Central Queensland Community Legal Centre

Central Queensland Community Legal Centre

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 – 2025

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ABN 46 257 295 522

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Vision

Empower the disadvantaged in our communities to navigate the Australian and Queensland legal systems through the provision of quality legal services utilising established and emerging service delivery methods.

Mission

Enhance and broaden access to legal services for the socially, economically or geographically disadvantaged throughout Central Queensland and the surrounding regions.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

FUNDING SOURCE

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 2024/2025 financial year.

Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Queensland Government

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2024-25 President's Report

The 2024-25 year has been another solid 12 months for Central Queensland Community Legal Centre Inc, the provider of legal advice to residents of Central and North West Queensland. While we provide advice to all community members, we specialise in the provision of legal help to those of limited means.

CQCLC continues to be an active member of Community Legal Centres Queensland which, among other initiatives, conducts an annual survey of Queensland CLC clients to determine the effectiveness of services provided by its members for the Department of Justice and Attorney General under the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement.

As part of the 2025 survey, CQCLC was once more identified as providing accessible, respectful and effective legal support to its communities. The survey results indicated sustained excellence in client engagement and service delivery together with a consistent high level of client satisfaction.

"Notably, 100 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the CQCLC staff were respectful, helpful and easy to contact, and that they would recommend the service to others. Positive responses regarding the usefulness of information and resources increased to 98.5 per cent, and confidence in staff ability remained high at 98.5 per cent. Improvements were also observed in clients' likelihood to access referred services and in the service's ability to meet cultural or personal needs."

The Centre delivered these services from offices in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Mt Isa, while providing outreach clinics for those living on the Capricorn Coast and in the Callide-Dawson valleys. Much of our work continues to be focussed on helping those with family law problems, especially those with domestic violence challenges.

As the Gladstone office continues to be particularly busy, we have appointed a second solicitor Maryanne Mitchell to help Jasmine Smith handle the Port City's ever increasing workload.

Once more I would like to record my personal thanks, and the thanks of the Management Committee, to all staff and volunteers for their outstanding contributions to those who need to access the Centre's services.

Our work could not be completed without the commitment and energy of our dedicated and enthusiastic staff. I thank all for their hard work in delivering legal advice services. Our business continued to be led by Business Manager Judy Wright and Principal Solicitor/CEO Fay Tzioutzias. Thanks also to Kate Wright, Kelly Latham and Ross McLellan (Rockhampton), Jasmine Smith and Maryanne Mitchell (Gladstone) and Josh Gibson and Craig Ottaway (Mt Isa) as each has played their part substantially.

Judy Wright has filled the role of Business Manager for the past decade. Her retirement at the end of October will mark an important milestone for the Centre as her steady and knowledgeable hand will be sorely missed. Judy has made an outstanding contribution to CQCLC and the consistent high level of her work has completely justified her nomination as a life member. This will be considered at a special general meeting immediately following this annual general meeting.

At the same time, I would like to welcome Shane Brown as our new Business Manager. His experience at Central Queensland Indigenous Development will be invaluable as we confront our inevitable challenges.

I would also like to thank all our hard-working volunteers for their ongoing support and hard work. The Thursday night and specialist clinics in Rockhampton are integral parts of the Centre's offerings and would not be possible without the on-going, active support of the Rockhampton legal 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. CQCLC is extremely fortunate to have such a committed and experienced team to look after its affairs. I would like to thank those who ae not renominating for their contributions and wish them all the best for the future.

I would particularly like to record my appreciation to Gordon Stewart for his important contribution in appointing our new Business Manager and Justin French for his help as treasurer.

Rick Palmer

President, 2023 - 2025

Executive Committee Members – Rick Palmer (President), Judy Wright (Secretary), Chris Horton (Member) and Gordon Stewart (Vice President)

OUR SERVICES - OVERALL

2078

The number of legal advices provided during the period.

389

The Centre undertook 389 legal tasks including court documents and letters.

109

During this period we closed 109 cases.

1067

We provided assistance through 1067 information services.

1158

The Centre provided 1158 referrals.

1607

The Centre assisted 1607 clients, 1089 were new clients and 479 were repeat clients.

The figures presented on these pages provide an overview of 2024/2025 operations. They are relative to our service level agreements with the Commonwealth and State Governments. The figures for Duty Lawyer and EAPSS funds are reported separately.

Advices formed the major area of service with approximately 1089 advices undertaken by Rockhampton based staff, 549 in Gladstone and 438 in Mount Isa. The majority of clients who received legal advice as an assistance service were classified as experiencing financial difficulties.

Continuing the trends from previous years the top 3 areas of Legal Advice in 2024 – 2025 are shown below.

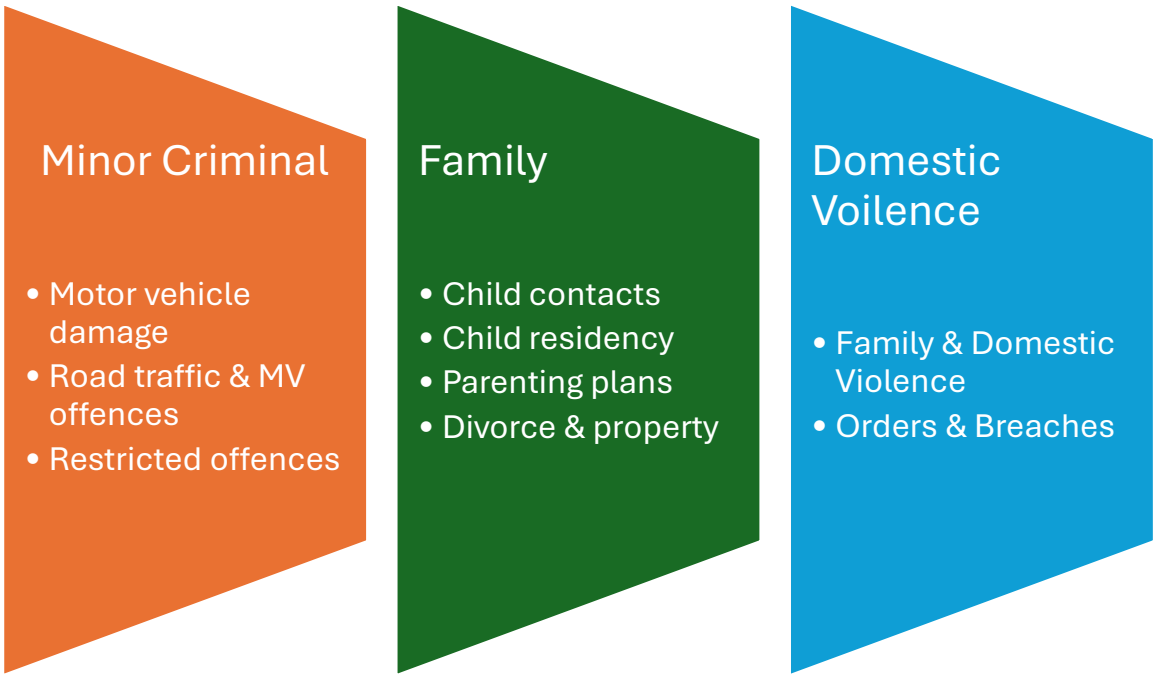


Figure 2. Top 3 areas of Legal Advice in2024/2025

Whilst the Centre's main focus is on the provision of legal advice, some assistance through legal tasks and minor casework is provided to clients. Legal tasks are defined as assistance provided to complete forms, draft letters etc with no expectation of ongoing assistance. In 2024/2025 the Centre provided 389 types of assistance through undertaking tasks for clients.

Casework provides ongoing assistance to a client with the majority being within the family law area. In 2024/2025, casework (other representation) comprised of 75 carry forward cases with 96 cases opened and 109 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 1

The client, who was a pensioner, sought assistance in relation to the purchase of a vehicle from a dealership in Brisbane. The client paid $18,000 for the vehicle. Within days of purchase, the vehicle experienced mechanical problems. The Client was unable to arrive at a solution with the dealership and approached the Centre for assistance.

The Centre assisted the client by preparing a QCAT application. The matter ultimately went to a hearing as the dealership defended the claim. The Centre assisted the client with affidavit preparation for the hearing. The client was successful with her application in the first instance however the dealership then appealed the decision. The Centre again assisted the client with preparation of submissions relative to the appeal and ultimately the client was successful. Thereafter, the dealership failed to make payment to the client in line with the judgement. The Centre again assisted the client with enforcement proceedings.

Ultimately the client was successful in recovering the full amount of the judgement in her favour.

Case Study 2

A client approached the Centre regarding a property settlement following the breakdown of her marriage some years beforehand. Unfortunately, the limitation period for the client to file a claim in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia had expired. The client was on Centrelink and was therefore unable to afford to pay a solicitor privately for assistance.

The Centre therefore assisted the client by preparing all relevant court documents in order to have the limitation period extended and also sought orders for a cash payment. After the documents had been served on the ex-partner, the Centre then further assisted the client by corresponding with the ex-partner and ultimately was able to negotiate a settlement such that the client received a cash payment.

The Centre then finalized the matter by preparing a consent order on behalf of the client and generally liaising with the Court to ensure that the order was made.

Ultimately the client received a significant cash payment which she would have been unlikely to pursue given her limited financial resources to pay a solicitor and the fact that the limitation period had expired.

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 and Biloela.

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 over 500 clients. Both new and repeat 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 & 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 Legal Education and Community Engagement Event

During 2024/2025 Community Legal Education events included in-person presentations. The in-person presentations were held in Rockhampton, Yeppoon, and Gladstone.
The event topics included:

Elder Abuse and Wills and Powers of Attorney

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 in-person.

Feedback on services

The 2025 client survey results demonstrate consistently high levels of satisfaction across all measured areas, with several indicators showing improvement from the previous year. Overall, the service continues to perform exceptionally well in delivering accessible, respectful, and effective support to clients.

Clients reported 100% positive experience (strongly agree and agree responses) in several key areas, including ease of initial contact (Q1), respectful listening by staff (Q2), clarity in understanding legal problems and available options (Q3), future help-seeking awareness (Q8), and likelihood to recommend the service to others (Q10). These results reflect sustained excellence in client engagement and trust and are classified as clear strengths.

The usefulness of information and resources provided (Q4) saw a notable increase in positive responses, rising from 92.3% in 2024 to 98.5% in 2025. Similarly, confidence in staff ability (Q6) remained high, with a slight increase to 98.5%. Satisfaction with resolution outcomes (Q7) remained stable at 94.1%, with only a marginal decrease of 0.1%, still well within the strength classification. Two areas showed positive trends: the likelihood of accessing referred services (Q5) improved by 8.6%, and the ability of the service to meet specific cultural or personal needs (Q9) rose by 7.4%. These gains suggest successful efforts in enhancing referral pathways and cultural responsiveness.

No areas were identified as significant opportunities for improvement, indicating that the service has maintained or improved its performance across all dimensions. The lower percentages represented above for Q5 and Q9 have been impacted by the inclusion of the 'Not Applicable' responses in the percentage calculation.

Comments from client survey participants:

- *Services are great. Advice awesome*
- *Easy to access service helpful information received.*
- *The staff at CQCLC have been amazing and so helpful*
- *Very professionally managed and spent as much time as was needed*
- *I felt very comfortable and at ease at a very stressful time in my life*

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

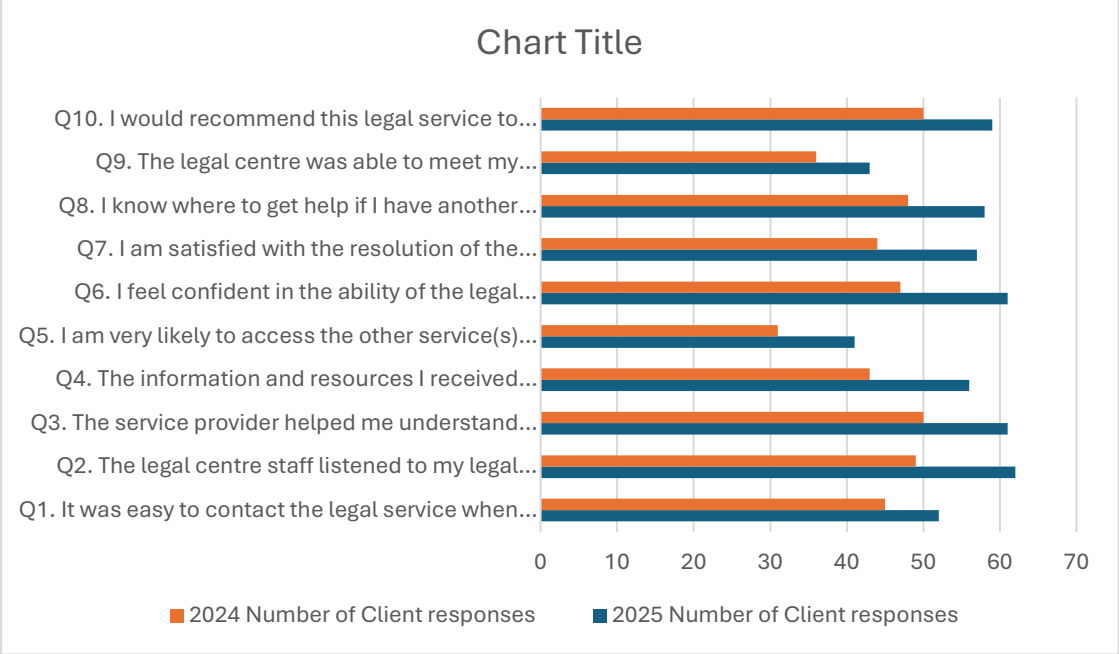


Figure 3. CQCLC responses. Data provided by CLC Qld Extracted from the client survey report 2025, July 2025.

Elder Abuse Prevention & 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 has been extended for an additional 12 months.

Duty Lawyer

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.

Duty Lawyer	***Gladstone***	***Rockhampton***	***Yeppoon***
Advices	***170***	***283***	***43***

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 2024/2025 period. Thank you to:

Rockhampton:	Grant Niven	Viv Hoy	Katrina Hicks	Karen Stanley
Gladstone:	Robyn Meintjes	Jennifer Staples	Vanessa Turnbull	

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.

Thank you to:

Courtney Blamires Bowes Law, Rockhampton	*Kristina Cummins* Robert Harris Rivett Lawyers, Yeppoon
Grace de Vere Rees R & Sydney Jones, Rockhampton	*Justin French* Taylor Rose, Rockhampton
Damien Martin Swanwick Murray Roche, Rockhampton	*Joshua Morgan* Kingdom Lawyers, Rockhampton
John Siganto Grant & Simpson, Rockhampton	*Michael Stockall* Michael Stockall Solicitor, Rockhampton
Jessica Price Grant & Simpson Solicitors, Rockhampton	*Shona Fitzgerald* ATSILS, Rockhampton
Stephanie Nicholas Justice Dept, Rockhampton	*Rafia Zaman* CQUniversity, Rockhampton
Alana Murray *Rees R & Sydney Jones, Rockhampton*	*Ross McLellan* *Rockhampton*

EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT:

Name: Mr Rick Palmer
Position: Director
Academic Qualifications: BA, LLB (Qld)
Current Employer: AgStreet Pty Ltd
Experience: Rick has worked as a solicitor, journalist, in higher education, tourism, event management and economic development. He's now working as a community relations consultant, principally for an international wind farm developer. He was appointed to the Management Committee in December 2017. After serving as president for two years, he was elected treasurer in 2021.

VICE PRESIDENT

Name: Mr Gordon Stewart
Position: Lecturer (Former)
Experience: Gordon lectured in industrial relations and employment relations from 1982 to 2020 at Central Queensland University and its predecessor institutions. Gordon is a Life Member of the Friends of the Rockhampton Art Gallery and a Gold Award Patron of the Rockhampton Art Gallery and has been a member of the Management Committee of the CQCLC since 2021.

TREASURER

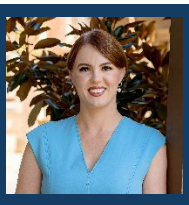
Name: Mr Justin French
Position: Solicitor Academic
Qualifications: JP (Qual), LLB, GDLP, GradCertMgmt, LLM
Experience: Justin has worked as a solicitor and as an academic. He has spent his career in both in-house counsel and community legal roles and currently works in private practice with a particular interest in employment and family law. Justin has been a volunteer, an employee, and a committee member with the Centre at various points since July 2015.

Management Committee

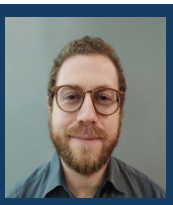
Selma Dredge

Christopher Horton

Yvette Ludlock



Alana Murray



Luke Price

Michele Davis

Committee Members: Selma Dredge, Banana Christopher Horton, Rockhampton
Yvette Ludlock, Gladstone Michelle Davis, Solicitor, Emerald
Luke Price, CQUniversity, Melbourne Alana Murray, Rockhampton

Secretary: Judith Wright, CQCLC, Rockhampton

CENTRE STAFF

During 2024/2025, one additional position for an extra solicitor was created in Gladstone along with a part time position for receptionist. A new solicitor was appointed in Mt Isa as well as a number of new appointments in Rockhampton within the Receptionist positions.

Legal Team

Principal Solicitor/CEO	Fay Tzioutzias	Ongoing
Solicitors:	Kelly Latham (Rockhampton)	Ongoing
	Kate Wright (Rockhampton)	Ongoing
	Jasmine Smith (Gladstone/Biloela)	Ongoing
	Maryanne Mitchell (Gladstone 14/7/2025)	Ongoing
	Craig Ottaway (Mount Isa 8/4/2025)	Ongoing
Resigned:	*Mark Boreham (27/11/24 - 28/3/2025)*	
	Josh Gibson (19/6/2024 - 10/10/2024)	

Administrative Team

Business Manager:	Judith Wright	Ongoing
Legal Support/Admin Officer:	Sue Woodfield	Ongoing
	Amy Wilks	Ongoing
	Catie Burow (26/6/2025)	Ongoing
Resigned:	*Roslyn Heness (July 2025)*	
	Ruth Siganto (28/4/2025)	
	Lyndall Anderson (1/8/2025)	
	Vanessa Turnbull (Gladstone 8/7/2025)	
	Jennifer Staples (Gladstone 19/3/2025)	

Support Officers

Social Worker	Kathleen Garle	Ongoing
Indigenous Liaison Officer	Leith Seymour (25/11/25)	Resigned

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, and west to the Mount Isa region.

From 1996 to today the Centre has assisted over 30,887 clients and provided in excess of 56,958 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.

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

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 provided access to work experience and placement opportunities for law students.

OUR LOCATIONS

ROCKHAMPTON
240 Quay St
Rockhampton 4700

Phone: 1800 155 121

GLADSTONE
147 Goondoon St
GLADSTONE 4680

Phone: 07 4804 1920

MOUNT ISA
Suite 28
119 Camooweal St
MOUNT ISA 4825

Phone: 1800 571 206