

Annual Report

2022 2023



COMMUNITY LEGAL
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners in the Perth region, the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation and acknowledge their special connection to land, waters and community.

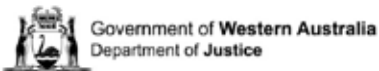
Always was. Always will be.

We pay respects to all First Nations Peoples in Western Australia and their cultures, and to Elders, past and present.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

We would like to acknowledge our key partners this year:

Our funders the WA Department of Justice, the Department of Communities and Lotterywest.



We are part of a national network and member of Community Legal Centres Australia.



CLWA would like to thank the following law firms for their pro bono support and commitment to CLCs and access to justice:

- ▶ **Allens**
- ▶ **Ashurst**
- ▶ **Clayton Utz**
- ▶ **Corrs Chambers Westgarth**
- ▶ **Gilbert+Tobin**
- ▶ **Gilchrist Connell**
- ▶ **Herbert Smith Freehills**
- ▶ **Lavan**

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ABOUT US

Community Legal WA is the peak body for community legal centres in WA. Our purpose is to support our members and work for a fair WA, where everybody has access to justice.

Key objectives of our work:

Promote and enhance
access to justice

Strengthen effective and
responsive community
legal services

Lead and unite the sector
through a strengthened
peak body

ABOUT COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Community legal centres are independent community organisations that provide free or low-cost legal help to people, when they need it most. Getting legal help in time can stop problems getting worse – keeping people in work, families in their homes and kids safe.

There are 26 community legal centres, right across WA. Some centres help people who live in a geographical area, like the northern suburbs of Perth and some centres are specialists in an area of law, like employment. Community legal centres help people understand their rights, discuss their options, and provide legal advice and representation.

OUR VISION

Our Vision is for a fair Western Australia, in which everybody has equal access to justice

OUR MEMBERS



We are pleased to welcome Arts Law and Knowmore as associate members of CLWA



CEO'S REPORT

This year's work has been driven by two themes: encouraging collaboration to create more a client-centred legal assistance sector and shining a light on the fantastic work that community legal centres do.

WA's first Legal Assistance Strategy asks providers to deliver a more client-centred service system. This provides a real opportunity for CLCs to shape the future of services – the right services, provided by the right people, at the right time and in the right place.

CLWA has advocated strongly for the role of CLCs and our central place in legal assistance, both in local services connected with and provided by community and statewide specialist services. Much of our work this year, including through the Sustainable CLCs Project, has brought members together to collaboratively shape our response to reforms and our place in helping people in need into the future.

We have been working hard to showcase our sector's impact. We have done this through advocacy; meeting with Ministers, MPs and decision makers across the state to grow active support for CLCs. We have also highlighted CLC innovation, through events like the Health and Community Justice Partnerships Forum and shone a spotlight in the media on the value of Centres and the work they do.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Community Legal Centres are part of a justice movement that spans more than 50 years. They have a unique place, owned by our communities, responsible to them and responsive to community need.

We have always known that prevention is better than a cure, and we have been working to change bad laws, improve processes and achieve justice for the community.

In this 'new world' on the other side of a pandemic, our purpose has not changed.

Over the last year:

- ▶ **We've seen the impact of our sectors work through multiple royal commissions (including those on disability and robodebt).**
- ▶ **Our skilled and dedicated lawyers have made countless submissions and advocated for changes to government policy and legislation and**
- ▶ **Together we've helped tens of thousands western Australians access justice through direct legal and social assistance.**

And we're not done yet. While our vision is for a fair Western Australia, where everybody has equal access to justice, we know this is not yet achieved. Our assistance and advocacy are not meeting community need.

We're continuing to work with Governments at all levels to highlight the importance of access to justice and our members continue to innovate and trial new models of connecting with community, providing invaluable support.

To CLWA staff – thank you for your dedication and contributions this year and to my fellow Board members – thank you for your commitment and wisdom.

KEY MOMENTS 2022-23

SEPTEMBER 2022

We celebrated the completion of the FDV Legal Health Check Project with CLCs across WA. This tool supports people with an experience of FDV, to identify legal issues early and create better referrals and outcomes.



NOVEMBER 2022

Our biggest ever Member's Engagement Forum ran for four days, covering CPD, consultation and sector discussions, finishing with leadership training for CLCs.



OCTOBER 2022

We ran a successful one-day Symposium, 'Improving Outcomes through Collaboration' with Health Justice Australia, about partnerships in the health, community and legal assistance sectors.



JULY 2022

CLWA welcomed WA's first Legal Assistance Strategy. As demand for community legal services grows, we need a strategy to meet current demand and future challenges.



JANUARY 2023

January saw tragic flooding in the Fitzroy region affecting our FVPLS and CLC members. CLWA worked with members on media to highlight the importance of Aboriginal and local leadership and advocated for funding to meet legal need and help with emergency response and recovery.





FEBRUARY 2023

We met Federal Attorney General Mark Dreyfus and Patrick Gorman MP with CLC leaders. Mark Dreyfus talked about the value of CLCs and his intention to grow funding into the future.

We also ran a two-day Sustainable CLCs Forum for the sector.



JUNE 2023

After consultation with our FVPLS members, we announced CLWA's support for the 'Yes' campaign for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. This is core to our values and role as the peak body - to work to increase access to justice for all people, including First Nations.

As Members of the Make Renting Fair campaign, we welcomed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. Renters deserve a place to call home, where they can hang a picture or have a pet.



CLCS IN THE NEWS

This year we supported Centres to tell their stories in the media, to increase awareness of and support for the valuable work they do.

In January we highlighted the need for local and Aboriginal leadership after the Fitzroy floods in the West Australian, and the lessons we can learn from legal need after Cyclone Seroja.

In May Women's Legal Service of WA highlighted growing demand for family and domestic violence legal assistance in several pieces for the Sunday Times.

We worked with Consumer Credit Legal Service and others to highlight the issue of economic abuse through their Roundtable event.

We worked with Kimberley Community Legal Centre to raise awareness of public housing issues in the aftermath of the Kimberley floods, centering on their 'Stuck in the Heat' Report.

MAY 2023

During Law Week we took part in the Walk for Justice and delivered training for Centres on Leadership through Change.

In the WA State Budget we welcomed a continuation of what was previously a COVID funding uplift for centres and a 35% two-year funding increase for Tenancy Advice and Education Services (TAES). CLCs were also included in the indexation policy, helping with rising costs.



DATA SNAPSHOT

All CLCs and FVPLS are required to record their service data in a system called CLASS, adhering to the National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual. The following statistics represent the work completed by CLCs and FVPLS during the 2022-2023 financial year.

THE PEOPLE HELPED BY OUR MEMBERS:



24584 people assisted



People who disclose a **disability / mental health** challenge



People who disclose experiencing **family violence**



People who identify as **Aboriginal** and/or **Torres Strait Islander**



People whose main **language** spoken at home is not English



People experiencing or at risk of **homelessness**



People experiencing **financial disadvantage**



People living in outer **regional** or **remote** areas



People who are **not married** or **de facto** who have dependants (**sole carers**)

TOP 6 ISSUES FOR CLIENTS CONTACTING COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Housing

Parenting Arrangements

Wills and Estates

Family and Domestic Violence Restraining Orders

Family Law Property

Credit and debt

SERVICES DELIVERED BY OUR MEMBERS



28577

Legal Advice

Legal services were delivered in the following ways:



34% In person



34% Over the telephone



16% Via letter or email



2140

Duty Lawyer



1844

Court Tribunal matters finalised



10452

Legal Task



1468

Other Representation matters finalised



9875

Legal Information provided

CLWA REFERRAL SERVICE

2022-2023: 3455 total referrals



At CLWA, we provide a referral service for people seeking legal help.



1789

telephone
and walk-in
referrals made

Online Referral Tool:



1666 people
used the tool to
get a referral to a
community legal
service this year.



93% of
people surveyed
said they'd
recommend
the tool.



71% of
online referrals
were made
outside of
office hours.

Objective One:

PROMOTE AND ENHANCE ACCESS TO JUSTICE

advocate for increased and more sustainable funding for the Tenancy Advice and Education Services (TAES) program and were pleased with the budget announcement of a 35% increase to TAES secured for two years, allowing Centres to plan and provide consistent services to renters.

Through our Awareness and Advocacy project, we have worked to highlight the value of CLCs and FVPLSs and their role in the community through the media and by building active support from MPs, Ministers and other decision makers. We delivered sector wide training sessions on MP engagement and working with the media to build capacity and skills in the sector.

We continued to work with a range of justice and advocacy forums, including Social Reinvestment WA, the Protection and Care Advocacy Network, Path to Safety steering group, WA Peaks Forum, CLC National Human Rights Network and Disaster Network. We joined the Western Australia for a Human Rights Act (WA4HRA) campaign and the Law Society Access to Justice Committee and continue our work as an active member of other important campaigns including Raise the Age and Make Renting Fair. This year we welcomed the government's announcement of proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act as important progress towards improving rights for renters in WA.

CLWA'S POLICY AND ADVOCACY WORK

Following the publication of WA's first Legal Assistance Strategy, we advocated strongly to influence the development of the Department of Justice's Legal Assistance Action Plan, securing commitments for a commissioning strategy and a workforce strategy for legal assistance services.

In November, following sector-wide consultation we launched our State Budget Submission, outlining issues facing the sector and our priorities for 2023-24, including a call for state funding for our Aboriginal community controlled members, FVPLS.

In May's budget, we welcomed the WA government's announcement of a continuation of what was previously the COVID funding uplift, to boost funding for two years, along with a small increase to baseline funding for Centres. CLCs were also included in the State Government's indexation policy, which will go some way to support Centres to keep providing services to the community when costs are rising.

We worked closely with the tenancy network to



CLWA's Chelsea McKinney and Jocasta Sibbel with Federal Member for Burt, Matt Keogh MP

CHATBOT/ONLINE REFERRAL TOOL

The Online Referral Tool launched in June 2022 and now forms a key part of CLWA's referral process. The Tool uses the Josef legal tech platform to collect information on a person's legal issues and recommend Centres near them that might be able to help. The Tool is available 24/7 and can direct people to a Centre's own online form or email a CLC requesting an appointment.

In the first year of operations, 1666 service recommendations have been made to people seeking help online; an average of 139 a month. The Online Referral Tool helps connect people to their local service and reduces the effort required to get the right help, creating a more person-centred service.

CLWA's Online Referral Tool



IMPROVING DATA

This year, CLWA has played a leadership role in the sector in WA, nationally to the peak body and with the ABS and Commonwealth government in advocating for appropriate data processes.

We provided advice to the Department of Justice through membership of their Data Advisory Committee and worked with the ABS on WA CLCs' successful provision of unit level data. Through our data communities we are working to build capacity and skills and helping Centres demonstrate their impact. Special thanks to Catherine Eagle, Brodie Lewis, Rowan Kelly and staff Joshua Marks for their work in this area.

PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

This year, we created a dedicated project on involving People with Lived Experience, to benefit our own work and provide leadership and support for the sector to increase their work in this space.

The Board agreed to spend reserves to facilitate this project and in April we welcomed Marisha Gerovich as our Lived Experience Coordinator. We started the foundational work needed to engage with People with Lived Experience safely and respectfully, creating policies and procedures and focusing on our organisational readiness.

In doing this, we drew on the expertise and guidance of experts from the Lived Experience community, and we thank them all for their support. We are excited to continue this project and create opportunities for People with Lived Experience to share their stories and shape our work.

Objective Two:

2 STRENGTHEN EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES



ACCREDITATION

2023 saw a major milestone in accreditation - WA became one of the few states in Australia to have all CLCs and FVPLS achieve accreditation under Phase 3 of the National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) by 30 June 2023, with the final 5 Centres assessed and accredited.

The accreditation process involves a desktop review, comprehensive site visit with a full day of interviews and the preparation of a customised Improvement Plan for each Centre to support its growth and development for the next three years. To achieve accreditation, CLCs needed to demonstrate that they meet minimum standards of governance, financial management and client centred practice.

In addition, we have worked closely with national colleagues in the review and refinement of the NAS Guidelines and supporting documentation for the next phases of accreditation. These updates to the NAS are expected to be implemented in WA

commencing in 2024. We have also provided ongoing support to centres to complete their Improvement Plan progress reporting.

The Accreditation Team and the Sustainable CLCs Team have been working collaboratively to build the WA Accreditation Hub website, which will include a suite of best practice policies and procedures identified during the Accreditation process, enabling Centres to learn from each other's practices and build sector capacity to deliver high quality services.

During this year, Eleanor Yates handed over her role as Accreditation Coordinator, first to Leigh Newman and then to Renai Bremner, in order to take on the role of Sector Development Manager. Thank you to Leigh and Eleanor for your fantastic contribution in this role. We also adjusted the balance of the team and welcomed Fiona Hobbs to work with Renai on administrative support for accreditation.

SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

The Sustainable CLCs project supports and enables the sector to engage with the Department of Justice reform agenda, in order to create more client-centred services and improve access to justice.

During the first year of a two-year project, the team has provided training, resources, conferencing and consultancy to enable engagement across five pillars of reform. The pillars are; providing client centric services, establishing minimum service standards, evidence-based service delivery, collaboratively delivered services and increased capacity of community legal centres.

Consultation was a major component of the work of the team this year, using different methodologies, including detailed conversations in workshops and online sessions, surveys, discussion papers, position papers and CLC working groups. The themes aligned with the pillars of reform including minimum service standards, service collaboration and workforce issues.

“The workshop was incredibly client centric, and having lived experience brought in made the workshop really engaging and gave us a reason and a purpose to make services more accessible and welcoming. Thank you.

Participant in mapping client pathways workshop

In November we delivered a range of presentations including one on pillar five - increasing capacity, looking at mergers and other partnerships. We also connected members with pro bono legal advice to consider merger options.

The team delivered a two-day Sustainable CLCs Forum in February 2023, taking the place of CLWA's biannual member engagement event. The Forum included sessions on outcomes, collaboration and service standards.

Training sessions have included client centric services, mergers and mapping client pathways.

During the year, the team established data communities, peer learning groups to improve consistency, capture and communication of data in the sector. The communities focus on building skills, and exploring ways that Centres can use data in demonstrating service quality and identifying need. This learning has been reinforced with ongoing one-on-one support and guidance by CLWA staff.

Measuring the impact of Legal Assistance Services is an important area of growth for the sector. CLWA was able to deliver three sessions on the what, why, and how of outcomes. Subsequently, CLWA has developed an introductory template of outcomes to assist its members in starting to collect and express their impact, including both client feedback and service data indicators.

The team also provided information, support and advice to Centres, assisting Boards and leadership teams to engage with the reforms, explore concepts and implement changes. The team provided support to the specialist community legal centres establishing the 'Hay St Hub'.

There have been high levels of engagement from the sector in the project and positive feedback about the work of the team and the help and resources provided.

During the year, Felicity Townsend left the role of Project Officer and Holly Rolfe joined the team as Project and Referrals Officer. Renai Bremner also took on responsibilities in the project. Thank you to Felicity for your valuable contribution to the project and welcome Holly and Renai.



Our Sustainable CLCs Forum, Feb 2023

Objective Three:

3 LEAD AND UNITE THE SECTOR THROUGH A STRENGTHENED PEAK BODY



Improving our governance has been a big focus this year, with introduction of three Board subcommittees.

- ▶ **The Finance subcommittee has taken a deep look at our finance policies and processes and provided advice on audit, budgets, leave provisions and reporting.**
- ▶ **The Risk subcommittee commenced the development of a Risk Framework for CLWA and updated our Risk Register, setting policy review and development priorities.**
- ▶ **The Governance subcommittee led a comprehensive review of our governance model and Constitution. They developed a new approach to strengthen focus on our vision; introduce independent, non-sector Board members to bring in new skills; manage conflicts of interest; clarify member engagement; and modernise the Rules.**

We thank the following members for their committee work this year:

- ▶ **Finance:** Committee Chair Asha Bhat and Carol Child
- ▶ **Risk:** Committee Chair Sarah Toovey, Kathy Johnson and Brodie Lewis
- ▶ **Governance:** Committee Chair Brodie Lewis, Sarah Patterson and Jennie Gray

CLWA also saw successful results of our 2021 restructure, with new skills and increased capacity in the core functions of sector development, communications, advocacy and law reform. We further enhanced our member engagement practices - developing staff skills in facilitation and introducing new methods to support everyone to contribute. We are pleased with the results which saw increased input and fresh insights from our members.

Finally, CLWA ran our second annual Member Feedback Survey to take feedback on our work and inform our review of our membership value proposition and fees.

Responses from CLWA Member Feedback Survey 2023:

“The facilitation coupled with the background survey was excellent - what could have been a very contentious session was handled brilliantly. Well done.”

“CLWA has assisted my centre to engage with others in the sector, building relationships and leading to a greater understanding of how we can work together better across the sector.”



CLWA's Board at 2022 AGM

“I really appreciate the passion and enthusiasm of the very dedicated and experienced staff at CLWA.”

OUR TEAM

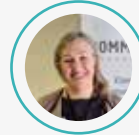
We have had some staff changes through the year and welcomed new team members. Below are the CLWA team (as of June 2023):



Chelsea McKinney
CEO



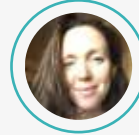
Sonia Abbott
Corporate Services Coordinator



Jocasta Sibbel
Policy & Advocacy Coordinator



Chantelle Lines
Strategic Communications Coordinator



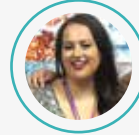
Eleanor Yates
Sector Development Manager



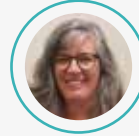
Sarah Jarman
Senior Project Officer



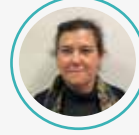
Joshua Marks
Data and Impact Advisor



Holly Rolfe
Project and Referrals Officer



Renai Bremner
Capacity Building Coordinator



Marisha Gerovich
Lived Experience Coordinator

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

In October/November 2022 we ran our biggest ever Member's Engagement Forum, spanning a week of activities. Monday 31st October saw us deliver a sold-out Symposium and Workshop on Partnerships in the health, community and legal assistance sectors. The hybrid event, organised in partnership with Health Justice Australia, was attended by over 180 participants from the legal assistance, health, community sectors and regulators.

Our February Members Engagement Forum was led by the Sustainable CLCs team, incorporating consultation and discussion with training and workshops



REPORT FROM THE WA PII REPRESENTATIVE AND CHAIR OF THE LEGAL PRACTICE AND PII COMMITTEE

During the past year I have discussed legal practice issues and concerns with CLCs. The Legal Practice and PII (Professional Indemnity Insurance) administration sub-committee meets approximately 6 weekly and supports me in my role.

With the introduction of Uniform Laws in WA we have identified issues with how the laws are being administered in WA. The resulting extra cost and administrative burden is being felt by all CLCs and I have been working with and will continue to work with CLWA to raise these issues with the Legal Practice Board.

During the year amongst other things we:

- ▶ **planned and delivered 53 CPD sessions requested by CLCs to 1371 attendees;**
- ▶ **responded to legal practice issues that arose; and**
- ▶ **finalised the 2022 crosschecks and organised the 2023 crosschecks.**

I would like to acknowledge and thank the other members of the sub-committee - Fiona Hobbs whose administrative support is essential, and Ann-Margaret Walsh and Alison Muller whose practical ideas and experience are invaluable.

THE NATIONAL PII NETWORK

CLCs Australia has a PII Network made up of a representative from each State and Territory. I am the PII representative for WA and the chair of the National PII network.

Each year the network is involved in ensuring that our PII policy is placed with an insurer on the best possible terms and for the best possible price. This year we were able to finalise our Policy earlier than in previous years, however there was a delay in the Legal Practice Board approving the policy.

We were once again able to renew our policy with our existing insurer in a difficult insurance market because of our reputation as a sector that focusses on managing risk and has in place great strategies to reduce the likelihood of us making errors in providing services to our clients and so avoiding claims against us.

The PII network has been working with Liz Wells at CLCA who is completely redrafting the Risk Management Guide. This has involved a significant

extra time commitment from members of the Network but based on the draft chapters that we are close to finalising it will be a great resource for the sector.

Catherine Eagle

Welfare Rights and Advocacy Services, PII Representative for WA Chair of the National PII Network

Many thanks to Fiona Hobbs, Virtual Assistant and Executive Support Services for her work supporting the Legal Practice and PII Committee

2023 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE

Income for the year was \$1,008,966, with most of our income coming from the Department of Justice, which included special funding for the Sustainable CLCs Project as well as our baseline funding. This funding is set to continue into 2023/24.

The organisation is continuing to invest reserves into advancing our policy and advocacy agenda and commencing work to engage People with Lived Experience to inform our work.

As of 30 June 2023, CLWA held cash balances of \$601,172 and reserves of \$423,065.

In 2022/23 CLWA reported a surplus of \$22,018.

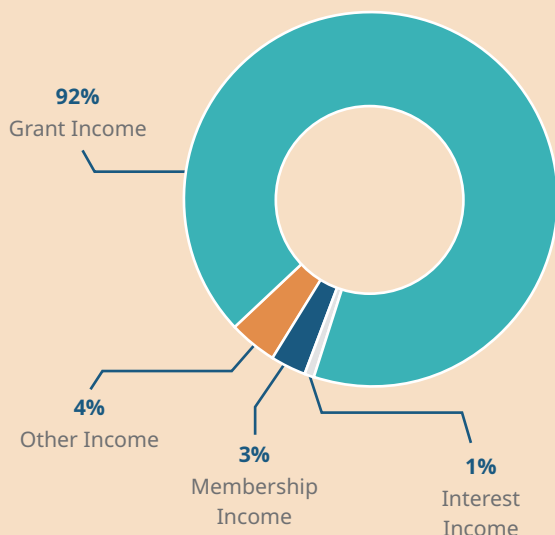
In 2023/24 the Board have agreed to continue their investment to support the community legal sector in this challenging reform era. In future years there will be a need to diversify our income streams to ensure our sustainability and independence.



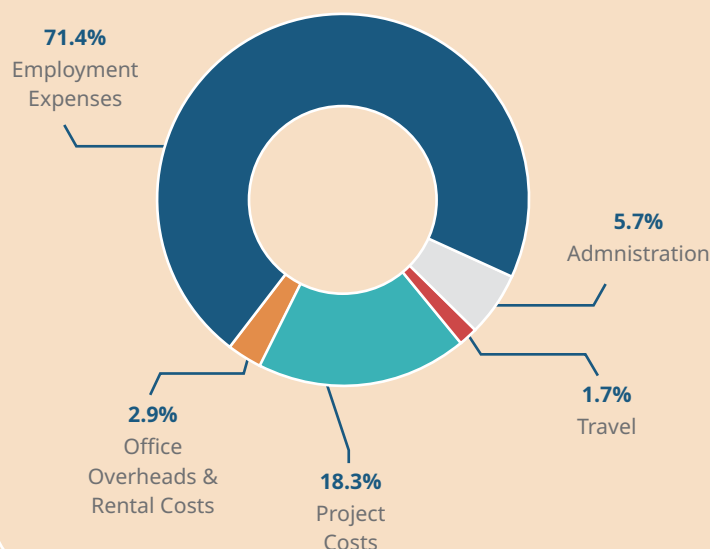
Asha Bhat

Treasurer, CLWA

Breakdown of Income



Breakdown of Expenditure



Our total expenditure for the year was \$986,948. The majority of costs related to staffing and some costs associated with the FDV Legal Health

As of 30 June 2023, our net assets were \$423,065.

Note: In 2022 other sundry income had been included with Membership Income, this was separated out in 2023 to ensure Membership Income could be reported clearly and separately.

Profit and Loss	\$ 2023	\$ 2022
Grants	929,322	1,697,856
Membership Income	29,290	47,518
Interest and Other Income	50,354	11,739
Total Income	1,008,966	1,757,113
Employment Expenses	699,413	696,493
Project Costs	180,252	801,010
Other Expenses	107,283	130,624
Total Expenses	986,948	1,628,127
Surplus for the Year	22,018	128,986

Financial Position	\$ 2023	\$ 2022
Fixed Assets	20,078	12,948
Current Assets	626,252	731,109
Current Liabilities	-215,867	-342,404
Non-Current Liabilities	-7,398	-606
Net Assets	423,065	401,047
Current Year Surplus	22,018	128,986
Reserves	401,047	272,059
Total Equity	423,065	401,047

CLWA BOARD 2022-23



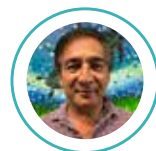
Chairperson
Brodie Lewis
Business Manager,
Albany CLC



Deputy Chair
Sarah Patterson
CEO, Gosnells CLC



Treasurer
Asha Bhat
CEO, Southern
Aboriginal Corporation



Members
Chris Gabelish
Operations Manager, Regional Alliance West



Jennie Gray
CEO, Women's Legal Service WA



Kathy Johnson
CEO, Peel Community Legal Services



Sarah Toovey
General Manager, RUAH Legal Services

We would like to thank outgoing Board members Carol Child and Gai Walker for their hard work and valuable contributions.



**COMMUNITY
LEGAL**
WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

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