



northern suburbs
community
legal centre

Northern Suburbs
Community Legal Centre

2023 • 2024

Annual Report

Northern Suburbs
Community Legal Centre

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Acknowledgement of Country



We would like to acknowledge that we operate on the lands of the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connections to 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 person centred services that are offered primarily across the northern metropolitan area, with some programs extended further across the State. We have 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 more holistic and integrated services. 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 and extensive community legal education and professional legal education.



OUR VISION

Leading in community social justice.



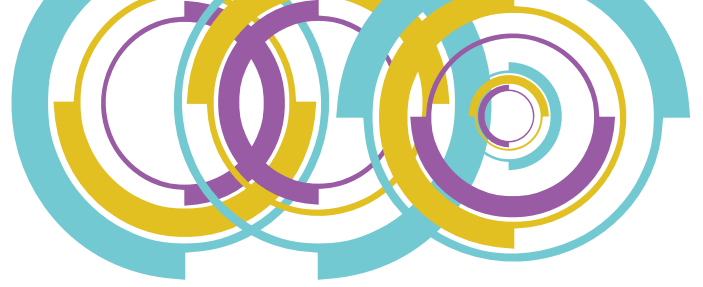
OUR MISSION

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

The 2023-24 year has seen a change at the helm of Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre (NSCLC). At this time, the Board would like to acknowledge Kathy Blitz-Cokis for her invaluable leadership of NSCLC, overseeing consolidation at the Centre, growth and the continued delivery of outstanding services. The Board would also like to acknowledge the steadfast holding of the fort by Acting CEOs Janine Freeman and Clare Meyers whilst Kathy was on extended leave.

It is a testament to the energy, commitment and resilience of the staff and volunteers at NSCLC, that during this last year of change, services continued smoothly and to such high quality. Their support and welcome of the new CEO, must also be recognised and is very much appreciated.

In terms of service delivery, we have solidified our presence in Yanchep this year, in addition to our office locations in Mirrabooka, Joondalup and Wanneroo and we continue to build connections in regional areas, having travelled to Broome, Kalgoorlie and Albany during the year.

NSCLC continues to collaborate with our many partners in the community sector including Naala Djookan Healing Centre, Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. This year also saw the commencement of a collaboration with the City of Gosnells to extend our reach of financial education sessions for older people. Being able to

work in partnership with other community organisations is invaluable in bringing together experience and expertise for the benefit of people and community.

We are also very proud to be part of a new Health Justice Partnership between the North Metropolitan Health Service, Legal Aid WA and ourselves. NSCLC provides outreach at Osborne Park Hospital to be able to address, on site, unmet legal concerns by providing legal assistance to patients at the hospital. NSCLC also provides education and training to their healthcare workers to further develop their skills to identify and respond to patient health care and legal needs. This now adds to our existing health justice partnerships with Joondalup Health Campus and Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Service.

Our community legal education (CLE) continues to go from strength to strength with 2023/24 seeing a sharp increase in demand and delivery of our extensive suite of workshops. We value our continued partnership with the Equal Opportunity Commission to deliver education sessions on rights and discrimination, as well as other community legal centres such as the Consumer Credit Legal Service WA.

We are grateful for the continued support of our work by our philanthropic partners, such as Ecstra Foundation and Klimek and Wijay Lawyers and we cannot forget our long-standing partnership with Edith Cowan University Joondalup, as well as the invaluable support of our many other pro

bono partners. We also would like to acknowledge our Government funders, WA Department of Justice, Department of Communities, Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services without whom many of our services would not be able to be delivered.

For the new year the Board and Executive are pro-actively preparing for a busy 2024/25. The community legal centre sector is due for recommissioning in the next 12 months and future funding needs to be secured for Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre to continue to deliver crucial community-based services including legal assistance, holistic trauma-informed supports and education; and continue to play a role in preventing and responding to family and domestic violence.

Finally, we both would like to thank the Board for their time commitment, hard work and unwavering support of NSCLC, and we would also like to acknowledge the staff and volunteers for their passion and persistence in making the year so successful.



Jennifer Hannan AM

Our Board Chair
Jennifer Hannan AM



Su-Hsien Lee

Our CEO
Su-Hsien Lee

Our Board

We value each and every member of our NSCLC Board and benefit from their expertise, leadership, compassion and generosity. Our Board Members support us strategically in what we do and in our quest to enable justice for our clients and community.

Jennifer Hannan AM
Chairperson

Diana MacTiernan
Deputy Chairperson

Toby Nisbet
Secretary

Allison Leonard
Treasurer

Michael Klimek
Member

Dr Rupert Johnson
Member

Richard Klimek
Member

Who Do We Support?

- Families & Children
- Women
- Men
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders
- Culturally & Linguistically Diverse
- Financially Disadvantaged
- LGBTIQA+
- Migrants and Refugees
- Older People
- People with Disabilities
- People with Mental Illness
- Tenants
- Young People
- Other Vulnerable People

Our Services

GENERAL LEGAL

With over 14,000 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 parenting arrangements; other civil and credit debt; housing; family or domestic violence; and family property. 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 1563 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 69% of all tenancy clients experiencing financial disadvantage and 25% of people with disabilities.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE AND ENGAGEMENT NETWORK (WREN)

In its ninth year of operation WREN delivered more than 2800 occasions of service, an increase in complexity of presenting issues, as well as seeing an increase in ongoing legal representation services (open cases) and an 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 Aid WA and maintains two health-justice partnerships with Joondalup Health Service and Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre. The team is made up of lawyers, social workers, paralegals and a financial counsellor, which supports our multidisciplinary support to women. Access to and costs of mental health services for women continues to be an area of growing concern.



OLDER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS SERVICE (OPRS)

Including Peer Educators, Purple Road and Financial Education Program

The OPRS team provided over 1100 occasions of legal and advocacy support, as well as 57 financial education sessions with funding support from the Ecstra Foundation. Our volunteer-led Purple Road Program champions prevention through raising awareness, talking with hundreds of people in the community about elder abuse and positive ageing. We are especially thankful to the volunteer peer educators who delivered 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 matters.



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 strong focus of NSCLC, our team delivered 697 sessions across the community on a variety of legal topics, reaching around 8221 participants and an increase of 30% on total sessions delivered last year. Most common session topics were elder abuse and financial abuse, avoiding scams, family law and FDV, tenancy law, and dealing with police. Our education work continues to grow and 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.

Regional Community Legal Centres

This year our Older People's Rights Service was lucky enough to travel to three regional locations, to support education and services related to elder abuse. We were able to partner with the local community legal centres during our visits, thank you to Great Southern Community Legal Centre, Kimberly Community Legal Services and Goldfields Community Legal Centre.

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 we provide outreach to Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Service, Joondalup Health Campus and Osborne Park Hospital. We deliver legal services and financial counselling for women and support for older people.

Equal Opportunity Commission

Our partnership has continued with the Equal Opportunity Commission in delivering much needed education sessions on rights and discrimination to vulnerable members of the community.

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 have continued 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 345 occasions of service to our community. (More details included under Our Pro Bono Partners.)

Our Impact

OUR CLIENTS AND SERVICES



Total occasions of service:
10,100
(including referrals)



Total number of clients assisted:
2580

Most common issues:

Parenting Arrangements

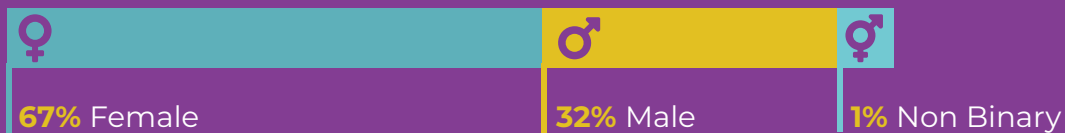
Other Civil and Credit Debt

Housing

Family or Domestic Violence

Family Property

Gender breakdown:



79 Languages spoken in total

Most common languages spoken:

English
Arabic
Vietnamese
Mandarin
Persian



Clients with financial disadvantage
72%



Clients with history of FDV
37%

I felt heard, unrushed and listened to. I also have been able to take away thoughts of different perspectives on the issues, with some specific actions I can take to move forward on these. Thank you!"

OUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION



Total number of sessions delivered:

697



Total number of attendees:

8221

Most common topics:

Elder abuse and financial abuse

Avoiding scams

Family law and FDV

Tenancy law

Dealing with police

CLIENT SATISFACTION



98%

Listened to in a friendly and respectful way



96%

Helped me to understand my legal problem



98%

Options were clearly explained



98%

Know where to get help if I have another legal problem



100%

Would recommend us to other people

Extremely helpful and everything was fully explained so it was easy to understand. Very friendly and able to put you at ease. This is a service that is sorely needed.

Our Year in Review

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

Finalist in the Women Lawyers of WA Awards for 2024

One of our fabulous lawyers, Ally, was a finalist in the Women Lawyers of WA Awards for 2024. Ally is an amazing lawyer whose passion and dedication to the law and to supporting women experiencing FDV is impressive. International Women's Day was a perfect time to celebrate.



Paralegals admitted

Congratulations to three of our paralegals, Alison, Lea and Astrid, who were admitted to the roll of legal practitioners at the Supreme Court of Western Australia and successfully obtained a practicing certificate from the Legal Practice Board of Western Australia in 2023-24. It has been great to have them as part of our legal team and see their knowledge and expertise grow during their time with us.

Winner of Leach Legal Family Law Prize

Our dedicated paralegal Astrid Sander won the Leach Legal Family Law Prize at the Edith Cowan University School of Business and Law Student Prize Breakfast. This is a significant achievement, and we are very lucky to have Astrid on board here at Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre.



ACTIVITY AND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) Regional Grants Program 2024

In 2011, the United Nations designated 15 June each year as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). The Department of Communities (Communities) provides support to community events and activities throughout WA on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day each year. In 2024, Communities partnered with Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre to fund WEAAD initiatives delivered in regional areas. Grants of up to \$3,000 were made available for eligible organisations to deliver a range of events and activities that raise awareness of elder abuse.

Pridefest Fair Day

In November we spent the day at Hyde Park for the 2023 PrideFest Fair Day, a world of rainbows and pride, with theme of Be Brave, Be Strong, Be You. What an amazing day it was. We also had a visit from Premier Hon Roger Cook MLA who added to our artwork of the day.





Harmony Week 2024

We were at The Square Mirrabooka celebrating Harmony Week this year. Harmony Week celebrates diversity within our community and brings together people from all different backgrounds. We had our financial educator, Azadeh, demonstrating the art of traditional Persian calligraphy and staff sharing good wishes for Persian New Year or Nowruz.

Website finalist for 2023 Australian Access Awards

Our new website was a finalist in the Australian Access Awards, hosted by the Centre for Accessibility Australia (CFA Australia) in November. The event brought together notable dignitaries, including Minister Don Punch and Senator Jordon Steele-John, to recognise and honour outstanding contributions in the realm of digital accessibility. What a fantastic night for us to be part of and some amazing work on display from all finalists. Congratulations to the winners – it was well deserved.



Finalist for Age Friendly Business of the Year

Our Older People's Rights Services (OPRS) was one of three finalists for the "Age Friendly Business of the Year" category, made possible by Council on the Ageing WA, Lotterywest and Department of Communities WA. It was fantastic to see the amazing finalists across all categories and although we didn't win, we were in exceptional company with the other finalists and winners.

Equal Opportunity Commission Partnership for Education

Our partnership has continued 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

Purple Road World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event at Parliament House

We were honoured to have Meredith Hammat MLA host our Purple Road World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event at Parliament House in June. The Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Seniors and Ageing, opened the morning to recognise the significant milestone of the Purple Road reaching 100 metres long. The Purple Road now stretches across the state with over 40 community groups including regional areas of Broome, Kalgoorlie and Albany joining together to raise awareness, educate and support older West Australians at risk. The Older People's Rights Service team would like to thank the many individuals, groups and organisations that continue to wise up and rise up to elder abuse.



Partnership with Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation - Family Dispute Resolution

This partnership has continued with NSCLC supporting the delivery of Ebenezer's 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.

Community Legal Education sessions go to Lancelin

This year we hit the road to provide the community of Lancelin with community legal education sessions on Enduring Power of Attorneys, Enduring Power of Guardianships, and wills. These information sessions were packed out and participants were then invited to register for a free one-on-one appointment with our lawyer, Danika. We love engaging with the community, especially those in beautiful beachside towns!



Best practice guidelines for interviewing older people at risk

A new guide for interviewing older people at risk of harm was produced, giving service providers the tools to have effective and meaningful conversations with older people who have experienced abuse.



The guide was developed by the Social Ageing (SAGE) Futures Lab at Edith Cowan University with support from an advisory reference group on behalf of the Older People's Rights Service at Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre.



Another busy year for the Tenancy Team

Our Tenancy Team were kept on their toes again 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 contributed to a range of opportunities to share their expertise, such as:

- A podcast interview with Legal Aid about tenancy issues.
- Being a panel member at the Tenancy Network Meeting for a Q & A session, sharing knowledge and experiences with other advocates.
- Partnering with The Spiers Centre to deliver a free tenancy workshop for people thinking about renting or already renting. The session covered tenant rights and responsibilities, disputes with landlords, as well as starting, during and ending a tenancy.

Everybody's Business: Resource partnership with the University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University and University of South Australia

A resource addressing research into responses to the abuse of older people (elder abuse) in Western Australia, this study was commissioned by the Western Australian Department of Communities as a component of the WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019- 20294 (Elder Abuse Strategy).



Client Stories

**Names changed for privacy reasons.*



IMPROVING FINANCIAL SECURITY AND WELLBEING FOR SHARON*

Women's Resource and Engagement Network Financial Counsellor

- Sharon* is a sole parent of a toddler and working part time. She came to us in financial hardship and with multiple debts, as well as experiencing extreme family violence.
- When she left the relationship Sharon had to move to a new rental, and on connection of her new electricity account she had a carry-over debt of over \$5000. This was from a private rental that the couple were evicted from previously. Sharon appealed her situation with the electricity account regarding the impact of FDV but was only offered 10% off the arrears.
- Sharon also had pay day loans that she had been forced to have taken out in her name by her former partner.
- Our Financial Counsellor (FC) advocated for Sharon and was able to have her pay day loans waived. Our FC contacted the credit company to find that Sharon had multiple phone accounts that were being pursued. Sharon had no recollection of these debts. Our FC appealed the debts and advocated on behalf of Sharon resulting in the credit company offering a full waiver on the phone accounts.
- Our FC arranged a meeting with the electricity company case management team and appealed Sharon's case with the arrears. At first, the FC was told that there was nothing that could be done and that Sharon would need to pay the debt. FC then raised a complaint on behalf of Sharon and the debt was then waived giving her a fresh new account and \$0 balance.
- The FC is continuing to advocate for Sharon in relation to the remaining debts, but Sharon can now concentrate on a better financial future for herself and her child and has sought financial coaching and self-advocacy skills.



HELPING CELIA* CARE FOR HER GRANDCHILDREN WHILE MAINTAINING FAMILY CONTACT

Family Law

- Celia* is the maternal grandmother of 3 children who lived with their mother in a regional town.
- The mother (Celia's daughter) has a history of drug use and found herself in violent relationships, including her relationship with the children's father and with her current partner.
- The children's father was also unable to adequately care for the three children.
- Celia often had the children stay with her in school holidays and so had a good relationship with them.
- On one occasion, Celia drove to their mother's house and found the mother in such a worrying state that she was concerned for their safety and took the children back home to stay with her. She enrolled them in school and settled them into a routine.
- Court orders were made for the children to spend time with their father and their paternal grandmother every third weekend, using their discretion as to whether to allow the children to spend time with their mother. The mother was to seek assistance for her drug use issues.
- The paternal grandmother then sought custody of the three children. NSCLC assisted her to fill out her legal response documents, setting out why she believed the children should stay with her while the parents worked on themselves, rather than go to the paternal grandmother.
- Before NSCLC could finalise the forms, we were informed that during a routine visit the paternal grandmother had left the children in the care of the mother, who was now refusing to return the children, and so the client needed to file an urgent application for a Recovery Order for the children to be returned to her.
- The Recovery Order application was successful, and the children were returned to the Celia very quickly.

UNWANTED HOUSEMATES PUT ANJA* AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Tenancy

- 86-year-old Anja was referred to our organisation through an in-home service provider. She was subject to elder abuse, both financially, mentally and in relation to her health.
- Anja was in public housing where she was living on her own until six months prior when her adult child, their partner and five children moved in with her. They had then taken over the property and the state of house had become increasingly worse.
- Anja's health deteriorated and her safety became a concern. Due to the elder abuse occurring and the family not caring for the property, it was no longer suitable or safe for Anja.
- Anja had to use steps to enter and exit the property and also to access the bathroom, which was becoming riskier for her due to her decreased mobility. She was also unable to use her walker for support inside the home due to the state of the property.
- NSCLC's Tenancy Advocate contacted the Department of Housing, alerted them to and discussed Anja's situation.
- Two days later the Tenancy Advocate received a call from an accommodation manager with the Department of Housing who advised that they had a property to offer Anja. Anja went to view the property and was very excited.
- NSCLC arranged for our Financial Counsellor to assist her with her debts, which had been incurred by the family.
- We assisted and negotiated with other services to support Anja to relocate without the knowledge of her family to avoid any conflict prior to her relocating.
- Anja subsequently moved to the new property where she is now settled and very happy.



Our Funders

- Dept of Justice
- Dept of Communities
- Dept of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
- Ecstra Foundation
- City of Stirling
- Department of Social Services



Our Pro Bono Partners

We extend our thanks to all our pro bono partners who provided a total of 345 occasions of service to our community.

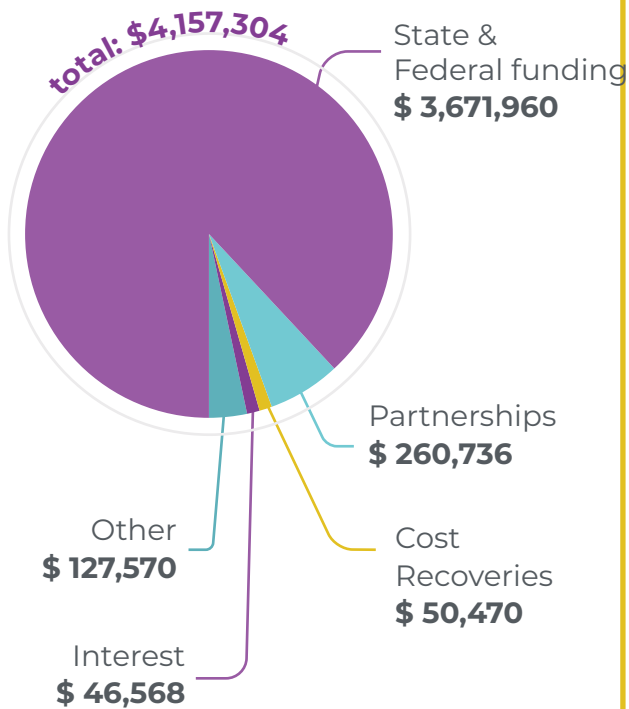
- Klimek and Wijay Family Lawyers
- Bloxham Legal
- Hall and Wilcox
- HWL Ebsworth
- Bailey Family Legal

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

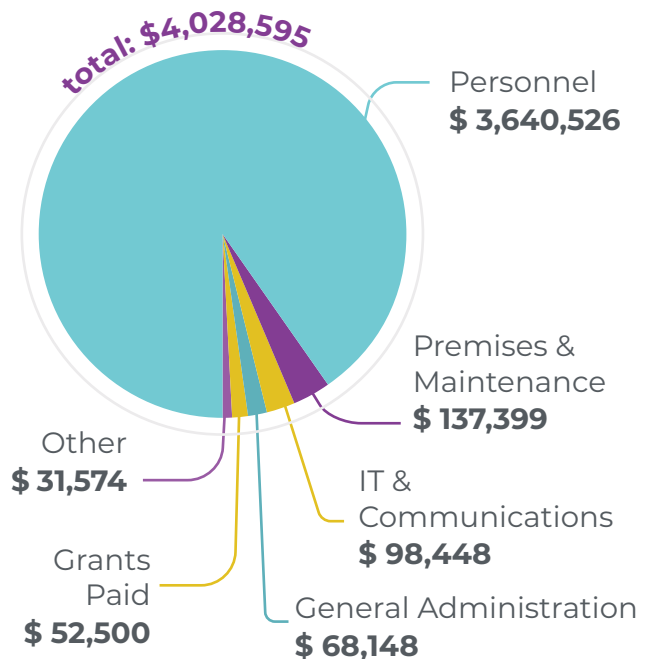
Financial Report

We finished the 2023-2024 year with a surplus of **\$128,709**.

Income



Expenditure



Net surplus **\$128,709**

Assets

Cash and Equivalents	1,842,553
Receivables and prepayments	95,756
Right of use	24,436

Total Assets 1,962,745

Liabilities

Employee provisions	432,364
Grant contract liabilities	436,000
Trade and other payables	78,712
Lease liability	24,819

Total Liabilities 971,895

Net Assets

990,850



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