



WELFARE RIGHTS &
ADVOCACY SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017



Contents

Funding and Support provided to Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service in 2016-2017.....	3
Personnel and Staff Profile 2016-2017	3
Chairperson’s Report	4
Objects of the TLC Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia (Inc.).....	5
Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives.....	5
Centre Report.....	6
Our work in 2016-2017	6
Funding	7
Legal Advice, Casework and Representation Assistance	8
Our clients.....	8
Welfare Rights.....	9
Welfare Rights Case Studies	10
Tenancy.....	11
Tenancy Case Studies.....	12
Community Legal Education	13
Law Reform	14
Governance.....	15
Future.....	16
Acknowledgement and Thanks.....	16
Treasurer’s Report	17
Abridged Financial Statements	18

Funding and Support provided to Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service in 2016-2017

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT



DONATIONS

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT



MEMBERSHIPS

Personnel and Staff Profile 2016-2017

Board

Owen Whittle	Chairperson
Brendyn Nelson	Deputy Chairperson
Cindy Labuschagne	Treasurer
Matthew Davey	Secretary to AGM 2016
Zaneta Mascarenhas	Secretary from February 2017
Philip O'Donoghue	Committee Member
Sinead Glackin	Committee Member
Leon Stojmenov	Committee Member to AGM 2016
Rebecca Dennison	Committee Member
Helen Tuck	UnionsWA nominee to AGM 2016
Pearl Lim	UnionsWA nominee from AGM 2018
Helen McNally	Committee Member from March 2017

Permanent and/or Contract Staff

Kate Beaumont	Executive Officer
Catherine Eagle	Principal Solicitor
Chris Belcher	Welfare Rights Advocate/Tenant Advocate
Jeanie Bryant	Welfare Rights Advocate
Paul Harrison	Tenant Advocate
Matthew Davey	Solicitor
Rhea Thomas	Paralegal/Solicitor Youth Welfare Rights Advocate
Christine Carr	Bookkeeper/Administrative Officer

Volunteers

Shaun Doray	Elizabeth Watts
Isabelle Flynn	Hannah Flynn
Nathan Kearns	Madelaine Rice
Tahnee Gibson	Lisa Pegrum

Pro Bono Legal Assistance

Ann-Margaret Walsh

Chairperson's Report

This AGM marks the end of my second year as Chairperson of the TLC Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia (Inc.) trading as Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service.

It has been an eventful 12 months for community legal centres and the welfare sector with funding uncertainty and some significant government policy changes impacting on the service.

While funding uncertainty existed for the service for much of the year the end result was better than what was anticipated. Some small funding increases in some areas and some other declines and resulted in some small budget cuts to the organisation.

The budget cuts and late notice of funding arrangements for 2016-2017 have resulted in some difficulties for the service, however the patience and understanding of the staff and the persistence of Kate has ensured that this process has been managed less painfully than may have been the case.

The Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service has continued to increase its service delivery to the community despite the challenges and uncertainty. Our staff have ensured that we continue to provide a high volume of quality advices and legal assistance to the community.

We also finalised an enterprise bargaining agreement between the service, staff and the Australian Services Union. The agreement was finalised quickly and I would thank Kate and the staff for a smooth consultative process to finalise the new agreement.

While strategic plans can often be abstract and intangible, the board has a focus to operationalise the service's strategic plan. The board has made steps to ensure renewal and succession planning for the service, as well as ensuring the service has a constitution which will serve it well into the future and in line with new legislative requirements.

We wish to ensure that in the operation of that strategy that we continue to improve our service to ensure that we provide high quality services to those in need and that we prevent future disadvantage in our community

Government policy decisions have the ability to result in a higher demand on our services – including the rollout of the 'robo-debt' program over the past twelve months and anticipated government projects to drug test welfare participants and the expansion of the cashless welfare debit card.

It is important that our service both provide services to those in need, but continues with law reform and advocacy to defend the interests of those who may not have the resources to do it themselves.

I would like to thank Pearl Lim and Hellen McNally, our departing board members for volunteering their time with the organisation. In particular I would also like to acknowledge Brendyn Nelson for his many years of service on the board as a reliable and honest Deputy Chairperson for the Association.

As part of the service's funding uncertainty this year we lobbied and spoke to many state and federal members of parliament. This provided us with an opportunity to highlight the good work of the service, especially to many of the new members of parliament following the March State Election. As Chairperson it was encouraging to learn that the reputation of the service was well known before these meetings and that the hard work and professionalism of our staff is valued highly throughout the community.

Demand for our services are ever increasing. It is incumbent on us to ensure that our service continues to improve to service our clients in need. I look forward to another successful year for Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service.



Owen Whittle
Chairperson

Objects of the TLC Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia (Inc.)

The Objects of the Association are:

- to provide emergency financial and material support to persons who are homeless, destitute, necessitous, suffering, distressed, disabled, disadvantaged or otherwise stricken by misfortune;
- to provide advice and other forms of welfare, assistance and guidance to those persons and to make representations on behalf of those persons;
- to liaise with, and whenever appropriate request and arrange, the services of public instrumentalities, or of charitable or other bodies which may be able to meet the needs of those persons;
- to cooperate with other organisations having objects similar to those of the Association;
- to assist and represent persons in conducting appeals against administrative decisions by Government agencies, particularly in relation to welfare rights and tenancy;
- to work towards structural change, aimed at the elimination of poverty within the community and seek to empower welfare recipients generally and with respect to their legal, welfare and other rights; and
- to promote the principles of equal opportunity.

Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives

Vision

A just and compassionate society.

Mission

Eliminating disadvantage by assisting people to realise their rights to income and housing.

Values

We are committed to:

- Client focused ethical practice;
- Social justice and human rights principles;
- Empowering people;
- Collaboration and community engagement; and
- Innovation and creativity.

Objectives

- Serving individuals through casework, advocacy and advice.
- Increasing the systemic awareness and responsiveness to clients.
- Attracting, retaining and developing capable staff and volunteers.
- Ensure effective governance and reputation.
- Maintain sustainable systems, facilitates and financial management.

Centre Report

Our work in 2016-2017

There has been a steady increase in demand for assistance in the last year. In 2016-2017 Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service continued to provide legal help in the areas of Social Security and Family Assistance Law, as well as Social Security Prosecutions and Tenancy Law. The main delivery mechanism for legal assistance by the service is through information and referral, advice, casework (including court and tribunal representation), community legal education and law and policy reform.

Advice and casework assistance is prioritised to those within our geographic catchment area although help is provided to clients outside of our geographic catchment area in some circumstances.

The geographic catchment area for our service delivery varies between our programs. Welfare Rights assistance is provided to those in the area north of the Swan River to the top of the state and across to the South Australian/Northern Territory border.

Tenancy assistance is provided to the Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Lower North Metropolitan Zone from Mosman Park up to Scarborough and across the City of Perth to Bayswater and Morley. Social Security Prosecution assistance is provided across the entire state.

The community legal education, law reform and legal policy work undertaken by the service is informed by the experience of our clients. The law reform activities of the service are augmented by its direct work with the National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN).

All of the activities undertaken by Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service are in line with the vision, mission, values and objectives of the service and the Objects set out in the Constitution and Rules of the TLC Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia (Inc.).

Assistance is provided from our premises at 98 Edward Street, Perth, Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm with the exception of public holidays and during the Christmas shutdown. Outreach services are provided at

the Perth Magistrates Court as part of a Tenancy Duty Advocate Program.

The staff of Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service includes a mix of lawyers and paralegals who deliver the core services provided to clients. This assistance is augmented by pro bono lawyers and our volunteer program of law students. In 2016-2017 pro bono lawyers contributed approximately 20 hours and law student volunteers contributed 278 hours to the service.

The service has a Disability Action Plan which includes the provision of disability access to its building and ensuring that all facilities hired to conduct education and information sessions are compliant with disability access requirements. People with disabilities are provided with the opportunity to have the assistance of support people in matters relating to their particular issues. People with disabilities are able to access feedback and complaint mechanisms by either directly contacting the centre for information via a pamphlet or by telephone or email.

Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service encourages feedback and suggestions from all service users and the service website includes a feedback survey.

Funding

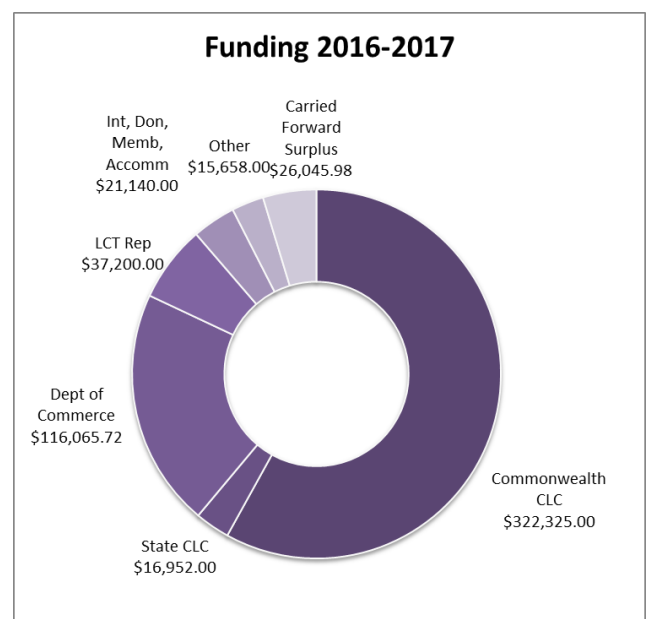
The main source of funding for the service continues to be through the Community Legal Service Program (CLSP) of Commonwealth Attorney General’s Department under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services (NPA) which funds the welfare rights assistance provided by the service. This Commonwealth CLSP funding is augmented by State Community Legal Centre funding provided by the State Attorney General’s Department.

The second largest source of funding is from the Department of Commerce for our

Tenancy Advice and Education Program (TAEP). In 2016-2017 the service retendered to provide this service. We were however required to tender at a fixed cost which was 28% less than the previous contract. As a result of this new contract from 1 January 2017 the services to be provided have been reduced in line with the new funding.

In 2016-2017 the service received replacement funding from the State Attorney General’s Department as the Legal Contributions Trust (LCT) was unable to fund our Youth Welfare Rights Project. The service also received a one off capital grant from Lotterywest for the purchase of a new photocopier.

Apart from these recurrent and one off grants the service carried forward a surplus in our CLSP and LCT program from the previous financial year into 2016-2017. These funds have been expended within the welfare rights and youth welfare rights programs. The service received other income including interest, donations and income from other sources which does not relate to our core funding. The service received income from the National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN) for the bookkeeping work that is undertaken for the NSSRN Secretariat.



Legal Advice, Casework and Representation Assistance

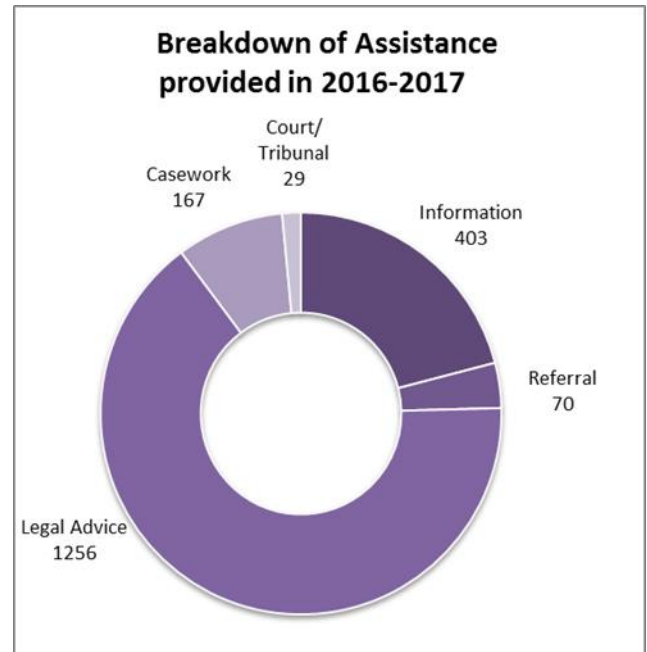
In the most recent year data standards for the recording of assistance was altered. This occurred under the NPA with the move from the Community Legal Service Information System (CLSIS) to a new data base, the Community Legal Assistance Services System (CLASS). With the migration of data to the new system the way activities are categorised and counted have altered. From migration in March 2017 some categories of work such as cases no longer exist and have been replaced historically and into the future in the data base. At the time of preparing this report CLASS did not have the functionality to extract much of the client and demographic information which had been able to be extracted from CLSIS.

The total number of clients who accessed the service for advice and casework assistance in 2016-2017 was 991 which represented a 6% increase from the previous year. Of those clients 83.6% were new clients, 15.5% were repeat clients and less than 1% were existing clients at the start of the year.

In total across all types of assistance 65.25% of clients were provided with legal advice, 10.1% had casework assistance and court and tribunal representation and 24.5% were provided with information/referral.

Of legal advices provided in 2016-2017 across all programs 92.5% were by telephone, 3.8% were face to face and 3.7% were by mail and email.

There were 501 information and referral activities undertaken in 2016-2017. For those given information and referral 64.5% were from outside of the service geographic catchment area and 31.8% required assistance in an area of law not provided by Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service.



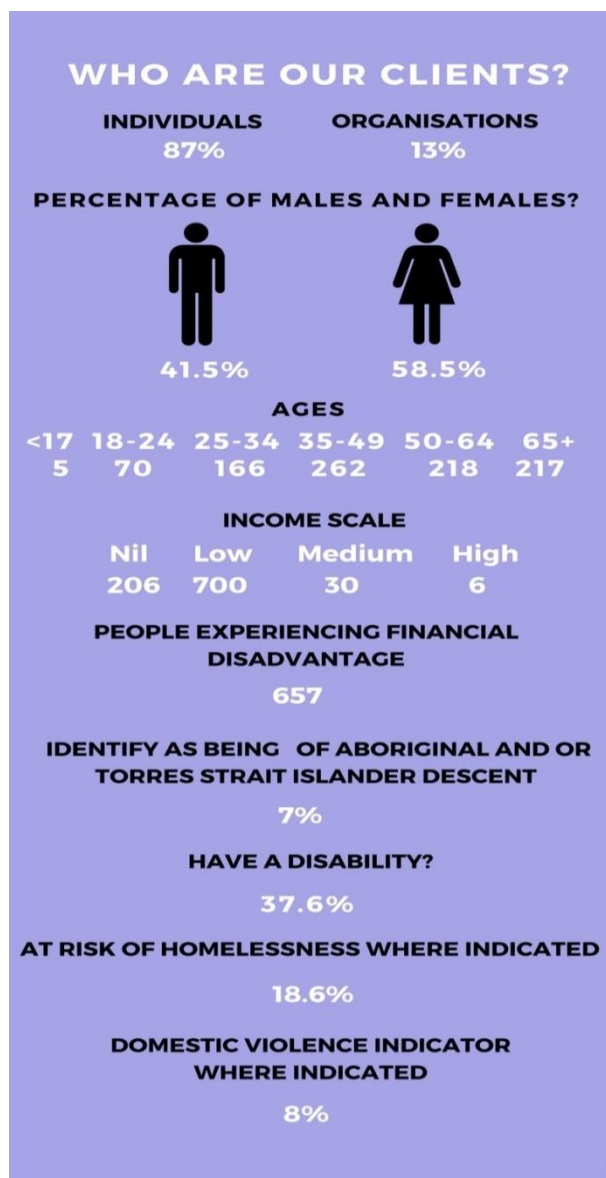
Our clients

The migration of data from CLSIS to CLASS may have compromised the accuracy of some of the 2016-2017 demographic information. The data and categories now collected are in line with the new data and counting standards and NPA requirements. Data migrated from CLSIS to CLASS for work carried out before 23 March 2017 has resulted in some information being treated as legacy fields which have not been included in the new CLASS fields which are counted.

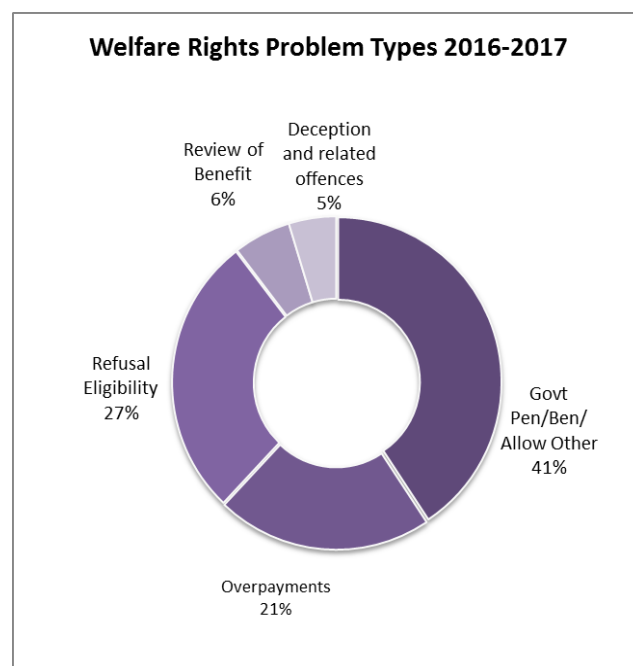
There is currently limited capacity to extract demographic information beyond the raw numbers of the priority client groups under the NPA. Information which was easily accessible in CLSIS relating to country of birth, type of disability and public and private housing tenure remains blocked in CLASS at the time of preparation of this report.

For the service although in terms of income scale there were 906 individuals with low or no income, the field for those experiencing financial disadvantage did not equate to these previous categories. This has resulted in the need for the service to review each advice, other representation or court/tribunal activity

to complete the financial disadvantage indicator as it is otherwise blank for all work completed prior to migration to CLASS.



From CLSIS pre-migration data Disability Support Pension continued to be the main entitlement type for over 34% of our welfare rights clients. The second largest client group who were assisted were those receiving Newstart Allowance (18%) followed by Age Pension (10%), Youth Allowance (7.6%), Parenting Payment Single (5.6%) and Family Tax Benefit (5%).



The main welfare rights problem type for clients was Govt. Pensions/Benefits/ Allowance – Other (41%) which is a catch all to cover the breadth of Social Security work not captured in the CLSIS/CLASS problem classifications. The second highest occurring problem type is Refusal Eligibility (27%), followed by Overpayments (21%).

Welfare Rights

Demand for welfare rights assistance continued to increase in 2016-2017 with client numbers increasing by 21%. There was a 12.5% increase in the numbers of legal advices provided and a 5% increase in the court/tribunal and other representation provided compared with that undertaken in 2015-2016.

There was an increase in assistance provided in relation to Centrelink overpayments activity in the latest year as a result of Centrelink’s new Automated Debt System. In addition to this overpayment work 5% of those seeking welfare rights assistance related to Deception and Related Offences (Social Security Prosecutions).

In the most recent year there has been a continued trend of clients complaining about long delays in new claim processing. These

delays do not relate to any particular type of new claim activity and have been across the board. At times we see DHS taking up to four or more months to process some seemingly straightforward claims. For those with little resources it can be difficult as they deplete their meagre resources or have to rely on others for support. Such delays adversely impact on a person's ability to participate whether it is in education, training and job search activity.

Welfare Rights Case Studies

Welfare Rights Case Study 1

Facts of the Case – The client is a woman with very longstanding mental health issues whose husband contacted us in August 2016. She had applied for DSP and had had the claim rejected by Centrelink but on review by the AAT Tier 1 was found to be qualified. DSS appealed to AAT tier 2 and Legal Aid NSW agreed to represent the client. Just before the matter was set down for hearing Legal Aid NSW advised the client they would no longer represent her as her matter was unlikely to be successful. By then she and her husband (who was her carer) were itinerant, living in a caravan in northern WA and so contacted us.

Advice/Assistance Provided – The client was becoming increasingly unwell and distressed by the appeals process and her husband was very agitated by how unwell she was and angry at Centrelink and Legal Aid. We assessed that it was important that the hearing went ahead as soon as possible. Due to her illness the client was unable to represent herself and her husband had become so angry about how his wife had been treated that he was unlikely to be a helpful advocate. We agreed to represent her and arranged for the matter to be listed for hearing by the NSW registry of the AAT - to move the hearing to WA would have involved further delay.

The main issue for determination was whether the client's conditions were fully treated so they could be considered to be 'permanent'. The client and her husband came to Perth for the hearing which was by videoconference and the Tribunal and Department's lawyer were in the hearing room in Sydney. The client was represented by our Principal Solicitor at the hearing.

Outcome - The AAT2 confirmed that the client was eligible for DSP and she received an arrears payment back to the date of her claim and started to be paid DSP.

Without our assistance it is unlikely that she would have been successful as neither she or her husband could cope any longer with the process and were unlikely to have attended a hearing or been in a position to provide necessary evidence in support of her case.

Welfare Rights Case Study 2

Facts of the Case – The client contacted us in mid December 2016 following a referral from the Commonwealth Ombudsman. She is a 72 year old widow who had applied for Age Pension in early July 2016 and no decision had been made about her claim. She had made a complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman because her claim had not been granted and Centrelink kept asking her to provide additional information. The client had been earning wages up until the time that she had claimed Age Pension. Her circumstances were straight forward, however her claim had been referred to the Complex Assessment Team within Centrelink for assessment as she and her daughter had a \$200.00 trust bank account for her granddaughter.

Advice/Assistance Provided – The WRAS advocate provided advice to the client about the Centrelink new claim processes, complex assessment and the complaints process. The WRAS advocate assisted the client by

contacting Centrelink to request urgent processing of the claim.

Outcome – Two days after we contacted Centrelink on the client’s behalf her Age Pension was granted and she received arrears of over \$10,000.

Without the assistance of Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service we do not know when the client’s straight forward claim would have been processed. We are being contacted more frequently by clients experiencing lengthy unexplained delays in having claims processed.

Tenancy

Demand for tenancy assistance decreased in 2016-2017 after an almost doubling of demand in the previous year. There was a 20% reduction in the numbers of clients seeking tenancy assistance. In terms of services this drop in client numbers equated to a 21% reduction in legal advices provided and a 15% reduction in the court/tribunal and other representation work undertaken in the tenancy program.

The service provides assistance to tenants irrespective of means in line with Tenancy Advice and Education Program contract. Due to the limitations of the CLASS database we are unable to provide a breakdown of the mix of tenants accessing the service but help was provided to private tenants, public tenants, community housing tenants, boarders and lodgers and homeless people. For the first six months of the year to 31 December 2016 where tenure type was extracted using CLSIS, 36% of the tenancy matters provided with advice and casework assistance related to public housing tenants.

On an outreach basis Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service has continued to provide assistance as a Duty Advocate at the Perth Magistrates Court on a Thursday morning every three weeks. This assistance is provided

in collaboration with TenancyWA. Some of the partners who had been involved in the Duty Advocate Pilot Project have been unable to continue this service provision following the reduction in TAEP funding from 1 January 2017. Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service has long considered assistance at the court as an important aspect of our tenancy service delivery.

Regularly unrepresented tenants are provided with advice and representation at the court. If ongoing assistance is required and the tenant is from our geographic catchment area other representation is provided. If the tenant is not from our catchment area we refer them to the Local Service Unit (LSU) in their area for further assistance.

The main reason for tenants contacting the service for help was in relation to Tenancy Termination by Lessor which accounted for 33.5% of our tenancy work. As a proportion of our overall tenancy work this marks an almost 10% increase from the previous year.

The service continues to have high numbers of tenants seeking assistance as they are being evicted by the Housing Authority. In 2016-2017 there has been an increase in Housing Authority evictions for rent arrears and for property standards, as opposed to those being evicted under s75A of the *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA). Apart from these termination actions there has been an increase in the numbers seeking assistance where their fixed term agreement with the Housing Authority has not been renewed. A high proportion of these matters are Aboriginal clients referred by Daydawn Advocacy for help.

Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service prioritises assistance to those facing eviction or at risk of homelessness. Advice and representation at court has been provided where appropriate to tenants to defend matters to stop the tenant’s eviction. This is augmented with the work undertaken as Duty Advocate at the

Magistrates Court. Court/Tribunal and Duty Lawyer assistance was provided with 21 tenancy matters in 2016-2017.

As a result of these interventions some tenancies have been saved and the service has worked closely with other community organisations and the Housing Authority to support tenants to retain their housing.

The second highest occurring tenancy problem type was Tenancy Termination by Tenant (14.8%). The service continues to have tenants contact in relation to ending a fixed term tenancy. Too regularly issues of financial hardship and domestic violence are elements of these break lease matters. The next highest tenancy categories for work undertaken was Tenancy Other (14.35%) which covers tenancy problems not included in the CLSIS/CLASS problem types, Tenancy Bond (10.05%) and Tenancy Access (9.09%).

Tenancy Case Studies

Tenancy Case Study 1

Facts of the Case – The tenant was referred for assistance by DayDawn Advocacy as an eviction order had been issued and the Housing Authority had advised the tenant that they intended to have the bailiff take possession of the property. The eviction related to poor external property standards as there was rubbish in both the front and back yard and the neighbours had complained. There had been property standards issues noted previously and the tenant had not allowed the Housing Authority access to the property since that time. The tenant had been hospitalised due to mental health conditions and had suffered severe family traumas in the preceding period. We identified that the workers assisting the tenant with her mental health issues had not considered addressing the issues of the property standards. The tenant lived at the property with her daughter and infant granddaughter.

Advice/Assistance Provided – We agreed to mediate with the Housing Authority in relation to the eviction action and negotiated time to organise a plan to clean and maintain the property. WRAS assisted the tenant to get a skip bin from the local council and to get the tenant and other agencies to assist with cleaning and gardening at the property. The gas had been disconnected and DayDawn Advocacy assisted the tenant to have it reconnected. The Tenant Advocate liaised with the tenant about the property clean up and arranged for an inspection by the Housing Authority and advised the tenant about the importance of her being at the property and about allowing the Housing Authority access to the property. The Housing Authority completed their inspection and were happy with the condition of the property. They then agreed to enter into a new six month fixed term tenancy with the tenant. We advised the tenant about the importance of maintaining property standards, and complying with the terms of the lease. The tenant was advised that if there are no issues during the six months that the Housing Authority could sign her to a periodical agreement.

Outcome - The outcome in this case was that the tenant and her family were not evicted into homelessness. The tenant now has a 6 month fixed term agreement.

Tenancy Case Study 2

Facts of the case – The tenant had been in a rental property for almost 12 years and had renewed the lease until October 2018. She was then offered public housing accommodation after being on the Wait Turn List for a number of years. The tenant gave notice to the REA and whilst initially they had agreed that the tenant could end the tenancy they then said she was breaking the lease and would be responsible for the rent until the property was relet. The tenant said there were a number of outstanding maintenance

issues which could reduce the prospects of the property being relet in its current condition.

The tenant was a single parent with a child with a disability and had recently had her Centrelink payments reduced as she was transferred from Parenting Payment to Newstart Allowance when her child turned 8.

Advice/Assistance Provided – The tenant was advised of the process to apply to the court and seek termination of the tenancy due to hardship as soon as possible. The tenant was advised about negotiating with the real estate agent to agree to terminate the lease without her having to pay anything further on the basis of the compensation she may be entitled to due to the serious maintenance issues that had not been addressed for many months. If she was unable to reach agreement she was advised about the court process including the costs, pre-trial negotiation process and if agreement was unable to be reached how to present her case at a trial in the Magistrates Court. She was also advised about seeking an urgent hearing and the evidence that would be helpful in court.

Outcome – Unknown. This case illustrates the difficulty that tenants can have ending a tenancy, bearing the costs until a property is relet where the property may not be in a rentable state due to disrepair and where market rent has dropped since the commencement of the lease.

Community Legal Education

In 2016-2017 there was an increase in the numbers of community legal education activities undertaken by the service. In total there were 46 CLE activities and 3 CLE resources developed in the year.

Community education activities were undertaken in both our welfare rights and

tenancy program and included both one off workshops and the development of information resources. In the current year the service undertook the final CLE activities of the Welfare Rights CLE Project undertaken in Rural, Regional and Remote Western Australia which was funded by the Public Purposes Trust in the previous year. This project included CLE activities in Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Leonora, and Karratha. As part of the Youth Welfare Rights Project the service also conducted a number of activities which have been directed toward young people and those who work with young people in the community.



Sessions were undertaken in the following settings:

- ASeTTS (Centrelink and Tenancy);
- Aboriginal Family Law Service (AFLS);
- Geraldton Resource Centre;
- Geraldton Refuge;
- Radio Mama;
- Goldfields CLC;
- Northern Goldfields Community Centre;
- Kalgoorlie GETS;
- Maku Stadium (collaboration with AFLS)
- Leonora Sewing Group and St John's Ambulance;
- Leonora School;
- Pilbara CLC;
- NWRN Conference 2016;
- NACLIC Conference 2016;
- UWA Life Hacks (Centrelink and Tenancy);

- Curtin University O Week;
- UWA O Week;
- Guild Workers (Collaboration with Centrelink at Curtin University);
- Youth Disability Advocacy Network;
- YACWA Fairground Conference;
- CLCA WA (CPD);
- CLCA WA CLE Network;
- Financial Counsellors Annual Conference;
- Daydawn Advocacy;
- UWA Social Work Students;
- Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre;
- Law Society Young Lawyers - Social Justice Opportunities Evening;
- Foyer;
- Woodvale Senior College;
- NGALA;
- Nulsen Haven;
- Fibromyalgia Support Group; and
- Red Cross.



The Welfare Rights and Tenancy Fact Sheets developed by the service in 2016-2017 include:

- Appealing Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme Decisions;
- Centrelink Resources for workers; and
- Shared Tenancies.

Our existing suite of Fact Sheets was regularly reviewed and updated in response to changes to ensure their currency.

Law Reform

In 2016-2017 there were less law reform activities undertaken by the service. These activities are informed by the experiences of our clients to bring about structural and systemic change.

The Law Reform work undertaken through the year included a range of activities which included forum participation, submissions, Senate Inquiry appearances, media interviews, and feedback to DHS and others on specific issues which related to service delivery and policy. Some of these occurred in the context of activities of the National Social Security Rights Network of which we are a member.

At a local and national level staff of the service participated in a number of regular meetings and forums and other activities. Some of the regular and ad hoc forums, conferences and meetings and activities in which staff have participated in 2016-2017 have included:

- Evidence to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs - Design, scope, cost-benefit analysis, contracts awarded and implementation associated with the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative (Automated ('Robo') Debt);
- WA Tenant Advocates' Meetings;
- WA Tenant Coordinators' Meetings;
- DHS Serious Non Compliance Meeting;
- NACLCL PII Committee;
- CLCA WA Legal Practice and PII Sub Committee;
- CLCA WA Member Meetings;
- CLCA WA CLEWS Network Meetings;
- CLCA WA Quarterly Meetings;
- NSSRN Conference (Fremantle);
- NACLCL Conference (Fremantle);
- NACLCL Youth Network (Fremantle);
- NACLCL Tenancy Network (Fremantle);
- NSSRN Welfare Reform Sub Committee;

- NSSRN Members' Meetings;
- NSSRN Committee Meetings;
- DHS Aboriginal Consultative Committee;
- DHS Community Consultative Committee;
- Access to Justice On Line Forum;
- YACWA Fairground Conference;
- NACLC Legal Needs Workshop;
- Meeting with Shadow Attorney General, Mark Dreyfus;
- NSSRN Linkup on Automated Debts;
- Legal Aid WA/CLCA WA Service Planning Workshop;
- AAT Stakeholder Liaison Meeting;
- Meeting with David Michael MLA;
- Meeting with Jessica Stojkovski MLA;
- Meeting with Dr Sally Talbot MLC;
- Co-Location/Merger Committee;
- Media Briefing 'Robo' Debts – ABC; and
- Media Interview Channel 9 News – Centrelink underpayments.

In 2016-2017 Catherine Eagle continued in her roles as the Convenor of the NACLC Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) Committee, the WA State Representative on the NACLC PII Committee and as the convenor of the WA Community Legal Centre Association (CLCA) Legal Practice and PII (LP&PII) Committee. In this role Catherine Eagle provides support and guidance to other CLCs in relation to PII issues and a range of issues that arise within a community legal setting.

Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service is an active participant in the National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN) (previously known as the National Welfare Rights Network- NWRN) of which we are a member centre. All of the staff who work in the welfare rights program participated in the Annual NSSRN Conference in Fremantle in August 2016. In the last year staff of the service have convened, chaired and participated in the monthly Members Meetings, various Sub Committees and Committee Meetings of the NSSRN. These meetings have a focus on casework trends,

policy and law reform, as well as the governance of the NSSRN.

Kate Beaumont continued in the role of President of the NSSRN until the AGM in August 2016 when she stepped down from that role. For the remainder of 2016-2017 Kate Beaumont was the Vice President of the NSSRN. These roles have provided greater scope for Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service to contribute and engage in the law reform and legal policy work undertaken by the NSSRN.

Governance

The governance of the Association rests with the Board of the TLC Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia (Inc.). In 2016-2017 the Association adopted the immediate changes required under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015* in relation to its register of members, rules of association and Committee and Officer Duties. These changes did not require changes to the constitution and rules. The Board has subsequently reviewed the Constitution and Rules of the Association to incorporate the additional provisions required under the new legislation. There needs to be special acknowledgement to Shaun Doray for his work on the review of the constitution. These modified rules are to be presented to the membership as Special Business at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held in October 2017.

The Chairperson of the Board has been Owen Whittle who has led the board since October 2015. The other office bearers were Brendyn Nelson as Deputy Chairperson, Cindy Labuschagne as Treasurer and, from February 2017, Zaneta Mascarenhas as Secretary. The Secretary position was vacant for a period following Matthew Davey stepping down from the role at the 2016 AGM. Continuing on the Board from the previous year were Philip O'Donoghue, Sinead Glackin, and

Rebecca Dennison. At the October 2016 AGM, Leon Stojmenov stood down from the Board and Zaneta Mascarenhas joined the Board. Helen Tuck stepped down as the UnionsWA nominee on the Board and Pearl Lim joined the Board as their nominee from October 2016. Helen McNally joined the Board in March 2017 filling the General Member vacancy that arose with the filling of the Secretary position.

The Board met 7 times in 2016-2017 and there was quorum at all but one meeting.

The new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement between staff, the Board and the Australian Services Union was registered in September 2016 and will run for the next three years.

A priority issue for the organisation during the last year has been the funding uncertainty facing the organisation for 2017-2018. In our lobbying activities letters were sent to both Federal Coalition WA MPs and Senators and WA MPs elected at the March 2017 State election. Following these mail outs there were a number of meetings held with WA MLAs and MLCs which provided opportunity to highlight the work of the service and the funding issues for Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service and others in the sector.

The Board endeavoured in light of expected funding reductions to ensure that their strategic focus for renewal and succession planning within the organisation was firmly in focus in their deliberations about the shape of the future for the organisation.

Future

Three weeks before the end of the financial year the service received a reprieve from some of the most savage funding cuts expected for 2017-2018 in respect of our welfare rights funding (including our Youth Welfare Rights Project). We did not, however avoid the reduction in our tenancy funding

and so have had to reduce our service offer to tenancy clients in line with the reduced funding provided under the contract.


Both the CLSP funding and replacement LCT funding has been extended for one year. We will however face another period of uncertainty over our future welfare rights funding in 2018-2019. We are hopeful that we will receive earlier advice of funding levels to assist with future planning for the organisation as opposed to what has occurred in the current year.

With the funding reductions coming into 2017-2018 we have had to reduce some staff hours in line with reduced levels of funding and increased costs. Any further funding cutbacks in 2018-2019 will result in the need for further reductions. Unfortunately at the same time our service has never been busier with client numbers increasing and it is unlikely that demand for help will reduce.

Acknowledgement and Thanks

I would like to acknowledge the work and ongoing commitment of the Board over many years to Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service. It is pleasing that most Board members will stand for another term consolidating on the work undertaken in the last year.

Our staff and volunteers are the lifeblood of Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service. Day in and day out they work tirelessly with our clients, willingly sharing their expertise and compassion to help. I would like to thank them for what they bring to the organisation.



Kate Beaumont
Executive Officer

Treasurer's Report

Once again we have had a successful year despite ongoing uncertainty around long term funding. Australian Audit conducted our financial audit and confirmed that we have fulfilled all legislated responsibilities. The Board remained diligent in its review of the service's finances whilst executing the strategic plan including a focus on succession planning. The Operating surplus for the year before Capital Grants amounted to \$17,784. Core funding continued from the Commonwealth and State Attorney General's Department, Department of Commerce and the Legal Contributions Trust Replacement with funding levels remaining consistent with the prior year.

The service received an increase in the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department SACS wage supplementation for the year. The annual SACS wage supplementation is used to cover the additional staffing costs arising from the Equal Remuneration Order.

Additional income received during the year included \$8,000 from the National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN) for bookkeeping services to their National Secretariat. The bookkeeping services will continue in 2017/2018.

During the year the service recognised accommodation income of \$10,000 with a charge for the use of the service's building to funding programs. This provides the service with funds for future maintenance or upgrades to the building.

Of the surplus for the year \$3,436 was allocated to the service's redundancy reserve. The service also received a capital grant from Lotterywest of \$6,940 that was utilised to purchase a much-needed new photocopier.

At the end of the financial year the service had cash of \$443,443 and prepayments of \$12,526, bringing the total current assets to \$455,969. Combined with property, plant and equipment with a book value of \$253,361, the service holds total assets of \$709,330.

Current liabilities include trade and other payables of \$17,938 with no unexpended grant funds at the end of the year. Provision for employee entitlements remains the largest liability for the service with a total of \$164,759. After deducting total liabilities of \$182,697 from total assets, the service has a net assets position of \$526,633.

The service's strong net assets and cash position provides the Board the option to utilise retained earnings to invest in succession planning during periods of funding uncertainty.



Cindy Labuschagne
Treasurer

Abridged Financial Statements

AUSTRALIAN AUDIT

DIRECTORS:
ROBERT CAMPBELL CA, CPA, RCA, MSW
VIRAL PATEL CA, CPA, FCCA (UK), RCA
ALASTAIR ABBOTT CA, RCA, M.FORENSIC ACCOUNTING

T.L.C. Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia Inc ABN: 95 512 184 786

Abridged audit report For the Year Ended 30 June 2017

Scope

I have audited the abridged financial report of T.L.C. Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia Inc for the year ended 30 June 2017 as set out on the following page in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards.

Audit Opinion

In my opinion, the information reported in the abridged financial report of T.L.C. Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia Inc is consistent with the annual special purpose financial report from which it is derived and upon which we expressed an unqualified audit opinion in our report to the members. For a better understanding of the entity's financial position and performance, as represented by the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year, and the scope of our audit, this report should be read in conjunction with the annual special purpose financial report and our audit report.

Robert John Campbell CA CPA
Registered Company Auditor No. 334773
Australian Audit Pty Ltd
Level 8, 251 St Georges Terrace, Perth, WA, 6000



DATE: 17 October 2017

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and New Zealand

T.L.C. Emergency Welfare Foundation of Western Australia Inc
 ABN: 95 512 184 786

Abridged financial report for the year ended 30 June 2017

	2017	2016		2017	2016
	\$	\$		\$	\$
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
AS AT 30 JUNE 2017			FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2017		
CURRENT ASSETS			Accommodation income		
Cash assets	443,443	455,647		10,000	12,000
Receivables	12,526	3,448	Grants	518,588	546,767
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	455,969	459,095	Membership fees	464	445
NON CURRENT ASSETS			Donations		
Property, Plant & Equipment	253,361	246,692		1,230	650
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS	253,361	246,692	Interest received	9,448	5,869
TOTAL ASSETS	709,330	705,787	Other income	15,658	24,117
CURRENT LIABILITIES			Employment expenses		
Payables	17,938	21,456		(467,773)	(452,392)
Unexpended grant funds	-	28,046	Administration expenses	(32,401)	(55,879)
Provisions	162,856	154,851	Property expenses	(34,930)	(35,885)
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	180,584	202,353	Depreciation	(2,499)	(4,077)
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES			PROFIT/(LOSS)		
Provisions	2,103	1,525		17,784	41,615
TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES	2,103	1,525	Capital Grant	6,940	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	182,687	203,878	TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	24,724	41,615
NET ASSETS	526,633	501,909	STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
EQUITY			FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2017		
General funds	474,978	453,690	Cash flows from Operating Activities		
Reserves	51,655	48,219	Receipts from operations	520,159	556,776
TOTAL EQUITY	526,633	501,909	Payments to suppliers and employees	(539,581)	(500,778)
			Net cash generated by (used in) operating	(19,422)	55,998
			Cash flows from Investing Activities		
			Purchase property, plant & equipment	(9,188)	(1,808)
			Interest received	9,446	5,869
			Net cash generated by investing activities	278	4,061
			Cash flows from Financing Activities		
			Receipts from capital grants	6,940	-
			Net cash generated by financing activities	-	-
			Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	(12,204)	60,059
			Cash at beginning of financial year	455,647	395,588
			Cash at end of financial year	443,443	455,647

NOTES

The Abridged Financial Report has been derived from the audited special purpose financial report that is prepared in accordance with note 1 to that report.

Full copies of our Special Purpose Financial Report are available and can be requested by emailing welfare@wraswa.org.au