



National Welfare Rights Network Inc.

Annual Report

July 2011 to June 2012

Prepared for 2012 Annual General Meeting

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National Welfare Rights Network Committee

President:	Maree O'Halloran, Director, Welfare Rights Centre (Sydney)
Vice President:	Kate Beaumont, Executive Officer, Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service (Perth)
Secretary:	Georgina Warrington, Acting Executive Director, Welfare Rights Centre Inc (Brisbane)
Treasurer:	Peter Horbury, Coordinator, Social Security Rights Victoria (Melbourne)
Committee Member:	Mark Leahy, Manager, Welfare Rights Centre (Adelaide)
Committee Member:	Dale Nelson, Community Legal Education Worker, Social Security Rights Victoria (Melbourne)
Committee Member:	Liz Turnbull, Welfare Rights Solicitor, Illawarra Legal Centre Inc (Illawarra)

President's Report

The National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) is the peak body for welfare rights services across Australia. The Member and Associate Centres of the NWRN provide legal and early intervention services for people who need assistance with social security, family assistance law or Centrelink administration. Many of the Centres also provide advice for clients experiencing difficulties with their employment service providers.

Welfare Rights services have, for example, helped numerous people have their Centrelink debts waived or be found not to exist. They have also worked with people facing lengthy compensation preclusion periods and no means of support as well as people living with disabilities and people who are unemployed. Our services across Australia provide public value as well as important assistance to individuals and families. Details of the work of the members of the NWRN can be found in the body of this annual report.

NWRN advocates for law and public policy reform at a national level, makes media comment in accord with the principles and policies of the organisation and seeks additional funding for peak body activities and for service provision. The NWRN bases its advocacy and submissions on the experience of the caseworkers and clients of its member centres across Australia.

In 2011/12 the NWRN was instrumental in highlighting the inadequacy of the Newstart Allowance in the media, at many public inquiries and at the Tax Forum in October 2011. The NWRN has also argued that the nation's macro-economic policies need to be more focused on full employment with more effort on reducing the structural rate of unemployment.

Australia's official ABS unemployment figure at 5.2% as at August 2012 is likely the envy of the developed world. Comparable figures were 8.1% in the United Kingdom, 8.2% in the United States, 22.6% in Greece and 24.8% in Spain. However, it is important to remember that behind the official statistics are real people and families. In Australia our Member Centres frequently work with people who either face multiple barriers to entering the labour market or who are forced to cobble together irregular and casual work. Income stability, Centrelink debts and the manifestly inadequate rate of the Newstart Allowance are issues that our clients face every day.

The NWRN was particularly pleased to bring all our casework experience and other evidence to bear in our submissions to the Howe Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work which was commissioned by the ACTU. Our submission outlined that as the industrial relations system and the nature of work in Australia had fragmented, the social security safety net for working age people had become even more important. Unfortunately, that safety net not only contains gaps but governments of all political persuasions have succumbed to the temptation to force people onto the Newstart Allowance and make income support more conditional.

In addition to campaigning for an increase in the Newstart and other Allowances, the following issues, among many, were given high priority by the NWRN this year:

1. Sole parent facing major cuts to their social security payments following the proposed unwinding of the 2006 "Welfare to Work" grandfathering provisions;
2. Debt prevention and more favourable debt waiver rules in relation to Centrelink error;
3. The rejection of compulsory income management as counter-productive, unfair, discriminatory and costly;
4. The prosecution of people for social security fraud when there was no intent to defraud and the social security system itself is very complex;
5. Support for targeted and tailored investment to help people with disabilities and people who are unemployed into the workforce; and,
6. Beneficial tax and welfare reform generally.

A list of all the numerous submissions to government and parliamentary inquiries is detailed in the policy section of this report. The number and high quality of the NWRN's submissions are recognised by the Senate Committee's we appear before, other community organisations and government agencies generally.

The NWRN has a high level of engagement with government and relevant government agencies and departments as we seek to influence policy-makers on behalf of our client base. We maintained our regular biannual delegation to Canberra to meet with the Department of Human Services. The NWRN is represented on the Disability Support Pension Working Party organised by the Department of Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs as well as the Centrelink working party on mental illness. The NWRN is also represented on the Service Delivery Advisory Group organised by the Department of Human Services.

Arising from the 2010 Conference, the NWRN has decided to upgrade and renew its national website. I am very pleased that the launch of the new website will take place at this 2012 Annual Conference in Adelaide.

The NWRN is a peak lobby unfunded by government. We rely on a small levy from Member Centres and the goodwill of the staff in those Centres to operate and contribute to the battle of ideas in a much contested policy field. The NWRN made a separate pre Federal Budget submission this year arguing for increased funding for welfare rights services across the nation and secretariat funding for the NWRN. While these submissions were not successful, it is important for us to continue our lobbying and momentum for funding.

Finally, I would like to thank Kate Beaumont, Vice President, and all the members of the Committee for their hard work and commitment. The current Committee Members are Kate Beaumont, Mark Leahy, Peter Horbury, Dale Nelson, Georgina Warrington and Liz Turnbull.

Maree O'Halloran

President

Vice President's Report

The last year has been a busy one for the NWRN and I have endeavoured to provide Maree O'Halloran support in her role as President of the NWRN. At times I have continued to act as Spokesperson for the Network in her absence in relation to media and other activities as required. In the most recent year I have continued, as the NWRN representative on the quarterly Department of Human Services Service Delivery Advisory Group (SDAG) and have been involved in the Centrelink Bi-Annual Delegations which remains the chief opportunity for the NWRN to dialogue with the Department of Human Services.

As in other years I would like to acknowledge the work of those in the NWRN who work on a daily basis assisting their clients to challenge Centrelink decisions. It is that work which continues to inform our Network's broader advocacy activities to bring about structural and systemic change.

Kate Beaumont

Vice President

NWRN Policy Activities

One of the main roles of the National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) is to lobby for changes to Social Security laws and policies and to contribute to broader campaigns aimed at reducing poverty, inequality and hardship in Australia.

The NWRN lobbies all political parties to achieve these aims. The NWRN also works in conjunction with other welfare groups to lobby for reforms to Social Security law and its administration.

The NWRN policy activities in 2011-2012 are outlined in this section:

- Policy papers and submissions
- Appearances at Parliamentary Inquiries
- NWRN membership of relevant Departmental working parties
- Formal letters to Politicians and relevant Government Agencies
- Key meetings
- Media Releases
- Media activity

Policy papers and submissions

The National Welfare Rights Network has provided an extensive range of submission to various Government inquiries and reviews over the past 12 months. Whilst overwhelmingly the submissions were the result of efforts by the Welfare Rights Centre Sydney, in particular, the work of the Policy Officer, the Director, Principal Solicitor and the Network's National Liaison Officer, NWRN members across the board contributed valuable insights to the development of these submissions.

The NWRN submissions in 2011-12 are listed below:

- Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Economics re: Inquiry into Schedule 4 of the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Further Election Commitments and Other Measure) Bill 2011.
- Submission to Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) on cost of 1800 and 13 numbers, Submission on Numbering, ACMA Consultation Paper 4.
- Submission to Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws
- Submission to Department of Climate Change for community information campaign on Carbon Price and the Compensation arrangements.
- Submission to 2011 Tax Forum.
- Submission to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into Disability Employment Impairment Tables: Provisions of Schedule 3 of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.
- Submission to Office of the Information Commission on Discussion Paper on charges for freedom of information requests.
- Submission to Australian Council of Trade Unions Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work.
- 2012-13 Federal Budget Policy Submission Priorities Statement
- 2012-13 Federal Budget Services Submission – Improving Centrelink Services and Funding Welfare Rights programs – Priorities Statement.
- Supplementary submission to the Australian Council of Trade Unions inquiry into Insecure Work.
- Submission Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Stronger Futures and two related Bills, 2012.
- Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support and Other Measures) Bill 2012 (Provisional
- 13 June 2012, Submission to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on Social Security and Other

Legislation Amendment (2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012.

- Submission to Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights on payment cuts affecting single parents.

Appearances at Parliamentary Inquiries

The National Welfare Rights Network has appeared before a number of Senate inquiries during the past year, allowing members to provide additional evidence to support our written submissions. Below we provide a list of the inquiries that Welfare Rights appeared before during 2011-12.

- 6 September 2011, Evidence to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into Disability Employment Impairment Tables: Provisions of Schedule 3 of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.
- 28 February 2012, Evidence to the Independent Australian Council of Trade Unions inquiry into insecure work.
- 6 March 2012, Evidence to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Stronger Futures and Related Bills 2012.
- 14 June 2012, Evidence to Parliamentary Inquiry into Submission to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012.
- 21 June, Evidence to Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights on payment cuts affecting single parents.

NWRN membership of relevant Departmental working parties

The National Welfare Rights Network takes part in a number of advisory groups in addition to specific “client” groups which are run by the Department of Human Services. In 2011-12 NWRN members were invited to participate in the following committees.

Name of Committee	Agency
Mental Health Service Delivery Working Party	Department of Human Services
Essential Medical Equipment Payment	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Carbon Tax Household Assistance Working Party	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
Expert Panel on Social Security Issues: Grey Matters: Inquiry into Age Barriers to Workforce	Australian Law Reform Commission, Review into Commonwealth legal barriers to older persons participating in the workforce or other productive work
Disability Support Pension Advisory Group	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Expert Panel on Social Security Issues	Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry into Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws
The Future of Income Support Working Party	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Augmented Job Services Australia Advisory Group	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Connections for Quality Working Party	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Formal letters to Politicians and relevant Government Agencies during 2011-12

The National Welfare Rights Network endeavours to engage with Australia’s politicians and with government agencies on policy options, the impact of its income support proposals on the lives of ordinary Australians. During the past year letters were sent to various politicians and agencies on a broad range of matters, including:

- Federal Budget priorities and NWRN’s funding proposals;
- problems with the design and administration of the Special Benefit payment;
- inadequate rates of Newstart Allowance for people looking for work;
- changes to processes at the Brisbane Social Security Appeals Tribunal;

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- problems debt collection practices by Dunn & Bradstreet & Recoveries Corp;
 - impact of telephone call costs and waiting times for Centrelink recipients;
 - proposal for a Disallowable Instrument to address problems with particular debts;
 - on the need for Public Hearings to be held by the Senate Community Affairs legislation Committee inquiry into the extension of income management in the NT and across other disadvantaged locations and the inquiry into removal of the 2006 'grandfathering' Welfare to Work provisions;
 - Centrelink deficiencies with debt prevention and debt waiver rules;
 - funding for legal advice and information on income management issues in the Northern Territory and in the five areas subject to income management after 1 July 2012;
 - priorities for the new Minister for Human Services;
 - payment cuts affecting parents, young people and tougher job seeker compliance penalties;
 - Budget cuts for parents and Newstart Allowance increase;
 - the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights inquiry into single parent changes affecting over 100,000 single parents; and
 - concerns regarding the lack of indexation to the Pensioner Education Supplement.

Media Releases during 2011-12

The National Welfare Rights Network produced a significant number of media releases and a series of joint media statements during this period:

- 11 July 2011, Carbon Price compensation cautiously welcomed
- 13 August 2011, Clean Energy Package Must Pass Parliament
- 22 August 2011, Disability Pension Changes untried, untested and unfair
- 2 September 2011, 1 million Australian's slide deeper into poverty as benefits rise 85 cents a day
- 2 October 2011, Tax Forum offers chance to restore balance and fairness to welfare system
- 21 October 2011, New Poll shows rate of Newstart Allowance for unemployed people is too low
- 21 October 2011, Life is no picnic on \$243 a week.
- 23 November 2011, Cooperation not intervention: a call for a new direction in policies affecting Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory, ACOSS, APONT, NWRN and 24 community organisations.
- 30 December 2011, New year heralds winners and losers in welfare changes, NWRN and ACOSS
- 8 February 2012, Welfare Rights welcomes landmark report on domestic violence and commonwealth laws
- 20 March 2012, Unemployed short-changed by 20 cents a day increase
- 5 May 2012, Welfare cuts will place 100,000 single parents at risk of poverty, ACOSS, National Council of Single Mothers and Their Children and NWRN
- 9 May, 2012, 'Fair go' Budget less fair for some
- 16 June 2012, Groups support Qld Government on truant back down, NWRN and ACOSS

Key Meetings in 2011-12

The National Welfare Rights Network regularly meets with Ministers, politicians, government departments and community agencies to engage in policy reform aimed at improving the social security safety net. Below is a list of some of the meetings and activities that NWRN members took part in 2010-11:

- 1 July 2011, Stakeholder meeting with Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) Disability and Carer's Branch on proposed Disability Support Pension changes and impairment tables review, Sydney.
- 10 July 2011, Lock up for release of Carbon Price Household Assistance Package, Parliament House, Canberra.

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- 25 July 2011, Address to Commonwealth Leaders Conference, Canberra.
 - 28 July 2011, Meeting with Australian Payments System Council on discussion paper, The future of cheques, Sydney.
 - 29 July 2011, Meeting with ACOSS and FaHCSIA on income management and place-based welfare reform, Sydney.
 - 1 August 2011, Meeting with Department of Human Services Serious Non-compliance Branch, Sydney.
 - 3 August 2011, Launch of Homeless Person's Week and launch of Parity edition on Centrelink and Homelessness by the Minister for Human Services and Minister for Social Inclusion, Sydney.
 - 3 August 2011, HESTA Conference, Presentation on recent Disability Support Pension reforms, Melbourne.
 - 10-12 August 2011, Are prisons obsolete?, Sisters Inside Conference, Sydney.
 - 12 August 2011, Meeting with Professor Tony Vinson of social security prosecutions project, Sydney.
 - 26 August 2011, Meeting with LHMU on Tax Reform. Sydney.
 - 29-30 August 2011, ACOSS Community Tax Forum Meeting, Sydney.
 - 2 September 2011, Council for Civil Liberties Dinner.
 - 8 September 2011, Meeting with advisors to Minister for Human Services, Canberra.
 - 8 September 2011, meeting with the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office in Canberra.
 - 9 September 2011, NWRN bi-annual delegations with DHS.
 - 14 September 2011, Department of Human Services Mental Health Working Party, Sydney.
 - 15 September 2011, Meeting with Department of Human Services Zone Managers, Sydney.
 - 16 September 2011, FaHCSIA Clean Energy Household Assistance link up.
 - 16 September 2011, Welfare Rights Outreach Project link up.
 - 26 September 2011, meeting with United Voice representatives about "Working People in Poverty".
 - 28 September 2011, attend the launch of Independent ACTU Inquiry into job insecurity, Sydney.
 - 28 September 2011, Roundtable with LGBTI organisations and staff of the Australian Law Reform Commission on Discussion Paper on Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws, Sydney.
 - 29 September 2011, Department of Human Services Serious Fraud and non-compliance training, Melbourne.
 - 29 September 2011, meeting with staff from Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations on "Young Parents and Jobless Families Participation measures, Sydney.
 - 29 September 2011, Meeting with policy officer from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations on impairment tables, Sydney.
 - 30 September 2011, DEEWR meeting regarding employment services 'red tape' review, Melbourne.
 - 30 September 2011, address to Social Security Rights Victoria's planning day, Melbourne.
 - 2 November 2011, NSW Homelessness Alliance.
 - 4-5 October 2011, attendance at the Tax Forum, Canberra.
 - 6 October 2011, attendance at the Prime Minister's Jobs Forum, Canberra.
 - 7 November 2011, Meeting with Legal Aid, NSW Aboriginal Legal Services and WRC on income management and legal advice and services, Sydney.
 - 9 November 2011, Churches Community Housing, AGM: talk on social security issues.
 - 15 November 2011, meeting on income management with NSW Tenants Union, Sydney.
 - 14-16 October, National Welfare Rights Network National Conference, Hobart.
 - 17-19 October 2011, National Association of Community Legal Centre's Conference, Hobart.
 - 17 October 2011, national meeting of Anti-Poverty Week.
 - 17 October 2011, address to Uniting Care Breakfast for Anti-Poverty Week, Sydney.
 - 15 November 2011, NCOSS Poverty Policy Meeting, Sydney.
 - 16 November 2011, Connections for Quality Panel, DEEWR, Sydney.
 - 17 November 2011, ACOSS Board Meeting, Sydney.

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- 18 November 2011, ACOSS Policy Forum – Speaker on panel, and AGM.
 - 21 November 2011, NCOSS AGM, Sydney.
 - 21 November 2011, Data and Evaluation Panel Meeting, DEEWR, Canberra.
 - 29 November, Whitlam Institute Lunch, Panel on Employment in Australia, DEEWR Secretary, Sydney.
 - 8 December 2011, NSW DHS Mental Health Advisory Party.
 - 14 December 2011, Human Rights Commission Roundtable on Income Management.
 - 15 December 2011, ACOSS income support teleconference, link up.
 - 20 December 2011, meeting with Aids Council of NSW on DSP changes, Sydney.
 - 17 January, FAHCSIA community sector telephone link up on Essential Medical Equipment Payment, Carbon Tax Household Assistance Package.
 - 23 January 2012, Consultations with NSW Office on Ageing on Whole of Government Ageing Strategy, Sydney.
 - 26 January 2012, Meeting with ACOSS energy project funders on community engagement, Sydney.
 - 2 February 2012, Meeting with ACOSS on Newstart Allowance campaign, Sydney
 - 16 February 2012, ACOSS Board Meeting, Sydney.
 - 21 February 2012, Meeting with advisers from Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and adviser from Minister Shorten on legislation on payment changes for parent’s young people and compliance.
 - 23 February 2012, Meeting with Community Public Sector Union, Sydney.
 - 9 March 2012, Community Roundtable on Stronger Futures with Human Rights Commission, Sydney.
 - 16 March 2012, NWRN and Department of Human Services Delegations, Canberra.
 - 16 March 2012, Meeting with Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Brendan O’Connor, Canberra.
 - 16 March 2012, Meeting with advisers to Minister for Human Services, Senator Kim Carr.
 - 22 March 2012, Job Services Advisory Committee with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, link up.
 - 28 March 2012, ACOSS Media Forum – panel on Newstart Allowance Campaign.
 - 29-20 March 2012, ACOSS Conference – participants, Sydney.
 - 29 March 2012, meeting with Director of Department of Human Services Serious Non-Compliance team and Commonwealth Ombudsman’s Office, Sydney.
 - 26 April 2012, Meeting with Kathryn Campbell, Secretary, Department of Human Services and Barry Sandison, Assistant Secretary, DHS, Sydney.
 - 27 April 2012, Discussion with consultants from Haystac, about improving community attitudes to income management.
 - 8 May 2012, Federal Budget “lock-up”, Canberra
 - 9 May 2012, Meeting with advisers to Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Employment Participation.
 - 14 May 2012, ACOSS Post-Budget Lunch, Melbourne.
 - 15 May 2012, link with the Department of Human Services on “difficult” clients and aggression.
 - 17 May 2012, ACOSS Board Meeting, Sydney.
 - 23 May 2012, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Future of Income Support Working Party, Canberra.
 - 24 May 2012, Essentials Consultants on FaHCSIA’s Community Engagement Strategy.
 - 25 May 2012, Presentation at AIDS Council of NSW Forum: DSP – what’s happening now?
 - 26 May 2012, Public Meeting in Bankstown – NT speaker, NWRN presentation on income management.
 - 30 May 2012, Meeting with Sydney Zone Manager, Department of Human Services, Sydney.
 - 4 June 2012, NWRN Policy Sub-Committee meeting on submission on Social Security Legislation on portability changes.

- 7 June 2012, Teleconference with Department of Human Services on Centrelink Statements and changes.
- 14 June 2012, Job Services Australia Augmented Advisory Group/DEEWR teleconference.
- 19 June 2012, Meeting with Legal Aid on developing income management brochure.
- 20 June 2012, Meeting on Local Solutions Fund Program, Bankstown.
- 21 June 2012, Meeting with FaHCSIA, Department of Human Services and NSW Dept. of Families on income management in Bankstown, with Welfare Rights, Legal Aid, Tenants Union and NSW Aboriginal Legal Service.
- 23 June 2012, Expert Panel Meeting on Australian Law Reform Commission Review into Commonwealth legal barriers to older persons participating in the workforce or other productive work.

Media activity

The National Welfare Rights Network is seen as a credible and reliable source of analysis and comment on issues related to social security legislation and its practice. As social security law is complex, we spent a lot of time explaining the rules and briefing journalists. Some of the media coverage that we received is listed below and this highlights the breadth of policy and advocacy work that NWRN members take part in.

- 12 July 2011, Tax changes to lure uni students, mums to work, The Australian.
- 14 July 2011, Editorial for Parity Magazine, Centrelink and Homelessness, Sydney.
- 8 August 2011, Pension overhaul: thousands to miss out, The Australian.
- 19 October 2011, Working poor cleaners tell of despair, AAP.
- 21 October 2011, Calls to raise Newstart allowance, AAP, The Australian, Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun, West Australian, Brisbane Courier Mail.
- 24 October 2011, Newstart recipients living in poverty, Pro Bono.
- 21 November 2011, Labor doles out tough love as rate of docked payments surges, The Australian Online.
- 22 November 2011, Savings scheme a 'dud', The Australian.
- 2 December 2011, Unemployed and wrapped in red tape, Inside Story.
- 3-4 December 2011, Savings scheme a 'dud', The Weekend Australian.
- 9 December 2011, ABC Radio, In the National Interest, Deliberate fraud in inadvertent error?.
- 13 December 2011, One in 3 Centrelink decisions rejected, The Australian.
- 24 December 2011, Crackdown on the dole punishing the vulnerable, The Australian
- 30 December 2011, Jobs plan 'sends wrong message', The Australian.
- 1 December 2012, Tough welfare trial defended, The Australian.
- 1 January 2012, Youth Allowance boost for regional students, The Australian
- 1 January 2012, Swag of benefits start tomorrow, The Australian
- 4 January 2012, Call for compassion in program to move young mothers off welfare, Sydney Morning Herald, 4AW radio interview on Newstart Allowance
- 11 January 2012, Shorten rules out increase in the dole, The Australian.
- 14-15 January 2012, Despair of job seeker welfare exposed, The Weekend Australian.
- 17 January 2012, Howard dole plan up 30pc, despite ALP, The Australian.
- 4 February 2012, Call for increase in rent aid as crisis balloons, The Australian.
- 9 February 2012, Ministers refuse to lift welfare payments, The Australian.
- 17 February 2012, Canberra cuts losses on its failed forums, The Australian.
- 7 February 2012, Court forces carer father on dole, Sydney Morning Herald.
- 13 March 2012, Indigenous numbers fall in quarantining, The Australian.
- 15 March 2012, Dismay as fines raised for jobseekers who give appointments the flick, The Australian.
- 20 March 2012, Single mothers face cut in benefit, The Australian.

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- 3 April 2012, Bankstown wary of “Stronger Futures”, The Tracker.
 - 10 April 2012, Plan for jobless ‘should be axed’, The Australian.
 - 12 April 2012, Centrelink enlists spies, debt collectors to recover taxpayer funds, The Australian.
 - 17 April, 2012, Sacked workers use savings before dole kicks in, The Australian.
 - 2 May 2012, Welfare group urges reform of tax rates, The Australian.
 - 9 May 2012, ABC Radio National, Response to the Budget, Breakfast Panel.
 - 9 May 2012, Response to Federal Budget, Parliamentary Courtyard, various media.
 - 10 May 2012, Single mums to bear brunt of \$200m job agencies cut, The Australian.
 - 11 May 2012, Parents go from ‘welfare to poverty’, The Australian.
 - 29 May 2012, An NT intervention policy coming near to a suburb near you, The Punch.
 - 29 May 2012, Drug testing of income support recipients, ABC Radio.
 - 1 June 2012, New start, new job, but no takers, The Australian.
 - 5 June 2012, Jobless snub offer to move interstate for mining jobs, The Australian.
 - 16 June 2012, Sole-mum dole cut ‘an abuse or rights’, The Australian.
 - 17 June 2012, Welfare changes will punish single parents who work, Sun-Herald.
 - 19 June 2012, Unemployed struggle as dole’s value declines, The Australian.
 - 19 June 2012, Queensland to scrap scheme linking school attendance to welfare payments, The Australian.
 - 29 June 2012, Welfare reforms set to hit young jobless, The Australian.

Policy Achievements

The National Welfare Rights Network worked collaboratively with a wide range of community sector organisations and faith-based organisations over the past year. Collectively, our efforts helped to improve services and supports for low income and disadvantaged Australians. The staff, volunteers and Board members of our Member Centres and Associate services also worked tirelessly to highlight deficiencies with current social security policies and improve services for those who need them most.

Key activities and achievements in the past year include:

- achieving broad recognition, across groups like the Business Council, Australian Industry Group, the ACTU, economists and even some Government back-benchers and other members of Parliament that the rate of Newstart Allowance, at just \$35 per day, is too low;
- Federal Budget recognition that the single rate of allowance payments are too low, with the introduction of a supplementary Allowance of \$210 per week (equivalent to \$4 per week);
- a growing united and strong coalition between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and other community critical of the Federal Government’s Stronger Futures Legislation extending compulsory income management for an additional 10 years in the Northern Territory and to the introduction of ‘place-based’ income management in five disadvantaged’ local government areas across Australia;
- the Minister for Families, Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) agreement to ensure that her department will work with NWRN to address unfairness with existing debt raising rules;
- first steps towards the implementation with initial funds for the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme;
- advised Government via the Carbon Price Household Assistance Working Party on necessary steps needed to ensure sufficiency of compensation for carbon pricing, ensuring payments were adequate and would be regularly monitored;
- greater recognition of workforce barriers to employment of people with disabilities, including payment disincentives due to the “payment gap” of \$133 per week between the Disability Support Pension and the Newstart Allowance;
- increased community awareness of harsher impairment tables and more restrictive social security rules affecting access to the Disability Support Pension;
- relaxation of income tests for students, young unemployed people and Newstart Allowance principal carers;

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- exposing negative impacts of Government plans to move 100,000 single parents onto the Newstart Allowance, especially for those on the maximum rate or those parents working part time who stand to lose up to \$233 per week;
 - being part of a coalition of welfare, faith-based groups and human rights advocates and academics to give evidence on the ‘grandfathered’ single parents and the inadequate rate of Newstart Allowance to the first ever public hearing of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights;
 - regular public comment and analysis on data and trends for people affected by the compulsory income management regime in the Northern Territory;
 - consistently highlighting the need for greater tailored and flexible assistance to help the most disadvantaged job seekers move into employment;
 - improved awareness about the impact of existing unfair job seeker compliance arrangements, especially on vulnerable job seekers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers, who disproportionately bear the brunt of these negative approaches;
 - the Australian Communications and Media Authority recognising community concerns over the cost of dealing with Government when using 13 and 1800 numbers on mobile telephones;
 - recognition within the Department of Human Services about the need for alternative approaches to dealing with overpayments, with a reduction in the numbers of Australian’s prosecuted for social security fraud and the establishment of an inter-departmental working party on alternative sanctions to the criminalisation of people on income support;
 - recognition that the existing Liquid Assets Waiting Thresholds are too severe, with the Government agreeing to double the thresholds, from March 2013;
 - drawing attention to unfairness of Centrelink processes around “tip-offs”;
 - positive engagement with Departments and Ministers about the importance of treating people respectfully and with dignity when they are receiving income support or accessing Centrelink services, including highlighting the significant differences between “fraud” and “overpayments” of Centrelink debts;
 - highlighting the impact of the negative impact of budget and staffing cuts to the Offices of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and risks to service delivery and problems of poor and deficient administration, especially the reduction to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Northern Territory;
 - the release of a report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman exposing major unlawful deficiencies in Centrelink’s treatment of people subject to income management laws in the Northern Territory;
 - federal Budget reforms to the superannuation system to reduce the unfairness in current arrangements;
 - a landmark report on Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws by the Australian Law Reform Commission that responds positively to many of the issues raised by Welfare Rights;
 - agreement from the Department of Human Services to consider how it can use its extensive information-gathering powers in ways that will be beneficial to vulnerable clients;
 - recognition in a report on the review of costs of FOI by the Office of the Information Commissioner that Centrelink files should be available at no charge, and that they system should recognise public interest considerations for community and advocacy organisations;
 - recognition in the Australian Payments System Council report into the future of cheques that there should be continued access to cheque facilities and that cheque users should not be priced out of the market.

NWRN Member Centre Reports

Adelaide – Welfare Rights Centre (SA)

Staff

- Manager: Mark Leahy
- Solicitor: Margaret Riley
- Outreach Co-ordinator & HLC Co-ordinator: Amanda Tsoundarou
- Housing Legal Clinic Co-ordinator: Bill Manallack
- Casework Supervisor: Stephany Del Canto
- Administrator/Casework Supervisor: Mark Shepley
- Data entry/I.T.: Andrew Prince
- Plus 47 volunteers and students on placement

Casework trends

- Total WRC clients: 1067
- Total HLC Clients: 874
- Combined Total: 1941

Disability Support Pension (DSP) matters constituted around 80% of our casework this year. Changes to the DSP Impairment Tables have had a huge impact on our caseloads and much of our time has been spent understanding the legislation and appealing the lack of program of support problems. A large amount of our casework is concerned with obtaining the right impairment points and arguing what constitutes a program of support or ways of getting around the requirement.

We have also seen a large number of debt cases, Member of a Couple (MOC) debt waivers (\$90 000 for one client) and several Pension Bonus Scheme cases.

Income management is being rolled out in the Playford area, but it is still too early to gauge the impact. We have been informed that Centrelink aims for 85% of those case-managed to participate voluntarily, but it seems inducements will be offered to put pressure on people to volunteer.

In 2011-2012, we have had 105 SSATs, 80 PCs, 6 Directions hearings, 3 AAT hearings, 3 CDDAs and 7 Act of Grace requests.

We have received \$50,000 from the Ian Potter Foundation, \$37,000 from the Mercy Foundation and \$55,000 from the National Broadband Fund to deliver Housing Legal Clinic and Welfare Rights services into rural and remote communities.

We are continuing to run two outer metropolitan Outreaches, at Christies Beach and Port Adelaide.

After eight years with WRC, Jo Porter left us this year to take up a position as Education Welfare Officer at Adelaide University. Joining us is Stephany Del Canto. Stephany is a lawyer, to be admitted in September, so we now have three lawyers working at WRC. Stephany will be supervising volunteers and students, undertaking casework at the SSAT, and assisting Amanda at the HLC clinics.

The Lord Mayor of Adelaide hosted a Mayoral Reception to celebrate the work of the Housing Legal Clinic. 170 people attended and volunteer lawyers were awarded certificates of recognition by the Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Brisbane - Welfare Rights Centre Inc (QLD)

Staff

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| • Executive Director (resigned) | Gail Middleton |
| • Policy & Comms Officer/Acting Executive Director (part time) | Georgina Warrington |
| • Senior Solicitor | Patrick Cranitch |
| • Solicitor (part time) | Andrew Davison |
| • Advocate | Bryony Walters |
| • Project Officer/Policy and Communications Officer | Georgina Lawson |
| • Social Worker (part time) | Teresa Grahame |
| • Office Administrator (part time) | Nicole O'Keane |
| • Office Administrator (part time casual) | Joel McComber |
| • Finance Officer (part time) | Sue McComber |

Staff & Centre

The Centre experienced a couple of major changes over the year:

- After 13 years in offices at Stones Corner we were forced to move premises in a short time frame. We are now located in Fortitude Valley and have hot running water.
- Gail Middleton, Executive Director for just over 8 years, resigned from the Centre in November 2011 to pursue other opportunities. Georgina Warrington, Policy and Communications officer stepped in as Acting Executive Director.

Casework Trends

Welfare Rights Centre assisted 1100 people during the financial year.

We completed 243 cases of which:

- 15% of the clients had no income
- 55% of our cases were eligibility issues (up from 40%). Of these, 68% related to DSP rejections (these DSP cases are 37% of our total casework numbers)
- Overpayments and debts make up 15% of the caseload
- 18% of our cases were rate reduction issues

Our casework numbers have reduced over the last 3 years due to a combination of factors; we have fewer caseworkers available to us, and we are handling more intensive cases which require a greater investment of time.

Policy Work and Issues

The introduction of Income Management to Logan and Rockhampton has focussed the Centre on developing detailed knowledge of policy and practice in preparation. This included contribution to the Network's submission to the inquiry into the Stronger Futures legislation, and the development of Queensland specific fact sheets which have been distributed to the relevant communities.

WRC Qld made a submission to the ALRC Family Violence inquiry in partnership with the AASW.

We appeared before a House of Representatives committee inquiry into Mental Health and Workforce Participation in August 2011. The report was released in June 2012.

Projects and Publications

A new brochure was produced to support the work of the centre and distributed broadly to the community sector and government stakeholders. We have received requests for and distributed over 3500 copies of our publications in the financial year.

We provided a number of social security community legal education sessions to community organisations (staff from over 30 organisations) in the financial year and information sessions to students and other legal practitioners (including Legal Aid Queensland).

The Centre established guidelines for the delivery of community legal education to ensure the program continues to be viable.

A community education project in Cherbourg has commenced and will continue to the end of the calendar year 2012.

An e-bulletin has been produced and distributed to a wide range of stakeholders. This will be a quarterly e-publication.

Future directions – next 12 months

Opportunities/plans for the Centre/Service

Development of an Outcomes Database to record more thoroughly the results of our casework. This will include legal, financial and social outcomes.

Participation in the NACLCL Legal Needs Assessment Framework project to better understand our clients and the met and unmet legal need in our service area.

Threats to the Centre/Service

Funding pressures continue to be an issue for the Centre and may result in contracting of services. This threat has been increased by the new LNP Government who has defunded a number of community legal services.

Canberra - Welfare Rights and Legal Centre (ACT)

Centre Programs and Staff

The Centre runs four programs:

- Social Security and Tenancy Service (SS&T): which specialises in the areas of Social Security law (for clients in the ACT and surrounds) and tenancy law (for public housing and low income earners in the ACT)
- Disability Discrimination Legal Service (DDLS): which specialises in the area of disability discrimination law (for people with disability and their associates, carers etc in the ACT and surrounding regions)
- Street Law: an outreach service aimed at people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Night Time Legal Advice Service (NTLAS): which provides one-off general legal advice and some limited advocacy.

The current staff at the Centre according to each program is as follows:

General

- Genevieve Bolton Coordinator/Principal Solicitor P/T
- Pat Wilkinson Administrative Assistant P/T
- Chelsi Wingrove Bookkeeper P/T
- Cesira Costello Librarian P/T

Social Security and Tenancy Service (SS&T)

- Anne Yuille Advice Line Co-ordinator/Caseworker P/T
- Derek Emerson-Elliott Advocate F/T
- Louisa Bartlett Advocate F/T
- Corrie Goodhand Solicitor F/T (SS&T and also DDLS)
- Naomi Gould Solicitor P/T
- Vanessa Faulder, Solicitor F/T

Street Law

- Parastou Hatami Supervising Solicitor (on maternity leave until June 2013)
- Alexandra Palk Senior Solicitor (on maternity leave until May 2013)
- Beth Cox Locum Supervising Solicitor, P/T
- Joanne Wright Locum Senior Solicitor, P/T
- Katie Fraser Project Manager and Solicitor, P/T
- Heather McAulay Solicitor F/T

Night Time Legal Advice Service

- Derek Emerson-Elliott Administrator

Centre Achievements

2011/2012 was an extremely productive and successful year for the Centre.

The highlights included:

- Being the first CLC in Australia to be recommended for accreditation under the National Association of Community Legal Centre's (NACLCL) national scheme;
- Street Law Funding of \$900 000 over three years from the ACT Government (see Street Law for more detail)
- The commissioning of independent evaluations for our Street Law and Night Time Legal Advice Service both of which found that the programs were meeting their objectives and providing quality and innovative legal services;
- The refurbishment of our front office which has provided much needed desk space and a modern, professional and welcoming environment;
- The passage of the Road Transport (General) (Infringement Notices) Amendment Bill 2012 (see Street Law for more detail)
- During the year, the Centre in conjunction with the Women's Legal Centre and the Tenants Union also campaigned hard for the ACT Government to fund the establishment of a new ACT Community Legal Centre (CLC) Hub highlighting the serious overcrowded and substandard nature of our current accommodation. Whilst not the preferred outcome, the ACT Government in the May 2012 Budget made \$660 000 available from 2013 to enable the relocation of the Women's Legal Centre which will provide additional space for WRLC and the Tenants Union and an upgrade of the Havelock House accommodation.

Social Security and Tenancy Service

During the 2011/2012 year, the service provided 794 advices (80.9 were tenancy) and opened 120 minor assistance matters and 89 cases. The Social Security and Tenancy Service had just over 100 Tribunal appearances, the majority of which were in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT). During the year, we also appeared in the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT).

As in previous years, the majority of our advice work revolved around problems of getting into public housing and avoiding eviction from public housing. Despite a range of measures which had been introduced by both the ACT and Commonwealth Governments in recent years to address the housing crisis, this year saw a significant increase in the waiting times for people on the Priority Housing list and a chronic and severe shortage of crisis accommodation. As a result, there was an increase in requests for assistance in obtaining public housing and we also spent more resources and time defending eviction proceedings because of the severe shortage of options for any person who loses a public tenancy in the ACT. We also saw an increase in the number of eligible applicants seeking public housing from a position of imminent or actual homelessness. This is despite the fact that the income barrier for eligibility was lowered in 2006, which should have had the effect of reducing the pool of eligible applicants.

Our Social Security advice and casework continued to highlight the difficulty in people being able to obtain legal advice in respect of the voluntarily disclosure of failure to meet obligations which may lead to debt/prosecution and attendance at pre-prosecution interviews. We are currently working collaboratively with the Legal Aid Commission ACT in order to try to address this gap in legal services.

The Centre saw a spike in the number of people seeking assistance regarding waiver of compensation preclusion periods. We provided representation on two such matters before the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal, both of which resulted in favourable outcomes for our clients.

We continue to see a large number of member of a couple debts and are currently running a test case before the AAT where we are arguing, for the first time, that the definition of 'member of a couple' needs to be interpreted carefully in cases involving indigenous couples who are also bound by mutual care obligations under their traditional culture.

We continue to observe from afar the Northern Territory Welfare Rights Outreach Project going from strength to strength and we were pleased to be able to assist NAAJA and CAALAS with the induction and training of three new welfare rights workers to the project.

Disability Discrimination Legal Service

During the 2011/2012 year, the service provided advice and minor assistance to 31 matters and provided representation and casework for 6 clients. The litigation included a complex matter in the Federal Magistrates Court which was successfully resolved by settlement. The service also focused resources on a series of three cases involving the issuing of banning notices by shopping centres to people with disability. These cases highlighted the problems caused by the increasing privatisation of once – public spaces and the lack of any mechanism for ensuring fairness and transparency in decision making about who should be excluded from privately owned ‘public’ spaces. This litigation has yielded some change in the practices of at least one major shopping centre in the region.

The advice work again included discrimination by employers and educational institutions at both a Territory and Commonwealth level: however, the greatest proportion of enquiries was in the provision of services, especially, complaints about private traders, interactions with police and the provision of government services, the latter of which raises new possibilities for combining human rights work with the discrimination practice in order to heighten the effectiveness of the discrimination complaint process. The DDLS also provided informal advice to a number of community and advocacy organisations about the use of discrimination and human rights legislation in their advocacy and law reform activities.

This year the DDLS continued to provide advice support to the other WRLC services in the practical application of the Human Rights Act 2004, particularly by assisting in the drafting of submissions in tenancy litigation in both the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) and the Supreme Court and developing advocacy strategies based on the Human Rights Act.

The DDLS also delivered the Centre’s CLE program during the first half of the year (see Community Legal Education for more detail) and was actively involved in the Australian Disability Rights Network, particularly in relation to the Canberra consultations into the Commonwealth’s consolidation of discrimination laws project.

In February 2012, Helen Dalley resigned as our DDLS Senior Solicitor to take up the position of manager with the Equality Rights Alliance, a National NGO advocating for women’s equality. During her seven and a half years with the Centre Helen made an enormous contribution to the work of the Centre as a whole but more particularly to developing the Centre’s expertise in the areas of Disability Discrimination and ACT Human Rights law. Fortunately, for us, Helen has maintained strong ties with the Centre as a consultant and more recently as a Board member.

At the end of June 2012, the Centre welcomed Corrie Goodhand to the role of DDLS Solicitor.

Night Time Legal Advice Service

During 2011/2012, the NTLAS provided 207 advices. The three most significant areas of advice by volume were civil law, family and immigration law. NTLAS also undertook some minor assistance work which included drafting letters and correspondence on behalf of clients.

An independent evaluation of the service in early 2012, found that NTLAS was a vibrant and busy community legal service initiative that increased access to high quality legal services to people in the ACT. It also acknowledged that NTLAS provided an excellent environment for less experienced practitioners and graduates to obtain an opportunity to broaden their skills and knowledge in the delivery of general law advice to clients on almost any legal topic.

Historically, funding for NTLAS has been extremely limited as it has been funded through general inclusion in the WRLC Budget and relies heavily on the pro bono support of the ACT Legal Community. In the coming year, the Centre will be working towards implementing the recommendations of the report to further support and develop the service which will hopefully provide a solid foundation on which additional funding for NTLAS can be obtained in future years.

Street Law

During the reporting period, Street Law finished its 3 year pilot phase and was successful in receiving further funding of 3 years from the ACT Government which was announced in the ACT Budget. This funding will enable Street Law to continue to operate its current staffing level and structure. Unfortunately, it is not recurrent funding which will mean that we will have to make another

application and make the case for its ongoing existence.

The funding announcement was the culmination of a busy year. In October 2011, Street Law was evaluated by independent consultant (Karl Manning) who found that the Street Law model of service was sustainable and its legal work of a high quality. (Street Law runs on a slightly different model than other homeless person's legal services across Australia – the legal work is done by in house lawyers; single matters are referred out for pro bono assistance on a case by case basis).

In November 2011, Street Law published a report on an issue common to people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness: traffic infringements. Many Street Law clients were having their licence suspended for non-payment of traffic fines. It is not possible to seek an instalment plan or waiver because of homelessness. Street Law documented the issue with case studies. The ACT Greens then drafted a Bill - with input from Street Law – that would fix the problem. The Bill was passed by the Legislative Assembly in May 2012 and the Act will be fully implemented in May 2013. The changes will enable people to pay fines by instalments or through community work orders or through personal development orders. This was the first successful law reform campaign for Street Law.

Street Law continues to see clients at four weekly outreaches, to undertake complex casework for clients who are homeless; to make referrals to pro bono partners where appropriate; and to document systemic problems with the legal system. The service is increasing the number of homeless people who are able to access existing services, including the other programs at WRLC, the Women's Legal Centre and the Consumer Law Centre.

Law Reform

During the reporting period, the Centre made a submission to and appeared before the ACT Legislative Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services Inquiry into the provision of Social Housing in the ACT. Our central and most important submission to the Inquiry was that the housing crisis in the ACT had reached a new stage and that the only real solution to the crisis was an immediate increase in public housing stock. We also highlighted the administrative and legal problems which had emerged as Housing ACT had attempted to find a way to revamp the application process to cope with the deluge of applications highlighting repeated examples of break down of basic elements of public service – failure to record decisions, lack of cogent and ongoing policy development and a failure to meet or even consider legislated standards such as those imposed on housing under the Human Rights Act 2004. We also noted concerns about the level of understanding of Housing ACT staff regarding their legal obligations. Further our submission also raised the practical problems for applicants who have specific housing needs which arise out of disability and the overall age and poor state of repair of Housing ACT stock.

The Centre also made submissions to the ACT Targeted Assistance Strategic Panel which was established by the ACT Government to consider the current range of ACT programs designed to assist lower income Canberrans and to develop an evidence-based Targeted Assistance Strategy. Our submissions to the panel highlighted the current problems with Housing ACT's debt raising and debt management practices and the need for a transparent model and process for dealing with applications for debt waiver. We were pleased to see that the final report contained a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the concerns that we had raised.

Throughout the year, the Centre has also been proactive in raising concerns regarding the effectiveness and operation of First Point which was established in 2010 to provide a single access point into the ACT Homelessness Support Services Network.

During the year, we also campaigned against the closure of the Canberra registry of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) which had originally been flagged for closure at the end of 2012. Unfortunately, our campaign was thwarted somewhat by the decision to bring the closure date forward following the unexpected resignation of the Canberra's last full time member. We did however manage to obtain a commitment from the Senior Member of the NSW Registry that face to face hearings would continue to be held in Canberra.

Community Legal Education

During the reporting period, the Centre provided a series of human rights training sessions with the assistance of an Australian Human Rights Framework – Education Grant from the Australian Government. The seminars were targeted to individuals and community sector advocates and provided an introduction to Human Rights Law at both the international and ACT level and some practical approaches for using human rights in the ACT legal context. To this end, the human rights seminars were combined with our general

CLE program with the Centre presenting secondary presentations on tenancy, advocacy, or disability discrimination advocacy after each seminar in order to provide content which would be recognised as directly relevant to the daily lives of our target groups. The feedback from those attending the seminars was strongly positive.

The Centre also conducted the annual DV and tenancy workshop with the Tenants Union and Women's Legal Centre.

In addition the Centre further developed and refined its very popular, 'How to Spot a Legal Issue Session', and through its Street Law program combined forces with the Legal Aid Commission ACT to provide training sessions to a large number of community and government agencies throughout the year.

Centre was also a regular contributor to the Social Security Reporter and two of its staff were members of the ACT Chapter of the Alternative Law Journal.

Community Legal Education Program (CLED)

The Centre continued to run the Community Law Clinical Program, in partnership with the Australian National University. The program is a 13 week subject offered in the ANU's LLB and JD courses with two student intakes each year. Established as a pilot in 2005 and having been run each year since, the course continues to be extremely popular amongst students providing them an opportunity to obtain practical legal experience within a community law setting as well as reflecting on the law and legal system as it affects the lives of our clients.

ACT Legal Assistance Forum (ACTLAF)

ACTLAF comprises representatives of all legal assistance providers in the ACT and was established in May 2008 to improve co-ordination between legal assistance services in the ACT and encourage collaborative service delivery.

Throughout the reporting period, the Centre was an active member of ACTLAF especially in the development of a legal assistance plan that would be activated in the event of a major disaster in the Territory. The impetus for developing the plan was the experience of legal service providers in the 2009 Victorian bushfires and the Queensland cyclones and floods in 2011 which demonstrated the importance of a properly planned and co-ordinated legal response and the desirability of planning in advance of an emergency so personnel and other resources can be deployed as quickly as possible. We understand that this is the first plan of its kind to be developed in Australia.

The Centre also was represented on the CLE and migration working groups of ACTLAF during the year.

Darwin – Darwin Community Legal Service (NT)

Staff

DCLS Welfare Rights Solicitor Melanie Robinson left DCLS (destination: NT Legal Aid Commission, so not lost to our sector) in June 2011. The position was vacant until October 2011 when we welcomed Shelley Eder to DCLS. Shelley had been Welfare Rights Solicitor at Launceston Legal Centre before taking up the position in Darwin.

Casework trends

Income Management has been ongoing in the NT for a number of years now. The casework associated with this has declined as Centrelink customers have become used to this system. The IM rules are relatively inflexible meaning there is little room for appeal work.

Due to our location, we have had a lot of contact with Centrelink customers affected by the residency changes and changes to portability for Disability Support Pension. This has presented logistical challenges in dealing with clients who are overseas.

We have a high proportion of homeless clients as well as clients from non-English speaking backgrounds. We also have a number of senior clients who have been referred by our aged and disability service. We are generally seeing the usual run of cases and have been able to achieve positive results for a number of clients at ARO stage.

Policy work/issues

Our policy work has included submissions on the 'Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory' Bill and on related Northern Territory legislation. We also contributed to the NWRN submission on changes to portability legislation in this year's Federal Budget.

We have participated in ongoing Welfare Rights Outreach Project meetings and Centrelink Multicultural Forum meetings. We have also attended a number of one off meetings with interested community groups with the purpose of promoting our capacity for casework and community legal education.

Projects and publications

Darwin Community Legal Service prepared Income Management resources including a booklet and fact sheet which we mailed out to all community legal organisations in or near the new Income Management areas. This resource was sent to over 40 organisations.

We are also in the process of finalising a plain language booklet for distribution to people affected by Income Management in the Northern Territory.

Future directions – next 12 months

Opportunities/plans for the Centre/Service

As this Welfare Rights Service was unstaffed for a part of the year, the service has needed to raise its profile in the local community. This has been achieved and the service is now getting referrals from a wide variety of organisations. It is hoped that we will continue to maintain and improve our profile as well as to broaden our reach to more remote areas in the Top End as well as with urban indigenous communities.

Threats to the Centre/Service

We have not identified any threats to the Centre or Service.

Geelong – Barwon Community Legal Service (VIC)

Staff

- Nick Hudson Manager
- Mandi Hyland Principal Lawyer
- Elsie Stokie Community Lawyer
- Geordie Konieczka Community Lawyer
- Jeanette Parrott Community Lawyer
- Simon Pitman Community Lawyer
- Lee Bolton Community Lawyer
- Mikala McIntyre Community Lawyer
- Sam Hawkins Paralegal
- Ros Muir-Morris Finance - Administration Officer
- Grace Forrest Administration Officer
- Charmaine Floyd Administration Officer
- Jillian Chapman CLE Worker
- Liz Flynn Administrative Assistant
- Dianne Kannemeyer Project Worker

Barwon Community Legal Service Centre (BCLS) in Geelong has an integrated practice model with lawyers providing advice and casework in multiple areas that BCLS covers.

Those areas are General Law, Child Support, Social Security (Welfare Rights), Family Violence Intervention Orders, Family, Tenancy, Elder law and some Criminal law.

As it is not viable for one person to have extensive knowledge in all these areas, we have nominated one person to be practice lead in each of the main practice areas. Jeanette Parrott is the Social Security (Welfare Rights) practice lead and updates and assist colleagues and provides community legal education.

BCLS assists in Social Security matters throughout Victoria.

Advice is flexible and can be by drop-in, telephone or by appointment.

Social Security Casework trends

The trends for this year were rejections and cancellations after review of Disability Support Pension, cancellations of Carer Allowance for long standing recipients upon review, several large debt matters and many small to medium debt matters.

In the 2011/12 financial year over \$71,000 was saved or obtained via arrears, debt waivers, compensation etc. by BCLS on behalf of our clients.

Policy work/issues/ Community Legal Education

Locally, Jeanette Parrott continues to convene the Barwon Centrelink Liaison Group. We meet quarterly with and at different community agencies venues and the current Centrelink Managers and Team Leaders to build closer more positive relationships. We discuss local issues and changes to Social Security legislation and continue to provide relevant community legal education. Community

agencies and groups present new and relevant programmes in the region to further assist each other, our clients and the community.

Barwon Community Legal Service has provided community workers and the general community with up-to date legal education in seminars and by full day workshop.

Barwon Community Legal Service has provided community legal education regarding the inadequacy of Newstart Allowance. We have contacted Ministers, Senators and local federal members by letter regarding the inadequacy of Newstart Allowance. We have requested interested community workers and community members add their voice to request an increase to the inadequate Newstart Allowance and provided pro forma letters to assist.

Future directions – next 12 months

We are continuing casework in and social security law reform work on the inadequacy of Newstart Allowance, the 2010 changes to Carer Allowance and other areas as informed by our casework.

Threats to the Service

As usual in the community sector, the major threat to the Service is the yearly funding structure and the possibility of reduced funding in the future. We continue to provide free independent legal advice to service our large catchment area and look positively to the future.

Hobart – Hobart Community Legal Service (TAS)

Staff

Hobart Community Legal Service has three staff who work with Welfare Rights clients, they are:

- Henry Pill
- Irene Tiang
- Jason Wright

We also have a healthy level of volunteer engagement from students and graduates through our relationship with the local University.

Casework trends

Debts continue to be the primary focus of our service, with Marriage-Like-Relationship cases accounting for a large portion of larger debts raised.

Policy work/ issues

Contacting Centrelink via telephone has become next to impossible, putting us in a difficult position when clients have urgent matters to resolve.

We have also developed serious concerns with the independence and professionalism of the Social Security Tribunal members in Hobart. On a number of occasions we have encountered examples of SSAT members being unnecessarily adversarial or antagonistic towards our clients. We feel that the Tribunal Members on occasion see their role as simply checking the working out of the ARO and ratifying the decision. This has completely changed the way we advise clients with regards to their appeal rights. We are no longer able to advise that the SSAT is an “easy” non-confrontational step of appeal, especially with clients who are easily intimidated or respond poorly to stressful situations.

Future directions

We are committed to continuing to develop a solid base of Welfare Rights expertise at levels from ODM through to Administrative Appeals Tribunal. We continue to develop relationships with Authorised Review Officers and have a good relationship with Centrelink Legal Services in Hobart.

Our key concern in to the future is a continuation of the current antagonism of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, which we feel limits the opportunities for appeal (and inevitably increases our workload by necessitating appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal).

We also have concerns about the relocation of Centrelink Legal Services to a centralized office outside of the state. We fear that this process (which we have been advised is more or less inevitable at this stage) will weaken our relationship with Centrelink and our ability to manage matters through partial waivers and similar compromises.

Launceston - Launceston Community Legal Centre Inc (TAS)

Staff

- Manager: Nicky Snare
- Reception: Susan Quinn
- Principal Solicitor: Jessamy Downie
- General Legal: Sarah House
- Employment Law: Ryan West
- Disability Discrimination: Rohan Pratt
- Family Law: Elise Whitemore
- Legal Literacy: Beylara Ra
- Welfare Rights: Emma Smith

The Welfare Rights programme run by Launceston CLC is a part time service operated by one person, four days a week, for the north of Tasmania. There are currently no volunteers assisting with this service.

Clients living in any areas outside the Launceston 7250 zone can access our service via telephone for information or advice. The Centre maintains a statewide toll free number that is readily available to our clients.

The Service has undergone some staffing changes in the last year with the previous worker, Shelley Eder, leaving on 13 October 2011 to join the Darwin CLC. The programme was then taken over by Irfan Yusuf. Irfan left the service on 28 March 2012. Emma Smith took over the programme at that time.

The WRS clients continue to seek advice and information in relation to a range of matters including Disability Support Pensions, preclusion periods, overpayments/debts, and assets assessment. The majority of our clients come to us for assistance with DSP appeal processes. Cancellation of Carers Allowance has also been an issue that has seen an increase this year.

During the course of the last financial year the Centre handled a total of 85 client matters. Most issues were resolved at the initial stages of appeal with the Authorised Review Officer. Only 18 of these matters went on to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal or Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

The WRS has conducted several presentations to vulnerable community members in the last financial year. Some of the Community Legal Education Sessions that we hold include “Welfare Rights and You”, “Income Management”, and “Appealing Centrelink Debts”. The services are provided free of charge to community groups, community health centres, and neighbourhood houses.

Melbourne - Social Security Rights Victoria Inc (VIC)

Staff

- Dale Nelson CLE officer
- Sally Allman Caseworker
- Joanne Joosten Supervising Solicitor
- Joan Thong Caseworker
- Rini Krouskos Casework and Volunteer program
- Ben Zika Casework and Fundraising
- Alison Cook Bookkeeping and IT
- Claire Carroll Volunteer Coordinator
- Peter Horbury Coordinator

After more years than anyone can remember in Collingwood, SSRV moved to North Fitzroy in June 2012. After a few hiccups (no electricity, then no phones and then no internet) we are now seemingly ensconced in our new home.

Casework continued to have a significant role in the SSRV's work. Around twelve hundred clients were assisted at various levels.

Changes to DSP residency has been a big issue for us. Over a number of years a group of gents living in Thailand on DSP have been long-term clients of SSRV. A lot of this has come to a head in 2012. DSP as a whole remains around one-third of our casework and the new eligibility is an area of concern.

There were three editions of the SSRV's newsletter 'Red Tape' distributed to members and interested parties during the year.

In September 2011 we held a '10 year Symposium' to look at the future of social security as well as SSRV over the next decade. Our Patron, Prof Brian Howe opened and closed the day. As a result of some of the things he said there and the involvement of the ACTU, Prof Howe was asked to chair the 'Independent Enquiry into Insecure Work'. Maree O'Halloran (as NWRN President) was one of our guest speakers and a number of other NWRN folk attended.

We continue to be assisted by Martin Pike an ex-Centrelink lawyer who is doing some pro bono work for us on particularly complicated cases.

Our volunteer program continued to provide assistance to our clientele and we have built a strong group of ex-volunteers who are now moving into jobs in law firms and the CLC sector.

With income management coming to Shepparton in July 2012 SSRV has become involved in a group along with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) and the Loddon Campaspe (Bendigo) Legal Service looking at ways to assist particularly local community assistance organisations prepare for this significant change.

2012 is SSRV's twenty-fifth year as an organisation. We aim to be around for at least twenty-five more.

Perth - Freemantle Community Legal Centre (WA)

Staff

- Lynda Wennstrom Co-ordinator (F/T)
- Annie Gray Principal Solicitor (P/T)
- Gary Mack Family Solicitor (P/T)
- Aoning Li VRO Solicitor (P/T)
- Elyse Hocking Evening Legal Service (P/T)
- Jenny Cecil Financial Counsellor (F/T)
- Amanda Boffey Administrative Support (F/T)
- Lauren Moore Tenant Advocate (F/T)
- Antonio Gonzalez Welfare Rights Advocate (F/T)

Fremantle Community Legal Centre (FCLC) offers a range of services to the community covering legal advice and limited representation in matters such as: Family law, Restraining Orders, Criminal Injuries Compensation and minor civil/criminal matters. Legal advice on family and general law is also available under the Evening Legal Services program. Specialist services include: Financial Counselling, Tenancy and Welfare Rights. This report relates to the Welfare Rights Service.

Casework Issues and Trends

Casework continues to be the major focus of welfare rights work. In the past year a total of 198 clients' matters were attended. Demand for assistance with claim rejection and the internal review process has been increasing and continuing throughout the reporting period. Strong advocacy and direct negotiation with Centrelink has resulted in many clients having their payment restored and/or matters resolved via the internal review process, including the ARO. Many of the 20 matters that proceeded to SSAT and AAT were settled without proceeding to a hearing.

Problem types

The types of problems attended as per codes are as follows: 3910: (45%); 3920: (18%); 3930: (5%) and 3990: (32%). The figures indicate that rejection of claim and suspension or cancellation of payment represents the largest problem type of clients problems presented during the year and the trend continues to increase, in particular, in the area of DSP. The second largest problem relates to general queries about eligibility, income, assets, rate of payment, complex assessments and portability issues. Overpayment, debts and debt recovery issues continues to involve a significant part of the workload. Eight weeks non payment has remained lower than previous year.

Payment types

The major payment types affected during the past year have been Disability Support Pension and Carer payment, followed by Parenting Payment (PPS/PPP), FTB, Age Pension and participation payments such as: Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance.

Disability Support Pension

The number of DSP matters has continued to increase during the past 12 months.

Rejection of claim and/or cancellation following reviews due to not meeting the medical criteria continues to be the common cause for this. Supporting clients through the appeal process has involved a great deal of resources and effort during the reporting period.

Notwithstanding the difficulties involved, a number of 'dsped clients' have had a successful outcome at ARO, SSAT and/or settled at AAT.

Participation Payments

The main issues presented by client on participation payments have been dealing with PST to restore payment following the imposition of an 8NPP and/or assisting client through the appeal process. Most of these cases were resolved at initial stages and/or at the ARO level. The incidence of Indigenous youth caught with participation failures and subsequent payment cut continues to be disproportionately high.

An increasing number of people with disabilities who do not meet the strict criteria for DSP have been noticed in recent months. Typically, the person is not job ready and has multiple barriers to comply. Often the task is to continue to request exemption from the activity test or have a reduced participation requirement. Mature people and parents are struggling with this pressure.

The majority of inquiries about Age Pension relate to the impact of income and assets on the rate of payment, complex assessments, residency and portability restrictions issues.

Policy work/issues

Welfare Rights continues from time to time to participate in NWRM link ups and contribute with policy/law reform activities by way of providing feedback and case studies. Areas of interest covered include: Feedback about Centrelink services delivery issues for the Canberra delegation: such as long waits to get through to call centres and/or PST, cost to mobile phones and claim processing delays among other issues. Other contributions towards the network policy submission include case studies about disadvantaged jobseekers, the new impairment tables, participation issues, loss of grandfather status for parents and reduction of portability.

CLE/Information

Welfare Rights has focussed this year in promoting awareness about vulnerable jobseeker's difficulties in meeting participation requirements among the job service providers in the Fremantle Region. Talks and liaison meetings were conducted with Community First International, ORS Group, Salvation Army Employment Plus and Bridging the Gap with the aim to prevent 8 weeks non payment and promote appeal rights.

Welfare Rights also had two community legal presentations about participation requirements and appeal rights for parents and young people. One session was presented to Elders and young people at the Burdiya Aboriginal Corporation. Another session was presented to the Solid Women's Aboriginal Group at Ottey Family Centre. A wide range of information about Social Security payments and appeal rights were distributed to the public at the "Wool Stores Shopping Centre" in Fremantle during "Law Week". An increase number of queries about carers' and disability issues was noted.

Networking

Continuing liaison and networking with community agencies during the year and in particular: The Fremantle/Spearwood Centrelink Community Forum, The Centrelink Consultative Committee in Perth and liaison meeting of WA Advocates with AAT.

Perth – Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service (WA)

Staff

- Kate Beaumont Executive Officer/Welfare Advocate (F/T)
- Catherine Eagle Solicitor (P/T)
- Chris Belcher Welfare/Tenant Advocate (P/T)
- Marilyn Marvelli Welfare Advocate (P/T)
- Jeanie Bryant Welfare Advocate (F/T)
- Paul Harrison Tenant Advocate (P/T)
- Tom Milton Administrative Officer (F/T)
- Christine Carr Bookkeeper (P/T)

Casework Trends

The agency provides assistance in relation to Welfare Rights, Social Security Prosecution and Tenancy matters. In the current year the agency has provided 859 advice activities, 221 information and referral activities and opened 253 cases and closed 265 cases during the period. There has been a small reduction in the casework activities undertaken during this latest year in comparison with previous years. Despite this reduction there has been a seeming increase in the complexity of the matters dealt with by the agency.

Similar to previous years there continues to be high levels of debt matters which include some large member of a couple and gambling debts. The agency is the only Welfare Rights service within the country which employs a lawyer specifically for assistance with Social Security Prosecution matters. As a result of the casework undertaken in this area the agency lawyer has made representations on behalf of clients to Centrelink and the Commonwealth DPP (CDPP) which has resulted in matters not being referred to CDPP or alternatively the CDPP not proceeding with prosecution action. In some of these matters the agency has also provided help to challenge the debt decision administratively.

There have continued to be many client matters pertaining to eligibility for Disability Support Pension (DSP) and activity testing for participation payments including parents and those with partial capacity. Changes to residency requirements for those receiving DSP have caused an increase in these types of matters. Within the agency's tenancy program there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers facing eviction by the Department of Housing under their three strikes Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

Policy work/issues

Staff of Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service are representatives on NWRN Sub Committees which address specific policy/law reform issues. In the last year the agency has had representatives on the following sub committees which have included: Member of a Couple Sub Committee, Prosecutions Sub Committee and the Welfare Rights Outreach Project (WROP) Sub Committee. Some of these Sub Committees have not been convened in the current year. In the current year the agency has participated in a number of ad hoc linkups with the Department of Human Services on a range of issues.

At a local level staff of the agency are involved on a regular basis with the local Centrelink Community Consultative Meeting, Centrelink Mental Health Consultative Meeting, Centrelink Aboriginal Consultative Meeting, Centrelink Homelessness Consultative Meeting, CLCA WA Meetings, State CLC Stakeholder Committee, CLCA WA State PII and CPD Committee, local Tenancy Network Meeting and other forums as they arise. Catherine Eagle has continued as the WA State Representative on the NACLIC PII Committee. Forums in which staffs of the agency have participated in the most recent year have included Social Inclusion Roundtables with Legal Aid WA, Administrative Appeals Tribunal Liaison Meeting, Commonwealth Ombudsman Roundtable, ARO Meeting, Meeting about closure of Legal Services in Western Australia. The agency has also continued to have regular meetings with the senior Managers of the Serious Non Compliance Team in Western Australia which has resulted in an improved working relationship with this unit within Centrelink.

Additional to these activities Kate Beaumont has continued to be a member of the Executive of the NWRN, as Vice President in the current year and has participated in Members Meetings and Executive Meetings through the year. Kate Beaumont has continued to undertake media activities on behalf of the network in the most recent year in the absence of the President. Over the last year Catherine Eagle and Kate Beaumont have both participated in NWRN Delegations to Canberra. The agency's participation in NWRN Delegations is an important aspect of the agency's contribution to law reform and policy work and it is an opportunity to provide casework examples from Western Australia in the network's lobbying activities.

Kate Beaumont has continued to be the NWRN representative on the DHS Service Delivery Advisory Group (SDAG) which is the peak consultative forum for the Centrelink arm of that organisation. There were three meetings of the SDAG in 2011/2012 and the most recent meeting in April 2012 was a joint meeting with the Consumer Consultative Group (CCG) which was the Medicare equivalent of the SDAG. As part of the participation in the SDAG Kate Beaumont has also contributed to the work of the Non Attendance Working Group established to look at ways to improve attendance at Centrelink interviews for those on participation payments. Through the current year the recommendations developed by the Working Party were provided to the Minister for Human Services in relation to dealing with this issue into the future.

The agency conducted 17 Community Legal Education activities throughout the year which included singular and multiple sessions conducted at a variety of settings and delivered to both clients and workers in community organisations. The agency also conducted training of new Centrelink staff with the Serious Non Compliance Team in relation to the work undertaken by welfare rights centres. In the most recent year a number of sessions were conducted in Broome and Fitzroy Crossing, as part of an Indigenous remote and rural CLE Project which was again funded by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department. A CLE trip was conducted to Albany at the request of Albany Youth Support Association and the focus of these education activities related to young people and those working with young people and Centrelink issues.

Projects/publications

Prosecution and Women in Prisons Project – The agency has been successful in receiving funding for a seventh year to employ a lawyer three days per week funded through the Public Purposes Trust of the Law Society of Western Australia. Previously funding was provided on an annual basis, however with the introduction of three year funding rounds this agency was successful and at this stage our funding will continue until June 2013. Recently the agency completed an application for funding of the program for 2013 to 2016 and we will not find out about our success or otherwise until January 2013.

The project is in collaboration with Women's Law Centre where another lawyer works one day per week with our project specifically in the women's prisons in Perth. Catherine Eagle continues to provide advice and assistance to clients contacting in relation to Centrelink prosecution matters but does not represent in court due to time constraints. Catherine Eagle has been of great assistance to paralegals that work in the centre who have been able to provide additional casework assistance in challenging debts administratively where the client is at risk of prosecution for social security offences. Catherine Eagle has over a number of years conducted CLE sessions at the NWRN Conference in relation to Prosecutions and continues to provide support to others within the broader NWRN and those working in the Northern Territory with the WROP in relation to these types of matters.

Tenancy Program – The agency was successful in securing funding for its Tenancy Program for the next five years through an open tender under the new Purchasing of Community Services Policy in Western Australia. This will allow the agency to continue to provide tenancy assistance on an ongoing basis which complements welfare rights assistance provided by Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service.

Future Directions – the next 12 months

Opportunities/plans for the Centre/Service

The one-off Funding previously received from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department has now been depleted. In the last couple of years the agency has been able to ensure that levels of service delivery have remained at the same levels, as we did not expend this additional one off funding in the year allocated. This surplus had provided a buffer in view of limited increases to

CLSP funding to the welfare rights program over the last decades. With the depletion of these funds it is likely to have an impact on our capacity to deliver welfare rights services at the same levels as in the past.

Threats to the Centre/service

In the most recent year the agency has seen an increase in the numbers seeking assistance from outside of the geographic catchment area traditionally serviced by the agency. This in part is as a result of another adjacent welfare rights service providing that assistance for three days per week, as the funding for the program has not kept up with increased employee costs over the last two decades. The amount previously provided for a full time worker does not have the capacity to pay for a full time worker in 2012. Without additional funding it is unlikely that the service will have capacity to meet the demand for welfare rights assistance at the same levels as in the past. This will result in a reduction in welfare rights assistance in Western Australia.

Perth – Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc. (WA)

Staff

- General Manager/ Principal Solicitor Jane Timmermanis
- Operations Manager Denise Beer
- Family and Civil Solicitor Karen Bond and Hayley O’Hara
- Family Relationship Centre Solicitor Hayley O’Hara
- Belmont Outreach Family, Civil & Minor Criminal Solicitor Steven Offerman
- Disability Discrimination Solicitor Michele Hardesty-Munday
- Disability Discrimination CLE Officer Melinda Edgelow
- Tenancy Advocate Jenny Cogan and Megan McKrill
- Welfare Rights Advocate & Generalist Solicitor Zoe O’Neill
- Disability Advocate Rose Ngoga and Doris Turner
- Financial Counselor Iris Watt and Marise Resuggan
- Administration/Finance Officer Steen Johansen
- Administrative Staff Shirley Newington
- Karen Headley
- Kate Wedge
- Night Legal Service - Volunteer solicitors and about 7 Students/Volunteers

There is one worker employed as a Welfare Rights Advocate, Zoe O’Neill, who has been employed since October 2010 in the position as Welfare Rights advocate. Zoe was admitted to practice on 1 May 2012, and now acts as Welfare Rights solicitor, having completed her articles of clerkship in the Welfare Rights role.

The position is staffed for 22.5 hours a week. This is a reduction down from 30 hours per week due to funding. The remaining 7.5 hours a week are now funded for the role of Generalist Solicitor.

There are currently no volunteers providing assistance to the Welfare Rights Advocate. The Centre has sporadically had the services of Restricted Year Practitioners from Freehills for two week periods. It is hoped that this will continue with more regularity for the remainder of the year. It is also expected that a volunteer will also assist with Welfare Rights for a few hours a week.

Casework Trends

Data from CLSIS shows the following for 2011/2012:

- Total Advice Activities 338
- Total number of clients 63
- Cases open at beginning of period 12
- Cases opened during period 15
- Cases closed during period 13

The Centre has dealt with a number of serious and routine matters over the past year. There has been a significant increase in DSP

related matters with clients with a disability making up over 50% of the WR client demographic. Among the open files are matters including applications to the minister for deeming exemptions, act of grace payments and appeals relating to overpayments of various benefits (primarily Youth Allowance).

The Centre has also made referrals to WRAS on behalf of clients who have been prosecuted.

Client demographics:

- ATSI 5%
- CALD 11%
- DISABILITY 52%

Policy Work/Issues

Welfare Rights has conducted research into putting forward a policy proposal. This proposal looks at instigating reform on the information and education Centrelink recipients receive when they are awarded a compensation payment. Research is ongoing and no formal submissions have been made as yet, although it is thought that findings may also be relevant to be presented to the legal fraternity who represent these clients in their compensation matters and may have a duty to educate them on the likely ramifications of receiving lump sum payments.

Community Legal Education

The Welfare Rights unit has engaged in CLE projects and was involved in the Homelessness Connect program in August 2011.

The target CLE for the Welfare Rights Unit is 5 per year, with half being delivered to service providers. Welfare Rights has several new CLE attendances booked in, with joint attendances organized by the Centre's dedicated DDU CLE coordinator.

Future Directions – the next 12 months

Opportunities/plans for the Centre/Service

The commitment from the WA State Government following the 2011 Budget announcement that further funding will be provided for sustainability and growth within the not for profit sector has completed component one and we are now seeing the flow on benefits. The second component that should be rolled out starting 2013 will provide an average increase of 10% on existing contracts as they are revised to match the new procurement policy. As a Centre we are staying up to date and engaged in this, so as to be best prepared to access funding opportunities which in turn will allow greater development in key areas of service.

Threats to the Centre/service

Reduced WR funding and therefore reduced contact hours for that service coupled with clients presenting with more complex, time consuming matters is resulting in less clients being seen overall. A pattern of clients not attending their booked appointments has also arisen, and procedural steps to remedy this are being trialed.

The recent Pay Equity decision has resulted in increased wages, which, while excellent for workers in this sector must be met with an increase in funding from commonwealth funders to ensure that service funding is not diminished.

Sydney – Welfare Rights Centre (NSW)

Staff

- Matthew Butt Litigation Solicitor (F/T)
- Lee Hansen Principal Solicitor (F/T)
- Karen Lau Administrative Secretary (F/T)
- Catalina Loyola Office Manager (F/T)
- Amelia Meers Caseworker/Community Education and Liaison Officer (P/T)
- Carolyn Odgers Caseworker (P/T)
- Maree O’Halloran Director (F/T)
- Danny Shaw Senior Caseworker
- Gerard Thomas Policy and Media Officer (F/T)
- Cass Wong Caseworker/Volunteer & Student Coordinator (F/T)
- Katie Wrigley Caseworker/Handbook Researcher (F/T)

The Centre currently employs 11 people. Nine of the positions are full-time and two are part-time. We also engage an accounting company and Sam Trinity from that company works approximately one day per week at the Centre.

Advice and Casework service

The Centre’s casework comprises a telephone advice service, assistance with self-advocacy, written advocacy on behalf of clients and written or personal representation before the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT), the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), or the Federal Court in some cases. Advice is given on all aspects of Social Security and Family Assistance law and appeals.

Telephone advice is provided daily for a four hour period. The Centre has a toll free number to facilitate access for clients in country and outer-metropolitan areas and a TTY for people with hearing impairment. Initial advice is generally provided by phone. The Centre has an access and equity policy to ensure that people unable to obtain assistance by telephone are not disadvantaged.

The Centre maintains a nation-wide toll-free number for HESTA clients.

Number of clients

From July 2011 to June 2012 the Centre provided assistance to 2,930 clients. We provided 3,969 “advice activities” and opened 868 new cases (both major and minor) in the period. This advocacy included representation of clients in internal Centrelink reviews and with appeals to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

The most common payment types for matters over the period were:

- Disability Support Pension 768
- Newstart Allowance 511
- Parenting Payment 207
- Age Pension 319
- Youth Allowance 163
- Family Tax Benefit 228
- Carer Payment 152

Tribunal Representation

The Centre represented approximately 35 people at the Social Security Appeals Tribunal during 2011-2012. Cases included large member of a couple debts (\$200,000), to rejection of claims due to residency and compensation preclusion periods. The Centre represented a number of people at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Most of these cases were settled. One Carer Allowance case went to hearing with a successful outcome.

Criminal advice evening shift

In April 2012, the Centre established a fortnightly criminal evening advice service staffed by volunteer solicitors and barristers. Advice is provided to clients about the criminal prosecution process and the relationship between administrative and criminal law.

Debts

The most resource-intensive issue for our advice and casework service continues to be related to the raising and recovery of Social Security and Family Tax Benefit debts. In particular the Centre assisted numerous clients with member of a couple (MOC) debts which proved to be very resource intensive. The debts were usually in excess of \$70,000 and the Centre had many successes with these cases. It is of concern that in many of these cases Centrelink raises a MOC debt covering a period of many years, even though the client had been keeping Centrelink informed of their living arrangements throughout the relevant period. In some cases, it is observed that during the debt period Centrelink had reviewed the person's living arrangements and decided at that time the person was entitled to the single rate of payment. Despite this Centrelink decision makers invariably fail to take into account previous decisions by Centrelink, where it had accepted that the person was single. The retrospective nature of these decisions is of significant concern.

The Centre also provided assistance to many students who had debts raised on the basis that they were not undertaking full-time studies. Many of these students were enrolled in OTEN.

We also see cases where Centrelink systematically fails to take into account the person's income when calculating their rate of payment. This highlights the numerous Centrelink errors in the causation of debts. This is particularly the case where the person advises the Family Assistance Office of their income but that income is not used to assess the person's social security payment.

Compensation preclusion periods

We continue to see a large number of compensation preclusion period cases. This year our Centre has had some great success in getting lengthy preclusion periods reduced and assisting clients in hardship to get onto appropriate social security payments.

People with illnesses and disabilities

Approximately 25% of the people who contact the Centre are seeking assistance in relation to the rejection or cancellation of disability support pension. Due to the level of demand the Centre generally restricts its service to the provision of advice only.

The Centre continued to advise a large number of clients on activity tested payments, such as Newstart Allowance or Parenting Payment, who have an illness or disability. A difficulty in this area is where Centrelink refuses the request for an exemption from the activity test even though the person had obtained a valid medical certificate stating that they are unable to undertake any activity. In addition, the new changes to the DSP with the introduction of POS will invariably have implications for our clients in these situations.

Policy work/issues

The Centre undertakes the majority of its policy and media work in conjunction with the Network to facilitate a strong national presence. Please see the policy and media section of the Network report for details about submissions produced, Inquiry hearings attended and other work undertaken by Sydney staff working within the Network.

Media

The Centre responded to issues as they arose, but also sought to raise broader issues facing people living on low incomes. A great deal of effort went into briefing journalists and explaining income support policies and their impacts upon individuals and families.

Working in co-operation with the Tenant's Union of NSW, the Centre released a media statement on 10 May 2012 "New broom sweeps through Boarding Houses".

Anti-Poverty Week

The Welfare Rights Centre, Sydney, was the Chair of NSW Anti-poverty week in NSW during 2011, coordinating many meetings and events and providing administrative support, which made the week an outstanding success. Like many of our activities during the year, we sought to link our work to the campaign to increase the rate of Newstart and other allowances by \$50 per week.

During Anti-poverty week the Welfare Rights Centre released the findings of survey's that we undertook with the Australia Institute. The survey's revealed that Australian's believed that the rate of Newstart Allowance was too low, that, on average, it should be increased by \$86 a week. We also asked people to indicate what changes they would need to make if they unexpectedly found that they had to live on just \$35 a day. Sixty per cent stated that they would have to stop buying fresh food; almost half would not visit a doctor when sick. Seventy seven per cent would cut back on electricity or gas. Nearly one in two (45 per cent) would stop studying or training.

Liaison with Government agencies and the community

Staff members have attended many meetings with NSW and Federal Government agencies as well as within the community sector. As reported above, the Director continued to be the NSW Co-Chair of Anti-Poverty Week until the end of November 2011 when her term of office finished.

The Welfare Rights Centre, Sydney also regularly attended the following engagements during the 2011-12 year:

- NWRN committee meeting teleconferences
- Community Legal Centre NSW Co-ordinators' meetings
- the NSW Community Homelessness Alliance
- Federation of Non- Government Agencies (organised by NCOSS).

The Centre regularly attends a variety of local meetings to consult with the Department of Human Services on service delivery issues. These meeting include:

- the Department of Human Services Homelessness Advisory Group (NSW)
- the Department of Human Services Mental Health Advisory Group (NSW)
- the Department of Human Services Employment Services Advisory Group (NSW)
- the Department of Human Services Aboriginal Advisory Group (NSW).

The Centre also participated in consultations with the development of the NSW Ageing Strategy that was recently released by the NSW Minister for Ageing.

Finally, the Centre took part in the NWRN biannual delegations in Canberra. Sydney's Policy and Media Officer continues to be on the ACOSS Board. He is also the Employment and Social Security policy adviser to ACOSS.

Publications

The Centre's overall publication goals are to produce and distribute clear, informed, effective and targeted information and policy advocacy material designed to, increase accessibility to the Social Security system; educate and empower the community about Social Security issues, payments and rights; and improve the Social Security system in Australia.

In pursuit of these goals, the Centre's key publications for 2011-2012 were:

- "rights review" quarterly newsletter
- Independent Social Security Handbook ONLINE
- Social Security Reporter
- Factsheets
- Website on behalf of the Network as a whole

"Rights Review"

The Centre published four issues of "Rights Review" in 2011-2012, reporting every three months on changes to Social Security law and administration, raising awareness of Social Security matters, policy reform and assisting community workers to help their clients.

The Independent Social Security Handbook

In 2011-2012 the Centre continued to produce the ONLINE EDITION of the "Independent Social Security Handbook". The Centre updated the ONLINE Handbook four times to take into account changes to Social Security law and policy.

The Centre also laid the groundwork for the publication of the 7th edition of the Handbook.

Social Security Reporter

The Centre produced four editions of the Social Security Reporter (SSR) in 2011-2012. The purpose of the SSR is to provide a useful ready reference for Social Security practitioners and others with a particular interest in this area of the law, in particular important case law developments.

Factsheets and brochures

The Centre has 30 Factsheets available to assist and inform people about Social Security matters. In 2011-2012 we updated a number of Factsheets to reflect the changes to the law.

National Welfare Rights Network Website

The NWRN website, which is hosted by the Welfare Rights Centre, Sydney, continued to be updated and maintained by the Centre's Office Manager. The Centre is also in the process of revamping the current website and this project is nearly completed.

Education and community liaison

In 2011-2012, the Centre continued to target disadvantaged groups for education.

From June 2011 to July 2012 the Centre continued to provide bi-monthly training sessions on social security law to groups of community workers who service clients in our target disadvantaged groups. The courses also received accreditation from the Australian Association of Social Workers to June 2012.

In addition, we continued to provide targeted training to community organisations that support disadvantaged groups. Particular focus was given this year to interagency and community groups within the Bankstown local government area on the introduction of income management to the area, and to community and advocacy groups working with people with disabilities on the changes to Disability Support Pension.

Throughout 2011-2012, the Centre was involved in the National Multicultural Advisory Group, the NSW Centrelink Homelessness Reference Group, the NSW Homelessness Community Alliance, and the ACOSS Board.

Volunteer workers

Sydney's volunteer workers program continued with new volunteers being recruited and a number of group and individual induction sessions being held throughout the year.

The number of volunteer workers at the Centre is about 20 at any point in time. They provide an invaluable service to the Centre.

Future Directions – the next 12 months

7th edition of the Independent Social Security Handbook

The Centre intends to publish the 7th edition of the Independent Social Security Handbook in October 2012. The Handbook details all the changes to social security and family assistance law since the publication of the previous edition.

Threats to the Centre/service

Our biggest threat is to maintain sufficient recurrent funding to continue to provide the level of casework services provided and to maintain our current staffing levels.

Townsville – Townsville Community Legal Service (QLD)

Staff

The Townsville Community Legal Service currently has seven (7) full-time equivalent staff members, consisting of the following positions:

- Principal Solicitor
- Coordinator
- Financial Counsellor
- Seniors Legal and Support Service solicitor
- Seniors Legal and Support Service social worker
- General Solicitor, and
- Receptionist.

Until recently TCLS also had an eighth staff member who dealt with Cyclone Yasi and Family Relationship Centre legal advice, but Cyclone Yasi funding ended in April 2012 and that position has become redundant.

The TCLS's Welfare Rights service is funded for a 1.0 FTE position. The work is divided between the Principal Solicitor and the General Solicitor.

Welfare Rights work is one part of the TCLS's holistic service which includes:

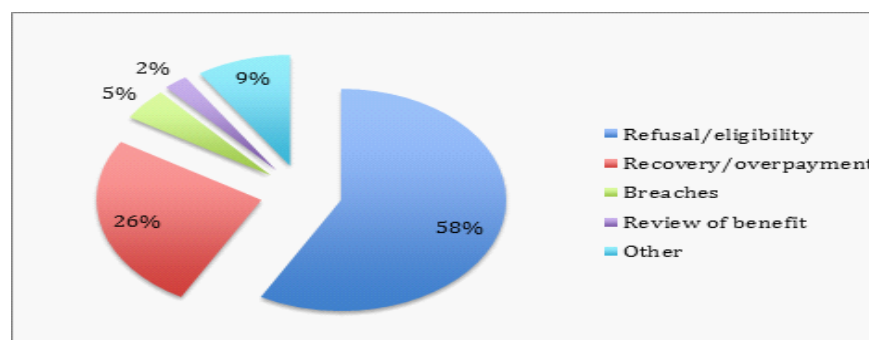
- A general law service, including weekly Thursday night advice service staffed by volunteer lawyers
- A Financial Counselling Service
- A Seniors Legal and Support Service
- The Welfare Rights Service
- An immigration service, focusing on humanitarian visas.

Casework trends

As can be seen from the following charts, our work predominantly concerns refusal of applications. The client's payment type (which includes the payment type they currently receive, and the payment type that they may be seeking) is predominantly Disability Support Pension (39%), Age Pension (21%) or Newstart Allowance (19%).

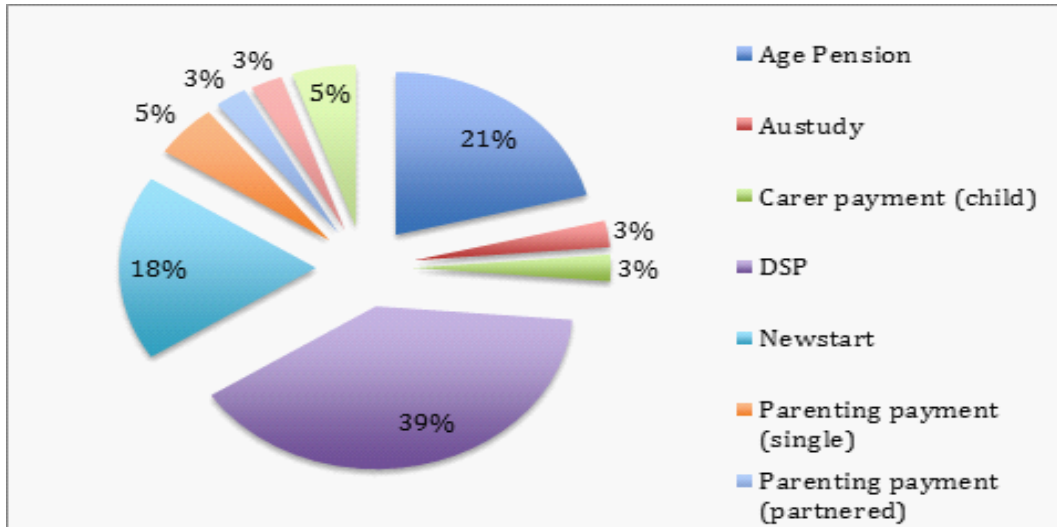
Welfare Rights matters at Townsville Community Legal Service

By CLSIS problem type 1/7/2011 to 30/6/2012



Welfare Rights matters at Townsville Community Legal Service

By payment type 1/7/2011 to 30/6/2012



Policy work/issues

The Townsville Community Legal Service has not been active in policy work over the last year.

Projects/publications

The Townsville Community Legal Service has not undertaken any projects or released any publications in the last year.

Future directions – next 12 months

Opportunities/plans for the Centre/Service

The Townsville Community Legal Service's catchment area stretches from Sarina (south of Mackay) to Cape York, and west to the Northern Territory border.

The majority of our Welfare Rights clients do not live in the Townsville region. As a result, our primary means of communication with clients is by telephone. TCLS Welfare Rights workers find that they never meet a large number of their clients on a face-to-face basis.

Hearings are generally conducted by telephone out of the Brisbane SSAT and AAT registries. Occasionally, videoconferences are arranged for DSP matters. Circuits are few and far between.

We are occasionally in a position when SSAT/AAT videoconferences are arranged for a client in one town, while we are linked in by telephone.

Given the number of services offered by the TCLS and the unpredictability of when and from where a client may seek assistance, there is no capacity for outreach.

The TCLS is hopeful that with the National Broadband Network rollout there will be potential for increased meaningful face-to-face contact with clients, and the capacity to gather documents during the course of the initial appointment, rather than by post or fax. We will apply for funding under the NBN Regional Legal Assistance Services funding program once the NBN is available to us. This is likely to be within the next six to twelve months.

Over the next year, the TCLS will discuss videoconferencing with community support services (including neighbourhood centres) in regional and remote settings.

Threats to the Centre/Service

Adequate funding is a constant concern, worsened by a new Queensland government that has already made numerous cuts to services.

As the Townsville Community Legal Service is a holistic service made up of five different services, the Welfare Rights Service may be impacted by other services losing funding. While our funding is predominantly Federal, a reduction in the Seniors Legal and Support Service would mean that we would need to relocate.

A reduction or loss of state Generalist Service funds would have a significant impact on current staffing arrangements for the 1.0 FTE Welfare Rights position.

Wollongong – Illawarra Legal Centre (NSW)

Staff

The year commenced with Liz Turnbull and Ian Turton working on a job share basis within the project. In April 2012 Liz went on leave prior to the birth of her second child leaving Ian working 31.5 hours per week within the project for the balance of the year.

Casework Trends/Law reform and policy

Welfare Rights undertook 183 advice activities in the 2011/12, which was a significant increase over the course of the previous financial year. In addition 18 files were opened at the beginning of this period whilst a further 50 files were opened during the year. Of these files 45 were closed during the period.

Clients continue to seek advice in a relation to a range of issues including income maintenance periods, compensation preclusion periods, eligibility for Disability Support Pension and Act of Grace payments. Centrelink debts and member of a couple matters continue to make up a significant component of our casework. Over the course of the last year the project has worked in close cooperation with Legal Aid in Nowra in several prosecution cases, with the Commonwealth DPP withdrawing proceedings on one occasion.

The project has lodged six appeals with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal over the course of the last year, of which three have been finalised as at the date of writing of this report. Two appeals were successfully concluded whilst the third was withdrawn on instructions from the client. In addition to this the project regularly represents clients before the SSAT. Limitation on resources means that we usually only advise our clients at the ARO level and below. Much of our casework continues to be assisting clients in being restored to payment.

Community Development/Community Legal Education

A number of community legal education workshops have been conducted for clients and the community sector over the past year including for the University of the Third Age (U3A); Cringila Cooperative; TAFE students on welfare rights advocacy; and Parenting support groups.

The Centre participated in community events including NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day. We also enjoyed the opportunity to answer questions, and discuss common welfare rights problems, on community radio and during law week. Welfare Rights has focused on providing services to people living on the South Coast. We have worked collaboratively with the Illawarra Tenants Service on the South Coast project as well as with Legal Aid Nowra on shared cases.

Future Directions

We are looking to extend our representation of clients at the AAT and SSAT as well as increase our CLE activities within the region. To this end the project is working in close cooperation with community groups and TAFE. The project is also looking to increase its participation in National policy initiatives and campaigns.

Associate Members

In 2011/12 the NWRN has two Associate Members. They were the Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS). We undertook policy work with both agencies and we valued their contribution greatly. Lauren Walker from NAAJA joined us for our delegation meetings with Centrelink (DHS) in March 2012.

Sub-Committee Reports

Department of Human Services Service Delivery Advisory Group

The Department of Human Services Service Delivery Advisory Group (SDAG) has for the last three years been the chief stakeholder consultative forum for Centrelink with external peak bodies. The group met three times over 2011/2012 with meetings held in September 2011, November 2011, and April 2012. Through the current year there has continued to be discussions over the form and function of the group and how it relates to the work of the Department of Human Services with the integration of its Centrelink and Medicare functions since July 2011. The forum has looked at specific themes in agenda topics throughout the last year relating to service delivery which has included servicing older Australians, Disability Support Pension changes, and young parent initiatives, as part of the Placed Based initiatives of Building Australia's Future Workforce. In September 2011 the recommendations formulated by the SDAG Did Not Attend (DNA) Working Party were provided to the Minister for Human Services for consideration.

The April 2012 meeting was a combined meeting of SDAG and the Consumer Consultative Group (CCG) which was a similar consultative forum within the Medicare space. Whilst the joint meeting was promoted at the November SDAG Meeting, as a one off combined meeting, the Department at Senate Estimates announced its intentions to merge the two groups on a permanent basis, as a cost saving measure. There has been a high level of resistance from members of SDAG and CCG to continued joint meetings, as they see their roles and purposes as being fundamentally differently. The two groups were formed using different terms of reference and within a different service delivery context of two very different organisations which have been merged. It will be necessary if these two stakeholder groups are to merge that there will need to be time spent on working collaboratively toward rearticulated terms of reference. This will largely be set against the backdrop of the new Minister for Human Services decisions about how the Department will engage with stakeholders in the future.

National Multicultural Advisory Group

The annual two day National Multicultural Advisory Group meeting hosted by Centrelink's Multicultural Services Branch will be held in Canberra 21-22 August 2011 (in the week prior to the NWRN network meeting) and will be attended by Amie Meers on behalf of the NWRN.

Unfortunately, the timing of the annual meeting this year meant that it had not yet taken place at the time this report was prepared. However, this year the NMAG met several times in Sydney in the interim. Much time was devoted to two key issues for NWRN, income management and special benefit.

Income management

Much of the focus of the 2011/2012 meetings was on the potential impact of income management on CALD communities as it is rolled out in places like Bankstown (ie areas with predominantly migrant populations) groups like the NMAG are getting on board with issues and problems relating to the impacts of income management on CALD communities.

Many of the issues raised echoed concerns that have been raised in the Northern Territory.

Income management problems for migrant communities that were raised by the group included problems around cash expenses such as overseas remittances, overseas debts, cash rent arrangements, community loans and pooling arrangements and other cultural factors. NMAG members provided insight and feedback to Centrelink to help it train its social workers to identify particular problems, especially where clients will be reluctant to disclose certain expenses (eg overseas debts).

Special benefit

In 2010/2011 NWRN undertook to the NMAG to write a paper on the problems around special benefit. The NWRN wrote a paper "Special Benefit – social exclusion and poverty traps". This paper was endorsed by the members of NWRN and has been sent to:

- Ministers
- Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Bill Shorten, Minister for Employment, Education and Workplace Relations
- Kim Carr, Minister for Human Services
- Brendan O'Connor, Minister for Homelessness
- Mark Butler, Minister for Mental Health and Social Inclusion

Others

Australian Law Reform Commission – Inquiry - Grey Areas – Age Barriers to Work in Commonwealth Laws

Social inclusion board (we also met with Patricia Falkiner from the board to discuss the paper)

There is a session at the annual NMAG meeting in August 2012 to be facilitated by NWRN which will look at the response to the paper and what action might be taken next.

Treasurer's Report

National Welfare Rights Network Inc.
Treasurer's Report 2011-12

The NWRN ended the 2011-12 year in good shape with just a \$4,000 loss. Effectively our budget was pretty balanced. We brought in \$30,000 in income and spent \$34,000. As we had \$50,000 to begin with, we have used less than 10% of our accrued surplus. So entering the 2012-13 year we have in excess of \$46,000 in the budget. Note of course that we work in 'cash' that is, we cost money when we either receive it or spend it. We know for example that already we have spent some more money on the website in the 2012-13 year. Particular thanks to Mark Leahy who always approves things above and beyond the call of duty (he's more contactable than most other exec members!). It is good to be able to assist the organisation in a practical way.

Regards

Peter Horbury
NWRN Treasurer



National Welfare Rights Network Inc.

A03998
ABN 13 789 701 090

Annual Financial Report

For the year ended 30 June 2012

National Welfare Rights Network Inc.
A03998

Statement of Financial Performance

For the year ended 30 June 2012

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
Receipts		
Levy from Members	19,379	27,551
Conference Registrations	6,700	5,175
GST Refunds	1,917	3,875
Interest	1,774	2,247
Other income	562	-
Total Receipts	<u>30,332</u>	<u>38,848</u>
Payments		
Staff Costs	-	2,200
Communications	8,853	2,340
Travel	6,894	6,911
Network Development	778	375
Administration	607	380
Annual Conference	9,224	10,534
GST Payments	357	5,036
Same-sex Project	7,700	62,356
Total Payments	<u>34,413</u>	<u>90,132</u>
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	<u>(4,081)</u>	<u>(51,284)</u>

Balance Sheet

As at 30 June 2012

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
Cash at Bank		
Fitzroy & Carlton Community Credit Co-Op Ltd.	1,064	784
Commonwealth Cash Management Trust	0	49,528
Bendigo Bank	45,167	0
Total Cash at Bank	<u>46,231</u>	<u>50,312</u>
Accumulated Funds		
Retained Funds	50,312	101,596
Current Year Net Result	(4,081)	(51,284)
Total Accumulated Funds	<u>46,231</u>	<u>50,312</u>

AUDITOR'S REPORT

National Welfare Rights Network Inc.
A03998

Independent Audit Report to the Members of National Welfare Rights Network Inc.

Scope

I have audited the financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of National Welfare Rights Network Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2012 which has been prepared on a Cash Basis. The Committee of Management is responsible for the financial report and has determined that the accounting policies used are appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 Australian Capital Territory and are appropriate to meet the needs of its members. I have conducted an independent audit of this financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members of National Welfare Rights Network Inc. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used are appropriate to the needs of the members.

The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 Australian Capital Territory. I disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or any other purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

My audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards.

The audit opinion is expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Audit Opinion

In my opinion, the financial report of the National Welfare Rights Network Inc. presents a true and fair view of the financial position of National Welfare Rights Network Inc. as at 30 June 2012 and the results of its operations for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Stephen James Hall Andrews (Retired CPA)

Melbourne

August 2012



National Welfare Rights Network Inc.
A03998

Statement by the Board

The Board of National Welfare Rights Network Inc. has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and has prepared the financial statements on a cash basis.

In the opinion of the Board:

1. the Balance Sheet and the Statement of Financial Performance present a true and fair view of the financial position of National Welfare Rights Network Inc. as at 30 June 2012 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. at the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that National Welfare Rights Network Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board and is signed for and on behalf of the Board by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maree O'Halloran", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

.....
Maree O'Halloran
President

Sydney, 17 August 2012