooka, Wanneroo, Joondalup and Yanchep and we partner with other community focused organisations to deliver diverse services in a range of locations.

We provide a unique approach to delivering legal and non-legal support services, as we understand that complex issues require integrated programs. Our support is assured through our multidisciplinary team, comprising of solicitors, tenancy advocates, social workers, financial counsellors, financial advocates, older people's rights advocates, community legal education staff, program support staff and a valuable contingent of volunteers.

As a nationally accredited organisation, we also provide ongoing community legal education and professional legal education.



OUR VISION

Leading in community social justice.



OUR MISSION

To provide innovative and dynamic services to enable justice for clients and the community.



OUR VALUES

- Person-centred and holistic activities
- Safe and open communication
- Compassion and appreciation for all
- Respect for each other
- Inclusive support
- Excellence always

Message from CEO and Chair

'Slick operation', that was the tick of approval we got as a result of our annual presentations to our funding bodies, a sentiment of competency, matched by compassion for clients, that is often said about Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre.

This was no more evident than in NSCLC's delight when Judy Joukador, an Older People's Rights Service (OPRS) volunteer, and previous board member, was the recognised this year by the State Government through the Seniors Advocacy Award.

In meeting our commitment to our strategic priority of 'Governance, leadership and sustainability', NSCLC has this year prioritised the introduction of a new financial structure that provides greater financial reliability, resilience and accountability.

In addition, recognising the culture of collaboration that has enabled this transition NSCLC's employee surveys have repeatedly demonstrated a high staff satisfaction in their roles and commitment to the Vision of 'Leading in community social justice.'

To further this vision the organisation has contributed to and presented submissions to various government reviews, including the Family Law Act, family domestic violence (FDV) provisions in tenancy laws and the Residential Tenancies Act.

NSCLC recognises the sensitivity of our records, undertaking a cyber security review which commended the organisation for "good cyber security posture and more". NSCLC continues its commitment to increasing organisational cyber security.

We are grateful to our philanthropic partners, such as Ecstra and other donors who have enabled our services to meet the community education needs of our clients in our general practice, community education, supporting regional communities, Older Peoples Rights Service and Women's Resource and Engagement Network.

NSCLC continues to collaborate with our many partners in the community, this year partnering with Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the Aboriginal alternative dispute resolution service training.

We were able to extend our community legal education through the employment of a dynamic lawyer presenter who has built on our commitment to prevention through timely information and early intervention. This commitment has included the launch of our partnership with the Equal Opportunity Commission in delivering education sessions on rights and discrimination to a range of groups.

Not only have we extended our services but also our reach through opening an office in Yanchep, joining our suite of locations in Mirrabooka, Joondalup and Wanneroo, as well as building connections in regional areas.

We would like to thank the Board, staff and volunteers for their energy and commitment in making this year successful as we continue to provide such valuable services in our community.



Our Board Chair
Jennifer Hannan AM



Our Acting CEO
Janine Freeman



Our Board

Jennifer Hannan AM
Chairperson

Diana MacTiernan
Deputy Chairperson

Toby Nisbet
Secretary

Allison Leonard
Treasurer

Michael Klimek
Member

Dr Rupert Johnson
Member

Richard Klimek
Member

We value each and every member of our NSCLC Board and benefit from their expertise, leadership, compassion and generosity. Our Board Members support us in being successful in what we do and in our quest to make the lives of vulnerable people a little easier.

Who Do We Support?



Families & Children



Financially Disadvantaged



People with Mental Illness



Women



LGBTIQA+



Tenants



Men



Migrants and Refugees



Young People



Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders



Older People



Other Vulnerable People



Culturally & Linguistically Diverse



People with Disabilities

Our Services

GENERAL LEGAL

With over 17,000 occasions of service delivered, our solicitors provided in-person, telephone and videocall appointments for family law, civil law (including debt, criminal injuries compensation), as well as advice on traffic and minor criminal matters. The five most common types of presenting legal matters related to family and domestic violence, civil restraining orders, child contact orders, family violence restraining orders, and child residency matters. General legal advice appointments continued to be offered across our various offices, five days per week.

TENANCY ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION SERVICE

This year saw our tenancy advocates providing nearly 700 occasions of service. Negotiation was a key component of the work and as always, staff attention to addressing disadvantage was a priority. Of particular difficulty was the demand for housing people in crisis and at risk of homelessness, with around 87% of tenancy clients experiencing financial disadvantage and 20% of tenancy clients living with disabilities.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE AND ENGAGEMENT NETWORK (WREN)

In its seventh year of operation WREN delivered 3199 occasions of service, as well as seeing an increase of 87% in ongoing legal representation services (open cases) and 128% increase in discrete non-legal services (social work and financial counselling) provided to women seeking legal, social and/or financial advice and support, compared to last year.

The program is in partnership with Legal maintains two health-justice partnerships Health Service and Ishar Multicultural Centre. The team is made up of lawyers, paralegals and a financial counsellor, which multidisciplinary support to women. Access of mental health services for women was an growing concern.





OLDER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS SERVICE (OPRS)

(Including Peer Educators, Purple Road and Financial Education Program)

The OPRS team provided over 996 occasions of legal and advocate support, as well as 71 financial education sessions through funding support from the Ecstra Foundation. Our volunteer-lead Purple Road Program champions prevention through raising awareness, talking with hundreds of people in the community about elder abuse and positive ageing. Special thanks to the volunteer peer educators who continued the journey, delivering 43 sessions. The OPRS service is funded through the Department of Communities to provide legal advice, information and support to older adults who are at risk of or are experiencing elder abuse. OPRS also addresses matters such as enduring powers of attorney/guardianship orders and state administrative tribunal issues.

SHUTTLE CONFERENCING AND THE RESTRAINING ORDERS AND RESPONDENTS (ROAR) DUTY LAWYER SERVICE

Operating at Joondalup Magistrates Court these programs are invaluable in assisting victims recognise the benefit of early resolution and minimise the risk of breaches and further acts of family violence. Our solicitors provided a range of support to clients in an attempt to resolve matters earlier. These efforts resulted in a significant number that did not require going to trial, such as agreed consent orders, undertakings or conduct agreement orders.

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

With early intervention and prevention a focus of NSCLC, our team ran 407 sessions across the community on a variety of legal topics, reaching around 6300 participants and an increase of 140% on sessions delivered from last year. Most common session topics were family law and family domestic violence, tenancy law, elder abuse (including financial abuse), dealing with police and how to avoid scams. Our education work continues to evolve as we build a better understanding of community needs and address specific issues as they arise.



ADDITIONAL PARTNER PROGRAMS

Naala Djookan Healing Centre:

The Centre's focus is on early intervention and healing for women and children who have experienced, are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing family and domestic violence. NSCLC is one of 10 dedicated partner agencies supporting the centre, led by the City of Stirling, with NSCLC offering legal services, support groups and financial counselling.

Aboriginal Outreach Programs:

NSCLC partner with Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation (Mirrabooka) to provide regular legal outreach and education services for clients and staff. These partnerships have seen a direct benefit in an increasing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients accessing our services.

Women on temporary visas experiencing family violence:

This program supports women experiencing family and domestic violence while on temporary visas. It is delivered in partnership with Red Cross and Circle Green to provide legal and migration advice and support to women in this situation.

Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs):

As part of our HJPs with Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Service and Joondalup Health Campus, we deliver legal services and financial counselling for women and support for older people. We will soon be launching a new HJP with Osborne Park Hospital.

Equal Opportunity Commission:

This year saw the launch of our partnership with the Equal Opportunity Commission in delivering much needed education sessions on rights and discrimination to vulnerable members of the community.

Subiaco Justice Centre Partnership:

NSCLC funded a lawyer for a day each week to provide legal advice and complete any relevant legal tasks on family law or civil law to disadvantaged people living in the north metropolitan region.

Consumer Credit Legal Service WA:

Our community legal education program highlights the importance of partnering with other CLCs to make sure we have the right information for the right audience. We are currently partnering with Consumer Credit Legal Service WA to deliver scam awareness education sessions.

Edith Cowan University School of Law:

Our partnership continued with Edith Cowan University Joondalup and we again hosted the Community Legal Practice unit for students of the School of Business and Law.

Pro Bono Partners:

We extend our thanks to all our pro bono partners who provided a total of 560 occasions of service to our community. (More details included under Our Pro Bono Partners.)

Our Impact

I feel listened to and received positive information to help move forward.

OUR CLIENTS AND SERVICES

Total occasions of service:
17,000
(including referrals)



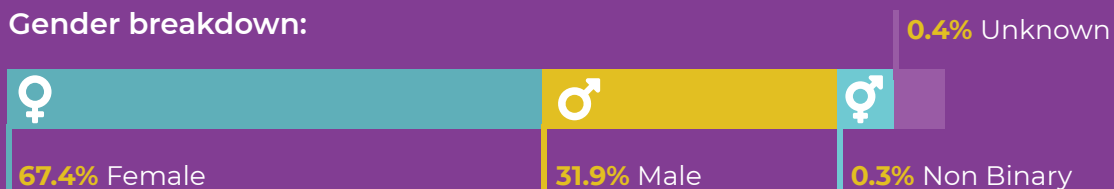
Total number of clients assisted: **3055**



Most common issues:



Gender breakdown:



73 Languages spoken in total

Most common languages spoken:

English
Arabic
Vietnamese
Spanish
Mandarin
Persian

Clients with financial disadvantage
85.3%



Clients with history of FDV
46.4%



Such an amazing service provided to the Northern Suburbs of Perth. Friendly, informative session with great advice, non-biased and personalised to my situation. Thank you!

OUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Total number of sessions delivered:

407



Total number of attendees:

6309



Most common topics:

Family law and FDV
Tenancy law
Elder abuse and financial abuse
Dealing with police
Avoiding scams

CLIENT SATISFACTION



99%

Listened to in a friendly and respectful way



100%

Helped me to understand my legal problem



100%

Options were clearly explained



100%

Know where to get help if I have another legal problem



100%

Would recommend us to other people

Thank you so much for bringing us knowledge and confidence to help solve our problems.

Our Year in Review

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

OPRS volunteer, Judy Joukador, named 2022 WA Seniors Advocate of the Year.

Volunteer Judy Joukador was the winner of the 2022 WA Seniors Advocate of the Year Award presented by Hon Minister Punch. She was recognised for her tireless work for the Older People's Rights Service (OPRS) as a volunteer peer educator. Judy has been volunteering with NSCLC for over five years, providing community presentations to hundreds of individuals and community groups on elder abuse and connecting seniors to support services like OPRS. Judy shows true dedication to the work we do together.



Laura Post, senior solicitor, finalist in the Attorney General's Community Service Law Awards.

Laura's long-term commitment to NSCLC mission to 'Provide innovative and dynamic services to enable justice for clients and the community' is applauded. Laura has been with NSCLC for over 12 years and is an exceptional lawyer, dedicated to her client outcomes and a natural leader.

National Community Legal Centres Conference 2023: Workshop - On the wrong side of the system: supporting offenders, perpetrators, prisoners and the accused

NSCLC principal solicitor, Nicholas Snare, and paralegal, Astrid Sander, co-presented a session with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service on the systemic benefits of providing greater legal assistance to male perpetrators of FDV. Content included how to effectively communicate with this complex group in the context of restraining order and family violence proceedings. Delegates joined the conference from across the country, from legal services, state and federal government agencies, law firms, the Australian Services Union and other stakeholders.



Introduction of new Paralegal roles

Meeting demand was a focus in the employment of paralegals who, working under the supervision of our lawyers, have been able to complete their legal studies, support teams across the organisation and deliver great outcomes for clients.



ACTIVITY AND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Shedding Light on Elder Abuse City of Stirling

We partnered with the City of Stirling to shed light on elder abuse. Sessions covered how to spot signs of abuse, different types of abuse, and how to keep older adults safe in our community. Information shared was perfect for concerned family members, caregivers or anyone interested in the safety and wellbeing of an older person.

The Purple Road for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD)

Every flower on the Purple Road represents someone's story, a conversation or reflection relating to the very important subject of elder abuse in the community. WA Premier, Hon Roger Cook, and NSCLC Acting CEO, Janine Freeman, were there in support. The Older People's Rights Service peer educators launched the second part in a series of free community education sessions at City of Rockingham WEAAD event. The session "To Be Seen, To Be Heard, To Be Listened To" covers self-advocacy and developing skills to combat ageism, helping older people use practical tools to age positively.



The Queer Life in Australia: Happy and Legal

In partnership with Rainbow Migrants, we delivered an information session on legal aspects of life in Australia, such as family domestic violence, visas, housing and tenancy, road traffic laws, drug offences, dealing with the police, avoiding scams, equal opportunity and discrimination, as well as employment laws and rights. The event attracted LGBTIQ+ migrants, advocates and professional, with some great networking opportunities.

Law Week 2023 – Online Profile Series

For Law Week 2023 we posted daily videos from Monday to Friday profiling our amazing staff, programs and partnerships. We kicked off the week with a message from our then CEO, Kathy, and spent the rest of the week highlighting our key programs, partner organisations, finishing off with our Principal Solicitor, Nicholas.





Equal Opportunity Commission Partnership for Education

Our partnership with the Equal Opportunity Commission in delivering much needed education sessions on rights and discrimination to vulnerable members of the community has been a highlight for us. Education sessions have been provided to a range of groups, including culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community, tertiary students, and front-line community service providers.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Partnership with Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation - Family Dispute Resolution

Supporting the delivery of a pilot program for alternative family dispute resolution service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This is a pilot program aiming to provide alternatives to formal legal processes for families who are separated, separating or in dispute, to improve their relationships and take steps in the best interests of their children.



Let's Make it Legal Guide – A Resource for Older People, Families and Advocates

We were excited to share the Let's Make it Legal Guide, created in partnership with Council on the Ageing (COTA) WA. This comprehensive guide covers a range of legal matters which affect the lives of our older people. The Hon Minister Don Punch MLA launched the guide and highlighted the importance of older people having access to legal information to help make better informed decisions for their future.



Naala Djookan Support Group with City of Stirling

The Naala Support Group is a psycho-education program which is presented to a group of women who have experienced/ are experiencing family domestic violence. A collaboration between social workers from Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre and Naala Djookan Healing Centre, the group runs during school terms.

Presenters deliver sessions relating to issues women experience due to family violence, such as healthy relationships, children, trauma, exploration of what comprises FDV, financial abuse, technology abuse, visa issues, FVROs and other legal issues. The group is informal and provides the survivors of violence an opportunity to learn about the complexities of FDV and how it impacts on many areas of their lives, as well as strategies to recognise and address the issues that arise for them in a safe and healthy way. The women who attend shared that they love the mix of professional knowledge and support, as well as the support and new friendships that develop from other survivor women in the group.

End-to-end service provision from Women's Resource Engagement Network (WREN)

In delivering essential support to vulnerable women, WREN strives to provide end-to-end service provision. A new financial counsellor also joined the WREN team in June 2023.

For the period of 1 July 2022 to 30 April 2023, compared to the same period in the previous year, WREN has achieved the following:

- 8.6% increase in discrete legal services (legal advice and legal tasks)
- 128.4%* increase in discrete non-legal services (social work and financial counselling)
- 86.7% increase in ongoing legal representation services (open cases)
- 225%* increase in ongoing non-legal services (open cases for social work and financial counselling)

** A junior social worker was employed from 26 November 2021, which contributed to the increase in non-legal service provision.*



A Busy Year for the Tenancy Team

Our Tenancy Team were kept on their toes this year, with multiple government reviews of legislation with the potential to impact on our clients. As well as working one to one with clients, our Tenant Advocates, Mary, Paul and Danika, contributed to a range of opportunities to share their expertise, such as:

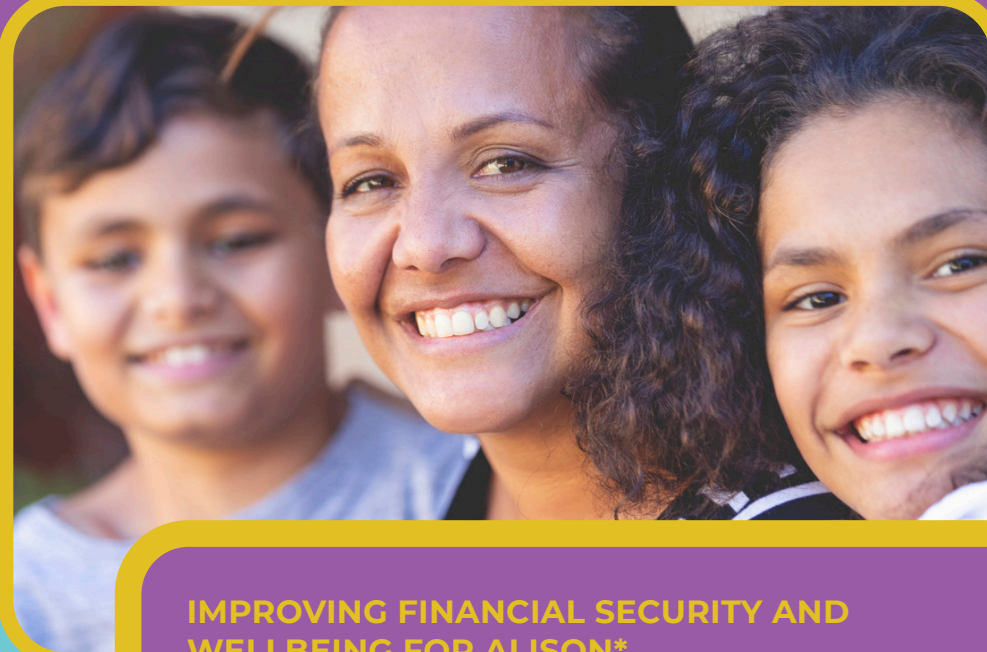
- Television interview about the changes to the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) for the ABC.
- Follow up interviews about the proposed changes to the RTA with 6PR and The Sunday Times.
- Podcast interview with Legal Aid about tenancy issues.
- Panel member at the Tenancy Network Meeting for a Q & A session, sharing knowledge and experiences with other advocates.

New Client Data Management System

Embracing the need for statistics when advocating for the services at NSCLC and secure management of client information, the organisation has implemented a new client management system. The transition has confirmed the capacity of NSCLC staff to adapt and the excellence of our leaders, such as Rachael, Alessandra and Clare, in their tenacity and capacity to overcome obstacles.

Client Stories

**Names changed for privacy reasons.*



IMPROVING FINANCIAL SECURITY AND WELLBEING FOR ALISON* WREN Financial Counsellor

After more than 20 years of marriage with two teenage kids Alison* left a marriage where she had been subject to physical and financial abuse, which included restricted access to money and essential items (eg food, clothing), despite her working. While Alison now had conditions in place to protect her, the protracted nature of the abuse left her fearing her former partner was monitoring her phone and computer. She was suffering from a serious illness and financial stresses, including the children's school fees, utility bills and her former partner had stopped paying his part of the mortgage.

Given the multiple financial concerns the WREN financial counsellor was able to explore financial hardship options with the bank, utilities company and the school, while working with a social worker to navigate safety issues. The advocacy has ensured that the bank has committed to supporting Alison, placing a temporary pause on repayments allowing Alison time to save up some money to secure a rental property when the family home is sold. The utility company flagged her account for financial hardship and manageable payments were applied. Alison also started participating in a budgeting skills program. The WREN financial counsellor was able to give Alison the confidence that her budget was manageable and her family can afford the essentials, while starting a small savings plan.



PARENTING ARRANGEMENT SUPPORT FOR DELORES*

Shuttle Conferencing

NSCLC was contacted to assist Delores* (respondent) in place of a conflicted CLC in the Perth Magistrates Court. Given the short notice NSCLC did the session over the telephone.

The main sticking point between the parties was their toddler, who was living with the father and spending one night per week with mum. A parenting plan was already in place, but Delores was contemplating making an application to the Family Court to amend the parenting arrangements.

We provided substantial advice to Delores leading to the parties reaching an undertaking in exchange for the FVRO application being dropped by her former partner and Magistrates Court proceedings finalised. The undertaking limited Delores' legal peril in the event of an alleged breach, the terms and nature of the undertaking provided sufficient flexibility for Delores and Boris* to adjust their parenting arrangements quite easily, which couldn't be done when an enforceable Court order was in place.

The outcome in this matter avoided an FVRO trial and also avoided the immediate likelihood of lengthy and stressful Family Court proceedings.



HELPING SUSAN* TO STAY SAFE AND RETAIN HER VISA Women's Resource and Engagement Network

After meeting her partner online and relocating to Australia with her children from Iran, Susan* found herself in a physically and emotionally abusive relationship. Using the threat of revoking her and her children's temporary visa, Susan's partner became increasingly violent, including stabbing her with a knife.

Referred to the NSCLC WREN team by a Police Family Violence team, Susan's safety was assessed at an elevated risk given her partner's unpredictable behaviour and tendency to carry a weapon with him.

The WREN social worker undertook short term counselling, completed a safety plan including referrals for ongoing counselling and comprehensive case management for Susan. The WREN social worker also liaised with the Police Family Violence Team and hospital to provide the relevant history and ensure that the interim FVRO was served.

Our WREN lawyer and paralegal drafted a Family Violence Restraining Order application and an extensive affidavit detailing the history, to reduce the need for Susan to have to give oral evidence. Given her immigration status was under threat and her child's visa expiry had forced him to leave, WREN lawyers liaised with her previous immigration lawyer with a view to urgent application for a family violence exemption for her temporary visa.

WREN continues to support Susan through an application under the family violence exemption for immigration and visa issues, the family law property settlement process and with financial assistance through financial counselling.

CHRISTINE* AND HER KIDS AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Tenancy

As a young single mother of two neurodiverse children, Christine found herself on a periodic tenancy after her lease has expired. Following a dispute with the property manager over rental payments caused by a glitch in the ledger, Christine was issued with an incorrect notice to terminate the periodic tenancy in 30 days (despite the form indicating 60), and the property manager applied to the magistrates' court when Christine had not vacated in the 30 days.

NSCLC tenancy worker represented the worker to outlining the notice was invalid and should be dismissed, on hearing the view of the court the property manager withdrew the application. The property manager then recommenced the process with a new notice and when it returned to Court the NSCLC tenancy worker was able to negotiate a further 30 days before Christine had to vacate the property.

The assistance of NSCLC had facilitated a further 4 months for Christine in the property in this very tight housing market giving her time to seek alternative accommodation.



RESTRAINING ORDERS AND RESPONDENTS (ROAR) SUPPORT FOR JULIUS*

Julius* was a respondent to a Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO) application at the local Magistrate's Court. The applicant was the current partner of Julius' former partner. The situation was unusual in that they were at Court to vary a final order that had already been made between the parties after a lengthy history of Family Court proceedings.

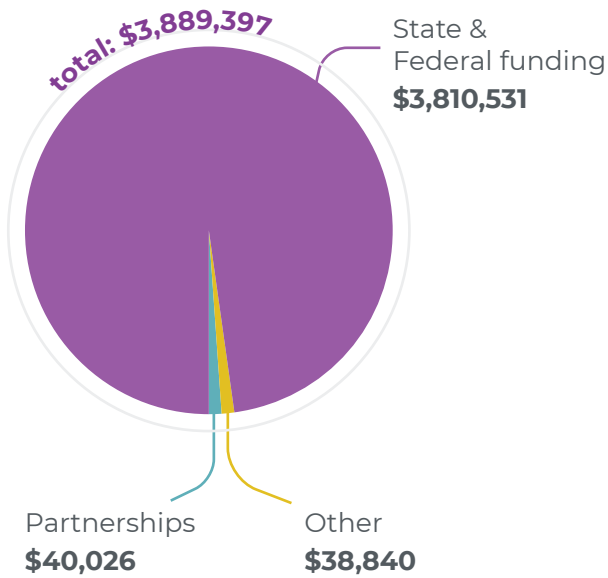
The problem was the order did not specify the length of time for which it would apply and had caused Julius to be charged with breaching the order at a time when he believed the FVRO to have expired.



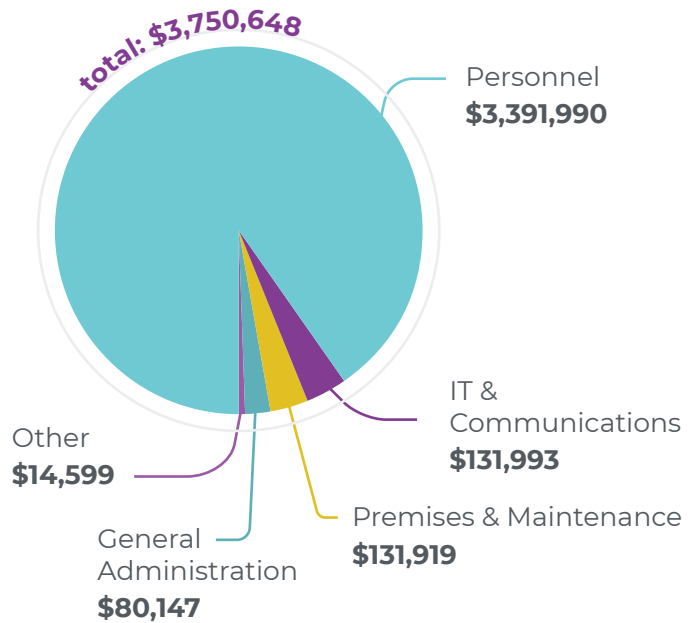
Financial Report

We finished the 2022-2023 year with a surplus of **\$138,749**.

Our total income was **\$3,889,397**, broken down as:



Our total expenditure was **\$3,750,648** and our main expenses related to staff, IT and office costs



Net surplus **\$138,749**

Assets

Cash and Equivalents	1,575,664
Receivables and prepayments	19,327
Right of use	21,134

Total Assets 1,616,125

Liabilities

Employee provisions	371,056
Grant contract liabilities	261,035
Trade and other payables	97,868
Lease liability	24,025

Total Liabilities 753,984

Net Assets

862,141

Our Funders

- Dept of Justice
- Dept of Communities
- Dept of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
- Ecstra
- City of Stirling
- Department of Social Services
- Commonwealth Attorney General



Our Donors

- The Hon Amber Jade Sanderson
- The Hon Alanna Clohessy

Our Pro Bono Partners

We extend our thanks to all our pro bono partners who provided a total of 560 occasions of service to our community.

- Klimek and Wijay Family Lawyers
- Bailey Family Legal
- Hall and Wilcox
- Bloxham Legal
- Saxon Legal
- HWL Ebsworth

A very special thank you to our funding bodies, donors and pro bono partners who help make our work possible.

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