

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Womens Legal Services NQ Annual Report 2015 -2016



Celebrating 10 years of service





Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Women's Legal Services NQ Inc.

Servicing the North Queensland Region

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Office Hours

Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

For Appointments

Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

**Annual
Report
2015-2016**



*10 years Celebration
Congratulations
Aboriginal & Torres Strait
Islander Womens Legal
Service NQ*

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WHO WE ARE

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services NQ Inc. ("ATSIWLSNQ") is a not for profit community legal centre developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to provide legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in North Queensland. ATSIWLSNQ is managed by a committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Based in Townsville, ATSIWLSNQ provides free legal services from Sarina to the Torres Strait and other northern regions, from Mount Isa in the west, to Palm Island in the east. Our services include legal advice by phone, mail and email and community legal education in regional outreach areas of North Queensland.

OUR PLEDGE

To provide an environment which is safe, culturally appropriate and friendly

To provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the community with information about the services we offer

To be respectful, courteous and professional and to listen to our clients' concerns

To respond to our clients' enquiries and requests for information in an accurate and timely manner

To provide quality legal advice and to provide legal representation to the extent of our resources

To provide women with an alternative source of legal advice or legal representation if we are unable to assist them

OUR MISSION

"Our mission is to provide and improve access to legal services and to promote law reform for North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through advocacy and representation in the legal system"

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



Professor Gracelyn Smallwood

As the 2015-16 Chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services North Queensland Inc. ("ATSIWLSNQ") I am pleased to present the tenth Annual Report since the legal service was incorporated in February 2006. The service has been operating independently for a significant period. It is a time to celebrate and reflect on the achievements of the service, but also to revisit our vision, to take stock and to step up to the future and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their families in North Queensland in the years ahead.

The 2015-16 year has been a time of growth in the service and in the capacity of the service to reach out and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in North Queensland. I would like to acknowledge both the Commonwealth and State government funders for their support for this valuable work and also to acknowledge the Queensland government for its provision of funds for a child protection duty lawyer to Palm Island which we commenced in January 2016.

It is pleasing that the service has been able to provide regular outreach services to areas of need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families, in Palm Island, Charters Towers and the Women's Centre in Townsville, among others. There is still work to be done for the most vulnerable women in our community and this includes women and girls in detention. ATSIWLSNQ has had regular visits to women in the Stuart prison throughout the 2015-16 year and more recently has visited the Cleveland Detention Centre. At a time when many of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) Report remain unaddressed or ignored Australia wide, it is important for legal services such as ATSIWLSNQ to be vigilant and to ensure the human rights of women and girls in prison are respected and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are able to exercise their legal rights to the full extent of their capacity and to have the protection of the law where it is needed.

In April 2016, ATSIWLSNQ had a day of celebrating the successes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, through our very well attended “Black Women Succeeding against All Odds”. It was an inspiring day for all who attended and a chance to hear the personal stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have overcome the obstacles stacked against them to achieve success for themselves and their communities.

Staff

The ATSIWLSNQ Management Committee values the diligence, skill and integrity that the staff at ATSIWLSNQ provide, in ensuring that services are professionally delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Cathy Pereira needs to be commended for her leadership as Co-ordinator/Principal Solicitor. Cathy has been with the ATSIWLSNQ for eight years and during her time the organisation has more than doubled its size and extended its regular outreach work, allowing extra services to be delivered to the community. ATSIWLSNQ has a dedicated and stable team due to her ongoing support to staff.

I would also like to commend the work of Lee Burton, who has provided administrative management of ATSIWLSNQ for four (4) years. The capacity of the service to grow in numbers and services can be largely attributed to the work that Lee has taken on in managing the office.

Jessica Henry is to be commended for her long term commitment to the work of ATSIWLSNQ. Jess started at the service as a dedicated volunteer. Since becoming employed in administration in 2012, Jess has provided excellence in administration and in her most recent position as client support officer.

I also acknowledge administrative assistant Erica Kyle (junior), whose roots on Palm Island have brought her to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Legal Service and who provides a culturally appropriate and friendly environment for women as well as maintaining our database.

Solicitor, Julie Kefford joined our service at the beginning of the 2015-16 year and is to be commended for her exceptional representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are dealing with child protection issues. Julie has been a welcome addition to the team as an innovator and strong advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Special acknowledgement also to solicitor Melanie Richardson for her work in researching and writing the bulk of the ATSIWLSNQ submission to the Senate Enquiry into Human Rights in Queensland.

Management Committee Members

I would like to acknowledge my fellow Management Committee Members who have provided a supportive and dedicated voluntary service for the governance processes of ATSIWLSNQ.

Our members during the 2015-16 year have been Babette Doherty as Vice Chairperson, Victoria Close as Secretary, Marilyn Smith as Treasurer and Jacinta Elston and Tanya Morris as Management Committee members.

We were saddened during the year to receive Victoria's resignation and on behalf of the management committee, I acknowledge the dedication, diligence and skill that Victoria gave to her role as Secretary and I would like to thank and acknowledge her for volunteering to continue to do voluntary work by advising the staff on our Policy and Procedures.

I would also like to make a special acknowledgement to Marilyn Smith and thank her as our longest serving Management Committee member. Marilyn has been with ATSIWLSNQ since incorporation and has contributed to our vision and stability, giving many hours of unstinting service to the organisation.

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Funding

We would like to thank the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet ("DPMC") for its April 2016 offer, which was accepted by ATSIWLSNQ, of a Service Agreement under the Indigenous Women's program ("IWP") which extends until June 2019. This is a most welcome development for the service and for the first time offers the service a longer term of funding stability, compared with previous agreements which have been as short as 12 months in the past.

Department of Justice and Attorney General (Qld) - Additional Commonwealth funding

ATSIWLSNQ made application in October 2015 for a one-off funding grant to the Department of Justice and Attorney General for Additional Commonwealth Funding for services which included a Palm Island Child Protection duty lawyer. We were delighted when we were informed by the Attorney General Yvette D'Ath that we were successful with our submission and we thank the Attorney General and the Queensland government for making this funding available to our service.

Events

I was personally involved in three events during the year with the ATSIWLSNQ staff, namely the Enquiry into Human Rights by the Queensland Parliament on 16 May 2016, the "Black Women Succeeding against All Odds" day on 8 April 2016, and the "Stop Domestic Violence" campaign, during the Cowboys vs Broncos NRL game on 20 May 2016.

Human Rights Enquiry

On 16 May 2016 I was one of those called on to give evidence, before the Senate Enquiry into Human Rights, addressing the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the need for a Human Rights Act in Queensland. Principal Solicitor, Cathy Pereira, also attended the Enquiry to address the issue from a legal framework and to provide an opportunity to answer

questions on the submission prepared by Melanie Richardson and Cathy Pereira of our office. It was a welcome opportunity to raise issues of concern and consider how to better protect and enforce the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

BLACK WOMEN SUCCEEDING AGAINST ALL ODDS

Community Events

I was very pleased during the year to support ATSIWLSNQ staff by calling for and co-ordinating, a community day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The theme of the day was, as the title says, “*Black women succeeding against all odds.*” The day was far more successful than anticipated with over 70 participants attending the day. The main attraction on the day was our speakers and I was very delighted to introduce:

Shireen Malamoo – Shireen is a dynamic 80+ year old, who shared with the audience her working experiences as a representative for Australian Aboriginal people. Shireen has held leadership roles at both national and local government levels, and has been a lifelong campaigner for the rights of Aboriginal people. Her political and social thoughts were very powerful and captivating on the day. The women participants agreed strongly with Shireen’s views and this was evident in how they all engaged as an audience.



Dorothy Savage – Dorothy gave a moving insight of growing up and living, as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman in Townsville. Dorothy has a strong connection to the local community and she shared her highs and lows about her life. This inspired many in the audience to share their own experiences.

Marcella Dostal (Maggie Walsh) - Maggie enlightened the audience with her poetry and storytelling. Maggie’s stories referred to her life experiences of growing up in the dormitories on Palm Island. There were many poetry and this was strongly from the day was pleasing. try and do the event



powerful messages within her stories and felt by the audience. The audience feedback The participants encouraged ATSIWLSNQ to annually.

¹ Dorothy Savage (left) and Shireen Malamoo (Right)

Stop Domestic Violence Campaign

I would like to thank staff for their time in highlighting the need to address domestic violence through a campaign at the Cowboys vs Broncos NRL game. Over 20,000 people attended the game, this being the largest crowd at any of the Cowboys' home games.

I thank Jess Henry who assisted in organising the event and arranged shirts for the staff attending, to draw attention to the issue of Domestic Violence.



In closing, I have enjoyed my year as Chairperson of the ATSIWLSNQ Management Committee and I look forward to seeing the service continue to grow. The success we have had in 2015-16 is set to continue into 2016-17. ATSIWLSNQ is unique in being the only legal service for Aboriginal and Torres Islander Women in Queensland at a time when Aboriginal women are still among the most disadvantaged in our community. I hope and trust that the service will continue to extend itself to the vulnerable women whose needs are not yet met and those who live in areas where legal services are difficult to access.

There is still so much unmet need and so much more to achieve in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. ATSIWLSNQ has in some respects stood the test of time and I trust that it will continue to get stronger each year.

Professor Gracelyn Smallwood

Chair, Management Committee

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services NQ

² Professor Gracelyn Smallwood (far left), Marnie Kyle (Middle) and Erica Kyle (jnr) (Right)

TREASURER'S REPORT

2015-16 FINANCIAL YEAR

Funding for ATSIWLSNQ during the 2015-2016 financial year has continued to grow with this year having a 12% growth. The main funding highlights during the 2015-16 financial year are as follows:

Indigenous Women's Program Funding (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet)

ATSIWLSNQ's Indigenous Women's program (IWP) funding under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding will be continued for another three years ending June 2019.

Department of Justice and Attorney General, Commonwealth Additional Funding

ATSIWLSNQ welcomed the news from the Attorney General Yvette D'Ath of funding of \$353,373 over the period of 2015-17.

With reference to the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2016, the following summary is provided:

- Trading Profit / Loss for the year result - NIL.
- To sustain this NIL profit result an approval for **Carry Forward Grants of \$ 122,872** is currently being sought from Legal Aid.

Balance Sheet

Liquidity:

Total Current Assets	\$440,860
Total Current Liabilities	\$343,759
Working Capital	\$ 69,006

Current liabilities balance *includes* the Carry Forward Grant application. This effectively means that, in the event of a request for repayment of these unexpended funds, cash is held to cater to this.

2016 – 17 Budget

The organisational budget for 2015/16 indicates a breakeven position – assuming the approval of surplus funds from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Office.

TOTAL COMMONWEALTH AND STATE ANNUAL FUNDS PAYABLE FOR 2015/16

Funding Category	Commonwealth Dept. Prime Minister & Cabinet	Commonwealth Attorney General Paid through Legal Aid Qld	State Legal Aid Qld	Total funding
Indigenous Women's Program	\$221,831			
Commonwealth funding LPITAF		\$324,695		
			\$46,686	
Total	\$221,831	\$324,695	\$46,686	\$593,212

Total funding received for 2015/16 - **\$593,212**



Marilyn Smith

ATSIWLSNQ TREASURER 2015-2016

ATSIWLSNQ Management Committee 2015 -16



Chairperson

Professor Gracelyn Smallwood AO MSc, PhD, RN RM – Biri Tribe, was born in Townsville

Qualifications/Experience

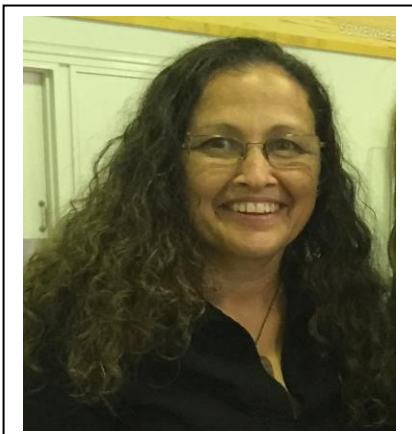
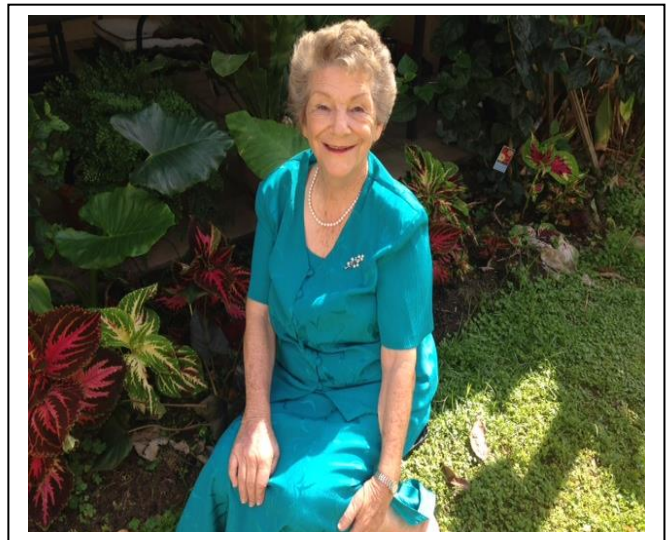
- Doctor of Philosophy
- Master of Science in Public Health
- Winner of the 2014 NAIDOC Person of the Year
- Queensland Aboriginal of the Year -1986
- Order of Australia medal - 1992

Secretary

Dr Victoria Close is a Wiradjuri woman

Qualifications/ Experience

- Trained Nurse
- Bachelor of Social Science
- Master's degree in education
- Doctorate of Philosophy in Health



Vice Chairperson

Babette Doherty is a Birri Gubba woman

Qualifications/Experience

- Regional Co-ordinator (Department of Justice and Attorney-General)
- Justice of the Peace
- Bachelor of Education
- Graduate Certificate in Management



Treasurer
Marilyn Smith - Murray Island.

Qualifications/Experience

- Bachelor of Community Welfare
- TATSICHS Stolen Generation Counsellor
- TATSICHS Early Childhood Program Case Worker
- TATSICHS Social Wellbeing unit Counsellor
- TATSICHS Stronger Families Program Case worker

Member

Professor Jacinta Elston

Jacinta Elston is from the Kalkadoon tribe in north-west Queensland and also has South Sea Islander ancestry.

Qualifications/Experience

- Associate Dean, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Strategy, James Cook University
- Professor Indigenous Health
- Master of Public Health and Tropical Medicine,
- Graduate Certificate of Rural Leadership
- Certificate of Aboriginal Research Design
- Board Member Breast Cancer Network
- Member James Cook University Academic Board
- Current Member Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Member NHMRC Research Translation Faculty
- Honorary Member Golden Key Society



Member

Tanya Morris

Tanya Morris is an Aboriginal woman from the Bar-Barrum people, west and south-west of Herberton in far north Queensland.

Qualifications/Experience

- Senior Indigenous Care Co-ordinator
- Early Childhood Education (Community Teaching)
- Enrolled Nurse
- Justice of the Peace (Qualified)
- Diploma of Project Management
- Graduate Certificate in Health Promotion.

ATSIWLSNQ

Celebrating 10 years as an independent Community Legal Centre

1998-2005

In July 1998 the North Queensland Women's Legal Service (NQWLS) received funding from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department under the Indigenous Women's Project to establish the "Indigenous Women's Unit" within its community legal centre in Townsville and Cairns.

The Indigenous Women's Unit ("IWU") was informed and guided by a Reference Group to advise the NQWLS Management Committee about legal services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by the IWU.

The IWU employed a community development worker and a solicitor, working from the Cairns and Townsville offices of the NQWLS.

The Reference Group was eager to establish its own identity as an independent community legal centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in North Queensland, a service that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women could feel was their own, notwithstanding the benefits of being under the umbrella of the larger NQWLS.

In 2005 the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department granted approval for the IWU to form an independent community legal centre managed by a committee comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. In May 2005, the IWU set up an office in St James Place in Townsville with three staff members, a principal solicitor, a community development worker and a part-time administrative officer. For a transition period, the service was financially managed and supported by NQWLS.

2006-2007

On 26 February 2006, the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Womens Legal Services NQ ("ATSIWLSNQ") was incorporated and in March 2006 an interim management committee was elected. The committee made a successful submission to the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department to commence operating independently from 1 July 2006.

The first nine members of the newly inaugurated ATSIWLSNQ Management Committee were:

- Chairperson - Agnes Tapim
- Vice President - Marilyn Smith
- Secretary – Angelina Akee
- Treasurer – Nyree Gertz
- Member – Rae Kelly
- Member – Glenda Illin
- Member - Cassandra Ross
- Member - Helen Akee
- Member – Linda Jordan

The ATSIWLSNQ staff comprised:

- Principal Solicitor - Ann Florence
- Community Development Worker – Hazel Illin
- Administration officer – Karen Owens

ATSIWLSNQ had its first Annual General Meeting and Annual Report in 2006.

In 2006 ATSIWLSNQ signed a two year Service Agreement with the Commonwealth and Legal Aid Qld (1 July 2006 to 30 June 2008). The service was primarily funded by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department under funding channelled through Legal Aid Queensland. The Queensland Government supplemented the Commonwealth funding.

2007-2008

By its second year of operation, ATSIWLSNQ was given a one-off grant of additional funding from the Commonwealth of \$160,250, from the Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland. The funding assisted the service to conduct outreach work in regional and remote areas including Ingham, Cardwell, Tully, Yarrabah Aboriginal Community, Charters Towers and Richmond, among others. The funding also assisted the service to provide legal assistance at the homelessness legal clinic for women at the Women's Centre in Aitkenvale.

ATSIWLSNQ began reporting to the Community Legal Service Program Manager at Legal Aid Queensland in relation to the delivery of legal services and expenditure of government funds.

Management Committee for 2007-08 comprised:

- Chairperson - Agnes Tapim
- Vice President - Angelina Akee
- Secretary – Glenda Illin
- Treasurer – Nyree Gertz
- Member – Rae Kelly
- Member – Marilyn Smith
- Member - Cassandra Ross
- Member – Lyn Cavanough

The ATSIWLSNQ staff members were:

- Principal Solicitor/co-ordinator - Ann Florence
- Community Development Worker – Hazel Illin
- Administration – Karen Owens



2008 - 2009

In October 2008 Anne Florence, principal solicitor, left the organisation after eight years of service. Anne resigned her position at ATSIWLSNQ to take a managerial role in The Advocacy and Support Centre, Toowoomba. Anne began her employment with the IWU in 2000 and nurtured the service through its transition from Indigenous Women's Unit to independence as a community legal centre in 2006.

³ Principal Solicitor Anne Florence with management committee member Michelle Murr (left), Administrator, Karen Owens (middle), Community Development worker, Hazel Illin (Right)

Cathy Pereira was employed to replace Anne Florence as Principal Solicitor / Co-ordinator and Jodie Vincent was employed as a community development worker to replace Hazel Illin who was also a long term employee with IWU and ATSIWLSNQ.

The service employed a second solicitor for the first time in Melanie Busato, a young solicitor who enthusiastically embraced community work, outreach to regional and remote communities and community legal education.



Management Committee members for 2008-09:

- Chairperson - Agnes Tapim
- Vice President - Glenda Illin
- Secretary – Marilyn Smith
- Treasurer – Angelina Akee
- Member – Cassandra Ross

The ATSIWLSNQ staff members:

- Principal Solicitor / Co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Contract Solicitor – Melanie Busato
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Administration – Karen Owens

2009-2010

In 2009-10 ATSIWLSNQ continued outreach work in North Queensland with the remainder of funding from the one-off grant.

Melanie left the service due to illness after making a very substantial contribution to the legal service. Her leaving was a loss to all of us and to our clients.

Val France joined the team as a dedicated, hard-working and astute solicitor. Val continued the outreach work that Melanie had begun as well as providing advice in the office.

ATSIWLSNQ made a submission to the Crime and Misconduct Commission review into police move on powers.

ATSIWLSNQ contributed to submissions to the Family Law Amendment Bill in relation to the relevance of Family Violence in family law proceedings.

Management Committee for 2009-2010:

- Chairperson - Agnes Tapim
- Vice President – Michelle Murr
- Secretary – Hazel Illin
- Treasurer – Glenda Illin
- Member – Angelina Akee
- Member – Marilyn Smith
- Member – Cassandra Ross

⁴ Community Development Worker, Jodie Vincent (left) with Solicitor, Melanie Busato (right)

The ATSIWLSNQ staff members:

- Principal Solicitor / co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Contract Solicitor – Melanie Busato / Val France
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Administration – Karen Owens / Lisa Owens

2010 - 2011

Commencement of My Journey My Footprints as a special project.

“My Journey My Footprints” project was an initiative of then CDW, Jodie Vincent, established to provide a mentoring system by women who have successfully had their children reunified with them, to share their story with women still on the journey through the child protection system. The program entered its first year, funded by a Commonwealth funding grant through the former Indigenous Co-ordination Centre (“ICC”) in Townsville.

ATSIWLSNQ was also provided with additional family violence funding for a period of 3 years as part of its funding package.

Management Committee members 2012-13:

- Chairperson - Agnes Tapim
- Vice President – Michelle Murr
- Secretary – Marilyn Smith
- Treasurer – Glenda Illin
- Member – Janine Gertz
- Member –Bonnie Hoey
- Member –Anita Farrelly

ATSIWLSNQ staff members:

- Principal Solicitor / co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Contract Solicitor –Val France
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Administration – Lisa Owens



My Journey My Footprints

2011 - 2012

In 2011, ATSIWLSNQ participated in the national consultations entitled “Recognise” on the recognition of Australia’s first peoples in the Australian Constitution. ATSIWLSNQ made a formal submission to the Enquiry, putting forward the views of the organisation on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in North Queensland.

In 2012, ATSIWLSNQ launched its booklets family dispute resolution “I want Custody of my Kids” and “Child Support” funded under a funding grant by the Commonwealth government. Social Justice Day was chosen as the launch day for the booklets and Torres Strait Islander singing group, “The Deadly Aunties” (pictured) performed at the event.



Following the launch of its booklets, ATSIWLSNQ received a grant of \$10,000 from Queensland Rail National funding to develop information brochures and conduct workshops with a theme of safety. The concept of safety drew on the work of the service by incorporating safety for women and children as well as safety more generally.

ATSIWLSNQ made a submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee on Human Rights and the Anti-Discrimination Bill.

In June 2012, ATSIWLSNQ made a submission providing Responses to the UN CEDAW Committee's concluding Observations.

Management Committee for 2012-13:

- Chairperson - Agnes Tapim
- Vice President – Michelle Murr
- Secretary – Marilyn Smith
- Treasurer – Glenda Illin
- Member – Vanessa Hunter
- Member – Harriet Hulthen



The ATSIWLSNQ staff members included:

- Principal Solicitor / co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Solicitor –Kate Lindsay
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Administration – Marcella Dindillo / Jessica Henry



2012 - 2013

ATSIWLSNQ has been an accredited community legal centre (CLC) since its inception. By 2012 the National Association of Community Legal Centres (“NACLC”) had set new national benchmarks requiring compliance for all CLC’s. In 2012-13 ATSIWLSNQ attained accreditation under the new national benchmark standards.

ATSIWLSNQ solicitor Kate Lindsay was appointed to co-convene the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services’ Reconciliation Action Plan (“RAP”) and consulted in relation to the development of the RAP.

ATSIWLSNQ Community Development Worker, Jodie Vincent, was elected to the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples (“National Congress”).

A new Management Assistant position was created to support the Principal Solicitor/ Co-ordinator role.

ATSIWLSNQ co-ordinated with the SBS program “Living Black” program to highlight the true costs of furniture rental schemes for families.



ATSIWLSNQ made a submission to the Carmody Inquiry into Child Protection. Principal Solicitor, Cathy Pereira, was subpoenaed to give evidence before the Inquiry and ATSIWLSNQ participated in a roundtable workshop, providing a further submission to the Carmody Inquiry in March 2013.

Management Committee for 2012-13:

- Chairperson - Agnes Tapim
- Secretary – Shirley Congoo
- Treasurer – Marilyn Smith
- Member – Angelina Akee
- Member – Jacinta Elston
- Member – Jamalliah Johnson
- Member – Rhonda Cole

The ATSIWLSNQ staff members:

- Principal Solicitor / co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Solicitor – Kate Lindsay
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Administration – Jessica Henry
- Management Assistant – Lee Burton



2013 - 2014

In the second half of 2013 the Commonwealth government announced cuts to funding for community legal centres and CLC's were required to reapply for funding. ATSIWLSNQ was brought under the umbrella of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous funding and successfully applied for funding under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, obtaining a short term grant of 12 months for its core Commonwealth funding.

In 2014 ATSIWLSNQ, together with other community groups in Townsville, met and made contributions to the Domestic and Family Violence Taskforce during its consultations in Townsville. The final report *Not Now Not Ever* was released on 28 February 2015.



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Management Committee for 2013-14:

- Chairperson - Marilyn Smith
- Secretary – Victoria Close
- Treasurer – Jacinta Elston
- Member – Amanda Wilder
- Member – Agnes Tapim
- Member – Rhonda Cole

⁵ Photo of Taskforce Chair, the Hon Quentin Bryce with Townsville community and ATSIWLSNQ's CDW and management committee member, Babette Doherty

- Member – Gracelyn Smallwood
- Member – Babette Doherty

ATSIWLSNQ staff members:

- Principal Solicitor / co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Solicitor – Kate Lindsay
- Solicitor – Moana Biddle
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Administration Assistant – Jess Henry
- Management Assistant – Lee Burton

2014-2015

ATSIWLSNQ relocated from St James Place in Townsville to co-locate with the North Qld Women's Legal Service at 42 Sturt St Townsville.

The service was able to create a new full-time solicitor's position and increased the hours of the second solicitor's position.

In late 2015, ATSIWLSNQ was able to commence regular outreach services to Palm Island. Solicitor, Julie Kefford was appointed in the position of outreach solicitor.



Palm Island

Julie Kefford on Palm:



ATSIWLSNQ supported a client to attend before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, during Commission's sittings in Townsville.

Management Committee for 2014-15:

- Chairperson – Gracelyn Smallwood
- Secretary – Victoria Close
- Treasurer – Marilyn Smith
- Member – Babette Doherty
- Member – Jacinta Elston
- Member – Tanya Morris

The ATSIWLSNQ staff members:

- Principal Solicitor / Co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Solicitor – Julie Kefford
- Solicitor – Melanie Richards
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Administration Assistant – Jess Henry
- Management Assistant – Lee Burton
- Administration Assistant – Lana Johnson

2015 - 2016

In 2015-16 ATSIWLSNQ was successful in obtaining a one-off grant from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's, of Commonwealth funding for 18 months to June 2017, to maintain outreach services and develop a child protection duty lawyer service on Palm Island.

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet offered, and ATSIWLSNQ accepted, a Service Agreement for core funding renewable over 3 years to 2019.

ATSIWLSNQ made a submission to the Queensland Senate Enquiry into Human Rights and gave evidence to the Senate Committee during its sittings in Townsville. Chair of ATSIWLSNQ also gave evidence of the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the need for a Human Rights Act.

ATSIWLSNQ has continued its regular outreach visits to Palm Island, Charters Towers and the women's prison in Townsville, among others.

Management Committee for 2015-16:

- Chairperson – Gracelyn Smallwood
- Vice President – Babette Doherty
- Secretary – Victoria Close
- Treasurer – Marilyn Smith
- Member – Tanya Morris
- Member – Jacinta Elston

ATSIWLSNQ staff members:

- Principal Solicitor / co-ordinator - Cathy Pereira
- Solicitor – Melanie Richards
- Solicitor – Julie Kefford
- Community Development Worker – Jodie Vincent
- Client Support Officer - Jess Henry
- Administration Assistant – Erica Kyle
- Management Assistant – Lee Burton



PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR'S REPORT

The theme of the 2015-16 year for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services NQ ("ATSIWLSNQ") has been growth. The service has grown in all areas. It has continued to target its efforts towards the most vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by improving regular outreach services to Palm Island, Charters Towers and women in the Townsville prison and, in co-operation with other community services, by increasing assistance for women experiencing family violence and women who have been victims of crime.

Our outreach work has been greatly supported in the 2015-16 financial year with a one-off grant from the Department of Justice and Attorney General (Queensland) of Commonwealth funds. The funds have been applied to the improvement of outreach services and a child protection duty lawyer service on Palm Island.

The 2015-16 year has seen an increase in legal advice and legal casework generally, with a noticeable increase in complex casework compared with simple matters. Complex casework is a holistic approach to assisting vulnerable women and is consistent with justice reinvestment. Legal cases, when dealt with as discreet legal problems, often fail vulnerable people, due to the complexity of the issues associated with vulnerability. For example, family violence may lead to loss of housing and family breakdown, disputes over care of children, financial hardship for the primary caregiver (in particular where there is no or very low child support as in the case of most of the women who are our clients), transport problems, difficulties in getting children to school, notifications to child safety authorities and enormous stress on the family and sometimes loss of confidence for a sole mother dealing with the overwhelming complexity of problems.

Vulnerability is higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who often experience racial and gender discrimination in addition to other indicators of disadvantage. It is, for example, now well documented that an Aboriginal woman is 34 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence and that Aboriginal women rate among the poorest in the nation. Racial discrimination, for example in the housing market and in delivery of services only exacerbates existing indicators of disadvantage. The flow-on effects for someone denied housing is obvious and while all of the problems have legal remedies, the problems can be overwhelming without significant legal assistance.

ATSIWLSNQ recognises that many of the women who seek legal advice at our service have a range of legal needs and that if only one issue is addressed, other legal issues may mean that a client is still in crisis. If a woman is able to have all of her legal issues dealt with, this provides a pathway for

women to get out of crisis and to get on with life without constantly dealing with issues that threaten their livelihood or their children's safety, among other things.⁶

Justice reinvestment understands that addressing needs now is likely to avoid greater demands on the community and justice system in the future by, for example, providing women with safe homes and children who are better able to succeed at school because they are not regularly exposed to or fleeing family violence, and this is likely to give children better prospects of entering tertiary education and employment. A family assisted with remedies for racial discrimination provides children with a demonstration of how to recognise unlawful discrimination, that there are legal remedies for unlawful discrimination and that a person has a right to seek a legal remedy.

OUR CLIENTS

The increased legal advice and casework for ATSIWLSNQ generally in the 2015-16 year has been driven by community demand and the service's responsiveness to need, as well as our capacity to offer improved accessibility for women through regular outreach services. While services are always limited to some extent by the capacity of the service, ATSIWLSNQ has continued to position itself towards accessibility for vulnerable women. The vulnerability of our client base is reflected in the demographic information relating to the women who have accessed ATSIWLSNQ over the 12 month period to 30 June 2016. Analysing the data for women to whom advice⁷ and casework was given:

- 83% of advice was provided to women who were either on very low incomes or had no income⁸
- 18% of the advice was given to women who were recorded as having a disability⁹
- 85% of applicable casework recorded family violence¹⁰
- 80% of applicable advice indicated family violence¹¹
- 59% of our clients during our ten years of operation have been from outside the Townsville metropolitan area
- 11% of advice during the 2015-16 year has been by a solicitor in an outreach location
- Our casework includes many young single mothers, some being under the age of 18 years old
- 26% of our client data during ten years of operation has been for women over 50 years old¹²

⁶ See Case notes for examples

⁷ As distinct from casework

⁸ Note that this is based on over the 90% of the women whose income data was recorded

⁹ this is based on the 95% of women for whom this information was recorded and it is suspected that the numbers are higher but may not have been captured due to a failure to record

¹⁰ Note that 23% of casework was not applicable (e.g. employment law) and 7% was not stated

¹¹ Note that 21% of advice was not applicable to the advice

¹² Due to the well documented chronic health issues among indigenous peoples, this represents a vulnerable group

LEGAL ADVICE and CASEWORK

Advice vs Casework

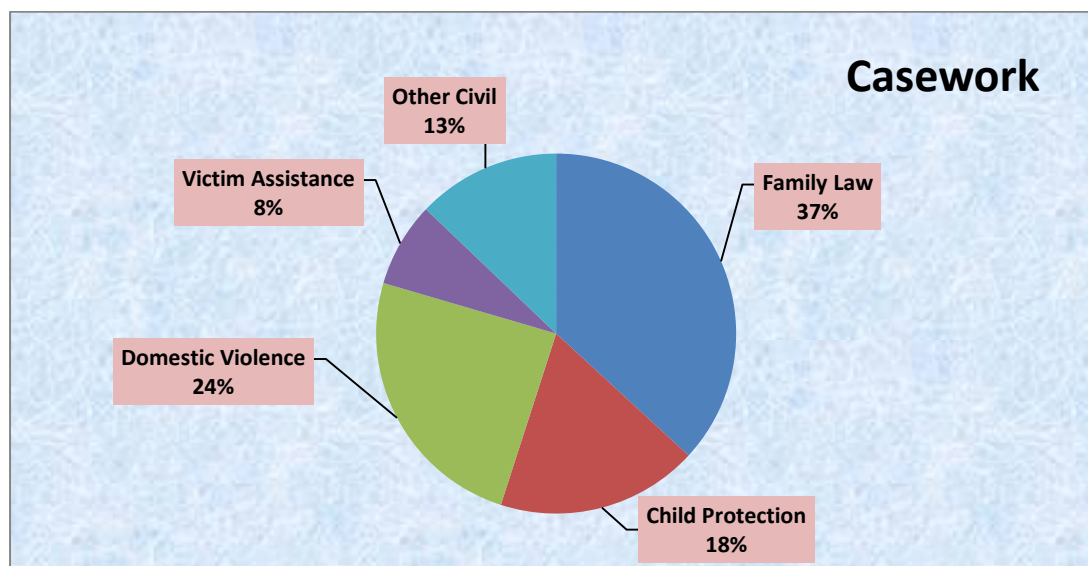
ATSIWLSNQ provides both single advices and casework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in NQ. When advice is not part of an ongoing matter, it is counted as an advice and not a “case”. Cases are opened only where there is ongoing legal representation being provided to a woman. Casework includes legal representation at court. Advice and contact with clients on an open file is not recorded statistically, the only measure of work undertaken on files being case hours recorded on closure.

Problem Types

Family law (parenting), Child Protection and Domestic Violence continue to feature strongly in casework and advice problem types, with an increase in Victim Assistance cases. These problem types have been an enduring part of our legal work throughout its ten years of operation. Of the advice problem types and cases opened during the 12 months to 30 June 2016, the statistical breakdown of problem types is as follows¹³:

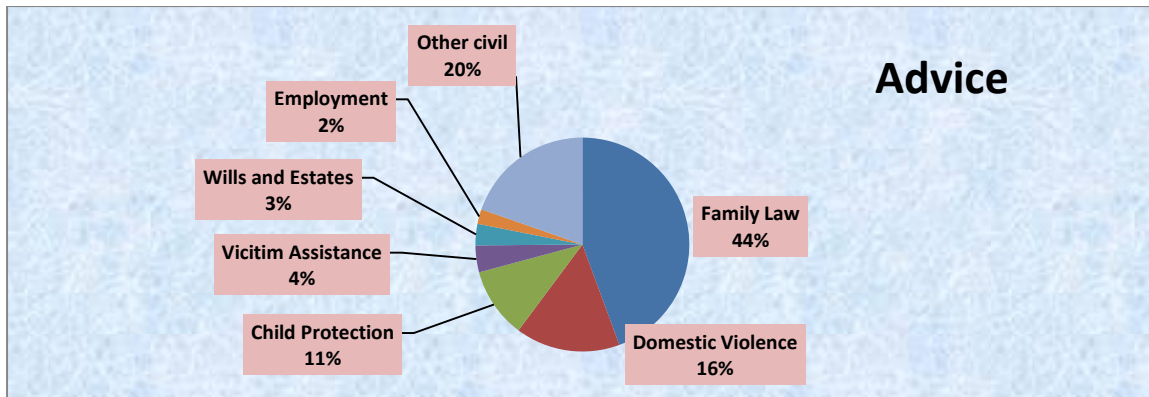
Casework	No.	%
Family Law	63	37
Child Protection	31	18
Domestic Violence	42	25
Victim Assistance	13	7.5
Other civil	22	13
Total:	171	

Table A – Casework by problem type



¹³ Nb that this refers to problem types in opened files rather than the number of files

Table B – advice by problem type



Advice	No.	%
Family law	438	44
Domestic Violence	156	16
Child Protection	105	11
Victim Assistance	40	4
Wills and Estates	32	3
Employment	22	2
Other civil	194	20
Total:	987	

Accessibility

The majority of clients access the service by phone, with an increased number of clients having face to face contact in outreach locations.

Table C

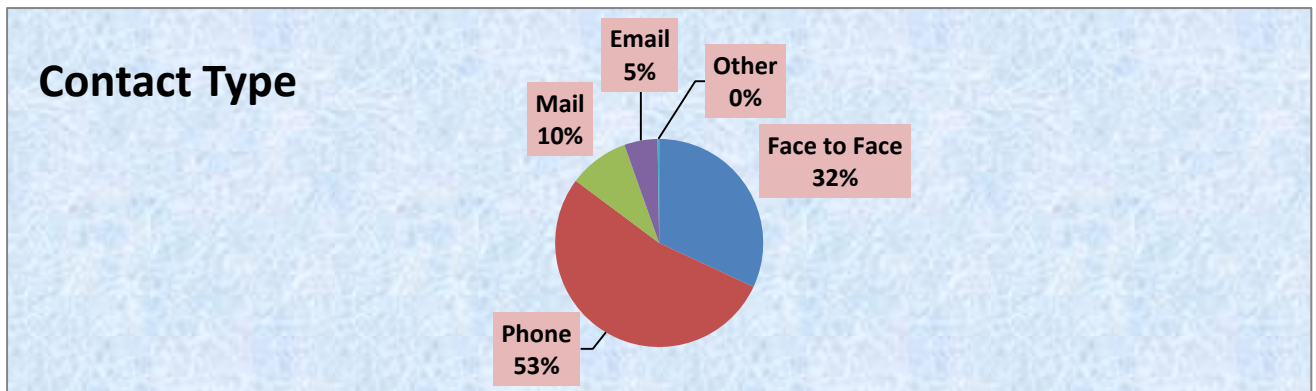
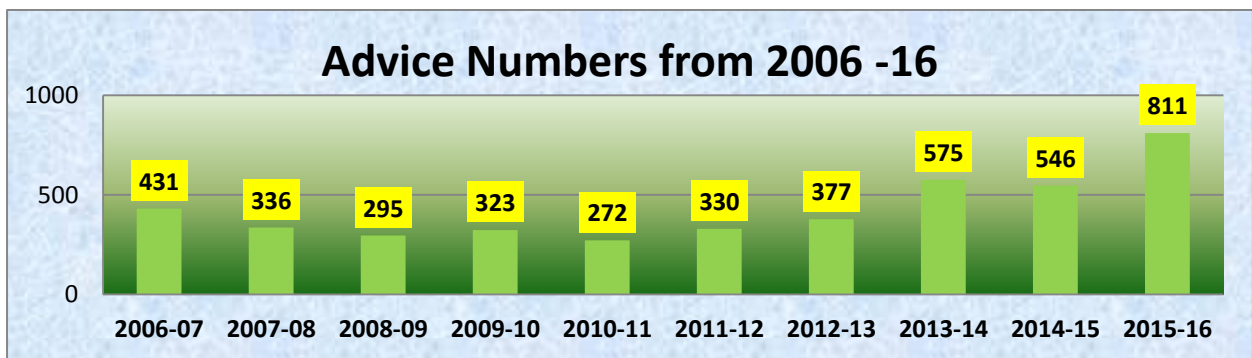


Table D

There has been a steady increase in advices for the service over its 10 year period of operation from 2006:



CASE NOTES

Case scenario 1

ATSIWLSNQ assisted an Aboriginal woman in a family law matter in which there was a very significant history of family violence. The matter had added complexity due to cultural differences, drug abuse and blended family issues. The family violence included hospitalisation of the mother and the children being traumatised. The father claimed to have changed and sought shared equal time with the children although the violence was ongoing. The woman was referred to ATSIWLSNQ part way through her legal proceedings. ATSIWLSNQ provided legal representation and Legal Aid Qld funded counsel for trial of the matter. Final orders protected the children from ongoing harm and limited their exposure to the father whose history of violence had traumatised them.

Case scenario 2

An Aboriginal woman with a disability had children subject to a Child Protection application. The children had been removed from the woman's care but were placed locally where, with the assistance of a community organisation, the children were able to spend time with their mother on a regular basis. Funding for the children's visits with their mother came to an end and workers at the Department of communities, child safety and disability services ("the Department") made a decision to remove the children from the community where their mother lived and the school and community that the children had been living in and place the children with a foster carer in another town. The mother objected to the removal of the children, but the Department ignored her and moved the children anyway. ATSIWLSNQ contested the removal of the children. The matter went to a hearing in the Qld Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) and was heard before 3 members. QCAT overturned the Department's decision to remove the children from their community.

Case scenario 3

A young Aboriginal woman with a profound physical disability gave birth to her first child and the Department sought to remove the child, alleging that the mother was incapable of caring for the child. ATSIWLSNQ successfully challenged the Department's application to remove the baby. ATSIWLSNQ worked collaboratively with a community organisation, which put in place assistance to support the woman and the Department withdrew its application.

Case scenario 4

An Aboriginal woman needed assistance to put in place a domestic violence order against her violent partner. Due to the violence she was having difficulty with tenancy issues arising from the lease, she was separated from her children and having difficulty with resolving debts from her marriage as part of the property settlement issues with a former partner. ATSIWLSNQ assisted with the domestic violence issue and the problem of the lease, assisted the woman in resolving the parenting issues for the children and provided assistance with property issues as far as the service was able to assist.

Because of the domestic violence issue being resolved, the woman separated from the violent partner, which resulted in a resolution of the tenancy issue and the children returned to her care.

COURT ATTENDANCES

ATSIWLSNQ offers court representation to our clients, dependent on need and merit. Court representation only appears on the database once a matter is closed.

Nearly 50%¹⁴ of legal cases closed during the 2015-16 year involved court representation. Court representation is often offered to clients in locations out of Townsville. In some cases ATSIWLSNQ has ongoing casework in an out of town court due to the lack of available legal representation for the client in their home town. This can be caused by a lack of legal services in the town or due to clients being conflicted out.

Court representation is offered during legal outreach in Palm Island and Charters Towers. In other cases, court is attended by leave of the Court to appear by phone link up.

In Townsville, ATSIWLSNQ has provided representation in the Federal Circuit Court, Supreme Court, Magistrates Court, Children's Court. ATSIWLSNQ has also appeared in the following courts by phone link up or in person during 2015-16:

- Ingham Magistrates Court
- Ayr Magistrates Court
- Bowen Children's Court
- Mackay Children's Court
- Rockhampton Children's Court
- Mount Isa Children's Court
- Brisbane Children's Court (on 1 occasion after transfer of a matter)

LAW REFORM

ATSIWLSNQ consistently engages in law reform work that provides advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

In 2016, ATSIWLSNQ provided a submission to the Queensland Senate Enquiry into Human Rights, calling for a Human Rights Act that would encapsulate a broader scope of human rights abuses than those currently captured by the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld).

In May 2016, ATSIWLSNQ was invited to present as a witness to the Senate Inquiry in Townsville in order to respond further to the Senate in relation to our written submission. ATSIWLSNQ Chair,

¹⁴ 49 cases out of 99 involved court representation

Gracelyn Smallwood also attended the enquiry to provide the living experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to the need for a Human Rights Act in Queensland.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

In addition to advice and legal casework, ATSIWLSNQ recognises the importance of community engagement to ensure referral pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in need, to improve awareness of the law in the community where there are often chronic and persistent misunderstandings of the law and gaps in the understanding of women's rights.

Collaboration between community organisations provides a sharing of resources and ensures that where there is a specialist or complementary service, clients have the benefit of the best service available.

Community engagement is a responsibility for all employees at ATSIWLSNQ but more particularly a responsibility of the community development worker. In the 2015-16 year there have been staff changes in which we lost one community development worker and gained a client support officer, but ATSIWLSNQ has maintained its networks while also strengthening community links in Palm Island and Charters Towers.

I would like to thank and acknowledge some of the community organisations who we have worked with collaboratively during the 2015-16 year:

- North Queensland Women's Legal Service (cross referrals including referrals to the domestic violence duty lawyer service and referral of indigenous women to ATSIWLSNQ)
- Qld Public Interest Clearing House (QPILCH) North Qld
- Palm Island Women's Shelter (referral pathways)
- Palm Island Community Justice Group (referral pathways)
- Charters Towers Neighbourhood Centre (now known as "Prospect") (close collaboration to achieve best outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal women in specific cases and referrals to ATSIWLSNQ)
- North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service ("NQDVRS") (monthly legal clinic to assist women with Victim Assist applications; cross referral to NQDVRS)
- Women's Centre Aitkenvale (monthly legal clinic)
- James Cook University's student placement program
- Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service ("TAIHS") (referral pathways, numerous referrals for support for vulnerable women)
- Malanbarra Midja Housing, Tully (hosting community legal education and outreach services)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service ("ATSILS") (referral pathways and cross referrals)
- Townsville Community Justice Group

- Townsville Community Legal Service (“TCLS”), Legal Aid Queensland (“LAQ”), and Qld Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (“QIFVLS”) (cross referrals and collaboration through the North Queensland Legal Aid Forum (“NQLAF”))

This is not a complete list of our community partners, but represents community organisations with whom we collaborate to provide legal clinics or referral pathways and other co-operation. The following are some case samples of Collaboration with other community services:

Case 1

ATSIWLSNQ worked closely with the Charters Towers Neighbourhood Centre (now “Prospect”) in relation to Aboriginal women with extreme vulnerability due to the women having a disability. ATSIWLSNQ and Prospect managed to achieve a good outcome for women who would otherwise have had a child or children removed from them by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Case 2

ATSIWLSNQ received a phone call for help from the North Qld Domestic Violence Resource Service (“NQDVRS”) for an Aboriginal woman with profound deafness who was involved in a domestic violence application. NQDVRS obtained the services of an interpreter and ATSIWLSNQ attended NQDVRS to provide legal advice and subsequently opened a legal case for the woman.

Case 3

An Aboriginal woman came to ATSIWLSNQ with an unusual problem relating to a leasehold of land. ATSIWLSNQ lacked the expertise to assist the woman and after discussions with QPILCH, assisted the woman with an Application for QPILCH (North Qld), which was able to assist the woman with the issue. Due to the blend of complementary skills and services offered by QPILCH, it has possible to provide a number of Aboriginal women with legal remedies that they would not have otherwise had access to.

Case 4

ATSIWLSNQ collaborated with NQWLS in relation to a project initiated by NQWLS to raise awareness of domestic violence through its “Stop Domestic Violence” campaign at a major football match.

Case 5

ATSIWLSNQ provides legal assistance to women in completing Applications for Victims Assistance, through a legal clinic run by NQDVRS.

I would particularly like to commend the exceptional dedication of staff at Prospect in supporting Aboriginal women with a disability. Prospect has been responsible for finding support for Aboriginal

women who are dealing with complex legal problems that have been made more difficult by a disability. Without the support of some outstanding staff at Prospect and their collaboration with ATSIWLSNQ, the legal issues for some Aboriginal women with a disability would have been overwhelming.

COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH WORK

Although community work is part of the way that community legal centres work to overcome accessibility barriers for vulnerable people, solicitor, Julie Kefford, has had primary responsibility for outreach work including community legal education (“CLE”), outreach networking, outreach court work and legal clinics. Julie Kefford provides the following outreach legal advice, assistance and legal representation:

- Palm Island including court representation approximately fortnightly. The majority of client work has been in the area of family violence;
- Charters Towers including child protection court and legal advice, approximately fortnightly;
- Townsville Correctional Centre women’s unit approximately fortnightly for legal visits and community legal education;
- Ingham on an “as needs” basis;
- Bowen and Ayr on an “as needs” basis.

In addition to the above, ATSIWLSNQ provides regular legal clinics at the Women’s Centre, Aitkenvale (monthly) and NQDVRs for Victim Assistance (monthly).

During the 2015-16 year, ATSIWLSNQ held CLE sessions for both the community and service providers. CLE has covered areas most often affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in North Queensland, in particular Child Protection, Family Violence and Elders workshop on funeral plans. Ms Kefford has provided the following account of some CLE sessions that she ran.

Domestic Violence

“Of particular note was the Domestic Violence Workshops developed as a result of a request directly from the Townsville Correctional Centre (Women’s Unit).

We considered what was currently available from other providers who educate women on family violence law and decided to direct our workshop to a space that allowed women to share and learn from their own experiences of domestic violence without focusing on the usual perpetrator/victim distinctions.

A culturally appropriate workbook was created that informed participants about the legal principles of the updated family violence legislation and provided women with information about how the domestic

violence courts deals with applications for domestic violence orders for both the Aggrieved and Respondents.

Included in each participant's personal workbook were spaces for attendees to write and reflect on domestic violence behaviours and what they have seen firsthand as early signs of domestic violence, the cycle and build-up of violence between intimate partners and the types of feelings that are involved.

Participants were asked to share their own stories about how domestic violence had affected their self-worth, their families and their children and how such relationships may have contributed to their current incarceration directly or indirectly.

The workshop was delivered in a facilitative manner ensuring that participants were self-directed and interactive. Two workshops conducted at the prison saw each group focus on different aspects of domestic violence law. The flexibility of this approach proved useful for generating discussion and participants helped others to understand what actions they could take in future to prevent themselves from perpetrating domestic violence or becoming a victim of domestic violence, as well as considering how past decisions could have been different.

Emphasis was also placed on recognising how experiences as a child being exposed to family violence led to an acceptance of that behaviour in themselves and others. The participants responded well to this approach and often shared their own stories about how they had found themselves in relationships that can be characterised as violent relationships and they were led to consider what was the direct and indirect impact in their lives of early exposure to domestic violence.

Many participants spoke of losing children into foster care, facing criminal charges or engaging in other unhealthy behaviour as a result of their violent relationships. Information and discussion was directed to how exposure to domestic violence in children negatively affected people and the participants acknowledged that domestic violence had an impact on them as children and this may be the experiences of children in their own lives. Participants talked about how they will do things different in the future."

Child Protection

"During this year we conducted CLE on Child Protection in community for family support workers wanting to understand the system and how they can better assist their clients who have children subject to child protection orders.

A child protection CLE was also conducted as a workshop at the prison for staff who expressed concern about their own lack of knowledge on how the system operated.

This workshop detailed the types of interventions used by the Department of communities, child safety and disability services (“the Department”), the client’s right to seek support and how clients may address concerns about their children.

The workshop explained the court process, what legal options parents have and what tools and resources the Department uses to make decisions about children in care.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Community Partners

I acknowledge the support of staff at the Townsville Correctional Centre (“TCC”) who have assisted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to access legal advice through our service. I further acknowledge the support of TCC in enabling ATSIWLSNQ to provide community legal education to women in prison and who have also facilitated a presentation for staff who work with women to raise awareness around domestic violence and child protection issues.

Thanks to Mandy Shircore and James Cook University for arranging placement of a final year law student with our legal service.

I acknowledge and thank James Farrell for his leadership and the CLC Qld team for their support, advocacy and promotion of community legal centres in Queensland.

I also acknowledge the work undertaken by the National Association of Community Legal Services (NACLC), which has played a key role in raising public awareness of the work of CLC’s and advocating for continuity of funding. This has been especially valuable for the less well-resourced community legal centres.

Funders and Donors

Our sincere thanks to Mrs Linda Eggert for her generous donation of \$500 for the work of ATSIWLSNQ.

On behalf of ATSIWLSNQ I thank our funding bodies for their ongoing support for the service. In particular I would like to thank the following.

We thank the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for providing the service with an opportunity for a degree of stability through Service Agreements to be renewed over the next three years.

We thank the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG) for its ongoing provision of funds to our service and for its grant to the service to conduct outreach work, including a child protection duty lawyer service on Palm Island.

The service is also indebted to the CLSP program manager, Ms Rosemary Coxon and her staff for their management of the community legal service program, including reporting and other compliance procedures.

ACCREDITATION

ATSIWLSNQ holds a certificate of accreditation, certifying its policies and procedures. Office manager, Lee Burton, has continued to work on the improvement of standards, through the ongoing development of policies and procedures. Ongoing monitoring and support for accreditation standards is provided by CLC's Qld, the peak body for community legal centres in Queensland.

CPD, PII and Cross Check

CPD and PII training requirements were met during the year. As principal solicitor, I attended compulsory PII training provided at the national conference in August 2015 and the CLC Qld conference in May 2016.

All solicitors employed by the service completed their professional development and met CPD requirements in 2016. Staff are generally encouraged to upskill and to take opportunities for improving their understanding in their areas of expertise. Office manager, Lee Burton, attended the CLC's Qld conference in May 2016. Administrative assistant and client support officer, Erica Kyle and Jessica Henry respectively attended the worldwide Indigenous Conference in Adelaide in September 2016.

ATSIWLSNQ successfully completed its 2015 year cross check of legal files by North Qld Women's Legal Service on 16 October 2015.

STAFF and VOLUNTEERS

Staff

I would like to thank all of the staff members I have worked with in the 2015-16 year for the contribution of their skills and support, all of which have contributed to the growth of the service. Special acknowledgement and thanks to the following:

Lee Burton has been an asset to ATSIWLSNQ during her time as office manager. Lee's duties have had a wide scope from assisting with performance review to liaising with Commonwealth and State funders. Thanks to Lee, the service has been better able to grow and take on more legal work.

Sadly, Lee will be leaving the service from 7 October 2016 as she and her husband intend to enjoy their retirement and Lee will be studying creative writing. I would like to thank Lee for her exceptional support for the service and wish her well in her future endeavours.

I thank Julie Kefford for her outstanding performance during her time with ATSIWLSNQ. Julie has been an exceptional advocate and legal representative for women and children, in particular in child protection matters. Julie has been dedicated, hard-working and uncompromising in her support of the women and children she has assisted and represented at ATSIWLSNQ.

Jessica Henry is to be commended for her unwavering diligence. Jess began the 2015-16 in the role of Administrative Officer and is currently working as a client support officer where she has provided valuable support for women. Jess, together with Lee, has done much of the organisational work for many of the events that ATSIWLSNQ has held. Jess has been admirable in her continued willingness to devote time to the organisation and to develop and diversify skills for the benefit of ATSIWLSNQ.

I thank and acknowledge Melanie Richards for her dedicated work on ATSIWLSNQ's submission to the Queensland Senate Enquiry into Human Rights. Melanie's research and writing provided the service with a valuable resource as well as making a contribution to the enquiry.

Many thanks to Erica Kyle (jnr), who began with our service in March 2016. Erica has provided a welcome environment for clients in reception and has been diligent in her other administrative duties. Erica has proved an asset to the service in terms of developing and understanding new skills.

Thanks to Lana Johnson who worked with our service for several months in 2015. Lana was a pleasure to work with and also kindly provided us with a photograph of herself with her child, which she has given us permission to use on our business brochures.

Thanks to Ms Jessica Shuttleworth, solicitor who backfilled Melanie Richard's position whilst she has been on maternity leave. Jess brought a number of long-running matters to conclusion including, in particular attending to a trial in Cairns on behalf of the service.

Thanks to Claire Sullivan, solicitor, for her work with our service over a short period.

Student Placements

In 2015, Ms Helen Melarekere completed her student placement with our service, undertaking various paralegal tasks.

In June 2016, Ms Judy Vera Sailor, completed a school placement with our service, undertaking administrative tasks. Judy enjoyed her placement and performed her tasks well.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

I would like to thank our Management Committee and extend the sincere appreciation of all of the staff for their ongoing support and work for the service. All of the management committee members are professional women with busy lives who have taken time aside from their work and family responsibilities to oversee the operation of ATSIWLSNQ.

I speak for all staff in expressing our appreciation of their dedication and guidance to the service throughout the year. I would like to make thank and acknowledge each of the committee:

Chair, Professor Gracelyn Smallwood for her leadership and advocacy and for drawing the community together for the “Black Women Succeeding against All Odds” day in April 2016.

Vice Chair, Babette Doherty, for her ongoing encouragement and support of the service.

Dr Victoria Close, Secretary for her dedication to her role as well as reading, editing and assisting with the development and review of policies and procedures.

Marilyn Smith, Treasurer, who has continued to contribute to the development of the service over her 10 years on the management committee and who has always been available to assist with practical issues such as banking. Marilyn has also been involved in sub-committees in past years.

Jacinta Elston for her frequent solving of problems and contributing to the quality of the work that staff and committee undertake.

Tanya Morris who has experience in HR and has given up her time to assist with staff performance reviews and recruitment interviews.

Cathy Pereira
Principal Solicitor

STAKEHOLDERS

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship Australia Qld• Victims Assist Qld• Police Support Link• The Women’s Centre, Aitkenvale• Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health Services• North Queensland Women’s Legal Service• Townsville Community Legal Services• QPILCH• The Court network• Charters Towers Neighbour Hood Centre (now “Prospect”)• Malanbarra Midja Centre Tully	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Townsville Community Hub• Garbutt Community Centre• Upper Ross Community Centre• NQ Domestic Violence Resource Centre• QIFVLS• ATSILS• Legal Aid Qld• Flora House• Red Cross• Anglicare• Yumba Meta Dale Parker
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STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Staff 2015-16

- Principal Solicitor/Co-ordinator: Cathy Pereira
- Management Assistant: Lee Burton
- Administration Assistant / Community Support officer : Jessica Henry
- Administration Assistant: Erica Kyle (2016), Lana Johnson (2015 to 2016)
- Community Development Worker: Jodie Vincent (2007 to 2016)
- Solicitor: Julie Kefford
- Solicitor: Melanie Richards (Maternity Leave March 2016) back filled by Jessica Shuttleworth, Claire Sullivan
- Solicitor: Kara Tait
- Solicitor: Angela Carroll

Volunteers 2015-16

- Helen Melarakere (law student)
- Judy Vera Sailor (work experience student)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ATSIWLSNQ funding bodies:

- Attorney General's Department (Cth)
- Department of Justice and Attorney General (Qld)
- Legal Practitioners Interest on Trust Accounts Fund (LPITAF)
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Cth)

Other Acknowledgements

- James Cook University, College of Business, Law and Governance
- Mc Cullough & Robertson Lawyers

"Black Women succeeding against all Odds" day was well supported by the following:

- Dr Marlene Kong - The Kirby Institute UNSW Australia
- Palm Island Shire Council
- The late Vale Emeritus Professor Rick Speare
- Pastor Ray Minnicon

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