

# QUARTERLY REPORT

**Legal**  
**Aid** For  
Tasmanians

## TLA'S ANNUAL REPORT DELIVERED

**Tasmania Legal Aid's Annual Report was released in November, showing increased services, grants of legal aid and payments to private lawyers over the turbulent 2019-20 period.**

Director Vincenzo Caltabiano said that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, Tasmania's justice sector came together to ensure people could have continued access to justice – quickly adapting to use technology.

"This quick response showed how TLA, the legal profession and the justice system are able and willing to adapt to meet community needs. Although TLA closed its doors for a period we were able to continue to provide information, advice and referrals through a range of means," he said.

"I am grateful for the versatility demonstrated by staff who responded quickly to the challenge and ensured continuity of service throughout the pandemic lockdown and since."

Chair, Patrick Lunn, noted that TLA operated to within \$10,000 of its \$17m budget, saying: "This is a credit to the management and staff responsible for delivering our services in times of unprecedented demand and managing our resources in extraordinary times."

The Annual Report discusses how, in spite of the pandemic, TLA took on and delivered a range of new initiatives, including the Advocacy and Support Service's Men's Service and Your Story, a free support service for those who want to participate in the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

The report came amid the first year of the Strategic Plan 2020-23, which was presented to all staff and stakeholders mid-year.

"The new Strategic Plan reflects our new direction, including our Vision that all Tasmanians are safe, respected and have their voices heard," Mr Lunn said.

"Tasmania Legal Aid will support and advocate for vulnerable and marginalised Tasmanians and work with our clients, staff, legal partners and community to improve the legal system."

**For the breakdown of Q2 stats and financials see page 4.**



Website page views

145,503



Telephone services

13,597



New grants of aid

1,175

***I am grateful for the versatility demonstrated by staff who responded quickly to the challenge and ensured continuity of service throughout the pandemic lockdown and since.***

**Legal**  
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## HELPING PEOPLE PURSUE CIVIL JUSTICE

**THE CIVIL DISBURSEMENT FUND (CDF) HELPS PEOPLE TRYING TO GET COMPENSATION IN A RANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.**

The CDF can cover some of their up-front costs such as expert medical reports. If they win, they are required to pay back the CDF along with a premium.

TLA Director Vincenzo Caltabiano said following consultation TLA decided to make it easier for people to get assistance.

"We want the CDF to help struggling Tasmanians get the right outcome. The new test will mean more people will be able to bring their cases forward."

Applications must be made through a private lawyer, with each assessed by the CDF Committee, then the TLA.

**To find out more about the CDF, including guidelines and application forms, click [here](#).**

***We want the CDF to help struggling Tasmanians get the right outcome. The new test will mean more people will be able to bring their cases forward.***

## GIVING CHILDREN A STRONGER VOICE

**IMPROVING INDEPENDENT CHILDREN'S LAWYER (ICL) AND SEPARATE REPRESENTATIVES (SR) SYSTEMS.**

TLA is working on ways to improve the important work of Independent Children's lawyers and Separate Representatives who give a voice to children and young people.

The importance of these specialised roles in the Family Law and Child Safety systems has been repeatedly recognised, with reviews noting the significant responsibilities they have.

These reviews also recognised opportunities for improvement and greater clarity. TLA has started two projects to achieve this.

The ICL project will take a consultative approach, with the steering committee drawing expertise from highly experienced and respected ICLs and key stakeholders within Tasmania's legal profession and service providers.

Despite the central role Separate Representatives (SR) play conveying and respecting the wishes of children there are no Tasmanian practice standards for the role.

The Separate Representative project will develop clear standards for undertaking this vital work. We will consult widely, including with young people who have direct experience of the child safety system.

## CLAIMING GRANTS OF AID

**CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT OF FEES ARE PROCESSED PROMPTLY BY TLA, GENERALLY WITHIN A FEW WORKING DAYS.**

Claims should only be submitted after the service has been provided.

This is consistent with the practitioner certification that forms part of the e-lodge claim process.

Where it appears that payment has been claimed before the work has been completed TLA may contact the practitioner to clarify the situation.

Practitioners are also requested to advise of the outcome of the matter when submitting the claim in line with Guideline 8 (1)(h).

## EXTRA FUNDING TO CLEAR 'SERIOUS CASE' BACKLOG

**THE TASMANIAN STATE BUDGET, DELAYED DUE TO COVID-19, BROUGHT SOME ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR TLA.**

While largely keeping funding at previous levels the budget included \$250K for Serious Criminal Cases. This was part of a package of \$2.3 million over four years to reduce the Supreme Court's backlog of cases that has grown over the past year due to COVID-19.

TLA welcomes the additional funding which acknowledges the role of Legal Aid, alongside the Court and the Director of Public Prosecutions, in addressing delays in the criminal justice system.



## TLA 'CHECKS IN' ON ITS MENTAL HEALTH

Tasmania Legal Aid team members took part in Tasmania Mental Health Week, October 6-10.

The week was an opportunity for staff to "check in" on their mental wellbeing.

Staff who took part in the 'Mental Health @ Work and Mental Health Champions' said it had essential lessons for everyone.

Team members described the training as educational, enlightening, informative, interesting, supportive, with helpful tips for how to "take 5" and to "check in" with yourself and your mental wellbeing.

The Director put up a prize to the charity of choice for the most creative and engaging team activity to get people to consider their mental health. There were top efforts all round, but the Family Team state-wide Zoom-bah won (see the picture above).

The prize was matched by Kristen Wylie and Kati Agh, resulting in a \$300 donation to Hobart City Mission.

Credit to Angela Powell, our Staffing and Development Coordinator for organising the week's events.

## NAIDOC WEEK IN NOVEMBER

NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Week was marked from 8-15 November in 2020 as a safety precaution amid the pandemic "in the interest of safety for our communities".

The theme for 2020 was "Always Was, Always Will Be" celebrated diversity, knowledge and ingenuity of Aboriginal people who managed the land to provide a sustainable future.

TLA has begun its journey toward increased awareness of history by developing a Reconciliation Action Plan. We are working with Tasmania's Aboriginal communities to deepen our understanding of history and consider how we can better support first nations people. The RAP is expected to be finalised and launched in coming months.

Staff attended Aboriginal flag raising ceremonies at piyura kitina/Risdon Cove and Iunyi mungalina/ Launceston as well as other activities held around the state.



**Always Was,  
Always Will Be.**















**8-15 NOV 2020**

**Legal  
Aid**

# Q2 - 2020-21 - OCT-DEC






## SERVICE DELIVERY: AT A GLANCE

Figures compared with Q2 2019-20



-  1,175 - New grants of aid - down 5.5%
-  1,322 - New grants files received - down 4.0%
-  6,701 - Grant extension requests processed - up 7.0%
-  1,434 - Duty lawyer services - down 8.83%
-  63% - New grants assigned to private profession - up 16.67%
-  \$1.68m - Private Practice & Disbursements Payments (ex. GST) - up 12.9%
-  97 - New Safe at Home files - down 10.2%
-  136 - Family Dispute Resolution conferences held - up 54.6%
-  99 - New Mental Health Tribunal files - up 52.34%
-  802 - Face-to-face advice services - down 30.8%
-  145,503 - Website page views - down 8.42%
-  12,892 - Telephone services - down 8.18%
-  5,090 - phone advice - down 12.96%
-  7,802 - phone referrals - down 3.84%

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

\* Note: these are management figures and have not been audited

Commonwealth Funding:	\$4,712,400	
State Funding:	\$4,214,944	
Other Income:	\$385,329	
<b>TOTAL INCOME:</b>	<b>\$9,312,672</b>	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE:</b>	<b>\$9,175,116</b>	

## REVIEW COMMITTEE

-  Reviews of grant officer decisions - 3
-  Reviewed decisions varied - 0 (0%)

