



**Community
Legal Centres
NSW**

Strategic Plan 2015–2018

Access to Justice



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Community Legal Centres NSW

CLCNSW acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which the CLCNSW State Office is located.

About this document

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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Strategic Plan of Community Legal Centres NSW Incorporated for the period 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018.

This plan has been developed by CLCNSW in consultation with its members, staff and Board. CLCNSW also consulted with Legal Aid NSW about the key funding and sustainability issues for the CLC sector in the immediate future.

As a result of these extensive consultations, this plan represents a clear direction for CLCNSW for the next three years. In particular, it incorporates ideas and suggestions from our member CLCs on what they want to see CLCNSW working on in the coming three years. There is no doubt in our minds that the next few years will present significant challenges for the CLC sector. We are facing diminishing funding from government along with policy changes. We are also seeing marked differences in the way people access and use information and services, such as through technology, including social media. These, and other challenges, represent a call to action for our sector to respond and change to ensure that we continue to deliver what our communities need if they are to have true access to justice.

The plan outlines five priority areas that CLCNSW will focus on. First, we will increase awareness of, and respond in strategic ways to, access to justice issues. We will do this by collaborating with CLCs and our other stakeholders to work on such issues, including utilising research into unmet legal needs. Second, we will advocate for law reform that delivers social justice for CLC clients. Activities will include engaging in sector-identified law reform activities, which will include undertaking campaigns and responding to issues of significant injustice for communities of most need. This work will have a particular focus on meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Third, we will promote the value of CLCs as unique and valuable contributors to the justice system. Staff and board members will, for example, use social media to promote the role of CLCs, as well as attend events, such as law student future careers days to promote working in CLCs as an exciting career option. Fourth, we will work with CLCs in NSW to build their organisational capacity to deliver services. This means we will undertake activities such as providing professional development opportunities and projects to increase the capacity of staff and volunteers. We will also continue

supporting CLCs to provide best practice legal services through the National Accreditation Scheme. And finally, we will put aim to ensure CLCNSW itself is a strong peak body for its members into the future. This will involve activities such as seeking alternative sources of funding and ensuring we have the best staffing structure in place to carry out all the objectives of this plan.

Our commitment to improving access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is demonstrated through the implementation in 2014/15 of our Reconciliation Action Plan. The Plan acknowledges the importance of developing strong effective relationships with Aboriginal people to inform the services delivered by CLCs. We are pleased to see some strong initiatives already being produced as a result of this Plan and we remain committed to building on these initiatives.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the CLC movement in NSW in 2015, it is important that we reflect on our history. CLCs in NSW have a strong and proud history of collaboration and cooperation. They also have an outstanding record of creating and delivering innovative legal services to the community, particularly those who are most marginalised and do not have the mechanism to voice their issues. This Strategic Plan outlines how CLCNSW will continue to support the collaboration, cooperation and innovation of our member CLCs.

I thank our members, Board, staff and stakeholders of CLCNSW for their valuable contributions to this plan. I look forward to working with you all to implement this plan, as we strive to make our vision of a fair and inclusive community a reality.

I commend this document to you.

Nassim Arrage
Chairperson, CLCNSW

Community Legal Centres in NSW

New South Wales has a network of 38 Community Legal Centres (CLCs), independent community organisations providing access to legal services throughout the state, with a particular focus on services to disadvantaged and marginalised people and communities, and matters in the public interest.

CLCs have a distinctive role in the NSW community and legal sector by:

- Providing general legal advice and assistance for socially and economically disadvantaged people. This includes taking on strategic casework on matters that may affect many in the community.
- Addressing special areas or specific population groups through dedicated Centres (e.g. tenancy, credit and debt, domestic and family violence).
- Encouraging capacity building for people to develop skills for self-advocacy.
- Advocating for improved access to justice and more equitable laws and legal systems.

Centres are committed to achieving systemic change through community legal education, and through law and policy reform.

Community Legal Centres NSW Inc.

Community Legal Centres NSW Inc. (CLCNSW) is the peak body for all CLCs in NSW. Our State Office is a small team providing support to, and representation for, our member Centres, in government and community fora.

Vision

Access to justice for all in a fair and inclusive community.

Purpose

CLCNSW leads and supports Community Legal Centres to deliver access to quality legal services and champion social justice.

Values

CLCNSW is committed to:

- Collaboration
- Cultural safety
- Diversity
- Equality
- Excellence
- Fairness
- Integrity
- Respect

History

The first Community Legal Centre in NSW opened in Redfern in 1977, two years after lawyers, volunteers, academics, social workers and community activists identified a need for accessible community legal services at the Community Control of Legal Services Conference.

Since Redfern Legal Centre began – delivering a model for community legal access and services – CLCs are now operating throughout NSW offering legal advice and assistance to urban, regional, rural and remote people and communities. In 2014–2015, CLCs in NSW provided advice to **58,428 clients** and delivered **74,754 advices**.

Our Priority Areas

Priority Area 1

Highlight access to justice

Increased awareness of, and strategic responses to, access to justice.

We will:

- Collaborate with CLCs and our community and legal assistance sector partners to identify and work on issues of access to justice, including research into unmet legal needs and emerging trends.
- Promote the outcomes of research into unmet legal needs.

To achieve this we will:

- Develop collaborations with key legal and community stakeholders.
- Create partnerships between CLCs and universities and research centres to identify and understand unmet legal need.
- Communicate the benefits of Justice Reinvestment and its relationship with CLC activities.
- Apply research knowledge for projects that contribute to law reform and policy discussion.

Priority Area 2

Advocate for social justice

Advocate for law reform that delivers social justice for Community Legal Centre clients.

We will:

- Undertake and collaborate on specific sector-identified campaigns on law reform and policy.
- Respond to law reform issues of significant injustice for local communities of need, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Position ourselves strategically to ensure the community legal sector's views are included in law reform and policy processes.
- Increase awareness amongst all CLC staff and management of the importance and value of systemic advocacy by CLCs to their clients.

To achieve this we will:

- Prioritise sector-wide law reform areas, especially in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Coordinate consultation by, and with, CLCs and their clients, for timely contribution to policy discussions.
- Assist individual CLCs to develop law reform projects.
- Advocate for social justice through participation in key legal and other law reform forums.
- Ensure all CLCs access up to date information and training on law reform in NSW.



Priority Area 3

Promote the value of Community Legal Centres

Increased political and societal awareness and recognition of Community Legal Centres as unique and valuable contributors to the justice system.

We will:

- Promote and strengthen awareness of CLCs to stakeholders, funding bodies and the broader community through events, publications, media and online activities.
- Be a leading public commentator on the value and contribution of CLCs to the justice system in the media and to decision-makers.

To achieve this we will:

- Use our online and social media presence to highlight how CLCs assist clients to access justice.
- Sponsor the Community Legal Centres NSW award at the annual NSW Justice Awards.
- Engage directly with law students (under- and post-graduate) at careers events and expos.
- Promote CLCNSW resources including publications and member directory.
- Develop proactive media relations for greater awareness of the role of CLCs in access to justice issues.
- Assist CLCs to promote their local projects and activities.

Priority Area 4

Strengthen the organisational capacity of Community Legal Centres in NSW

Increased capacity for Community Legal Centres to grow and deliver services.

We will:

- Advocate for additional funding for CLCs to address unmet legal needs.
- Assist CLCs to diversify funding sources and identify cost savings.
- Investigate alternative organisational models for CLCs.
- Work with CLCs to continually improve the viability and quality of their services to clients and the community, including through the National Accreditation Scheme.
- Provide professional development opportunities based on sector-identified needs for CLCs.

To achieve this we will:

- Outline the value of CLCs in addressing unmet legal needs.
- Assist CLCs to identify and access diverse funding sources.
- Provide information to CLCs on alternative organisational models to improve their financial sustainability.
- Support CLCs to maintain certification under the National Accreditation Scheme.
- Assist CLCs to improve the way they work with Aboriginal communities.
- Maintain regular contact and communications with all CLCs.
- Deliver professional development opportunities, including remote access.
- Deliver a mentoring program specific to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CLC staff.
- Provide induction for all new staff and volunteers in CLCs.
- Seek pro bono assistance with CLCNSW's professional development program.

Priority Area 5

Strengthen Community Legal Centres NSW Inc.

A strong peak body assisting Community Legal Centres to deliver access to justice.

We will:

- Review governance and operations to ensure effective delivery of the strategic plan.
- Strengthen our membership and supporter base.
- Ensure the State Office of CLCNSW can efficiently and effectively deliver services to members to improve their operations and sustainability.

To achieve this we will:

- Improve service delivery by the State Office.
- Initiate ways for organisations and individuals to become supporters of CLCNSW.
- Diversify CLCNSW's funding sources.
- Create more volunteer opportunities at the CLCNSW State Office.



Consultation to develop this strategic plan

The 2015–18 strategic plan was a result of consultation with the CLC and justice sector stakeholders from February to June 2015. CLCNSW undertook a range of activities to seek feedback and ideas for this strategic plan, including:

- A consultation with CLCNSW members at the February 2015 quarterlies.
- Consultation with Legal Aid NSW to identify funding and sustainability priorities for the CLC sector.
- Consultation and review by the staff and Board.

Implementation and reporting of the strategic plan

This strategic plan covers the period 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018. It aims not only to capitalise on CLCNSW's strengths, but also to take advantage of opportunities through the introduction of new initiatives in response to our members' needs, as well as those of the wider NSW justice sector. CLCNSW is committed to continuous improvement of all aspects of its operations, including its strategic planning process.

Implementation

Detailed and shorter-term strategies and actions, based on the five Priority Areas within this plan, are developed every year into a State Office annual workplan. Individual staff members have actions relating to their specific areas of responsibility.

Reporting

Six-monthly reports against the plan are provided in written form to the Board and the funding manager, Legal Aid NSW. Regular reports on significant actions in the State Office annual workplan are also provided to the Board and sector. The CLCNSW Annual Reports also provide a report of achievements under the plan.



CLCNSW's Members

FULL MEMBERS

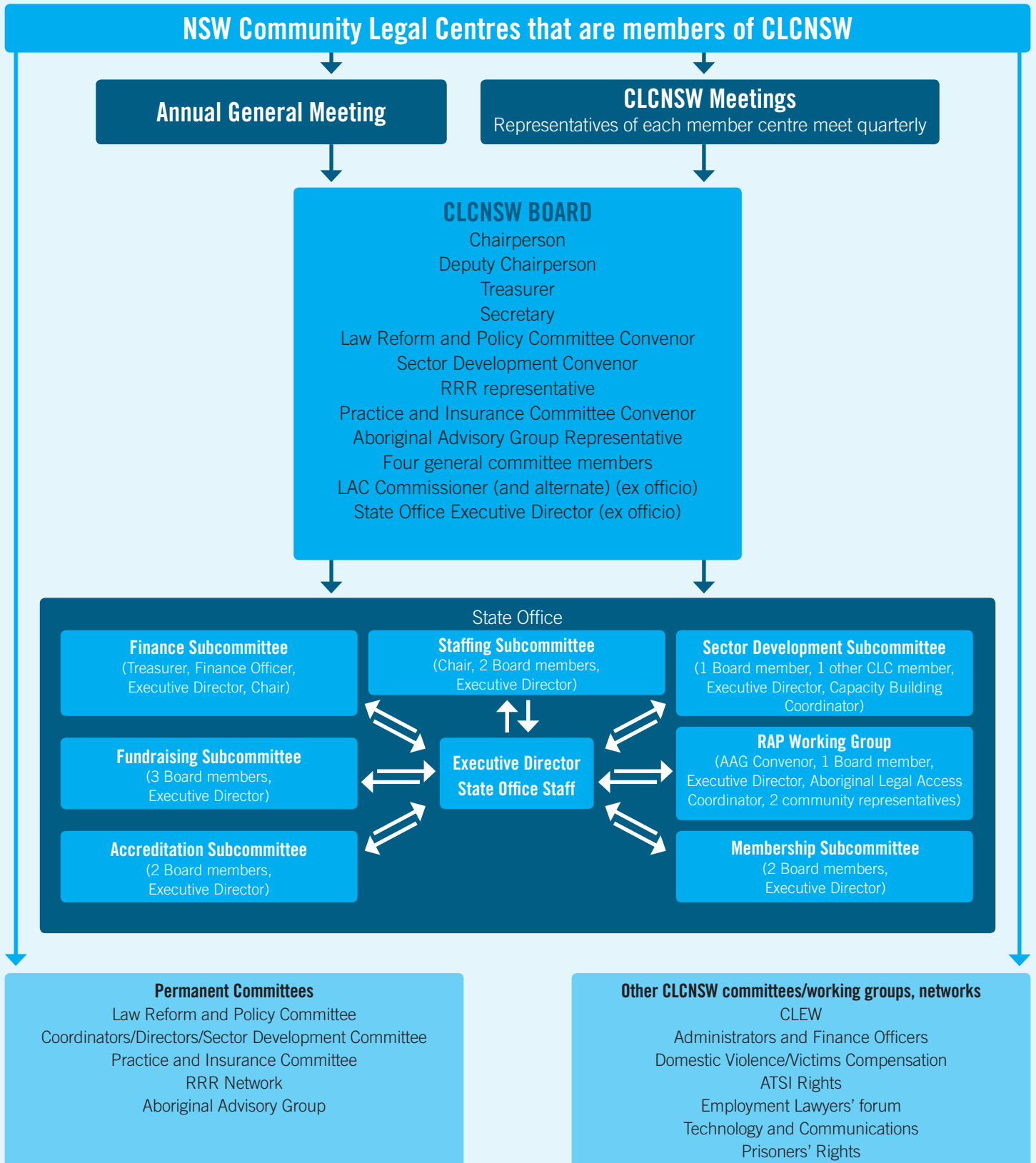
Generalist Centres	Specialist Centres
Central Coast Community Legal Centre	Animal Defenders Office
Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre	Arts Law Centre of Australia
Far West Community Legal Centre	Australian Centre for Disability Law
Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre	EDO NSW
Hume Riverina Community Legal Service	Financial Rights Legal Centre
Hunter Community Legal Centre	HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (NSW)
Illawarra Legal Centre	Immigration Advice and Rights Centre
Inner City Legal Centre	Intellectual Disability Rights Service
Kingsford Legal Centre	Justice Connect
Macarthur Legal Centre	National Children's and Youth Law Centre
Macquarie Legal Centre	Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Marrickville Legal Centre	Refugee Advice and Casework Service (Australia)
Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre	Seniors' Rights Service
Mt Druitt & Area Community Legal Centre	Tenants' Union of NSW
North & North West Community Legal Service	Welfare Rights Centre (NSW)
Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre	Wurringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre
Redfern Legal Centre	Women's Legal Services (NSW)
Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre	
South West Sydney Legal Centre	
Western NSW Community Legal Centre	

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Australian Pro Bono Centre
University of Newcastle Legal Centre

Community Legal Centres NSW Inc.

Organisational structure



Strategic Plan 2015–2018

Staff

Executive Director
Aboriginal Legal Access Coordinator
Capacity Building Coordinator
Finance Officer
Member Services Officer
Sector Relations and Administration Officer
Strategy and Communications Officer

Finances

The major sources of CLCNSW's funds are the NSW Government and the NSW Public Purpose Fund (PPF). The PPF's income is generated from interest earned on solicitors' trust accounts. CLCNSW's Government and PPF funds are managed by Legal Aid NSW.

In 2015/16, CLCNSW expects to receive \$822,885:

- \$608,313 from the NSW Government (up 51% from 2014/15);
- \$82,500 from the NSW PPF (same amount as 2014/15); and
- \$99,000 generated through activities such as fundraising and member fees (a decrease of 36% from 2014/15).





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