



Central  
Queensland  
Community Legal  
Centre

# 2022/2023 ANNUAL REPORT

*The Central Queensland Community Legal Centre Inc recognises that its operations are situated on country for which Aboriginal people have been custodians for many centuries. In acknowledging this, the Centre pays its respects to the Elders, past present and future, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures and hopes of Indigenous Australia.*

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



[admin@cqclc.org.au](mailto:admin@cqclc.org.au)



## Vision Statement

Sustainable and accessible legal service for the Central Queensland Community

## Goals

Provide quality legal help and education to our community ensuring that clients who most need our help are prioritised.

Develop and maintain strategic community relationships to enhance client services and the provision of legal information.

Build and maintain organisational sustainability.

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Funding to operate the Centre was provided by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and the Queensland Department of Justice and the Attorney General through the Community Legal Service program for the 2022/23 financial year.



# Our History

Responding to public demands the Central Queensland Community Legal Centre was established in late 1995 and the Centre was granted incorporation status under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 on the 22 February 1996. With funding received from the Commonwealth Government, the centre, in its first year of operations assisted 722 clients.

The footprint of the centre was from Mackay to Gladstone and west to Emerald. Since the inception of the Centre there has been changes to its footprint and office co-location however after 26 years the centre today services an area from Rockhampton to Gladstone, west to Emerald and the Mount Isa region.

From 1996 to today the Centre has assisted over 28,452 clients and provided in excess of 53,500 advices in the Central Queensland and Mount Isa regions through the provision of legal support services. Statistically the profile of today's client is similar to 1996, that is, the majority are female, aged between 35 - 49 years and have nil to low income.

The Centre's focus has been and continues to be on the provision of a generalist legal service for a wide range of clients. The main services provided include legal advice, legal task and minor casework. The diversity of its demographic area has seen the growth of outreach centres



to include residents in rural, remote and regional areas who now have enhanced access to free legal support services.

Our services target those whose financial circumstances would otherwise exclude them from accessing legal support and for those from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, translation services ensure that these communities are supported.

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Community Legal Education activities are undertaken to increase awareness and understanding of various areas of law which sequentially assists in circumventing legal disputes arising.

# CQCLC Annual Report 2022/2023

The Centre registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission in 2012. Through its Memorandum of Understanding with CQUniversity, the Centre established a teaching centre which provides access to work experience and placement opportunities for law students.



<b>Rockhampton</b>	240 Quay St ROCKHAMPTON QLD 4700
<b>Gladstone</b>	147 Gondoan St GLADSTONE QLD 4680
<b>Mount Isa</b>	28/119 Camoowal St MOUNT ISA QLD 4825
<b>Emerald</b>	Shop 1, Egerton St EMERALD QLD 4720 ( <b>Closed Dec 2022</b> )



# President's Report

Similar to the preceding year, 2022-23 has been a time of consolidation for the Central Queensland Community Legal Centre Inc, the provider of legal advice to residents of Central and North West Queensland who have limited means.

CQCLC has delivered these services from established offices in Rockhampton, Gladstone, Emerald and Mt Isa, while providing outreach clinics for residents in Yeppoon and Biloela. In 2022-23 the Centre made good progress in delivering these services to its various stakeholders. Our Gladstone office has been particularly busy handling an expanding case workload for the Port City.

For many years CQCLC has been a member of Community Legal Centres Queensland which conducts an annual Sector Client Survey of CLC clients to determine the effectiveness of service provision by its members for the Department of Justice and Attorney General under the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement 2020-2025.

As part of this survey, CLCQ asked CLC clients 10 questions to establish comparative service effectiveness of its members. This year the Centre fared especially well with its score for each of the 10 questions exceeding



the average for all Queensland CLCs. This comparative data reflects well on all involved in our Centre in their various capacities.

As well, the survey disclosed that CQCLC's staff were knowledgeable and respectful, and assisted their clients understand how to deal with their legal challenges. Clients also had confidence in Centre staff to help them now and in the future.

In addition to its regular monthly meetings, the Management Committee held a strategic planning day to identify our future challenges and possible solutions. I would like to record my particular thanks to Elise Hattin for her help in guiding us through this maze.

During 2023 the Management Committee has wrestled with the challenge of rebranding the Centre to take into account the services it delivers in North West Queensland. The Management Committee is now close to being able to make a decision on the Centre's name and associated branding.

## CQCLC Annual Report 2022/2023

The Management Committee is also looking at appointing an Indigenous Liaison Officer in Mt Isa which will significantly improve the provision of advisory services to Indigenous clients in North West Queensland.

The work of the CQCLC could not be completed without the commitment and energy of its dedicated staff. I thank the staff for all their hard work in delivering legal advice services. Business Manager Judy Wright and Principal Solicitor Fay Tzioutzias have once more done a great job keeping the ship afloat. Our other professional staff have also done a great job helping their clients. The Centre is the sum of its individual parts and, without their ongoing contributions, the Centre would not have been able to surpass its targets.

I would like to thank all our hard-working volunteers for their ongoing support. The Thursday night and specialist clinics remain an integral part of the Centre's business model and would not be possible without the active support of the Rockhampton profession.

Finally, I would like to thank the Management Committee for all their time and support over the past 12 months. It's been a pleasure to once again chair the Management Committee's monthly meetings. I would like to thank Vice-President Damien Martin for filling in for me when I have been absent from meetings. CQCLC is extremely fortunate to have such a committed and experienced team to manage its affairs.

The Centre is well placed to continue moving forward in an effective way to provide advice to the residents of Central and North West Queensland, whose financial circumstances may exclude them from otherwise accessing such services. I wish all staff, volunteers and Management Committee members all the very best for the future.

**Rick Palmer**  
President



## Executive



**Rick Palmer** BA, LLB

President

**Employment:** Director, AgStreet Pty Ltd

Rick has worked as a solicitor, journalist, in higher education, tourism, event management, and economic development. He is now working as a community relations consultant. He was appointed to the Management Committee in December 2017. He served as president for two years and treasurer for a year before returning as president.

**Damien Martin** BA, LLB, GDLP

Vice-President

**Employment:** Solicitor, Swanick Murray Roche

Damien completed his undergraduate study at Griffith University and was admitted as a Solicitor in 2012. He has spent his career working in private practice across the areas of commercial, property, wills and estates and litigation. Damien joined the Committee in October 2020 and was elected as Vice President in October 2022. He also volunteers in the Centre's Evening Clinic.



**Matthew Dunlop** BA, LLB

Treasurer

**Employment:** Solicitor & Mediator, Rees R & Sydney Jones

Matt is a solicitor and mediator with significant civil experience, which he applies to his roles within his employment and as a volunteer with the Centre's Evening Clinic. He has served on the Management Committee with the Centre for several years before taking on the role of Treasurer.

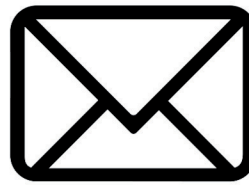




## Our Services



**2341**  
Legal Advices



**290**  
Legal Tasks



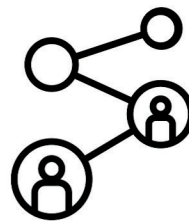
**125**  
Cases Closed



**1086**  
Information  
Services



**1306**  
Referrals



**1900**  
Clients  
(68% new clients)

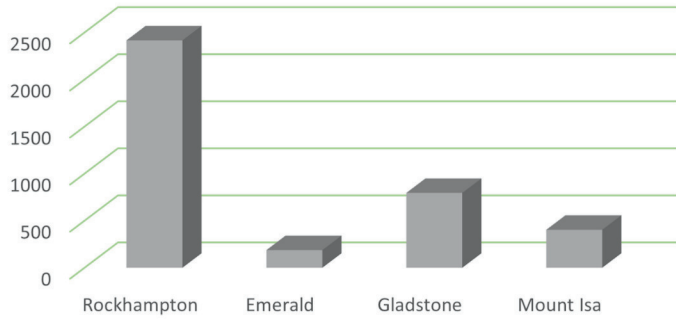
The figures presented on these pages provide an overview of 2022/2023 operations. They are relative to our service level agreements with the Commonwealth and State Governments. The figures for Duty Lawyer, COVID and EAPSS funds are reported separately.

Advices formed the major area of service with approximately 46% of advices undertaken by Rockhampton based staff, 26% in Gladstone, 8% in Emerald, 10% in Mount Isa and 10% by volunteers. 70.5% of clients who received legal advice as an assistance service were classified as experiencing financial difficulties.

Our client demographic, on average, was female, aged between 35 – 49 years of age and had nil to low income.

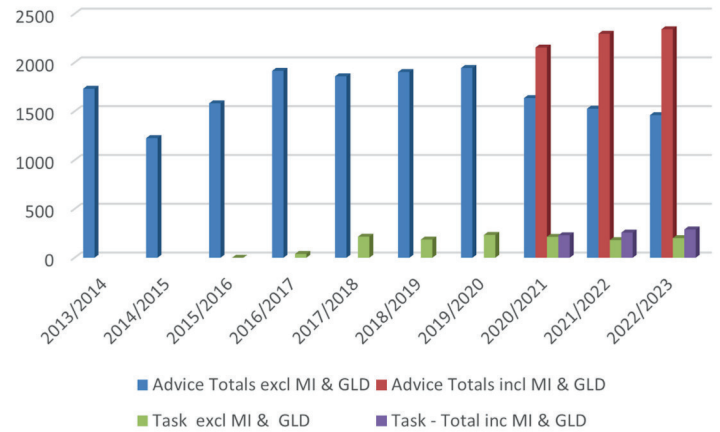
# CQCLC Annual Report 2022/2023

Legal Assistance Services by Location 2022/2023



Services by Location

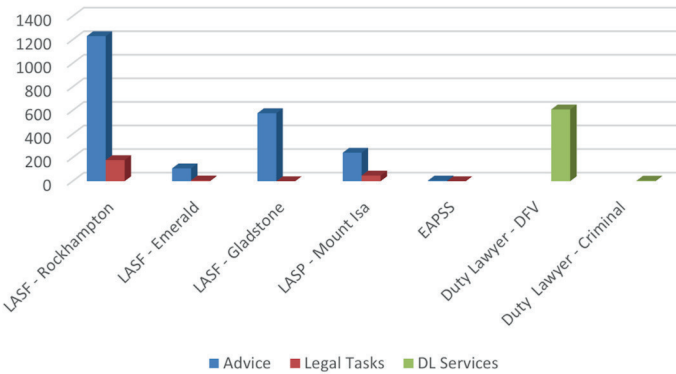
Advice & Task totals



Advice Totals including and excluding Mount Isa (MI) & Gladstone (GLD)

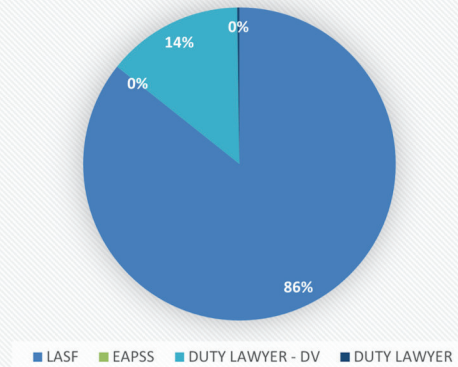
In addition to its core activities relative to its funding agreements, the Centre will undertake the role as an external service provider for Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS). Other contractual legal services were provided to the Relationship Australia for the Elder Abuse project - Prevention & Support Service and Duty Lawyer - Legal Aid.

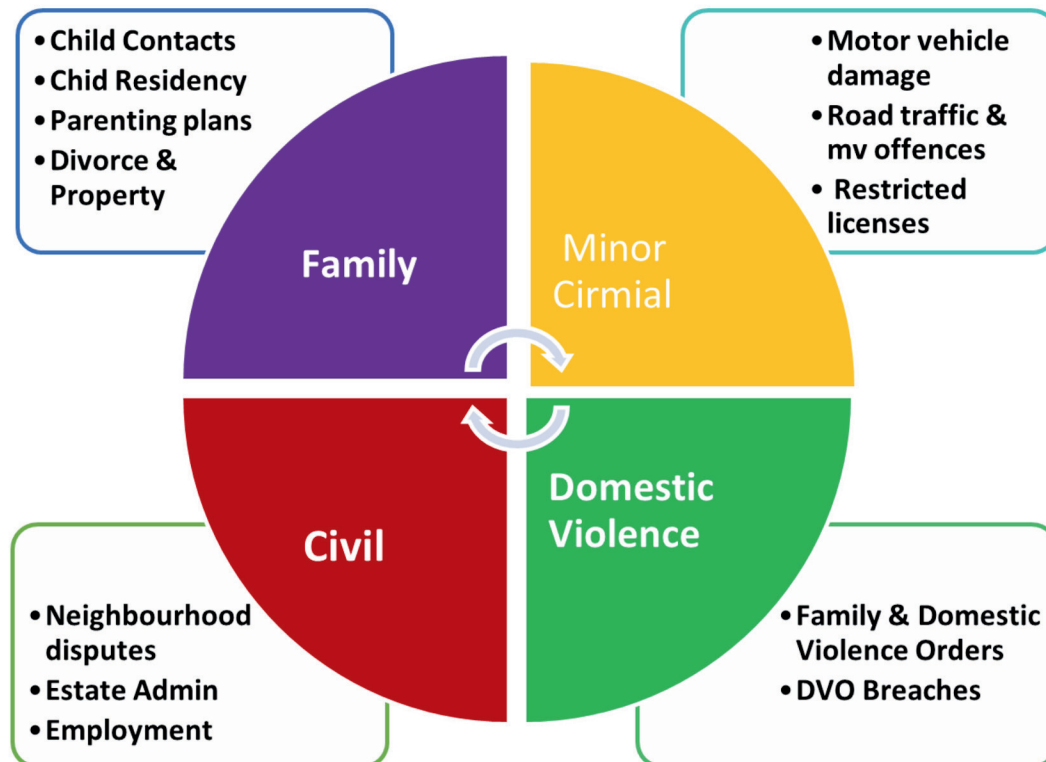
Services by funding category 1/7/2022 to 31/05/2023



Services by Funding Category

Total Services





Top 4 Areas of Legal Advice - 2022/23

Whilst the Centre's main focus is on the provision of legal advice, assistance through legal tasks and minor casework is provided to clients who are experiencing financial difficulties.

Legal tasks are defined as assistance provided to complete forms, draft letters etc with no expectation of ongoing assistance. In 2022/2023 the Centre assisted clients through undertaking tasks for clients.

Casework provides ongoing assistance to a client with the majority being within the family law area. In 2022/2023, casework (other representation) comprised of 109 carry forward cases with 87 cases opened and 125 closed during the reporting period.

*All legal assistance figures contained in this report are based on reports from the CLASS data base.*

## Case Studies

### Case Study A

A client sought assistance as the police had filed a domestic violence application naming the client as the respondent and the client's spouse as the aggrieved. The parties have been married for over 50 years. The client's spouse is in the later stages of dementia, therefore, their recollection of events are not always accurate. The client denied the allegations of domestic violence against the aggrieved. The police application made no reference to the aggrieved's lack of mental capacity.

The client was made to feel like they were a perpetrator of domestic violence leaving the client feeling, in their words, "like a criminal" - albeit DV applications being civil not criminal matters. The client was apprehensive around their spouse due to the fear of further allegations being made.

The CLC assisted the client by preparing an affidavit setting out the history of the parties' relationship, the history of the aggrieved's dementia diagnosis, and attaching medical evidence of same.

The CLC assisted the client by preparing an affidavit setting out the history of the parties' relationship, the history of the aggrieved's dementia diagnosis, and attaching medical evidence of same.

The client was not eligible for assistance from LAQ. The client is in receipt of a pension and did not have the means to engage a private solicitor. Further, the CLC are domestic violence duty lawyers and were able to assist the client with court appearances in their capacity as duty lawyer.



### Case Study B

A client received a summons to court to appear in the Coroner's Court (located in another town from where the client lives) in relation to the death of a previous partner.

The situation surrounding the deceased's death involved very serious domestic violence matters which has caused the client and their children ongoing trauma requiring intensive therapy.

Receiving the letter had caused the client to suffer severe panic attacks at the thought of having to travel to another town where the client would be completely out of their comfort and not have their usual support network in place, whilst having to relive the traumatic events by having to give evidence. Further, the deceased's family live in the other town and will likely attend court themselves in person.

The CLC assisted the client by writing to the Office of the State Coroner seeking that the client be able to give their evidence by video link and providing them with a doctor's report supporting this request, in order to reduce the risk of triggering off an acute exacerbation of anxiety and PTSD.

On review of the CLC's correspondence and the doctor's report the Office of the State Coroner agreed to facilitate the client giving their evidence via video link.



# General Operations

The CQCLC (Centre) is a generalist legal service, providing continued support to the residents within the local government areas of Rockhampton, Livingstone, Gladstone, Banana and the Central Highlands. In August 2021, the centre commenced the provision of legal assistance services in Mount Isa. These services aim to assist those who come from varying walks of life and cultures. Our clients present a broad range of issues within the areas of Family, Civil and minor Criminal law. The services provided include advice, tasks, casework, information, referral and education.

A centralised intake system provides clients with the option of a staff supported telephone or in-person booking together with the chat bot, based on the Centre website, for online bookings. Appointments can be either face to face, telephone or via video conference.

Office based appointments are available in Rockhampton Monday to Thursday between 9.30 am and 3.00 pm and Thursday evening from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm. The Gladstone office offers appointments between Monday to Thursday each week. Mount Isa appointments are available Monday to Thursday.

Appointment availability were augmented with outreach services in Yeppoon, Biloela and Agnes Water (July to December 2021).

During the reporting period, there was an even split of clients seeking face to face or telephone appointments, however telephone was the major form of communication when making an appointment.

Appointments for legal advice sessions are 30 minutes in duration, whilst the majority of advice sessions are once-off, the provision of minor assistance through case and task work was provided to 375 clients. Referrals are received from a wide range of areas including community groups, the Court House, Legal Aid, local practitioners and the Police Referrals System.

## Outreach Services

During the reporting period the Centre maintained its outreach services to Yeppoon and Biloela together with the monthly estates administration clinic and the Rockhampton Thursday Evening Clinic.

## Networking and Collaborations

Interagency meetings offer networking opportunities for the Centre. These meetings also provide opportunities for referrals and potential collaborations. Other regular meetings attended include the CQ Family Law Pathway Meeting, Domestic Violence Network Meeting and the Rockhampton Police Referrals Agencies Meeting. These meetings allow the Centre to provide and receive updates on available services.

## Community Engagement

During 2022/2023, community legal education events included in-person presentations and ABC radio presentations. The in-person presentations were held in Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Gladstone, and Mount Isa.

The event topics included:

- Elder Abuse
- Wills & Powers of Attorney
- The difference between solicitors and barristers

## CQUniversity Law Clinic

The Centre has been hosting CQUniversity students since 2015. In this reporting period, the students have undertaken several roles ranging from client intake, observing client interviews and providing support to staff.

The law students have 2 options for integrating their studies through

participating at the centre. They have the option of undertaking the role of volunteer support officer which includes helping clients to identify the exact nature of their legal problem to maximise outcomes for the client or observing client interviews either in-person or via Zoom.

## Feedback on Services

The May 2023 client survey was managed state-wide through Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLC Qld) with the Centre ultimately reporting to the Department of Justice and the Attorney-General. The overall outcome of the survey highlighted that the CQCLC is continuing to provide a service that our clients are seeking and that the advice provided was helpful, staff and volunteers were friendly and knowledgeable and the assistance provided enabled the client to deal with their legal problems.

The survey incorporated a number of sub-questions which provided the foundation for benchmarking the CQCLC against the state average. Based on the benchmarking data, the CQCLC was ranked in the top quarter percentile by its clients for all sub-questions, achieving a mean of 3.7 and above.

Client satisfaction with the services provided was ranked highly by clients with 98.57% of the clients who

participated agreeing that the CQCLC staff were knowledgeable and respectful and assisted the clients to understand how to deal with their legal problems. Further they had confidence in the staff to assist them now and in the future.

The survey has formed the basis for the CQCLC to review its services and focus on improving its processes to enhance its relationship with its clients.

The Graph below provides details of the sub-questions and clients responses.

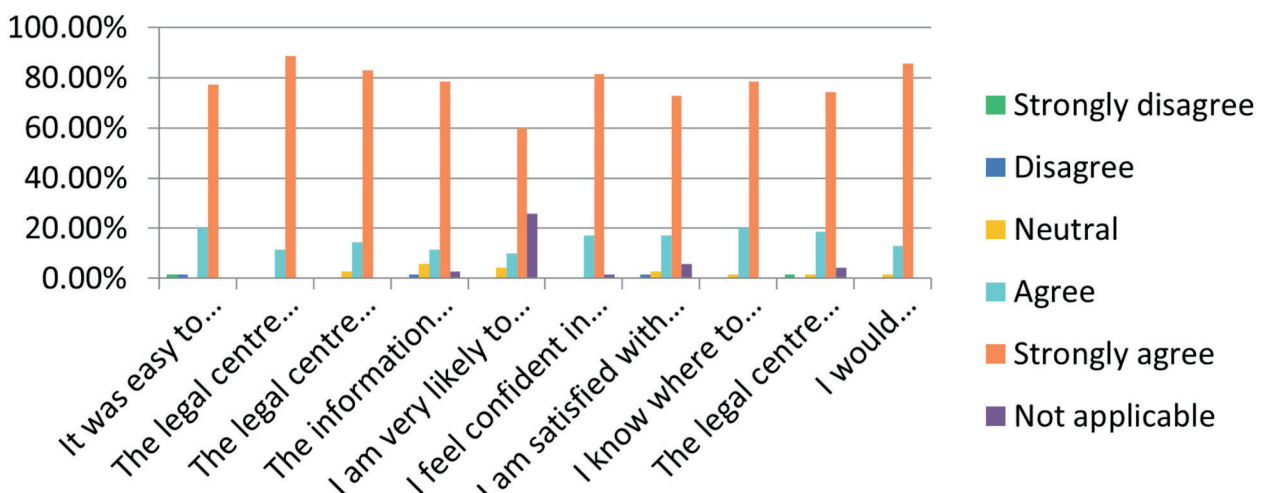
Client feedback included:

***“My referral from the Police follow-up from CQCLC was quick and easy. Help was beneficial. Will be making another appointment in future”.***

***“Very helpful and professional.”***

***“Polite, efficient. Very happy. Amazing staff.”***

## Rating of interaction with the CQCLC



CQCLC client responses based on experiences from interacting with the CQCLC.

(Data provided by CLC Qld)



## Elder Abuse Prevention and Support Service

The Centre agreement with Relationships Australia for the provision of legal services for their Elder Abuse Prevention & Support Service in Rockhampton and Gladstone was extended for 12 months.

## Duty Lawyer

The Centre, under contract from Legal Aid, provides a staff member to act as duty lawyer in the Rockhampton (weekly) and Yeppoon and Gladstone (fortnightly) domestic violence court.

These services do not form part of targets embedded in the service level agreement however remuneration for the work is provided by Legal Aid. During the reporting period, Centre staff provided assistance to clients across the Rockhampton, Yeppoon and Gladstone regions.

Additionally, during the reporting period, the Centre has provided non-contracted assistance services at the Biloela, Mount Isa and Yeppoon DV Court.



# Management Committee and Staff

The Management Committee met regularly throughout the reporting period. The major areas of business included a review of the Rules of the Association (ongoing) and the review of the Centre's name.

At the 2022 Annual General Meeting, 8 of the 9 Committee members sought re-election with two new Member appointed.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>
President:	Rick Palmer, AgStreet Pty Ltd, Rockhampton
Vice President:	Damien Martin, Swanwick, Murray & Roche, Rockhampton
Treasurer:	Matthew Dunlop, Rees. R & Sydney Jones, Rockhampton
Committee Members:	Nicole Laver, Rockhampton
	Janice Moriarity, Project Mgr, Business Dev, ENC, Emerald
	Luke Price, CQUniversity, Melbourne
	Dorothea Pouesi-Seumanatafa, Mount Isa
	Gordon Stewart, Rockhampton
	Bridget Wells, Qld Human Rights Commission, Rockhampton
Secretary:	Judith Wright, CQCLC, Rockhampton

During 2022/2023, one additional solicitor was appointed on a five-year fixed term contract and the contract was extended for a further 12 months.

Principal Solicitor/CEO	Fay Tzioutzias	Ongoing
Solicitors:	Kate Wright	Ongoing
	Jasmine Smith	Ongoing
	Kelly Latham	Ongoing
	Ross McLellan	Ongoing
	Rob Kendrick	Appt. March 2023
	Kasey Wilson	resigned December 2022
	Justin French	resigned March 2023
Business Manager:	Judith Wright	Ongoing
Legal Support/Admin Officer:	Ruth Siganto	Ongoing
	Sue Woodfield	Ongoing
	Amy Wills	Appt. November 2022
	Lyndall Anderson	Appt. April 2023
	Roslyn Heness	Appt. June 2023
	Lucy Hancock	resigned September 2022
	Claudia Neill-Ballantine	Resigned February 2023
	Alex Thomas	Resigned January 2023

# Volunteers

The contribution made by our volunteers is immeasurable as without their tireless efforts our ability to realise our vision would be difficult to achieve.

## Support Officers

Our volunteer support officers, drawn from the community and law students have contributed over 1000 hours of voluntary work during the 2022/2023 period.

Thank you to:

Lyndall Anderson   Viv Hoy   Lily Hopkins   Jack North

## PLT & Work Experience Students

During the reporting period, the Centre hosted a number of PLT and work experience students from Rockhampton secondary schools. The students ranged in year level however all were interested in studying law at the completion of their secondary studies.

## Solicitors

The dedication and expertise brought to the Centre by volunteer solicitors drawn from the Queensland legal sector has been exceptional. It has enabled the Centre to realise its objectives through the weekly evening clinics. Over 200 hours of support has been provided enabling additional free legal advice sessions to be made available to the Central Queensland community. Grant & Simpson Lawyers have continued to volunteer with the provision of assistance for the Estates Administration Clinic.

*Courtney Blamires*

Swanwick Murray Roche, Rockhampton

*Grace de Vere*

Rees R & Sydney Jones, Rockhampton

*Matthew Dunlop*

Rees R & Sydney Jones, Rockhampton

*Nicola Godwin*

Swanwick Murray Roche, Rockhampton

*Justin French*

*Emma Locke*

Grant & Simpson, Rockhampton

*Damien Martin*

Swanwick Murray Roche, Rockhampton

*Joshua Morgan*

Kingdom Lawyers, Rockhampton

*John Siganto*

Grant & Simpson, Rockhampton

*Michael Stockall*

Michael Stockall Solicitor, Rockhampton

*Flora Wellington*

My Will Qld

*Kimberly West*

Bressington & Partners Solicitors, Rockhampton

# Notes

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