

Legal
Aid For
Tasmanians

Strategic Plan 2020 –23

Honesty.
Courage.
Engagement.

Acknowledgement of Country

Tasmania Legal Aid acknowledges and pays respect to the palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal people) as the traditional and original owners, and continuing custodians of the land and waters of this island, Lutruwita (Tasmania), where we live and work.

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Chairperson's introduction



This Strategic Plan for Tasmania Legal Aid marks the commencement of a bright new era for the organisation and the clients we serve. With the appointment of our new Director in May 2019, a solid financial and administrative base, and a renewed commitment and engagement of all staff and stakeholders, we are well placed to improve and build the services we deliver to our community.

In stating our values, priorities and goals, the Strategic Plan makes clear our intention to place our clients at the centre of everything we do as an organisation, and Tasmania Legal Aid at the centre of the justice system. In this way, we will work towards our vision for all Tasmanians to be safe, respected and have their voices heard.

The three priority areas in the Plan - community, communication and collaboration - give direction and structure to the way we will deliver our services from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2023. Our relationships with our clients and community, staff and partners in the legal system and community will drive our work to meet the strategic goals.

Tasmania Legal Aid has a long history of providing high quality services to the Tasmanian community. As we continue this great work, this Strategic Plan gives us the framework to expand and enhance our services, extending our reach and improving access to our services to more Tasmanians, particularly those who are vulnerable and marginalised.

Our community faces increasing social and economic pressures over the coming years, and in response, we have planned for a growing demand for our services, and clients with more complex needs. A strategic approach is required to ensure that we make the most of the resources available to us.

Over and above, the broad range of services that Tasmania Legal Aid delivers, we will have an additional focus on strengthening the services that we deliver to children; services that address family violence; and supporting our clients' and staff wellbeing and resilience.

The Strategic Plan gives us a structured and systemic way to improve our services in these areas across our organisation. In doing so, we will help to break the nexus between children in the child safety system and their ongoing involvement with the justice system; provide better support for clients affected by family violence; and advocate more effectively to improve the justice system responses to both children and family violence.

Children are affected in approximately two-thirds of all of the work that we undertake at Tasmania Legal Aid, whether it is in child safety matters, family law, family violence, youth justice, mental health and our NDIS programs. By making the voices of children a primary consideration across all our programs, we will improve our services and the way the legal profession generally works with children.

Similarly, our focus on family violence broadens our approach beyond a narrow legislative definition of intimate partner violence to address it as a pattern of behaviour by a family member or carer that controls or dominates a person causing them to fear for their own or others' safety. In this sense family violence is evident in all areas of our work, from the elder abuse of Senior Assist clients; our civil practice clients at the hands of their family members or carers; many of our family law and Family Dispute Resolution clients, and in the lives of our criminal practice clients. Over the next three years, we will support all our staff and our legal partners to build their skills to identify and respond to family violence, and expand our community education program to be more effective in early intervention and prevention.

The Strategic Plan has been developed through consultation with clients, all staff, management, the Commissioners and our legal and community partners. As a result, we are all engaged and looking forward to working with the Plan over the next three years. We thank everybody who has contributed to the development of the Plan.

I commend the Strategic Plan to all those that have contributed to its development, those who will be responsible for delivering its successes, and the partners who will assist us to ensure that the more vulnerable and marginalised members of our community receive our support and services, as is their right.

Patrick Lunn,
Chairperson



Our vision

All Tasmanians are safe, respected and have their voices heard.

Our purpose

- > To provide legal services to help Tasmanians understand their rights, navigate the system to resolve their legal issues, and get the assistance they need.**
- > To support and advocate for vulnerable and marginalised Tasmanians.**
- > To work with our clients, staff, legal partners and community to improve the legal system.**

Our values

> **Honesty**

We communicate openly and clearly.

We provide clear, accurate and realistic advice; are accountable to our clients, our partners and our community.

> **Courage**

We speak up, listen to different views, and willingly take on feedback.

We advocate for our clients, our sector and our organisation; are open to new ideas and adaptable to change.

> **Engagement**

We are involved in the design of services, programs and policies.

We are committed to the best outcomes for our clients and our community; and work collaboratively with our partners and our clients.

Our focus

> **Children**

> **Family Violence**

> **Wellbeing and Resilience**

Our focus is the lens through which we approach planning and service delivery across our full range of services. Most of our work – across civil, criminal and family law – involves children, and family violence in its broadest context. In this way, we will develop a systemic organisational response to improve our services for children, to respond to family violence, and to build the skills, wellbeing and resilience of our clients, staff and legal partners.

Our statutory obligation

To sustainably provide legal aid in the most effective, efficient and economical manner.

Our Strategic Plan 2020–2023: Introduction

Tasmania Legal Aid is an independent statutory body established by the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1990 (Tas)* to provide legal information, advice and representation to Tasmanians who are unable to pay for those legal services. Most of our funding is from the Commonwealth Government and the State Government.

The Strategic Plan sets the direction, and steps out the path, to realising our organisational purpose. It helps us to increase our impact as we provide supportive and responsive legal services, advocate for vulnerable and marginalised Tasmanians, and work with our partners for a fairer, timely and more effective legal system.

Over the next three years, we will engage with our community and partners to meet our strategic goals, within the framework of our legislative and policy governance obligations and funding agreements.

Our priority areas

- > **Community**
- > **Communication**
- > **Collaboration**

The priority areas, Community, Communication and Collaboration, are the three spheres in which we live our values and strive to achieve our purpose. The needs of our clients, staff, our partners and the Tasmanian community, the way we communicate within our organisation and with our community, and how we proactively collaborate with our partners, will be the foundation for this work. These priorities will strengthen our ability to deliver responsive legal services, strategic advocacy and effective system reform.

A connected Strategic Plan

Each element of our Strategic Plan is linked and reinforces all areas of our work, creating a consistent approach to achieving our collective purpose across the organisation.

We contribute to our vision for the Tasmanian community we hope to live in by our fulfilling our purpose. We do this by delivering services in all our programs, consistent with our values.

Our priority areas – Community, Communication, Collaboration – give structure and direction as we work to meet our strategic goals.

Our focus provides the lens to help us develop consistent, systemic responses to children, family violence and the wellbeing and resilience of our clients – fundamental issues that apply across all of our work. The focus connects back through each level to contribute to our vision for all Tasmanians to be safe, respected and have their voices heard.



Community

We provide high quality, accessible legal services to Tasmanians, especially those who are most vulnerable, delivered by skilled and well supported staff.

1

Goals

1.1 Our clients, especially the most vulnerable, feel safe and respected and receive high quality legal advice.

Meeting the diverse needs of our clients will be at the centre of everything we do at Legal Aid. We will make our services more responsive to our clients, many of whom are the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our community. A client-first approach will be adopted across our organisation, in our services, policies and communications. Consultation mechanisms will engage clients in the development and evaluation of our services, programs and policies. Training will increase the ability of staff to work with clients with respect, empathy and cultural sensitivity, and implement policies to improve our responses to client safety. Expanded use of digital technologies will make our services more accessible, especially for clients with complex needs, with disabilities, and those facing geographical barriers.

1.2 Children are at the centre of our service delivery and women and children experiencing family violence are prioritised.

Children are the most vulnerable members of our community and often the most invisible participants in the legal system. Child-centred practice will make the voices of children a primary consideration across all our services and programs. We will work with our partners and staff to deliver training and guidelines for legal practitioners, particularly those in family law and child safety practice, to improve the way the legal profession works with children. We will explore initiatives for early interventions to protect the interests of children and keep them and their families out of court.

The impact of family violence on our clients is increasingly evident across all program areas. We will improve our service responses to family violence, including for children who are affected, by providing training to build the knowledge and skills of the legal profession. We will advocate to improve legal system responses to family violence and to address its underlying causes.

1.3 Our staff feel valued and proud to work at Legal Aid.

The work we do at Tasmania Legal Aid is rewarding, challenging and demanding and our staff bring great integrity and commitment to their work every day. We commit to providing the support staff need to deliver high quality services to our clients, community and partners. We will create an organisational culture that is supportive, consultative and accountable. This will include workforce development and employment policies to promote job security, recognition of service and fostering career pathways. We will encourage our staff to build their skills and expertise with innovative professional education, and implement policies to address vicarious trauma and burnout to protect their safety and mental wellbeing. Staff participation will be built into our operational and decision-making processes.

Communication

**We communicate with our clients,
partners, staff and community
to ensure they are informed,
engaged and empowered.**

2

Goals

2.1 Our community is informed about our services, their legal rights and options to prevent or intervene early in legal problems.

Effective communication is essential to fulfilling our purpose of delivering legal help to as many Tasmanians as possible. We will adopt an organisation-wide approach to our communications to make all our interactions with the community accessible, relevant and user-friendly. We will develop new community partnerships and expand our use of digital and social media platforms to increase awareness of our services, explain the role of Legal Aid, and raise issues of concern for our clients and community. We will grow our community legal information and education program to extend the reach and effectiveness of our work in prevention and early intervention. The accessibility and relevance of these programs will be tested with our clients and community members to ensure we are meeting their needs.

2.2 We are a leading voice for legislative and social reforms that support improved outcomes for our clients.

As the largest legal assistance service provider in the State, we are uniquely placed to advocate for better outcomes for vulnerable and marginalised Tasmanians, within the justice system and more broadly. We will build our capacity to contribute to legislative and social reform processes by developing the research and policy skills of our staff and supporting their participation in submission writing and policy development. We will implement new data systems and analytics to improve the quantity and quality of our data so that we provide authoritative advice and commentary based on high quality data and evidence from our practice.

2.3 Our communications with our clients, staff, partners and community are clear, accessible, consistent, regular and transparent.

We aim to become a more inclusive, collaborative and accountable organisation that is trusted and respected by our clients, staff, partners and community. To support this, our communication will be in plain language, accessible and user-friendly, consistent and relevant. We will collaborate with our sector partners to increase the availability of information in languages other than English. We will establish consultative mechanisms for regular, open and transparent communications with our staff, clients and partners so they are informed and engaged in decisions about policy development, service design and evaluation, and funding.

Collaboration

We work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders to ensure the Tasmanian legal system delivers the best outcomes for the most vulnerable clients.

3

Goals

3.1 We play a key role in developing a vibrant Tasmanian legal profession, supporting private practitioners to help legal aid clients, and in improving legal proceedings, particularly for criminal matters.

A vibrant, collaborative and highly skilled legal profession across private practice and the legal assistance sector, and a fair, timely and effective legal system are necessary to meet the legal needs of the Tasmanian community. Our role in the justice system means we are well placed to contribute to the development of the legal profession and improving the operation of the legal system. Over the next three years, we will strengthen our relationships and work collaboratively with our partners in the legal community to address systemic problems and implement reforms to improve the operation of the legal system. We will play a key role in implementing reforms to criminal proceedings in the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court. We will contribute to the knowledge and skills of the legal profession by expanding the content and delivery of our professional education program. We will work with practitioners to improve the quality and quantity of representation of legal aid clients.

3.2 Our service delivery and organisational decisions are evidence-based, and informed by consultation with clients, staff and partners to best respond to clients with multiple needs.

Collaboration and consultation with our clients, staff and partners will be the foundation of our service design and delivery. We will establish mechanisms to ensure the voices of our clients are integral to the design and evaluation of our services and policy and program development. We will build consultation processes and forums to facilitate staff involvement in our organisational decision-making. We will collaborate with our legal partners in service planning to identify gaps and opportunities to increase holistic service options and extend the reach of legal services across the State, particularly to remote and regional communities. Our organisational and sector planning will be based on high quality data produced through our enhanced data capture and analytics systems.

3.3 We collaborate with our legal and community partners in research, community education and other projects to promote the interests of our clients.

We will use our position in the community to contribute to research and social policy that addresses the systemic and structural barriers affecting the lives of vulnerable and marginalised Tasmanians. Through our active collaboration with partners in the community sector we will expand our legal education program to deliver a wider range of services and programs across the community. We will investigate opportunities for innovative, multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches and settings for the delivery of legal services, such as schools, health centres and community and neighbourhood houses.

Implementing our Strategic Plan and measuring our progress

The Strategic Plan will be implemented in an integrated, systemic way. Our annual plans, program plans and staff performance management plans will reflect our work towards our strategic goals. Our organisational responses to children, family violence and wellbeing and resilience will be articulated through this planning and reporting process.

We will measure and monitor our progress using a number of performance indicators. In this way we will be accountable to our community, clients, staff and partners, routinely seek their feedback on our progress, and modify and adapt our work as required to meet our objectives. The implementation strategies and performance measurement surveys referred to will be developed and implemented over the life of the Strategic Plan.

Measure 1: Increased client satisfaction with our services

As we implement a client-first approach across our organisation, we will review all our internal processes and systems and strengthen our practice skills with a professional education program including training in trauma-informed and client-focused practice.

A Client Engagement Strategy will build client involvement and feedback into our work and we will develop policies to promote client safety and accessibility.

A Reconciliation Action Plan will be implemented to strengthen our responsiveness to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and staff.

A Communications Strategy will ensure that our written and spoken information and advice can be understood and applied by our clients.

Indicators:

- two-yearly client survey shows high level of satisfaction.
- feedback from Aboriginal people shows they feel welcome and safe at Legal Aid

Goals:

Community 1.1, 1.2

Communication 2.1, 2.2

Collaboration 3.2

Measure 2:

Increased staff wellbeing, engagement and satisfaction in the workplace

Our commitment to building an open, inclusive and supportive workplace, includes implementing a comprehensive People and Culture Strategy to:

- foster the capabilities and skills of our staff
- promote staff wellbeing, resilience and safety
- support workforce development
- establish mechanisms and communication strategies to inform and include staff in our organisational decision-making processes.

To support our staff, we will implement clear and consistent policies for best practice standards to guide our work, including managing conflicts of interest, and minor assistance and duty lawyer guidelines.

Indicators:

- staff survey shows an overall high level of satisfaction
- increased staff engagement in program and project advisory groups.

Goals:	Community 1.3	Communication 2.3	Collaboration 3.2
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Measure 3:

Increased satisfaction of our legal practice partners

To contribute to a vibrant legal profession, we will increase our formal engagement, communication and collaboration with our legal partners in private practice and the legal assistance sector.

An expanded professional education program will help to build the skills and practice expertise of legal practitioners, including working with clients affected by family violence. To improve the way the legal profession works with children, we will provide specialised training, and revise the guidelines, standards and training for Independent Children's Lawyers (ICL) and Separate Representatives.

A new fee structure to simplify and streamline our grants of aid system will assist our legal practitioner partners and improve the quality and quantity of representation of legal aid clients.

Working with our legal partners, we will identify and implement system reforms, including the reforms to criminal proceedings in the Magistrates Court and Supreme Court to improve the operation of the legal system.

Indicators:

- participation of legal practitioners in consultation processes
- increased participation in professional education programs
- increased number of private practitioners helping legal aid clients

Goals:	Community 1.1	Communication 2.3	Collaboration 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
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Measure 4:

Increased community and client knowledge of Legal Aid services and understanding of legal rights and issues

To ensure that all our internal and external communications are informative, engaging and empowering for our clients and community, we will review the accessibility and currency of all our communications.

A Communications Strategy will establish communications guidelines and platforms to increase awareness of our services by a wider audience, including young people, people with disabilities, and those facing language and geographical barriers.

So that our services are accessible to as many Tasmanians as possible, we will expand and innovate our information and education services through new collaborative partnerships to deliver our legal services in more community settings, such as schools, health centres and community and neighbourhood houses.

Indicators:

- increased community access to information, referral and advice services
- increased participation in community legal education programs
- two-yearly client survey shows high level of satisfaction

Goals:

Community 1.1

Communication 2.1, 2.3

Collaboration 3.2

Measure 5:

Increased client engagement in service design and delivery

Client engagement and input into our service and program design and delivery is the cornerstone of our client-focused approach. Our clients will tell us what they need, in terms of information, service accessibility and delivery, and projects and programs priorities.

To build the voices of our clients into our organisation, we will implement our Client Engagement Strategy to develop mechanisms and feedback processes, including advisory groups across program areas and client consultation processes in our policies and projects.

Indicators:

- client advisory groups in each program and project area
- client feedback evident in service design and delivery

Goals:

Community 1.1

Communication 2.3

Collaboration 3.2

Measure 6:

Increased collaboration with legal and community partners to improve the legal system and outcomes for our clients

Better outcomes for our clients will be achieved through more effective advocacy to improve the legal system and address the systemic and structural barriers they experience. With more collaboration with our partners and key stakeholders, we will increase the scope and impact of our work on system reforms and service planning.

We will help to build a more sustainable and responsive legal assistance sector with formal agreements on service delivery and resource sharing, and collaborative forums for more effective service planning.

Indicators:

- number of our collaborative projects and forums
- number of legislative, policy and system reforms implemented

Goals:	Community 1.1, 1.2	Communication 2.2	Collaboration 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
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Measure 7:

Better use of digital technologies in service delivery and use of data to inform service planning and evaluation and system reforms

To respond to increasing demand, we will be more strategic and innovative in our use of digital technologies so that more Tasmanians can access our services, particularly those with geographical and other barriers.

A review and upgrade of our information technology system will increase our capability to offer more innovative and effective service delivery models.

Our service planning and evaluation will be improved by enhanced systems for data capture and analytics to improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of data and to provide the evidence base for research and policy development and system reform.

Indicators:

- increased availability, and client use, of on-line services
- two-yearly client survey shows high level of satisfaction
- increased use of data service planning and evaluation and advocacy.

Goals:	Community 1.1	Communication 2.1	Collaboration 3.2, 3.3
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Meeting our **strategic goals:** planning and reporting

The Strategic Plan helps us plan and deliver services for the community within the legislative and policy framework that we work in.

The Strategic Plan will be implemented through organisation-wide Annual Plans, which inform and are informed by Corporate and Program Plans. These in turn are reflected in and influenced by individual staff management plans.

This will help keep us focused and accountable to delivering the commitments in the Strategic Plan.



Our consultation process

The development of the Strategic Plan has involved an extensive consultation process with our staff, management team and Board, as well as our key stakeholders: clients, private practitioners and partners from across the legal system.

Our staff participated in a full day planning workshop and online survey. They provided feedback on the draft Plan through a series of face to face sessions with the Director and an online survey. Input from staff was provided throughout the project by the Staff Working Group.

Clients took part in a group discussion and roundtable consultations with private practitioners were held in south, north and northwest of the State.

Interviews were held with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, The Chief Magistrate and Deputy Chief Magistrate, Family and Federal Circuit Court Judges, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Secretary of the Department of Justice, the Police Commissioner, the Law Society and the Tasmanian Bar, as well as our partners in the legal assistance sector: Community Legal Centres Tasmania, Women's Legal Service Tasmania and Tasmanian Aboriginal Community Legal Service. We also consulted our community sector partners, Anglicare Tasmania, SafeChoices and TASCOS.

We acknowledge and thank the members of the Strategic Plan Project Steering Committee and Staff Working Group and the Project Manager.

Steering Committee

Vincenzo Caltabiano (Director), Sarah Campbell (A/Manager Civil and Mental Health), Vanessa Fenton (Manager, Grants & Civil Disbursement Fund), Alan Hensley (Manager, Criminal Practice), Sally Hunt (Duty Lawyer, FASS), Patrick Lunn (Board Chair), Rita Van Meer (Legal Practitioner – Family).

Working Group

Stuart Davey (Legal Practitioner – CLEI), Edwina Gelston (Legal Practitioner – Family), Narelle Hyde (Legal Secretary – Mental Health & Senior Assist), Angie James (Legal Practitioner – ALS & FDR), Angela Powell (Staffing & Development Coordinator), Simone Watson (Legal Practitioner – Family), Sally Hunt and Rita Van Meer as staff representatives on the Steering Committee.

Project Manager

Prue Cameron (Policy Officer)

Tasmania Legal Aid Strategic Plan 2020–2023 Framework

OUR VISION

All Tasmanians are safe, respected and have their voices heard

OUR PURPOSE

- To provide legal services to help Tasmanians understand their rights, navigate the system to resolve their legal issues, and get the assistance they need
- To support and advocate for vulnerable and marginalised Tasmanians
- To work with our clients, staff, legal partners and community to improve the legal system.

OUR VALUES

Honesty

- We communicate openly and clearly
- We provide clear, accurate and realistic advice; are accountable to our clients, our partners and our community.

Courage

- We speak up, listen to different views, and take on feedback
- We advocate for our clients, our sector and our organisation; are open to new ideas and adaptable to change.

Engagement

- We are involved in the design of services, programs and policies
- We are committed to the best outcomes for our clients and our community; and work collaboratively with our partners and our clients.

OUR PRIORITY AREAS

COMMUNITY

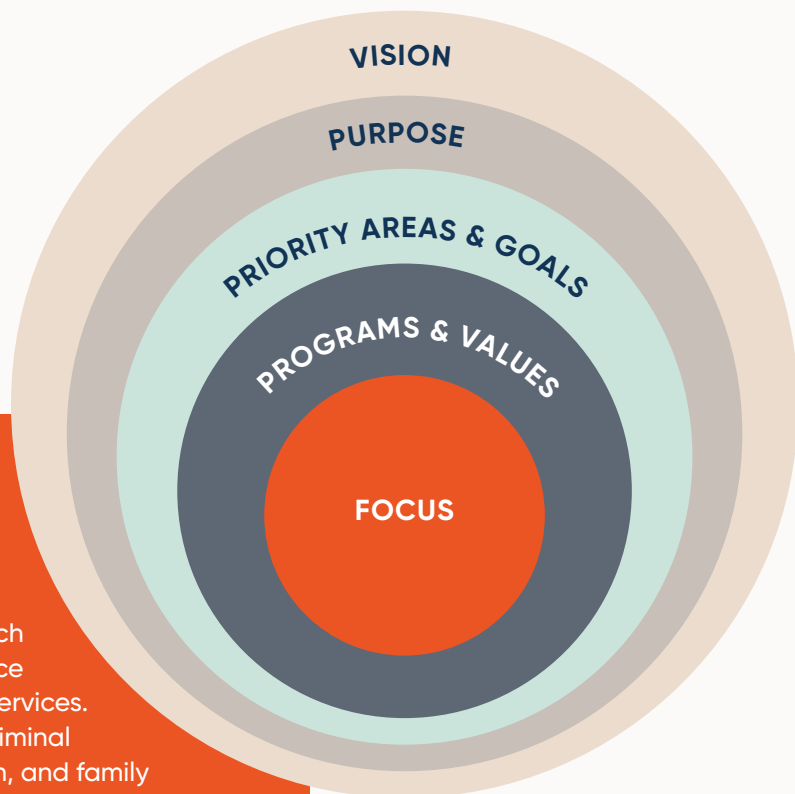
We provide high quality, accessible legal services to Tasmanians, especially those who are most vulnerable, delivered by skilled and well supported staff.

OUR GOALS

1. Our clients feel safe and respected and receive high quality legal advice.
2. Children are at the centre of our service delivery and women and children experiencing family violence are prioritised.
3. Our staff feel valued and proud to work at Legal Aid.

SUCCESS

Our clients and staff are engaged in the design and evaluation of our services, programs and policies.



OUR FOCUS

Children · Family Violence · Wellbeing & Resilience

Our focus is the lens through which we approach planning and service delivery across our full range of services. Most of our work – across civil, criminal and family law – involves children, and family violence in its broadest context. In this way, we will develop a systemic organisational response to improve our services for children, to respond to family violence and to build the skills, wellbeing and resilience of our clients, staff and legal partners.

OUR STATUTORY OBLIGATION

To sustainably provide legal aid in the most effective, efficient and economical manner.

COMMUNICATION

We communicate with our clients, partners, staff and community to ensure that they are informed, engaged and empowered.

1. Our community is informed about our services, their legal rights and options to prevent or intervene early in legal problems.
2. We are a leading voice for legislative and social reforms that support improved outcomes for our clients.
3. Our communications with our clients, staff, partners and community are clear, accessible, consistent, regular and transparent.

More Tasmanians access our services for legal advice, information and education.

COLLABORATION

We work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders to ensure the Tasmanian legal system delivers the best outcomes for the most vulnerable clients.

1. We play a key role in developing a vibrant Tasmanian legal profession, supporting private practitioners to help legal aid clients, and in improving legal proceedings, particularly for criminal matters.
2. Our service delivery and organisational decisions are evidence-based, and informed by consultation with clients, staff and partners to best respond to clients with multiple needs.
3. We collaborate with our legal and community partners in research, community education and other projects to promote the interests of our clients.

Collaborative partnerships contribute to a fairer, more timely and responsive Tasmanian legal system.

Legal
Aid For
Tasmanians

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