

ANNUAL REPORT



LAW ACCESS

LAWACCESS.ORG.AU

2023

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ABOUT LAW ACCESS

Law Access is a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates the giving of pro bono (free or low fee) legal assistance by the Western Australian legal profession to those who cannot afford a lawyer.

We are a service of last resort for those who cannot get legal assistance from Legal Aid WA, a community legal centre or other legal services.

Law Access considers applications from not-for-profits and individuals in genuine need of legal assistance.

Genuine need is assessed by considering an applicant's financial circumstances, the merit in their case and whether resolving their issue may have a broader positive effect on vulnerable groups in the community.

Our Patron

The Hon Malcolm
McCusker
AC CVO KC

Our Current Board Members

Greg McIntyre SC,
Chair
Barrister, Michael Kirby
Chambers

Valerie French OAM,
Director

Clare Thompson SC,
Director
Barrister, Francis Burt
Chambers

Professor Natalie Skead
FAAL PFHEA, Director
Dean and Head of
School, UWA

Adam Levine
Director
Partner, K & L Gates

Louise Giolitto
Director from Feb 2023
CEO, WACOSS

Michelle Sims
Director from Feb 2023
Coordinator - First Nations
Services, Legal Aid WA

Thanks to retiring members in 2022-2023
His Hon Justice Matthew Howard, Supreme Court of WA
Marshall McKenna, Gilbert + Tobin
Judy McLean, Fremantle Community Legal Centre

CHAIR'S FOREWORD



Law Access has continued throughout the current financial year to perform its role of linking those in need of legal assistance with those willing to provide pro bono legal services by building on long standing and new relationships with the many willing volunteers who are prepared to contribute to the aims of ensuring equal access to justice for those in need.

Law Access provides a vital function triaging applications for pro bono legal assistance from those who do not have the means to fund it themselves, do not qualify for legal aid and have exhausted the limits of what is able to be provided by Community Legal Services.

That function of Law Access could not be performed without the on-going relationship it has with its progenitor and sole member, the Law Society of Western Australia, its in-kind supporter and source of student volunteers, the University of Western Australia, and its many volunteers, donors, funders, sponsors, supporters and committees, who are acknowledged in the body of this report.

Law Access has been well served by our Chief Executive Officer, Alana Dowley, and Principal Lawyer, Georgia Pickering, who have spearheaded the innovative projects and enhanced organisational capacity reported on by the CEO, which, as reported, have been made possible because of collaborative arrangements with CLCs and law practices who have voluntarily devoted their time.

The thanks expressed below by the CEO for the unstinting dedication to the work of Law Access by my predecessor in the Chair, now his Honour Mathew Howard, is echoed by me.

This report reflects the very sound basis upon which Law Access sits, which is buttressed by the generosity of spirit and enthusiasm of its staff and the many contributors to its work and provides ample reason to predict that Law Access will continue to grow, in pursuit of its aim to achieve as high a degree of equality of access to justice as it can though the provision of pro bono legal assistance.

Gregory McIntyre SC
Chair

THANK YOU TO HIS HONOUR MATTHEW HOWARD (CHAIR TO JULY 2023)

His Honour became a director on the Law Access Board in January 2019 and Chair of the Board in January 2021. I have worked closely with him since my appointment as CEO in March 2022. His Honour was always available, approachable and genuinely concerned with the business of Law Access. He shared his knowledge, opinions, connections, and energy freely and proactively; approaching issues that we managed together with a mind to being both thorough and practical. It has been a pleasure and honour to have his guiding hand in our work. *Law Access CEO, Alana Dowley*



His Honour Matthew Howard

LAW ACCESS STATISTICS



632

Applications for pro bono assistance



127

Matters referred to lawyers



20

Matters unable to be referred



3794*

Estimated value of pro bono hours



\$2.65m*

Estimated value of pro bono (\$)

* Estimates are based on the pro bono lawyer survey results extrapolated to the number of matters referred.

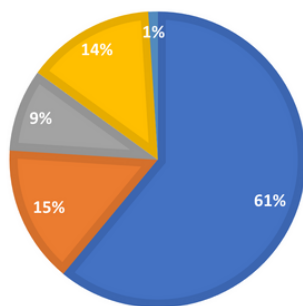
Applications Received in FY2023

Law Access received the following applications by matter type:

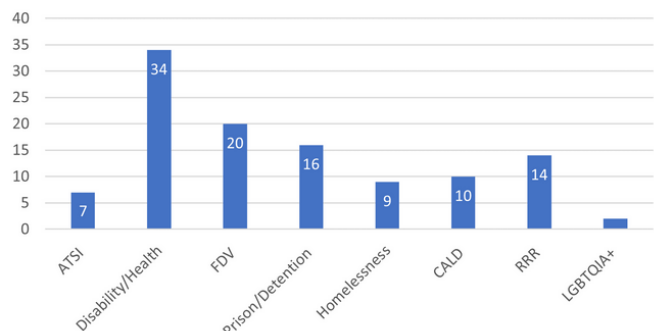
- 61% Civil
- 15% Family
- 9% Criminal
- 14% Immigration
- 1% Pro Bono Support

APPLICATION BY MATTER TYPE

■ Civil ■ Family ■ Criminal ■ Immigration ■ Pro Bono Support



Applicant Demographics



Law Access assisted individuals in genuine need of legal assistance with experience of the following categories of disadvantage:

- 7% ATSI
- 34% Disability/Mental Health/Serious Health issue
- 20% Experiencing/experienced FDV
- 16% Prison/Detention
- 9% Homeless/ At risk of homelessness
- 10% CALD (Culturally and linguistically diverse)
- 14% RRR (Regional, rural and remote)
- 2% LGBTQIA+

The issue I had when I started this process seemed to me to be hopeless but once hearing my pro-bono lawyer a weight has been lifted from my shoulders. Thank god for pro-bono lawyers who give their time to help those of us who are unable to get help elsewhere.

Relieved a lot of stress off me having someone who understood the law and able to deal directly with the respondent lawyers. Would of struggled without a lawyer representing me.

REPORT FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Enhancing Our Services

Law Access continues to look for ways to increase the efficacy of the pro bono contribution in addressing legal assistance needs in Western Australia. We do this through working closely with pro bono lawyers and the legal assistance sector.

Wills Project and Clinics



Law Access identified this project as a priority under the new WA Pro Bono Model. Aboriginal Family Legal Services (AFLS) worked with Jackson McDonald to develop resources for lawyers assisting Indigenous Australians with wills. Thereafter, Law Access has been working with various collaborators to deliver wills clinics in regional WA.

On 15-19 August 2022, a clinic was run in the Pilbara with the assistance of Pilbara Community Legal Service, working with AFLS and lawyers from Gilbert + Tobin.

A Wills clinic was held in the East Kimberley on 12-16 June with support from pro bono firm Barry Nilsson, AFLS, Kimberley Community Legal Services, Legal Aid WA, Aboriginal Interpreting WA and the Department of Justice.

New web-forms and information videos

This year Law Access up-graded our web-forms for applicants, warm referrers and lawyers. The form upgrade was accompanied by the creation of informational videos on how to apply to, refer to, and do pro bono work with, Law Access.



Building Organisational Capacity

Pro Bono Lawyers' Portal Resources



As well as new informational videos for lawyers, we also created a suite of resources on trauma-informed practice. Many thanks to our UWA students, Women's Legal Service WA and Sophie Taylor (RUAH) for their contributions.

Pro bono lawyers can also now access the Legal Aid Lawyers Hub through a Law Access account.

Working in Partnership

Law Access continues to participate in the Department of Justice working groups towards the implementation of a new Legal Assistance Strategy for WA.

The Law Society continues to support Law Access and pro bono lawyers in many ways and to advocate on important issues through its Access to Justice Committee .

The University of Western Australia continues to provide much valued in-kind support to Law Access and work closely with us on student opportunities.

Law Access thanks the members of our Stakeholder Advisory Committee, led by Chair Jennie Gray from Women's Legal Service.

Ensuring Our Sustainability

Reward and recognition



We sincerely thank all our staff for their commitment to Law Access. Thanks also to the many secondees and students who make a significant contribution to our work every year.

Law Access is grateful to the Western Australian Government and the Public Purpose Trust for their commitment to funding certainty to FY2025.

Each year we thank all of our pro bono lawyers and other supporters with Certificates of Appreciation. We also hold an annual Thank you Drinks event, which was generously hosted by MinterEllison.

Special contributors included Anthony Quahe, from Civic Legal, who was our pro bono lawyer of the year (FY2022).

plus 100 heroes

This year we ran a *plus100 heros* campaign to encourage new pro bono lawyers to register with us. Huge thanks to those who did so!

In FY2024 we will be upgrading our pro bono lawyers database and enabling more focused communications with the many lawyers who have registered with us.



2023 Walk for Justice

We held the most successful Walk for Justice yet, with 822 registered participants. We enjoyed a beautiful Perth day and much comradery.

Many thanks to:

- the McCusker Charitable Foundation,
- our Gold Sponsor (The College of Law),
- our corporate sponsors (Minter Ellison and Piper Alderman),
- all the university sponsors, and
- prize sponsors, participants and donors.

We raised over \$170k for Law Access, funds which are vital for our sustainability.



National Access to Justice and Pro Bono Conference



The National Access to Justice and Pro Bono Conference reconvened in Brisbane in 2023, after an interruption to the biennial pattern saw no event in 2021 due to Covid.

An impressive line-up of speakers on a variety of interesting and highly relevant topics presented to members of the private profession, legal assistance sector, government lawyers and other service providers.

The conference was an excellent opportunity to meet with our colleagues from other States and Territories, to explore issues that may challenge us all in coming years, and to examine the role that pro bono can play in ensuring access to justice.

Alana Dowley
Chief Executive Officer

Law  Access®
THE LAW SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA IN THE COMMUNITY

FINANCIAL REPORT

Statement of Profit and Loss

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	Notes	2023 \$	2022 \$
Revenue	3	829,358	708,792
Employee expenses		(622,863)	(583,310)
Depreciation expenses		(6,620)	(7,376)
Fundraising expenses		(11,780)	(12,049)
Other expenses		(77,240)	(74,988)
Surplus for the year		110,856	31,069

The above Statement of Profit and Loss should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

3 Revenue

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Revenue		
<u>Government grants</u>		
Department of Justice - WA Probono Model grant	151,500	150,000
Department of Justice - Law Access grant	101,000	100,000
ATO Jobkeeper grant	-	-
ATO COVID-19 cashflow boost	-	-
<u>Other revenue</u>		
Public Purposes Trust Fund grant	347,363	270,000
Sponsorship	18,000	18,500
Donations	207,606	170,241
General Income	1,618	-
Interest on investments	2,271	51
Total Revenue	829,358	708,792

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	Accumulated Surplus \$	Total equity \$
Balance as at 30 June 2021	245,585	245,585
Surplus for the year	31,069	31,069
Balance as at 30 June 2022	276,654	276,654
Surplus for the year	110,856	110,856
Balance as at 30 June 2023	387,510	387,510

Law Access accounts were audited by Ledger Accounting

THANK YOU

Pro Bono Lawyers

We thank all the pro bono lawyers and legal assistance service providers who took referrals from Law Access. We are grateful to members of our Pro Bono Coordinators' Committee who helped to guide and support our work.

Volunteers / Interns

Thanks to our interns, legal and admin volunteers, students from Edith Cowan University Business and Law School, School of Law Notre Dame University, University of Western Australia Law School, and The McCusker Centre for Citizenship.

Principal Supporters



Law Firm Secondees

Many thanks to the law firm secondees who worked with our staff this year.

- Corrs Chamber Westgarth
- Johnson Winter & Slattery
- Jackson McDonald
- HWL Ebsworh
- Sparke Helmore Lawyers
- Squire Patton Boggs
- Clayton Utz
- Minter Ellison

Funders



Major Donors

**McCusker
Charitable
Foundation**



In Kind Supporters

Compu-Stor
Vicky Dodds Consulting
FilePro

Thank You Drinks Sponsors

MinterEllison

Pro Bono Portal Sponsors

**McCusker
Charitable
Foundation**



**HERBERT
SMITH
FREEHILLS**

ALLEN & OVERY

Donors

We thank all those who donated to the Law Access Walk for Justice, individuals who donated via the Law Access website, and CPD presenters who elected that The Law Society of Western Australia make a donation to Law Access on their behalf.

Individual sponsorships

Gregory Castledine; Gary Cobby;
Grant Donaldson; Hopgood Ganim;
Matthew Howard; Adam Levine;
Marshall McKenna; Steven Penglis;
Nick Stag; James Steedman; Lavan

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Thank you to the members of our Law Access Stakeholder Advisory Committee for guiding and supporting our work.

THANK YOU

Walk for Justice Sponsors

Principal Supporter

**McCusker
Charitable
Foundation**

Gold Sponsor



MinterEllison



PiperAlderman

Corporate Sponsors

University Sponsors



School of
Business & Law



Our Vision

Equal Access to Justice

Our Purpose

To relieve disadvantage through pro bono legal assistance

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