



# Strategic Plan

2023-27

Tasmania  
Legal Aid



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Tasmania Legal Aid acknowledges and pays respect to the Palawa/Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the Traditional and Continuing Custodians of the land and waters of Lutruwita/Tasmania, where we live and work.

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## Chairperson message



On behalf of everyone at Tasmania Legal Aid (TLA) I am pleased to introduce TLA's Strategic Plan 2023-27.

TLA's new strategic plan has refined:

- how we propose to represent and promote our existing values of honesty, courage and engagement
- our vision that the Tasmanian community is safe, respected and has their voices heard
- our purpose to
  - enable the diverse Tasmanian community to:
    - > access legal services
    - > address their legal problems
    - > understand their rights
    - > navigate the legal system
    - > get the assistance they need
  - work with our clients, staff, legal partners and community for better laws and an effective legal system, within the framework of our statutory obligation, to sustainably provide legal aid in the most effective, efficient and economical manner.

This strategic plan continues to build on the success of the Strategic Plan 2020-23, pursuant to which we developed, amongst other things:

- our Client Engagement Strategy
- our first Reconciliation Action Plan
- our Communications Strategy
- our People and Culture Strategy
- our much-lauded Separate Representative and Independent Children's Lawyers Practice Standards and Guidelines.

The previous strategic plan was ambitious, meaning that we are continuing to work on implementing some of the programs that are

incomplete, including our Digital Strategy, and the replacement of extensions of aid, which are inefficient, with case-based funding.

Our priority areas are:

- **People** – where we aim to ensure that all our clients feel safe, respected and have increased access to justice; children and young people, and women and children experiencing family violence continue to be prioritised; our services are culturally safe and accessible; and our staff feel valued and are proud to work at TLA.
- **Communication** – where we aim to ensure our community has a better understanding of the legal system, their legal rights and TLA's services; that we continue to be a leading voice for reforms that support improved outcomes for our clients; and that all our communications are clear, accessible, consistent, regular and transparent.
- **Collaboration** – where we will continue to work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders to deliver better outcomes for clients; support more private practitioners to undertake criminal law, particularly in the North-West of the State; and continue to contribute to research and social policy that address the needs of the Tasmanian community.

Our strategic plan continues to focus on:

- Children & Young People
- Family Violence
- Wellbeing & Resilience

whilst adding to these themes, Disability.

The additional focus on disability has developed from our greater engagement with, and support for, people with a disability seeking access to justice and legal services. As is noted in this plan, 1 in 4 Tasmanians live

with a disability, and one third of our clients are people with a disability. The actions that we develop under our strategic plan will seek to remove the barriers that people with disability, their carers, families and supporters experience; address the related legal and social problems connected with disability; and aim to reduce the overrepresentation of people with a disability in the domestic and family violence, child protection and criminal justice systems.

We are grateful for all the contributions that informed the development of the plan.

Our strategic plan continues to be ambitious, given the excellent footing that TLA has to build on the success it has achieved under its last strategic plan; the on-going and additional challenges our community face, and the unique opportunity we have to improve the lives of the community we serve.

I commend TLA for the development of a strategic plan that promotes equity, accessibility, inclusion and respect for people across race, culture, gender, age, religion, identity and experience. TLA has proven that within the framework of a strong strategic plan it can achieve great success, and is essential in ensuring the Tasmanian community is safe, respected and has their voices heard.



## OUR VISION

The Tasmanian community is safe, respected and has their voices heard.



## OUR PURPOSE

To enable our diverse Tasmanian community to access legal services, address their legal problems, understand their rights, navigate the legal system and get the assistance they need.

To work with our clients, staff, legal partners and community for better laws and an effective legal system.



## OUR VALUES

### Honesty

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

### Courage

- We speak up, listen to different views, and take on feedback
- We engage with our clients with respect and empathy
- We advocate for our clients, our organisation and for justice
- We are open to new ideas and adaptable to change.

### Engagement

- We are inclusive and promote diversity in everything we do
- We involve our staff, clients and community in the design of services, programs and policies
- We are committed to the best outcomes for our clients and community
- We work collaboratively with our partners and clients.



## OUR STATUTORY OBLIGATION

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

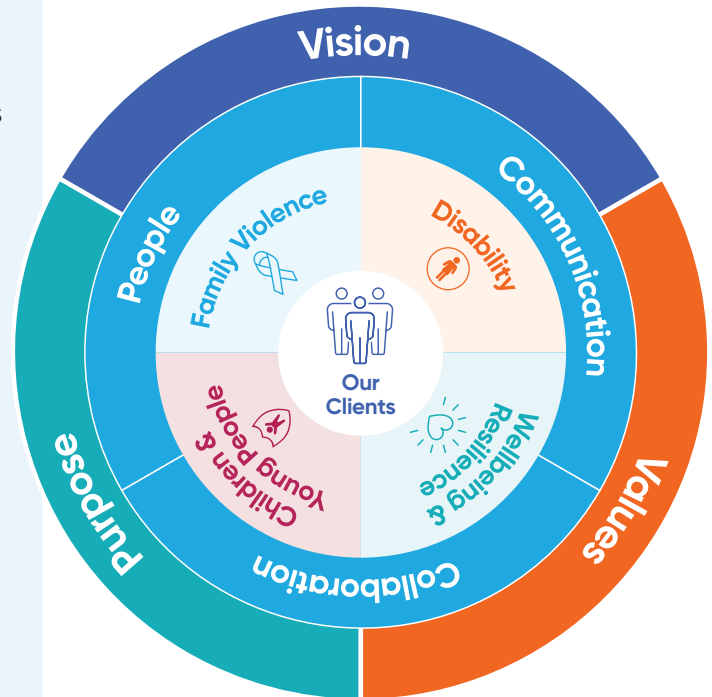
# Introduction

Tasmania Legal Aid is an independent statutory body established by the Legal Aid Commission Act 1990 (Tas) and funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments to provide legal information, advice and representation to members of the Tasmanian community who are unable to pay for those legal services.

Our strategic plan sets the direction, priorities and actions to achieving our vision and purpose. By prioritising key focus areas, we intend to increase our impact by directing our services to where they are most needed, while maintaining our commitment to serving all of our diverse clients and communities in an inclusive and respectful way.

Over the next 4 years we will continue to build on the foundations established in our Strategic Plan 2020-23, providing responsive and respectful legal services, advocating for legal reform that will assist our clients and working with our partners for a fairer, timely and more effective legal system. We will continue to engage with our community and partners to meet our strategic goals, within the framework of our legislative and policy governance obligations and funding agreements. We will work with our staff to ensure they feel supported and valued and so they can see their role within the strategic plan.

The strategic plan has been developed in consultation with our clients, staff, partners and community groups. We thank all who have provided their insights and are grateful for their commitment to helping us achieve our vision.



## The context of our work

We are the largest provider of legal services to the Tasmanian community. Some of our work includes courts and tribunals asking us to assist clients by providing legal advice and representation and we respond by ensuring that all our clients have fair representation in the justice system. This context creates a tension in our work: we represent those affected by family violence, and we also represent those accused of perpetrating family violence. Our role is clear – to help our clients understand their rights, navigate the system and get the assistance they need for their legal issue. Whoever our client, and whatever their matter, clients are at the centre of what we do. We undertake our role as advocates within a justice system and do so aspiring to our vision that all Tasmanians are safe, respected and have their voices heard.

# Our Focus Areas

We are committed to equity, accessibility, inclusion and respect for people across race, culture, gender, age, religion, identity, and experience.

This commitment informs our focus themes which direct particular attention to areas of specific need.

These are:

**Children & Young People**

**Family Violence**

**Disability**

**Wellbeing & Resilience**





## Children & Young People

As a community, we have an increased awareness of the need to nurture children to help them grow into healthy adults. We are aware of the impacts of trauma, neglect and abuse on childhood development. As the main provider of legal services to children and young people, we are committed to providing legal services and to advocating for system and law reform that is child-centric, reflects the voices of children and young people and promotes safety and wellbeing.

## Family Violence

Family violence continues to afflict our community, with many of our clients experiencing or using family violence. The Personal Safety Survey<sup>1</sup> found that 32% of Tasmanian women have experienced family violence – physical, emotional, economic, combinations or all of them – since the age of 15. Many more children have seen, heard or suffered the effects of family violence. Tasmania Police made 1,700 arrests for family violence in the 2021-22 year<sup>2</sup>, and their statistics recorded that children were present in more than half<sup>3</sup> of incidents they attended.

We are committed to a systemic and organisational response to improve services to respond to family violence, including legal advice and representation to all our clients, including alleged perpetrators of family violence. We will continue advocating for law and systems reform that prevents, responds to and supports those affected by family violence.

1 [Australian Bureau of Statistics' \(ABS\) 2021-22 Personal Safety Survey.](#)

2 [Tasmania Police Annual Report 2021-22.](#)

3 Figures supplied by Reporting Services, Tasmania Police by email 13 July 2023.

## Disability

More than one in four Tasmanians live with disability, and one-third of our clients are people with disability. People with disability, their carers, families and supporters often experience a range of barriers as well as related legal and social problems connected with their disability and are overrepresented in the domestic and family violence, child protection and criminal justice systems. TLA commits to improving access to justice for people with disability and to providing legal services that facilitate access and meet communication and referral needs of clients.

## Wellbeing & Resilience

Our diverse, skilled and committed staff are the heart of our service delivery, and bring our vision and purpose to life every day. Their work is rewarding, meaningful and often challenging, requiring both resilience and integrity. We recognise the impact of the work on our staff. We commit to supporting their wellbeing through a positive and respectful working environment, by providing training and support that builds knowledge and capacity through consulting with our staff in operational and decision making processes.

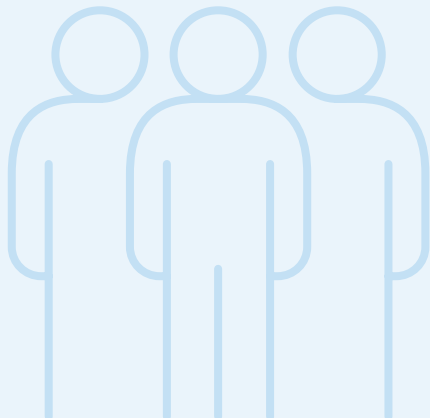
# Our Priority Areas

Our strategic plan is built around three priority areas in which we seek to live our values and deliver our vision and purpose. Our focus themes are reflected across the three priority areas.



## PEOPLE

We provide high quality, inclusive and accessible legal services to the Tasmanian community, delivered by skilled and well-supported staff.



## Goals

### 1. All our clients feel safe and respected and have increased access to justice

We will continue to work to ensure we respond respectfully to the diverse needs of our clients by building our understanding and response to the needs of people across all backgrounds, cultures and experiences. We have adopted, and will continue to build on, a client-first approach across Tasmania Legal Aid, in our services, policies, priorities and communications. We will implement our Client Engagement Strategy and use client input to review and improve our service delivery models to ensure they appropriately respond to the diverse communities we serve.

### 2. Children and young people are at the centre of our service delivery and women and children experiencing family violence are prioritised

The safety of people experiencing family violence and the particular needs of children and young people are at the forefront of our planning for the next 4 years. We will continue to work to ensure our facilities and services are safe for these groups. We will focus staff training to support respectful service provision to women and children affected by family violence. We will continue to advocate for improvements in the justice system as it relates to children and young people, including an increase in the age of criminal responsibility and improved access to legal services for children and young people in detention through provision of a Youth Detention Duty Lawyer Service.

### **3. People with disability have improved access to justice, including legal services that facilitate access and meet their communication and referral needs**

We are committed to breaking down the barriers experienced by people with disability and to improving accessibility to legal services. We will develop a Disability Strategy that seeks to remove the barriers that people with disability, their carers, families and supporters experience. We will continue to work to ensure our facilities and services are, and feel, safe for people with disability and will create a safe and supportive environment for staff with disability and staff who care for family members with disability. We will focus staff training to support trauma-informed and disability-informed services provision to people with disability and seek to understand disability related legal and social problems. We will support the Tasmanian Government's implementation of the findings of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. We will continue to advocate for improvements in the justice system for people with disability and aim to reduce the overrepresentation of people with a disability in the domestic and family violence, child protection and criminal justice systems.

### **4. Our services are culturally safe and accessible for all our clients across race, culture, gender, age, religion, identity, and experience**

We will prioritise improving the accessibility of our facilities and communication to diverse communities, listening to and responding to the needs of our clients. We will build on our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by developing and implementing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement and Action Plan in

consultation with our Palawa Advisory Group. We will deliver cultural awareness training that assists us to work with and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In addition, staff training will be provided in trauma-informed practice and client safety with respect to people experiencing family violence.

### **5. We demonstrate our commitment to diversity and inclusion**

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion must be visible to the Tasmanian community before, during and after our direct engagement with clients and community members. We will continue to build on our consultation mechanisms to enable every voice to be heard in our planning and decision making.

### **6. Our staff feel valued and proud to work at Tasmania Legal Aid**

Staff participation has been integral to the development of our strategic plan. We will continue to work to ensure that every staff member can see their role within the strategic plan, and that it provides a supportive framework for their decision making and work. We will continue to work with our staff to ensure our culture is respectful and supportive and that our office accommodation effectively supports their work and wellbeing.

### **7. We build wellbeing and resilience**

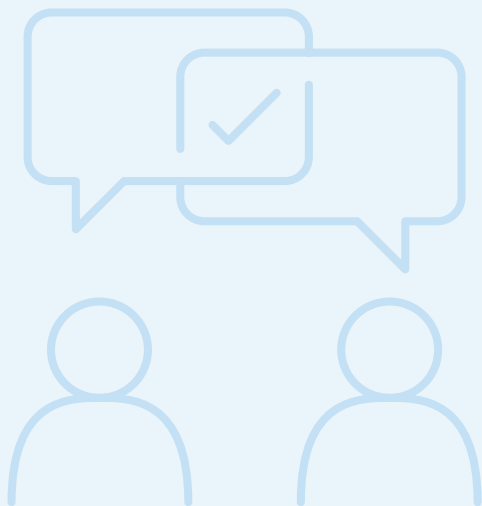
We recognise the impacts and potential impacts of our work on our staff, and commit to supporting their wellbeing through a positive and respectful working environment and culture, by providing training and support that builds knowledge and capacity and by listening to and consulting with our staff in our operational and decision making processes.

## Our Priority Areas

2

### COMMUNICATION

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



### Goals

1. **Our community has a better understanding of the legal system, their legal rights and our services**

Effective communication is essential to fulfilling our purpose and the diverse needs of our clients. We will review and improve our communications to ensure information is widely accessible and presented in a manner that is available and engaging for children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability and people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We will implement our Digital Strategy and improve the way we use digital technologies in service delivery and collate and use more and better quality data to inform service planning, evaluation and system reforms.

2. **We are a leading voice for laws and systems reforms that support improved outcomes for our clients**

We are uniquely placed to act as a voice for our clients, including children and young people, people experiencing family violence and people with disability. We will continue to contribute to legal and social reform and will support this with data gathering, collaborative relationships and advocacy with our partners and communities. In implementing our Client Engagement Strategy, we will ensure that a diverse client representation contributes to our decision making.

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

To earn and maintain the trust of our clients and communities, our communications must be clear, transparent and demonstrate our accountability to deliver on our commitments. We will continue to work to improve the accessibility of our communications by tailoring them to particular audiences and leveraging the opportunities offered by digital communication to bring information to people where, when and how they need it. To ensure our staff can see their role in the strategic plan we will integrate the goals and priorities into planning individual priorities as well as continuing to reference the plan in our regular communications with staff.

### **4. We consult our clients, staff, partners and community in the design, delivery and evaluation of our services**

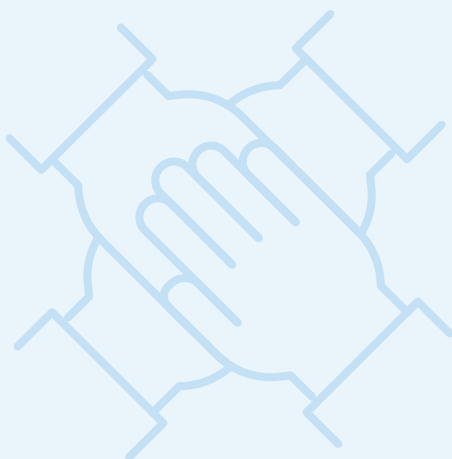
Consultation with our clients, staff, partners and community has been central to the content of this strategic plan. This will continue as we implement actions that deliver on our goals and evaluate our progress and success. We will continue with and build on existing forums and regular connections to inform our priorities and responses.

## Our Priority Areas

3

### COLLABORATION

We work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders to ensure Tasmanian laws and legal system delivers better outcomes, especially for people facing barriers to participation.



### Goals

- 1. We work with our partners to build a more collaborative and responsive legal assistance service**

We are proud of our strong relationships with the wider Tasmanian legal community. We will continue to work with them, sharing data and information to work together effectively to ensure our clients can access the services and support they need and to advocate for reform. We will continue to improve our engagement with private practitioners and the legal assistance sector to find effective ways to coordinate and support access to legal services.

- 2. 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**

Our relationship with the Tasmanian legal profession is strong and we will continue to nurture those relationships to support legal practitioners to support our clients. Recognising that criminal matters need particular attention we will focus on supporting this area. We will work with the Law Society of Tasmania and the University of Tasmania to research and address issues in attracting and retaining criminal lawyers across the state, and particularly in North-West Tasmania.

### **3. 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**

The best people to inform us of their needs are the people we are serving - our clients. We commit to providing forums where their voices are heard. We will improve data capture, analysis and reporting across the legal assistance sector to improve service planning and client experiences and share data with partner organisations to support joint advocacy. We will work with our community partners, learning from their experience and data to further inform and improve our services and advocacy.

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

We will continue to use our unique position in the community to contribute to research and social policy that addresses the needs of community. We will work with others to respond to relevant recommendations arising from the *Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* and the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*.

# Implementing the Plan and measuring our progress

Our strategic plan helps us deliver services for the community within the legislative and policy framework in which we work.

Our strategic plan will be implemented through organisation-wide 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 our strategic plan.





## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the contribution of representatives of the following groups, whose input has been invaluable in developing this strategic plan.

- Tasmania Legal Aid staff
- Palawa Advisory Group
- Family Violence Reform Group
- Tasmania Legal Aid Client Advisors
- Engender Equality
- TasCoss
- University of Tasmania Faculty of Law
- Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Relationships Australia Tasmania
- Law Society of Tasmania
- Tasmanian Bar

### Steering Committee

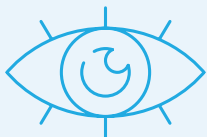
- Kristen Wylie
- Patrick Lunn
- Sarah Campbell
- Vanessa Fenton
- Stuart Davey
- Anne-Marie Kerr
- Julie Fawkner
- Jane Green
- Kirsten Abercromby
- James Oxley

### Project Managers

- Prue Cameron, Senior Policy and Projects Officer, Tasmania Legal Aid
- Jane Addison, Tomten Consulting

Acknowledgement of Country artwork by Caleb Nichols-Mansell

# 2023–27 Strategic Plan Framework



## OUR VISION

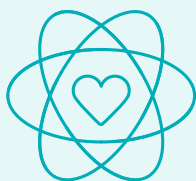
The Tasmanian community is safe, respected and has their voices heard.



## OUR PURPOSE

To enable our diverse Tasmanian community to access legal services, address their legal problems, understand their rights, navigate the legal system and get the assistance they need.

To work with our clients, staff, legal partners and community for better laws and an effective legal system.



## OUR VALUES

### Honesty

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

### Courage

- We speak up, listen to different views, and take on feedback
- We engage with our clients with respect and empathy
- We advocate for our clients, our organisation and for justice
- We are open to new ideas and adaptable to change.

### Engagement

- We are inclusive and promote diversity in everything we do
- We involve our staff, clients and community in the design of services, programs and policies
- We are committed to the best outcomes for our clients and our community
- We work collaboratively with our partners and our clients.



## OUR STATUTORY OBLIGATION

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

**OUR PRIORITY AREAS**

1



**PEOPLE**

We provide high quality, inclusive and accessible legal services to the Tasmanian community, delivered by skilled and well supported staff.

**GOALS**

1. All our clients feel safe and respected and have increased access to justice
2. Children and young people are at the centre of our service delivery and women and children experiencing family violence and people with disability are prioritised
3. People with disability have improved access to justice, including legal services that facilitate access and meet their communication and referral needs
4. Our services are culturally safe and accessible for all our clients across race, culture, gender, age, religion, identity and experience
5. We demonstrate our commitment to diversity and inclusion
6. Our staff feel valued and proud to work at TLA
7. We build wellbeing and resilience.

**SUCCESS**

1. More of our clients report that they feel safe and respected
2. Increased service delivery and law reform activities
3. More of our clients report our services are accessible
4. More of our staff report that they feel valued and proud to work at TLA.

2



**COMMUNICATION**

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

1. Our community has a better understanding of the legal system, their legal rights and our services
2. We are a leading voice for law and system 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
4. We consult our clients, staff, partners and community in the design, delivery and evaluation of our services.

1. More of our clients report that our communication provides them with a better understanding of the legal system, their legal rights and our services
2. The voices of our clients, staff and partners are reflected in our service design and delivery.

3



**COLLABORATION**

We work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders to ensure Tasmanian laws and legal system deliver the best outcomes, especially for people facing barriers to participation.

1. We work with our partners to build a more collaborative and responsive legal assistance service
2. 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
3. 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
4. We collaborate with our legal and community partners in research, community education and other projects to promote our clients' interests.

1. Collaboration with our partners and the legal profession leads to positive outcomes
2. We have contributed to a vibrant legal profession which supports lawyers to do legal aid work including criminal legal aid work.



SCAN ME

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