

QUARTERLY REPORT

Legal
Aid For
Tasmanians

OPERATIONS IN A COVID-19 WORLD

Vincenzo Caltabiano, TLA Director

As we adjusted to “the new normal” under Covid-19 restrictions we continued to deliver services to Tasmanians. We ended the 2019-20 financial year with an effectively balanced budget (less than \$10,000 surplus).

This was achieved by making savings internally while continuing to spend more on grants of legal aid. Last financial year there were 30,240 legal aid requests processed, up almost 13.1% on the previous year. Over \$5.15M was paid to private practitioners, up almost 7% on the 2018-19 financial year.

The strong demand for legal aid has continued in the first three months of this financial year, with grant requests and extensions reaching 8,260. That’s an average of 110 requests a day; a strenuous workload that is up 7.7% on Q1 2019-20. Payments to private practitioners and disbursements payments reached \$1.58m for the first quarter alone, an increase of 11.1%.

TLA received additional Commonwealth funding to assist our pandemic response. This is being used to meet the cost of grants of legal aid. It is hoped that further funds will be available to support the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on demand.

Mental health concerns, family violence, court appearances: demand for these services are likely to increase in response to the difficult economic environment.

We are already experiencing increases in the number of Tasmanians looking for help. For example we see this trend with our telephone advice services that have jumped 18.05% compared to the first quarter of 2019-20.

For a full breakdown of Q1 stats and financials see page 4.



Website page views

172,785



Telephone services

14,040



New grants of aid

1,417

Mental health concerns, family violence, court appearances: demand for these services will likely increase in response to the difficult economic environment.

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amica

Simple, smart
separation.

amica



Kristen Wylie, Family Law Practice Manager (Photo via ABC)

AMICA: ONLINE TOOL FOR COUPLES SEEKING 'AMICABLE SEPARATIONS'

TLA LAUNCHED THE
FAMILY SEPARATION TOOL
AMICA IN JULY.

The online service helps separating couples work through disagreements without having to go to court or even engage a lawyer.

It was developed by National Legal Aid with inputs from lawyers from around Australia, with funding from the Commonwealth Government.

Using artificial intelligence it helps separated couples reach agreement.

Lawyers around Australia worked on a number of scenarios to help the artificial intelligence learn what a court would ordinarily decide when parties are separating.

Only a very small number of separating parties end up in court and while some might see a lawyer and reach an agreement, lots of people don't and that can have adverse consequences in the long term.

Kristen Wylie, TLA's Family Law Practice Manager, said amica was designed to help separating couples and their families

Amica helps couples reach amicable agreements about dividing their assets and parenting arrangements and enables them to record those agreements in plain language.

come to "amicable agreements" while bypassing a stressful and costly courtroom venture.

"All too often, it can lead to long and sometimes painful court cases," Wylie said.

"Amica helps couples reach amicable agreements about dividing their assets and parenting arrangements and enables them to record those agreements in plain language."

The online tool helps former partners communicate in their own space and at their own pace, taking them through a step-by-step process while providing support and information at every turn.

Its dispute resolution feature is best suited to couples whose relationship is relatively amicable," she said.

Each year TLA handles thousands of calls about relationship breakdowns and holds hundreds of family dispute resolution conferences.

Amica is designed to give more of these separating couples the agency to work through a separation themselves in a calm way.

"People want to move on with their lives – and this allows that," Wylie said.

For more information on the amica program visit the website [here](#).

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YOUR STORY

DISABILITY LEGAL SUPPORT



TLA Director Vincenzo Caltabiano and Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service principal lawyer Hannah Phillips. (Photo via Launceston Examiner)

TLA & TALS: HELPING TELL 'YOUR STORY' TO THE DISABILITY ROYAL COMMISSION

Tasmania Legal Aid and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service launched Your Story in August to give people living with a disability the resources to share their story with the Disability Royal Commission.

The free service provides advice and information to help Tasmanians safely engage with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

The federal government funded service puts the needs, safety and security of people living with a disability at the centre of its objectives.

At the launch in Launceston, TLA Director Vincenzo Caltabiano said it was important people with disabilities felt "supported and safe" when sharing their stories.

"One of the things that Your Story disability legal support can provide is helping people think about how they'd like to tell their story," he said.

"Some people might want to speak to the Royal Commission at a public hearing, some people might like a private hearing. Some people might like to just put in a

submission - and that might be in writing, it might be a video recording.

"It's about helping people find the best way for them to be able to tell their story."

For more information or to make submission to Your Story visit the website [here](#).

CLE: BACK IN SCHOOLS & OUR COMMUNITY

Community Legal Education was up and running again in July following months of minimal activity during the lockdown.















In the 2020-21 Q1 there were 53 community learning sessions delivered to 1,986 participants across the CLEI, Safe At Home, Family and Civil programs.

Education programs jumped significantly since the previous April-June quarter, where only 90 people participated in 4 education sessions during the pandemic lockdown.

Q1 - 2020-21 - JULY-SEPT






SERVICE DELIVERY: AT A GLANCE

Figures compared with Q1 2019-20



-  1,417 - New grants of aid - up 5.28%
-  1,616 - New grants files received - up 6.5%
-  6,843 - Grant extension requests processed - up 8.4%
-  1,651 - Duty lawyer services - up 8.83%
-  57% - New grants assigned to private profession - up 2%
-  \$1.58m - Private Practitioner & Disbursements Payments (ex GST) - up 11.1%
-  132 - New Safe at Home files - up 37.5%
-  137 - Family Dispute Resolution conferences held - up 85.14%
-  84 - New Mental Health Tribunal files - up 29.23%
-  971 - Face-to-face advice services - down 22.13%
-  172,785 - Website page views - down 7.14%
-  14,040 - Telephone services - up 0.79%
 -  6,122 - phone advice - up 18.04%
 -  7,918 - phone referrals - down 9.45%

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

* Note these are management figures and have not been audited

Commonwealth Funding:	\$2,318,704	
State Funding:	\$2,128,522	
Other Income:	\$229,127	
TOTAL INCOME:	\$4,676,353	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE:	\$4,564,397	

REVIEW COMMITTEE

-  Reviews of grant officer decisions - 4
-  Reviewed decisions varied - 2 (50%)

