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# LEGAL AID COMMISSION OF TASMANIA

CORPORATE PLAN 2015

# From the Chairperson and the Director



*Patrick Lunn*  
Chairperson



*Graham Hill*  
Director

In less than 100 years, legal aid in Tasmania has developed from a small charity to a leading provider of legal services to disadvantaged people. Legal aid contributes to a fairer, more inclusive, and rights respecting community. Legal aid is also essential to the Tasmanian justice system. By enabling people to access lawyers, legal aid keeps the wheels of justice turning and helps maintain trust and confidence in the justice system.

With the needs of the community being so complex, diverse and multifaceted, it is vital that the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania ('LACT') plans for service delivery. It is also important that the LACT develops an integrated set of actions aimed at increasing its long-term capacity to achieve its statutory functions. Without a plan, agencies simply drift and react to the pressures of the day. This corporate plan arises from a planning workshop that the Legal Aid Commission held on 31 October 2014. The workshop mapped the needs of disadvantaged people for legal assistance services and objectively assessed those needs against our capabilities. It critically assessed the LACT's strengths and weaknesses and our priorities.

Our vision is for a safer and fairer Tasmania through enhanced access to justice.

## We can achieve this vision by:

- **Ensuring that the right people can access legal aid;**
- **Delivering high-quality legal assistance to the community;**
- **Providing the right mix of information, advice, minor assistance, mediation, and representation services;**
- **Contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of the court system; and**
- **Managing taxpayer funds appropriately**

To achieve this success, the LACT has identified six key strategies. We need to focus on the best possible outcomes for clients, encourage excellence amongst staff, consistently apply accepted guidelines, operate within a sustainable and transparent budget, effectively engage with the community, and remain at the forefront of technological innovation that increases productivity.

We are confident that our Board, management team, and staff have the commitment and ability to skilfully execute the actions in this plan that will support our strategies to achieve a safer and fairer Tasmania.

No one can predict the future and so we designed this plan as a dynamic document that we will adapt as circumstances change. We welcome your comments and feedback as we refine the plan over time.



## Vision

A safer and fairer Tasmania through enhanced access to justice.

## Mission

To deliver a range of high-quality legal services to as many needy Tasmanians as possible.

## Core Values

### **Integrity:**

We act ethically at all times.

### **Professionalism:**

We provide high-quality services.

### **Efficiency:**

We use taxpayers resources responsibly and pursue continuous improvement.

### **Fairness:**

We ensure equitable access to the right services.



# About Us

The Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania is a statutory body established by the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1990* (Tas). The Commission operates at arms-length from Government but is accountable to the Attorney-General, the Hon Dr Vanessa Goodwin MLC.

We are the largest government-funded legal assistance provider in Tasmania, playing the central role in the coordination and delivery of legal aid services. The Commission provides services across Tasmania through offices in Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie. The Commission provides a range of quality legal assistance services.

## Information

The Commission provides preventative services through its website and through community legal education. Our website includes facts sheets, YouTube videos on legal subjects, and help for self-represented litigants. Last year it registered 368,000 page views. The Commission has mapped the need for community legal education and presents to target audiences including schools, community groups, professional bodies, and other organisations throughout Tasmania. Last year we presented 109 sessions reaching 5,220 people.

## Advice

We provide early intervention services through our telephone helpline and face-to-face advice at our offices. Last year we serviced 20,027 calls from the community. With 43 calls serviced per 1,000 head of population, our helpline is the most frequented legal aid call centre in Australia. Last year we provided 6,590 face-to-face consultations with lawyers giving legal advice.

## Minor Assistance

The Commission provides minor assistance to self-represented litigants in civil matters. This includes help with court documents, writing letters for clients, making telephone calls and engaging in negotiations with other parties.

## Dispute resolution

In family law matters concerning children's issues, we provide family dispute resolution mediation services. Last year we conducted more than 400 mediations and achieved settlement rate around 90%.

## Representation

The Commission provides, and pays for, lawyers to represent assisted people in court. Last year we provided 5,211 new grants of aid for representation.



# Strategic Outcomes

In order to deliver on our vision we have identified 5 long-term outcomes that will focus our work over the next 3 years. These provide beacons that drive our strategic choices as well as our day-to-day actions.

## Strategic Outcome 1

Ensure the right people get access to legal aid  
How we will know if we are achieving this?

- **Priorities exist for the need for the service, type of service and merit**
- **Stakeholders understand the priorities**
- **Consistent compliance with the priorities**

## Strategic Outcome 2

Strike an appropriate balance in allocating resources between a range of services  
How we will know if we are achieving this?

- **Allocation split is identified and agreed**
- **Activity is occurring in all these areas**
- **Appropriate budgets exist for all these areas**
- **Spending is consistent with the split**

## Strategic Outcome 3

Deliver high quality legal services  
How we will know if we are achieving this?

- **Satisfied clients**
- **Service delivery fit for current demand**
- **Understand our greatest demands**
- **Recognition of service delivery by legal and general community**



# Strategic Outcomes

## Strategic Outcome 4

Contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system

How we will know if we are achieving this?

- **Key indicators of process efficiency in the system are improving**
- **Positive feedback from key stakeholders**
- **Empowered and educated litigants**

## Strategic Outcome 5

Be a financially sustainable and accountable organisation

How we will know if we are achieving this?

- **Not reliant on non-recurrent funding**
- **Have clearly identified priorities**
- **Meeting all compliance responsibilities**
- **Meeting funders expectations**
- **Prudent management of funds – public expectations for accountability being met**



# Key Strategies

To drive achievement of these strategic outcomes we have identified six key strategies that will be implemented over the next 3 years. Each of these strategies will contribute to different degrees to the achievement of each of the strategic outcomes. These strategies will be implemented through a range of annual actions that will be updated on a yearly basis as part of the Commission's planning process. These actions will be actively monitored and progress reviewed by the Commission management team over the course of the year.

## Strategy 1

### **Encourage excellence and collegiality amongst all staff**

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following strategic outcomes:

- **High quality legal services**
- **Efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system**
- **A sustainable and accountable organisation**

In 2015 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- Provide training to managers to effectively administer performance management**
- Develop a professional development and mentoring program for all staff**
- Develop induction and training manual for new employees**
- Provide whole-of-organisation training in relation to State Service Code of Conduct and ensure adherence**
- Aim for a whole-of-organisation event annually**



# Key Strategies

## Strategy 2

### **Establish, communicate and consistently apply guidelines and priorities to balance different funder's expectations**

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following strategic outcomes:

- **Ensuring the right people get access to legal aid**
- **Striking a balance in resource allocation**
- **High quality legal services**
- **Efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system**
- **A sustainable and accountable organisation**

In 2015 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- Establish priorities for grants to move away from the daily limit**
- Effectively communicate the priorities by making guidelines accessible to internal/external practice and clients**
- Ensure consistent application of the guidelines**

## Strategy 3

### **Develop and maintain a sustainable and transparent budgetary and governance framework**

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following strategic outcomes:

- **Ensuring the right people get access to legal aid**
- **Striking a balance in resource allocation**
- **High quality legal services**
- **Efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system**
- **A sustainable and accountable organisation**

In 2015 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- Investigate and correct current financial system**
- Recast the budget**
- Build three levels of management reports and be reviewed by an Expert Advisory Panel**
- Provide advice to the Board on financial sustainability**



# Key Strategies

## Strategy 4

### Strive for best possible outcomes for clients of the Commission

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following strategic outcomes:

- **High quality legal services**
- **Efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system**

In 2015 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- Use performance management to retain good staff and address underperforming staff issues**
- Explore alternative methods of delivering services e.g. maximise use of technology; addressing illiteracy; graduate program**
- Continue assessment of our client base, their needs and experience of our service**
- Investigate ways of rewarding and encouraging excellence within our statutory framework**

## Strategy 5

### Effectively engage with the community

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following strategic outcomes:

- **Ensuring the right people get access to legal aid**
- **Efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system**

In 2015 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- Develop a framework to identify and maintain relationships with external non-legal agencies**
- Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan to create stronger and more collegial relationships with legal stakeholders**
- Use existing technology to actively engage the public and wider community e.g. website, online chat, social media, client surveys**
- Plan appropriate CLE program by examining statistics to establish target audience and identifying relevant issues to target**
- Develop a marketing strategy consistent with non-duplication of service**
- Outreach through provision of CLE to vulnerable communities**



# Key Strategies

## Strategy 6

### **Remain intelligently at the forefront of technical support for all services**

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following strategic outcomes:

- **Ensuring the right people get access to legal aid**
- **Striking a balance in resource allocation**
- **High quality legal services**
- **Efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system**
- **A sustainable and accountable organisation**

In 2015 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- a) **Increase use of video technology e.g. FDR program, face-to-face advice, emergency client assistance**
- b) **Upgrade website for information services including videos, facts sheets etc**
- c) **Use social media as an engagement tool**
- d) **Construct client satisfaction surveys and interactive forms for tablet devices**
- e) **Collect contributions electronically – Centre pay**



# Organisation Structure

