

# Quarterly Report

Quarter 2, 2021/22 | October - December 2021

Legal  
Aid For  
Tasmanians

The reappearance of Covid has meant a challenging start to 2022. We are all faced with the complexity of trying to keep ourselves, family and work colleagues safe while continuing to deliver services to clients.

It is noted that many of the courts and tribunals have responded by limiting in person appearances and conducting cases remotely. While this leads to a delay in trials it can also be of benefit to clients and practitioners by reducing travel and waiting times and allowing practitioners to appear in multiple jurisdictions in the same day. It is hoped that once Covid case numbers fall we can retain the positive changes that current circumstances have brought about.

TLA's 2020-21 Annual Report was tabled in Parliament in November 2021. This noted over \$6M in payments to private practitioners, almost 17% more than the previous year. This is on top of annual increases in payments to practitioners in recent years.

At the halfway point of 2021-22, payments to private practitioners have continued to rise, up over \$500K (17%) for the same period in the previous year. This reflects the volume of work undertaken by and our support of the private profession.

A combination of factors led to an increase in processing times for applications for legal aid during 2021. We are conscious of the impact this has and have taken steps to address it.

The number of applications for aid, including extensions, has increased significantly in recent years. There was a further sharp rise as courts sought to reduce the backlog of cases. We also experienced some unexpected leave in our grants area which contributed to an increase in processing time.

We have increased the resourcing of our grants team to assist in the processing of requests. This has brought processing times back down. The maintenance of the increased resourcing over coming months will assist in ensuring that requests are processed in a timely manner. We are continuing to work with the profession to introduce further improvements, such as a stage of matter grants structure for Magistrate Court cases, that will reduce the administrative burden and reduce processing times

**Vincenzo Caltabiano**  
TLA Director



Website  
views  
147,273



Telephone  
services  
12,606



New grants  
of aid  
979



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## Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility: Our children, our community

The recent announcement by Attorneys-General of the intention to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years of age is a welcome first step but does not go far enough.

As our *Children First* report demonstrates, the current age (10 years) has an adverse and disproportionate impact on some groups in our community. In particular children with experience of the child safety system, Aboriginal children and children with experience of trauma and disadvantage.

Australia is out of step with over 80 countries where the age is 14 or higher. Recently, over 30 countries called on Australia to raise the age to at least 14.

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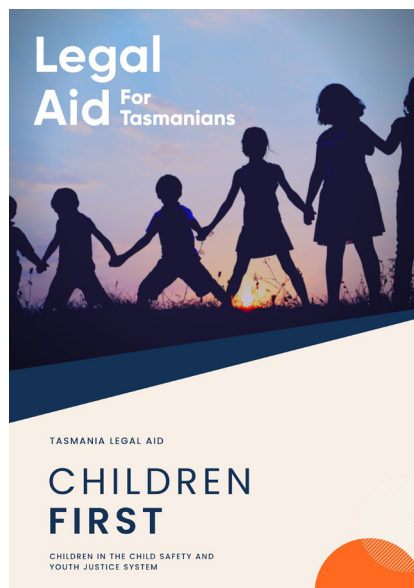
TLA Director, Vincenzo Caltabiano, was part of a panel that briefed the Legislative Council in October 2021. He joined Leanne McLean, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Trevor McKenna, President of the Law Society and Amnesty International spokesperson, Rodney Dillon to

explain why Tasmania should raise the age to at least 14. It was noted the ACT has committed to raising the age to 14.

The science of human brain development explains that risk taking behaviour emerges earlier than those factors that help consequential thinking and considered decision making. Further, we know that trauma has an adverse effect on brain development.

Rather than a criminal justice response we need to redirect resources to provide the resources that address the factors sitting beneath behaviours. A recent report commissioned by the ACT government shows what this might look like.

With the announced closure of the Ashley Detention Centre, and the review of our youth justice system, Tasmania is uniquely placed to reimagine our youth justice response. We can choose to improve how we care for and improve the lives of our children, and consequently our community.



## 2020/21 TLA Annual Report

The TLA 2020/21 Annual Report is our 31st annual report and was tabled in Parliament in November.

The Annual Report was presented by Director, Vincenzo Caltabiano and outlines our ongoing work in delivering services to clients and working to improve the justice system.

Our direct client work included:

- 2137 – Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS) duty lawyer services provided
- 22,746 – Telephone advice line callers assisted
- 35,148 – Telephone advice line referrals to other services
- 25,882 – extensions to existing legal aid grants
- 5859 – Legal aid grant applications received
- 12,551 – Community Legal Education and Information session participants
- 290 – Community Legal Education & Information Sessions

## TLA turns orange in support of Mental Health Week

TLA staff embraced the orange theme with gusto and shared some great resources and photos throughout the offices for Mental Health Week in October.

It was wonderful to see TLA team members attending various community and stakeholder Mental Health Week events across the state.

As part of the week, staff were encouraged to create an event or idea that promotes positive connections that support good mental health.

A number of entries were submitted for the Director's Cut and each of them connected staff across service areas. While they were each deserving, there can only be one winner.

And the winner is... *Coffee Connect*, an idea submitted by the FDR team.

*Coffee Connect* was a great initiative that connected employees across all service

areas and locations.

Once participants registered to play with their contact details, a Random Matching Generator was used to match participants with other individuals to make contact – either by making a coffee, a call or just a simple digital connection.

It was a terrific way to not only reach out and meet other team members, but to check in on people via a casual conversation.

TLA made a donation of \$100 to the FDR team's charity of choice Headspace for the following reasons:

- Headspace provides tailored and holistic mental health support to 12–25 year-olds;
- youth mental health is frequently raised and discussed in FDR Conferences;
- Headspace provides assistance to not only the youth, but to family and friends of the youth as well.



TLA's Civil Team turning orange for Mental Health Week 2021.

## Senior Assist's comprehensive new booklet for seniors



Senior Assist is excited to announce the completion of a new booklet for seniors called, 'Everyone Deserves Respect, a booklet for seniors in Tasmania'.

The booklet includes information on:

- a range of services and supports available;
- safety planning;
- legal issues to consider, including appointing substitute decision makers and preparing a will, family violence, and elder abuse prevention;
- emergency contacts.

The booklet is available on the TLA website and has been printed to give to clients and seniors attending community legal education (CLE) sessions run by the Senior Assist team. It forms part of a new suite of Senior Assist materials, including brochures and fact sheets, available on the TLA website: [www.legalaid.tas.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.tas.gov.au)

## Service Delivery Summary



New grants of aid .....	<b>979</b>
New grants files received .....	<b>1,247</b>
Grant extension requests processed .....	<b>6,082</b>
Duty lawyer services .....	<b>1,412</b>
New grants assigned to private profession .....	<b>67%</b>
Private Practice & Disbursements Payments (ex. GST) .....	<b>\$1.8m</b>
New Safe at Home files .....	<b>108</b>
Family Dispute Resolution conferences held .....	<b>81</b>
New Mental Health Tribunal files .....	<b>74</b>
Face-to-face advice services .....	<b>1,034</b>
Website page views .....	<b>147,273</b>
Telephone services total .....	<b>12,606</b>
Phone advice .....	<b>4,373</b>
Phone referrals .....	<b>8,233</b>

## Financial Summary



Commonwealth Funding: .....	<b>\$4,307,879</b>
State Funding: .....	<b>\$5,622,165</b>
Other Income: .....	<b>\$144,279</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME: .....</b>	<b>\$10,074,324</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE: .....</b>	<b>\$9,991,530</b>

Note: these are management figures and have not been independently audited.

## CLEI Program



Audience	Sessions	Participants
School students	62	3,095
Family Law services	4	42
Elder Support services	3	14
Civil Law services	1	25
Other services	4	77
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>3,253</b>

