

PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY CENTRE



PIAC

ANNUAL REPORT

2014-2015

CONTENTS

About PIAC	1
Chair's report	2
CEO report	3
Core strategies	4
Social justice	6
Equality	10
Consumer rights	12
Accountable government	14
Education & training	15
Thank you	16
Publications	18
PIAC Board	20
Staff	21
Fundraising	22
Financial statements	23

PIAC
Level 5, 175 Liverpool St
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia
Phone: 61 2 8898 6500
Fax: 61 2 8898 6555
www.piac.asn.au

ISSN 1324-5376

working for a
fair & just
democratic society

empowering
citizens & consumers
communities

Generous support from individuals, foundations, law firms and others is vital for PIAC's ongoing success. Your contribution helps PIAC address emerging public interest issues and achieve practical outcomes that protect individual dignity and the basic rights of vulnerable people.

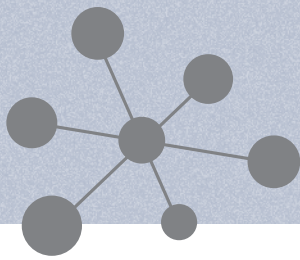
Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

Donate online at www.piac.asn.au

Editor: Gemma Pearce
Design: Lena Lowe
Photos: Gemma Pearce, Lena Lowe,
Scott Parker, Meredith Downes.

Cover: Oliver Derum, Julia Mansour and
Dr Gabrielle Kuiper.

Cover photo: Lena Lowe



The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is an independent, non-profit organisation, committed to social justice and addressing disadvantage. We help people by providing legal assistance, policy advice and training.

PIAC works with people who have least access to economic, social and legal resources and opportunities.

PIAC understands how the law can bear harshly on people who are experiencing homelessness, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people who have suffered discrimination, victims of war crimes and those who struggle to access essential services.

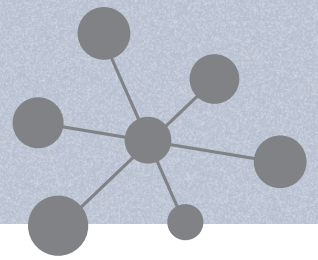
Our role is to use the law to achieve practical outcomes that protect individual dignity and the basic rights of vulnerable people. Providing legal assistance free of charge is a key way in which we promote equal access to justice.

PIAC also draws on our specialised knowledge of particular client communities, gained through our legal assistance work, to recognise trends or patterns that indicate systemic problems or issues. We work with government, business, the community sector and other partners to achieve lasting change.

Since our establishment in 1982, PIAC has grown from a staff of four to a staff of 26 as well as secondees, professional placements, and interns who all make an essential contribution.



*PIAC is committed to social justice for all in the community.
We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of
the land on which we work as the first people of this country.
We acknowledge with deep sorrow the past injustices,
mistreatment, and the failure to understand, respect and
value the cultural beliefs of Australia's Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples.*



P IAC's greatest strength is to take on complex, social issues and work with great skill and tenacity to resolve them in a collaborative way.

The 2014-15 year has been outstanding in marking some major successes for PIAC and for the disadvantaged and vulnerable people we serve.

PIAC this year celebrates a major success in our long-running class action on behalf of young people who were allegedly unlawfully detained by the police because of a longstanding fault in the police IT system. Working with Maurice Blackburn, we have negotiated a settlement with the State of NSW, which will be finalised in early 2016. This is the culmination of well over eight years of policy review and litigation.

PIAC's Energy + Water Consumer Advocacy Program has also worked with the NSW Government to improve the safety net that aims to ensure that electricity is affordable for people with disability who rely on electricity to power key medical and related equipment.

PIAC's largest project, the Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS), has opened a number of new free legal advice clinics in western Sydney and the Hunter region this year. I would particularly like to mention the generous pro bono contribution of many legal practices in providing PIAC with bright and enthusiastic lawyers who, while being essential to us achieving our goals, also broaden their own understanding of the role of law in society, which they take back to their organisations.

Over the course of the year, PIAC's International

Crimes Evidence Project worked closely with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in its investigation into alleged war crimes and violations of human rights committed

in the Sri Lankan civil war. In October, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that calls for the establishment of a special international crimes court, as well as a truth and reconciliation commission. PIAC is now working to prepare for the establishment of a new special court to prosecute alleged war criminals.

The achievements set out in this annual report are testament to the hard work of the staff, the commitment of the Board and the volunteers. PIAC is especially grateful to the Australian and NSW Governments for their continued support, as well as the many organisations and individuals who provide funding and donations.

Finally, in my first year as chair of the Board, I acknowledge the excellent work of my predecessor in this role, Prof Peter Cashman, and the contribution of our new director, Prof Eileen Baldry.

RALPH PLINER
CHAIR



In the first six months of this year, PIAC undertook its regular three-yearly review of its strategy and operations. This process, which involved considerable internal and external consultation, culminated in our new strategic plan.

A new strategic plan doesn't necessarily engender the sort of excitement that a big court win or law reform success might, but ours is crucial in setting PIAC's direction and focusing our limited resources on where the need is greatest and our impact is likely to be most keenly felt.

PIAC's new plan aims to link more effectively our project areas, strategies and the people we hope to work with and assist. It will see a deeper focus by PIAC on policing and detention, homelessness, discrimination, international crimes, and access to the essential services of energy and water.

This means opening new clinics for our Homeless Persons' Legal Service, expanding our focus on access to gas and other energy services, exploring new ways to document major human rights violations committed in the Asia Pacific and increasing our work for people who have been treated unfairly by insurance providers.

PIAC's governance, strategic direction and fundraising are overseen by PIAC's highly-skilled board of directors. In a year in which we embark on a new strategic plan, the Board has been exceptionally generous in giving their expertise and creativity so freely to PIAC.

On behalf of PIAC's staff, I also welcome Ralph Pliner

as the new chair and Rebecca Gilsenan as deputy chair of the Board. We are fortunate to have their combined skills and energy in these important leadership positions.

This year has been very successful for PIAC in promoting social justice, in large part because of the hard work of my colleagues. They have passion, but more importantly they have excellent skills and commitment. I thank them for devoting these qualities to PIAC and the people we serve.

But PIAC staff could not go anywhere near achieving our goals by working alone. We are very grateful to the funders, donors, volunteers and partner organisations, all of whom massively expand our impact and influence. For instance, in the Homeless Persons' Legal Service alone, we have almost 500 lawyers who volunteer.

Finally, one of PIAC's longest-serving staff members, Jane King, finished in September 2015. As Manager, Finance & Administration, Jane contributed to the smooth running of PIAC - but more than that, she was a warm and knowledgeable friend to many of PIAC's staff, volunteers and clients.

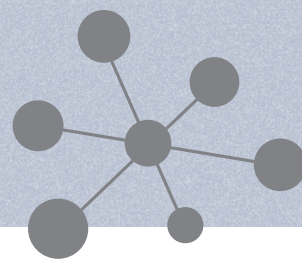
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Santow". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

EDWARD SANTOW
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

We are very grateful to the funders, donors, volunteers and partner organisations, all of whom massively expand our impact and influence.

CORE STRATEGIES

Public interest litigation, policy development and law reform, education and training



PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION

PIAC employs three central strategies to promote human rights and social justice: public interest litigation; policy development and law reform; and, education and training.

Strategic or public interest litigation has proved a powerful way for PIAC to protect the basic rights of disadvantaged people – at a broader, systemic level. However, we strive to use litigation only when other, less adversarial approaches are not viable, or are unlikely to be successful on their own.

PIAC uses public interest litigation especially to combat discrimination, unlawful detention and other violations of human rights.

PIAC has conducted 168 public interest matters during the past year. These matters covered issues including:

- false imprisonment
- assault, battery and misfeasance in public office
- discrimination
- freedom of information
- coronial inquests
- mental health detention.

PIAC has also provided almost 1400 legal advice services this year through the Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS), our largest project.

Reflecting changing patterns of homelessness in New

South Wales, in 2015 we expanded HPLS beyond inner Sydney, opening four new homeless legal clinics. We have welcomed five new legal service providers and four new partner agencies to HPLS, and now have new clinics in Marrickville, Mt Druitt and Newcastle.

The new clinics add to the ten HPLS clinics already run by PIAC, which are managed with the pro bono assistance of over 480 commercial lawyers at welfare agencies across Sydney.

At these clinics, lawyers assist clients with a range of legal problems including tenancy, credit and debt issues, social security, victims compensation and fines.

PIAC employs an HPLS Solicitor Advocate. He provides specialist legal representation for people experiencing homelessness who are charged with minor criminal offences.

The Solicitor Advocate assists with overcoming some of the barriers homeless people face accessing legal services. These barriers include a lack of knowledge of how to navigate the legal system; the need for longer appointment times to obtain instructions; and the need for greater capacity to address multiple and complex inter-related legal and non-legal problems.

This year HPLS and the Solicitor Advocate provided almost 1500 advice and assistance services (including criminal case work and clinic visits).



StreetCare and HPLS staff clockwise from top left: Damo, Dave, Roslyn Cook, Lou Schetzer, Melissa, Mary, AJ, Daryl, Ken and Renee.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND LAW REFORM

Improving access to justice is not just about ensuring that all sectors of society can equally obtain legal information, assistance, advice and representation. It also involves using the practical experience gained through our legal work to identify where justice is being denied systemically and to propose reform.

Much of PIAC's policy work responds to government and independent inquiries or parliamentary committees considering draft legislation, in both the State and Federal jurisdictions. Because of our specialised knowledge of particular client communities, PIAC is well positioned to identify trends or patterns in legal problems that indicate a systemic issue.

These problems can be substantive, such as the disproportionate negative impact of a particular area of law or practice on an identified client community, or procedural, such as particular difficulties the client community has in accessing or interacting with legal services or the legal process.

In 2014-15, PIAC's policy work spanned a broad range of its focus areas. For example, we provided evidence to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee considering significant freedom of information reform;

submissions on human rights law reform to the Australian Law Reform Commission and the Australian Human Rights Commission; and a submission to the Tink Review of Police Oversight Mechanisms in NSW. PIAC's recommendations were cited or adopted in a number of reports and a successful legislative amendment.

PIAC also built on its relationships with other community legal centres and organisations in the sector to identify areas of common ground, as well as meeting with relevant stakeholders including the NSW Police Force and parliamentarians at both federal and state level.

PIAC made 43 submissions to government and independent inquiries, parliamentary committees, law reform and regulatory bodies. These related to:

- energy pricing, regulation and affordability
- human rights law reform
- civil litigation reform in the context of institutionalised child sexual abuse;
- disability inclusion;
- coronial reform;
- access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

PIAC provides education and training for not-for-profit organisations and individuals to improve advocacy on public interest issues.

Participants learn to take a rights-based approach to their advocacy and gain a working understanding of the law, the justice system, and alternative dispute resolution.

PIAC trained 612 participants throughout the year. Courses included:

- Advocacy strategies
- Advocacy skills
- Tenancy law for non-lawyers
- Advanced media skills
- Electricity & water: helping clients stay connected
- Advanced negotiation skills

PIAC teaches law students through the Practising in the Public Interest (PIPI) program. PIPI is a partnership between PIAC, Justice Connect and participating legal practices and invites the participation of universities interested in providing their students with an elective

in this area.

The program introduces later-year law students to advocacy in the public interest and exposes them to organisations that are directly involved in public interest and pro bono initiatives.

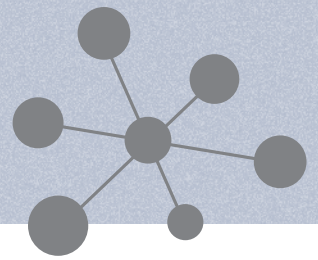
Universities that have recently participated in PIPI include Macquarie University, University of Western Sydney and University of Wollongong. PIPI has now been accredited as part of the law degree in most of the participating universities.

PIAC also presented its fourth Social Justice Clinical Course, in partnership with Sydney Law School. Four days of teaching were followed by a 12-day placement with PIAC, which gave the students a hands-on experience of public interest legal practice.

This year, PIAC has actively worked in partnership with government and non-government organisations in NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania to deliver training in areas including health, refugees, Indigenous communities, homeless, and mental health.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Addressing systemic injustice and unmet need among people who are homeless or are in detention



HPLS 10th anniversary art exhibition – 'No Fixed Address'

In November 2014, PIAC celebrated 10 years of the Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) with a vibrant exhibition of artworks by people who are homeless or have recent experience of being homeless. The exhibition was opened by renowned performer, director and writer, Leah Purcell, at Gauge Gallery, Glebe.

The opening was attended by an array of artists, service providers, lawyers, StreetCare members and HPLS and PIAC staff, past and present.

The 10th anniversary was an opportunity to reflect on the principles that have defined HPLS, including access to justice, pro bono partnerships, systemic change and consumer participation. Through these PIAC seeks to achieve social justice and promote a diverse and inclusive community.

Artists included Stephen Corry, Michael Lyons, Chris Barwick, Adrian 'AJ' Jansson, Gemma Lee, David McGettigan, Ian Smith, Irene Charmas, Ray Morgan and James Vincent. Many of the artists have participated in the art class at the Mission Australia Centre in Surry Hills and at the Ozanam Learning Centre in Woolloomooloo.

Over 40 pieces of work were on display, many of which were sold during the exhibition with proceeds going directly to the artists.



Leah Purcell at the opening of 'No Fixed Address'.



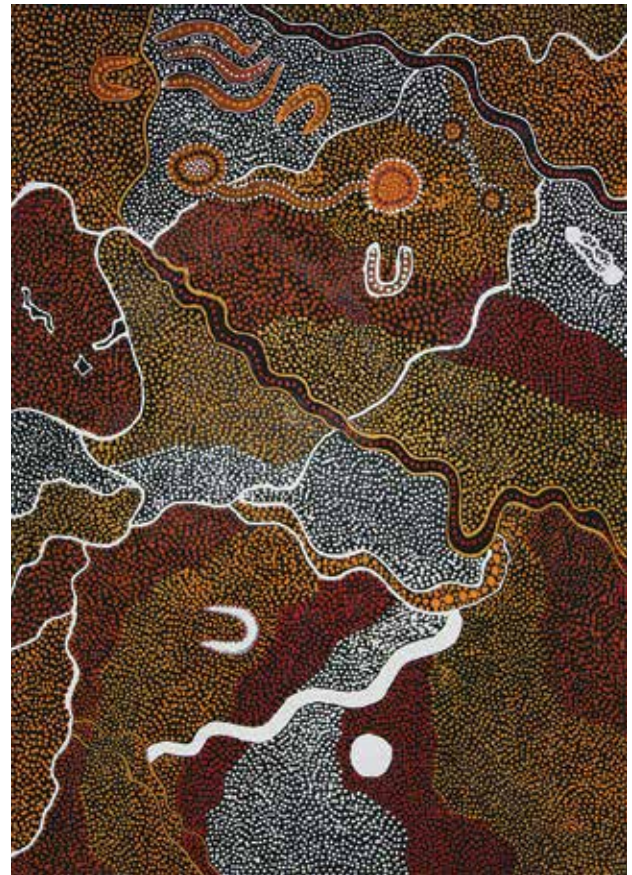
Over 40 works were on display by artists with lived experience of homelessness.



From left: Mary Sullivan, Roslyn Cook and Tim Ngui.



From left artists: Stephen Corry and Michael Lyons.



Welcome to country by Michael Lyons.

StreetCare

PIAC's homeless consumer advisory committee, StreetCare, was established in 2009.

StreetCare is made up of nine people who have recent experience of homelessness. The members reflect the diversity of homelessness in NSW, and include men, women, transgender people, young people, and representatives from inner Sydney, outer suburbs and rural and regional areas. StreetCare members also engage with other people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to facilitate their input into public policy and law reform initiatives.

StreetCare enables PIAC to obtain direct input from homeless people into its policy advocacy and also provides advice to government agencies.

During 2014-15, StreetCare members met quarterly with senior officials of Housing NSW and Centrelink to discuss services for people experiencing homelessness.

StreetCare members also represented homeless people on the NSW Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness, and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services expert panel overseeing the reforms of specialist homelessness services (Going Home Staying Home).

In November 2014, the NSW Government released the discussion paper Social Housing in NSW. PIAC was actively engaged in the consultation process in a number of ways, including by supporting individual StreetCare members to make submissions and participate in consultation forums.

In early 2015, PIAC conducted an evaluation of the StreetCare project, seeking members' views regarding their involvement. All members responded positively when asked about their perceptions of being involved with StreetCare. Several responses indicated how the experience was empowering and supportive, and providing them with an opportunity to turn their experience of homelessness into a positive by equipping them to help others facing homelessness.

New HPLS clinics

During the 2014-15 year, HPLS has continued to deliver a high volume of advice and casework services to individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

We have continued and refined our work in the inner-Sydney area, supplementing our 10 regular clinics with attendance at the Woolloomooloo Integrated Services Hub (WISH) each month and attending annual Homeless Connect events at Sydney Town Hall, and in Parramatta and the Hunter region.

We have also expanded our practice to several new areas. Reflecting changing patterns of homelessness in New South Wales, we have identified new target areas and have commenced four new legal clinics.

To make these services possible, we have welcomed five new legal service providers and four new partner agencies to HPLS. The expansion of HPLS was made possible by pilot funding from the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department.

Our new clinics include a monthly clinic focusing on clients who identify as transgender, delivered in partnership with the Gender Centre at Annandale and the in-house legal team at Macquarie Bank. We have also established a regular presence at The Shed in Mt Druitt, where we partner with lawyers from Carroll & O'Dea. North of Sydney, we are partnering with the Matthew Talbot Centre and Jenny's Place, to deliver services to both men and women in the Hunter Region. The Matthew Talbot Centre clinic will be staffed by Hicksons Lawyers, while Burke & Mead and Moray & Agnew will partner to deliver weekly services at Jenny's Place.

In all this work, we continue to deliver a very high level of legal service to some of the most disadvantaged individuals in NSW.

In the year ahead, we plan to continue strengthening our service by reviewing our existing services, while continuing to explore opportunities for new partnerships.

HELPING DEAN STAY OFF THE STREETS

Dean (not his real name) is a man in his forties who was living at Central Station. He was looking forward to moving into a social housing property he had recently secured after many years living on the streets.

One evening last year he was sleeping on the Sydney to Parramatta train, when a young man started talking loudly to another passenger. Our client told the young man to be quiet, and eventually a confrontation ensued.

Police were called and Dean and the other man

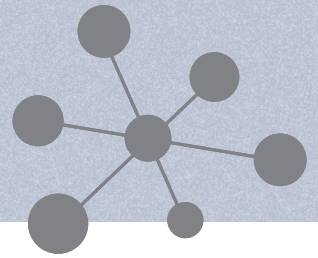
were charged with affray. Dean pleaded guilty to the charge in the Local Court where the maximum term of imprisonment is 2 years. If he received a term of imprisonment then he would lose his house.

With the assistance of the Solicitor Advocate, Dean was eventually placed on an 18 month good behaviour bond and was able to keep his house and look forward to a more stable and hopeful future.

Visit www.piac.asn.au for HPLS clinic times and locations.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Policing and detention



Class action settles: wrongfully imprisoned

A settlement has been reached in the class action PIAC has been jointly running for over four years with Maurice Blackburn on behalf of young people allegedly wrongfully arrested by the NSW Police.

The settlement, which is subject to final court approval, will see those young people affected share at least \$1.85 million.

The case commenced in 2011 after PIAC became aware that children and young people were being wrongfully detained, and in some cases imprisoned, as a result of inaccurate or out-of-date information on the NSW Police computer system known as COPS (Computer Operational Policing System).

Our case was brought in order to achieve justice for the victims and to highlight the inaccuracies in this computer system. PIAC continues to call on the NSW Government to fix any remaining problems with COPS so that no-one else is arrested based on incorrect information.

PIAC is very grateful to everyone who has helped achieve justice for these young people. PIAC particularly acknowledges current and former staff; our barristers, Michael Lee SC and Rachel Francois; our partners at Maurice Blackburn; and our generous funders and donors.

HISTORY OF THE CLASS ACTION

2005: PIAC receives reports of young people being unlawfully arrested as a result of problems with the COPS system.

2005 - 2011: representations are made to Ministers and the police on more than ten separate occasions over several years but the wrongful arrests continue.

December 2010: Sydney Morning Herald reports decision to undertake a class action to highlight problems with the system and achieve justice for victims.

June 2011: Class action launched.

September 2013: Supreme Court found that the State has no defence to the claims of those young people who were not on bail at all when they were arrested.

May 2014: The Bail Act is amended to require the Police to consider alternatives to arresting and detaining young people in these circumstances.

July 2015: NSW Supreme Court gives provisional approval to the settlement.

9 Oct 2015: Deadline for young people who may have been unlawfully detained to register to be part of the class action.

Early 2016: final approval by the Supreme Court.



From left: Oscar McClaren, Associate, Maurice Blackburn; Camilla Pandolfini, PIAC Senior Solicitor; Ben Slade, NSW Managing Principal, Maurice Blackburn; and Rachel Francois of Counsel.

EA'S STORY

EA was born in Sudan, and lived in Egypt for a period before coming to Australia as a refugee and settling with his mother and siblings when he was 8 years old.

In March and April 2010, EA was arrested three times in 15 days for breach of bail, when he was not actually on bail, as a result of incorrect police records. He was just 14 years old. On two of those occasions he was arrested by the same police officer.

Each time, EA was arrested in public, in front of his friends and family, out the front of Westpoint Shopping Centre in Blacktown. He was then taken back to Blacktown police station. From there, once, late at night he was driven to Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre, where he was strip searched by juvenile justice officers. The next day, once the matter was heard by the Children's Court, EA was released.

The incidents had a lasting impact. After these arrests, EA found it hard to concentrate at school and was afraid to leave the house in case he got arrested again by mistake. He felt really scared of the police.



Sarah Bassiuni from PIAC's Indigenous Justice Program and Ricky Welsh at the Shed.

Mental health in prisons

PIAC is investigating claims relating to the alleged inadequate provision of mental health treatment to persons in custody.

PIAC continues to act on behalf of a young man living with chronic schizophrenia who was injured during a delusional episode in prison. The claim alleges that despite staff being aware of his condition and the medication he was receiving prior to entering custody, he did not receive his medication in the three weeks leading up to the incident.

The claim, issued in the Supreme Court, is against Corrective Services, Justice Health (the medical provider in NSW correctional centres) and the GEO Group, the private contractor that operates Parklea Correctional Centre, and seeks compensation for the injuries he sustained.

PIAC also acts on behalf of the family of a man who died as a result of self-harm in custody at the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre in the Inquest into his death in the Coroner's Court. There is significant public interest in the case because of the issues raised regarding the treatment of individuals with a mental illness by Corrective Services and Justice Health, and the potential for the Coroner to make recommendations aimed at preventing other self-harm and suicide related deaths in the future.

PIAC has also filed proceedings in a matter that involves the attempted suicide of an Aboriginal woman with six young children in the court cells in a town in regional NSW. The case raises further issues about the practices and procedures of both NSW Police and Corrective Services NSW in the care and monitoring of individuals with mental health issues when they first come into custody.

Police misuse of tasers

PIAC is launching civil proceedings against NSW Police on behalf of Einpwy Amom, a young man who was tasered while handcuffed and lying on the ground after falling down the stairs at Blacktown train station. Einpwy was 17 years old at the time. CCTV and mobile phone camera footage shows that six police officers restrained him at the time. The matter was the subject of a report on the ABC's 7:30 program. The case continues, with proceedings to be filed shortly.

Indigenous Justice Program

Last year, PIAC advocated strongly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who been denied justice, particularly in relation to unlawful detention.

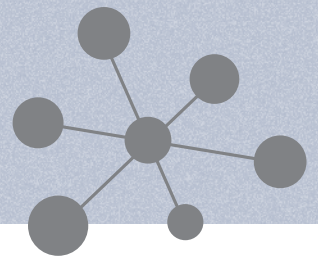
The Indigenous Justice Program (IJP) brought several matters concerning the unlawful imprisonment of juveniles by the NSW police in the last year. Two of the matters were from regional NSW and were filed in the District Court. The other matter, brought by a young Aboriginal man from Mt Druitt, is in the Supreme Court. It is alleged that this man was the subject of eight unlawful arrests, two malicious prosecutions and that he was stopped and searched by police unlawfully on seven occasions. Each of the matters settled outside court.

The IJP is pursuing several other cases relating to the wrongful imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. One involves a young Aboriginal man who resides in the town of Wellington in western NSW. In the claim filed in the District Court, we allege that our client was directed unlawfully by the police to stay outside of the Wellington central business district and later arrested as he tried to walk home with the only practical route being through the Wellington CBD.

In May 2015, the IJP also commenced proceedings against the State of New South Wales in relation to an unlawful strip search by police conducted on a 39 year old woman. The claim filed in the District Court alleges that our client was detained at a friend's house by police before being subjected to a highly invasive strip search. The case is continuing.

EQUALITY

Combating discrimination and advancing Indigenous justice



Promoting equal access to the media

In February 2015, PIAC lodged complaints on behalf of Vision Australia in the Australian Human Rights Commission against Channels Seven, Nine, Ten, SBS and Foxtel, calling for an audio description service that will make television more accessible to people who are blind or have low vision. This follows an earlier complaint by Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) against the ABC, lodged in 2013.

Audio description is a second audio track that can be turned on and off. It describes the important visual elements of a television program – such as actions, scene changes, gestures and facial expressions – that a person who is blind or has low vision can't see.

In the same way as captioning has facilitated media access for people who are deaf, audio description has the potential to allow hundreds of thousands of people who are blind to enjoy television.

After BCA's 2013 complaint in the Human Rights Commission, the ABC agreed to a time-limited trial of audio description on their on-demand service, iView. The trial commenced this year. While this has been widely acknowledged as a significant step forward, it is not an ideal solution, as many people who are blind or have low vision face major barriers to using iView. As a result one complainant is pursuing a case of unlawful discrimination in the Federal Circuit Court.

The claim against the ABC seeks a declaration of unlawful discrimination and orders requiring the ABC to implement an audio description service for a minimum of 14 hours per week.

Making online shopping more accessible

In a significant win for people who rely on screen readers to use the internet, the case between Gisele Mesnage, who is blind, and Coles settled amicably in February, with Coles agreeing to make improvements to its online shopping website that will make it more accessible.

Like many people who are blind or have a vision impairment, Ms Mesnage has had ongoing problems using the Coles website to do her shopping since 2008.

After negotiations with Coles failed to bring about a lasting solution, in October 2014, Ms Mesnage brought legal proceedings against Coles under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Coles agreed to make further improvements to its website, adopting suggestions by Ms Mesnage to make the website more accessible for people who are blind or have low vision.

Online shopping enables people living with disabilities, especially those who are blind or have low vision, to live



From left: Graeme Innes AM, Gisele Mesnage and Michelle Cohen.

more independently, saving time and transport costs and empowering them to do this ordinary domestic task, grocery shopping, on their own.

PIAC and Gisele Mesnage are grateful to IMF Bentham, Australia's leading litigation funder, for supporting the case as part of its pro bono program.

Virgin makes it easier to book flights for travellers with a disability

Following the resolution of a complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, Virgin Australia has made it easier for people with a disability, who need to travel with a carer, to access lower airfares.

The complaint was made after PIAC's client, Jenny Brown, found that she was unable to take advantage of discount airfares when booking flights for her disabled son, because of Virgin Australia's requirement to submit the name of her son's companion carer at the time of booking.

Like many people who find their carers through a nursing agency, Jenny Brown and her son don't usually know the carer's name more than two weeks in advance of travel, when the agency finalises their roster. As a result they have had to book air travel at the last minute, when

only the most expensive flights are available, often at the least convenient times.

As a result of Ms Brown's complaint, the airline has reviewed and made changes to its policy so that people travelling with a carer can now make flight bookings by phone up to 331 days in advance at the internet discount rate, without the requirement to enter the carer's name at the time of booking. The name of the carer can then be confirmed at any time up to 72 hours before the flight.

This settlement means that the Brown family and many thousands of people who need the assistance of a carer when travelling will have much better access to 'early-bird' flights and specials.

Mental illness and insurance

PIAC provides legal advice and representation to people who have been denied insurance (such as income protection insurance, life insurance and travel insurance) because of their history of actual or perceived mental illness. Insurers have declined to offer insurance altogether or have offered insurance policies that exclude claims arising from any mental health symptom or condition, irrespective of the nature and severity of the applicant's mental health history.

PIAC has also provided legal advice and representation to people who have had their existing insurance policies cancelled because they haven't disclosed a mental health symptom or condition at the time they applied for their policy. In some of the cases, the insurer has cancelled the policy following the applicant making a claim for an unrelated illness or condition.

PIAC is providing legal assistance to over 66 individuals who have been referred to us through our continuing relationships with beyondblue and the Mental Health Council of Australia. We have successfully settled several matters this year and have a number of other complaints open.

As a result of Jenny Brown's complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, it's now much easier for people who need to travel with a carer, like her son, Ashley, to book flights in advance with Virgin Australia.



THERESA'S STORY

For reasons of confidentiality, the following is a fictionalised account based on PIAC's cases.

When our client, Theresa, went through a difficult period following her divorce after 15 years of marriage, her GP referred her to a psychologist. Theresa met with the psychologist once a month. After eight months, Theresa and the psychologist agreed that the appointments were no longer needed.

Around two and a half years later, Theresa applied for income protection insurance. During the application process, the insurer asked Theresa a number of questions about her medical history, in response to which Theresa gave detailed and considered responses. When it came to the question about whether Theresa had ever had a mental illness or symptoms of a mental illness, Theresa answered that she had not. Theresa later told us that she did not even think about the appointments with the psychologist because her psychologist had never suggested she had a mental illness.

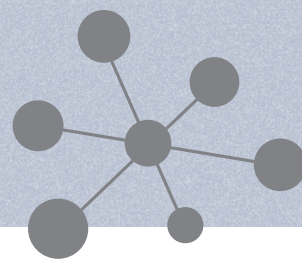
Approximately two years later, Theresa was diagnosed with liver failure. As a result, she stopped working and made a claim on her income protection policy. The insurer paid Theresa's claim for some months, after which it decided to obtain copies of medical records held by Theresa's general practitioner. The insurer saw the referral to the psychologist in the GP's records and obtained the psychologist's clinical notes. The notes recorded the psychologist's observations that Theresa seemed anxious and depressed. The insurer cancelled Theresa's policy for breach of her duty of disclosure of a mental illness and demanded that she pay back the money it had paid her.

PIAC assisted Theresa to challenge the insurer's decision by arguing that Theresa had not been diagnosed with a mental illness (which Theresa's psychologist confirmed in a written report provided to the insurer) and that if Theresa had made the disclosure at the time of her application, the insurer would have offered her a policy anyway. As a result of PIAC's assistance, Theresa settled her dispute with the insurer on terms favourable to Theresa.

If you, or someone you know has had an insurance claim or application declined, or a policy cancelled as a result of a mental health condition, you can contact PIAC's Mental Health and Insurance Project for advice on 8898 6526.

CONSUMER RIGHTS

Exposing and redressing unjust practices and deficient laws, especially in energy & water



Landmark legal challenge to reduce NSW electricity bills

In May 2015, PIAC launched a legal challenge on behalf of NSW consumers to the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) recent decisions that will be critical to the prices that consumers pay for electricity over the next five years.

PIAC will be the first consumer organisation to present arguments before the Tribunal in a matter of this kind. Before changes were made to the National Electricity Law in 2013, only electricity networks had had the practical ability to challenge the AER's decisions.

PIAC is taking this unprecedented action because we believe the electricity network revenue determinations delivered by the AER on 30 April allow the businesses to operate inefficiently over the next four years, keeping electricity prices unnecessarily high for consumers.

PIAC is arguing that the AER's decisions will allow the network business to spend more than \$2.1 billion more on infrastructure than is necessary - all of which would be paid for by NSW customers between now and 2020. At the same time, the three NSW network businesses are contending that the AER's determination would leave them with \$5.7 billion less than they need.

In other words, there is almost \$8 billion between the two scenarios proposed by the network businesses and PIAC. That equates to approximately \$570 per year for an average household.

Electricity prices more than doubled between 2008 and 2013, driven mainly by spending on the electricity distribution network or 'poles and wires'. In NSW and Queensland, these charges make-up around 50% of average household electricity bills. This caused terrible hardship for many households, especially those with



From left: Oliver Derum, Dr Gabrielle Kuiper from the Energy + Water Consumer Advocacy Program and Julia Mansour, senior solicitor at PIAC.

low incomes who had little scope to reduce their use of essential electricity services. Disconnections for non-payment of bills also doubled in five years, reaching 32,940 in NSW.

Inquiries by the Productivity Commission and a Senate Select Committee in 2012 highlighted the chronic over-investment in the network at a time of falling demand. The inquiries also highlighted the fact that the businesses earned a profit on anything they built, including, for example, an entire sub-station in the Hunter Valley that was never connected to the grid.

The Council of Australian Governments moved decisively, reforming the regulatory framework under which the AER sets network revenues. One significant change was a move to calculate permissible operating and capital expenditure based on benchmarking with other

NEW ENERGY REBATES ON THE WAY

Shortly before the 2015 election, the NSW Government announced several new energy rebates for low-income households. PIAC welcomed the announcements, which responded to proposals it had raised directly with government over many years.

Low-income households will receive a new \$90 gas rebate, and the anomaly that prevented some consumers from receiving energy rebates just because they live in retirement villages or other residential communities will be removed. The Government will also increase the Life Support Rebate and make the payment available for electric mobility devices used by tetraplegics.

The last increase in the Life Support Rebate was

in 2009, with the rate for some equipment not having changed since 2004. Over the same period, average electricity prices have doubled. The increase in the Life Support Rebate restores its value relative to electricity prices, while also reflecting improvements in the efficiency of life support equipment over that time.

Extending the Life Support Rebate to mobility aids for tetraplegics will provide relief for thousands of people who need to use electricity to get around or leave their homes. Currently, some people in electric wheelchairs have reported becoming socially isolated because they cannot afford to go out and expend their batteries.

efficient network service providers with comparable operations.

Changes were also made in response to previous appeals from networks of the AER's decisions. In 2009-10, \$3.3 billion was added to bills as a result of appeals to the Australian Competition Tribunal. Consumers were excluded from the process, due to the risk of incurring significant legal costs. Reform was introduced and the Tribunal must now consider whether overturning the AER's determination would be 'materially preferable' for the long-term interest of consumers.

The new laws are now being tested, at the first opportunity. Having vigorously opposed the reforms and submitted 44,000 pages of argument and material to the AER's price determination process, the NSW networks are appealing the regulator's first determination since the reforms were enacted. As well as seeking merits review of the AER's determination, they are also seeking judicial review of the decision in the Federal Court.

PIAC's Energy and Water Consumer's Advocacy Program has been heavily involved in network regulation for many years. PIAC devoted significant resources to having input into the development of the new regulatory framework, a process that involved extensive consumer consultation. PIAC also prepared two substantial submissions to the AER's price determination for the NSW networks (made in August 2014 and February 2015). Aided by reforms to the merits review process, PIAC will be now advocating for the first time ever on behalf of consumers for lower prices in the Tribunal.

PIAC believes that the recent reforms are good for consumers. But we are arguing that in its final decision, the AER did not go far enough in implementing them. In particular, PIAC believes that the AER has set its operational expenditure efficiency benchmark too low - in line with the fifth most efficient network out of the 13 in Australia's national energy market. PIAC also contends that the AER failed to properly reduce the networks' cost of borrowing in line with recent falls in interest rates.

In making its decision, the Tribunal must also consult with users of the network services who will be affected by its final decision. To PIAC's knowledge, this requirement is unique to reviews conducted under the National Electricity Law. With no precedent for running such a consultation, the process is being developed virtually as it unfolds. While there is uncertainty about how much weight the Tribunal will give to material received through the consultation, such processes have the potential to lower the barriers



You can find links to media coverage of the case on our website www.piac.asn.au.

to effective public participation in important regulatory decisions.

The Tribunal's decisions will have ramifications across the national electricity market. If the AER's current regulatory approach, including the use of benchmarking, is thrown out, it is likely that 'gold plating' of the electricity network will continue, at vast expense to consumers. But if common sense prevails, essential electricity services will become more affordable.

The ACT's hearing commenced on 21 September.

HOME ENERGY ACTION PROGRAM

PIAC welcomed the NSW Environment Minister's announcement of the creation of a new Home Energy Action program to assist low-income and vulnerable households to reduce their energy bills.

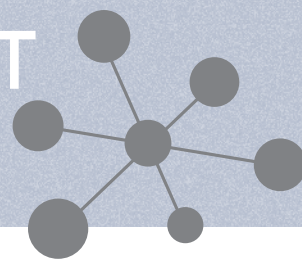
The program will assist households to access high-cost, high-return energy efficient appliances and home improvements. In partnership with community housing providers, the program will work to upgrade community housing properties, making them cheaper and more comfortable for low-income tenants to live in.

Home Energy Action will build on the success of the Home Power Savings Program to deliver higher cost, higher return efficiency improvements and target vulnerable, low income households that would most benefit from this support.

PIAC looks forward to working with the NSW Government to develop the details of the program over coming months.

ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

Promoting accountable and transparent government



International Crimes Evidence Project

Since 2012, the International Crimes Evidence Project (ICEP) has focused on the final months of the Sri Lankan civil war, between the Sri Lankan government armed forces and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

On 1 October 2015, the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva unanimously adopted a resolution on Sri Lanka, which calls for the establishment of a special international crimes court, as well as a truth and reconciliation commission and various other important accountability and reconciliation measures.

The resolution, which Sri Lanka co-sponsored, marks a crucial turning point in the push for truth, justice and accountability for the victims and survivors of Sri Lanka's decades-long civil war. Australia also co-sponsored the resolution.

The Sri Lankan Government should be applauded for changing its position and accepting the need for strong action to deal with the terrible consequences of its civil war.

The resolution draws on a recent report of the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report found that war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations were likely to have been committed by all parties to the conflict.

ICEP collects and analyses important evidence from witnesses, victims and other sources about the conflict. We used our knowledge of, and evidence relating to, the Sri Lankan conflict to assist the UN with its investigation.

PIAC's CEO Edward Santow and Senior Legal Officer Alexandra Owens attended the Human Rights Council

session to brief key delegates and stakeholders and push for a strong resolution.

The Sri Lankan Government should be applauded for changing its position and accepting the need for strong action to deal with the terrible consequences of its civil war. It now must make good on its commitment to consult widely as it implements the resolution, and must draw on international expertise and assistance, particularly in relation to the participation of foreign judges, prosecutors, lawyers and investigators in its special court.

PIAC's International Crimes Evidence Project will continue its work collecting and analysing evidence related to the conflict. Subject to Sri Lanka putting in place a robust and effective witness protection system and other necessary safeguards, the International Crimes Evidence Project hopes to contribute to the various transitional justice mechanisms as they emerge.

RIGHTS REASSESSED?

The 2014 Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) consultation on how 'rights and responsibilities' are protected was followed in 2015 by a review of statutory encroachment on 'traditional rights and freedoms' by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC).

PIAC's submission to the AHRC examined the need for reform to better protect rights and freedoms in a number of areas. The submission also urged the AHRC to tread carefully when discussing 'responsibilities', to avoid the risk of impinging more than is absolutely necessary on human rights and freedoms.

PIAC also made a submission to the ALRC inquiry, which is due to report in November 2015. Among other things, PIAC recommends that a process be undertaken to establish a comprehensive but non-binding document setting out how human rights apply in Australia, how they should be protected in domestic law and how they can be justifiably limited.

CHANGES TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW

In November 2014, PIAC gave evidence to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee on the Freedom of Information (New Amendments) Bill 2014. The Bill proposes to abolish the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

If passed, any appeal against a government agency's decision to refuse access to a document will be heard by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, which will be prohibitively expensive for many people. At a minimum,

PIAC has recommended that the Bill be deferred so that a proper inquiry into the Bill's proposals can take place.

The Bill stalled in the Senate in October 2014. Despite the Bill not having been passed, the Government ceased funding the OAIC at the end of 2014. In the recent 2015-16 budget, the OAIC received transitional funding which is enabling it to continue some of its work. With no further allocation of provisional funding, however, the future of the OAIC remains unclear.

EDUCATION & TRAINING



Social Justice Clinical Summer Course

In February 2015, 18 Law students from Sydney University undertook a clinical placement at PIAC as part of the Social Justice Clinical Summer Course (SJCS).

The course, which is provided in collaboration with Sydney University, gives final year law students the opportunity to gain on the job experience with real world

cases and participate in a structured seminar program dealing with social justice issues and public interest law.

The course consists of four days of seminars and 12 days of clinical placement (or internship). Students engaged in tasks in legal research, writing, comparative analysis and advocacy strategy preparation.



Practising in the Public Interest Summer and Winter Law Schools

The Practising in the Public Interest (PIPI) program is a partnership between PIAC, Justice Connect and participating legal practices. It takes place twice per year, in July and February.

The program introduces later-year law students to advocacy in the public interest and exposes them to

organisations that are directly involved in public interest and pro bono initiatives.

Universities that participated in 2014/15 include University of Sydney, Macquarie University, University of Western Sydney and University of Wollongong. PIPI is an accredited part of law degrees at these universities.



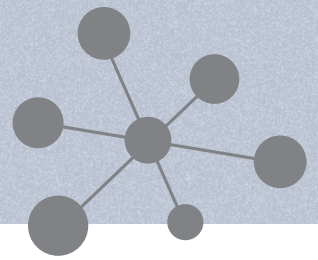
Practical Legal Training Placements

In 2014/15, PIAC engaged 15 law students to undertake their practical legal training placements within our general litigation practice.

Working in a voluntary capacity, they provided vital support to PIAC's work. Students assist by responding to telephone enquiries from members of the public seeking legal advice and assisting PIAC staff with dynamic and interesting litigation and casework, outreach projects and policy work.

THANK YOU

We acknowledge and thank all PIAC clients for their willingness to take legal action in the public interest



We would also like to thank the many individuals and organisations - donors, barristers, private law firms, companies, community organisations, government bodies and students - that work with PIAC to achieve social justice. We are very grateful for your support.

Major supporters

Allens
AMP Foundation
IMF Bentham Ltd
Carol & O'Dea
Energy Consumers Australia
Henroth Investments
Henry Davis York
King & Wood Mallesons
Law Cover Insurance
Minter Ellison
Macquarie Group Foundation
Oak Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Public Purpose Fund NSW
Riverbush Pty Ltd
Roth Charitable Foundation
StreetSmart Australia
Thomson Reuters

EWCAP

Lukas Rajnoch, St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW
Amelia Christie, Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association
Rhiannon Cook, Council of Social Services NSW
Leo Patterson Ross, Tannants' Union of NSW
Serena Ovens & Ruth Robinson, Physical Disability Council of NSW
Kianna Spicer & Melanie Walters, Salvation Army
Helen Scott & Iain Maitland, Ethnic Communities Council NSW
Craig Memery, Alternative Technology Association
Alexus van der Weyden, Jemena
Yolande Strengers, RMIT University
Penny Crossley, Sydney University
Bruce Mountain, CME
Bev Hughson, Darach Energy Consulting

Training

Michael Bevan, Mukesh Mahajan, Nouvart Asadourian, Legal Aid NSW
Grant Arbuthnot, Leo Patterson-Ross, Patrycja Arvidssen, New South Wales Tenants Union
Don Palmer, Glass Box
Carolyn Grenville, Cancer Council of NSW
Anna Lyons and Rebecca McMahon, Justice Connect
Carly Maxwell and Rachel Simpson, NSW Legislative Assembly
Teresa McMichael, NSW Legislative Council
Rick Welsh, The Shed
Marlene Brueton, Katie Healey, Law Society of New South Wales
Mary Gleeson, Legal Aid NSW EIU
Elisabeth Coroneo, CCLC NSW
Jessica Raffal and Matthew Butt,

Welfare Rights Centre
Margot Morris, Intellectual Disability Rights Service Inc

Indigenous Justice Program

Ricky Welsh (The Shed)
Felicity Huntington (ADB)
Noni Ross (ADB)
Danielle McGrath (ALS)
Col Skinner (ALS)
Sasha Da Silva (ALS)
Kate Bleasel (ALS)

International Crimes Evidence Project

Committee of Experts, and advisers

John Ralston (Chair, Committee of Experts)
Gordon Weiss
Colonel (retired) Desmond Travers
Professor William Schabas
Professor Paola Gaeta
Mark Ierace SC
Fiona McLeod SC
Phillip Boulten SC
Ragni Mathur
James Payten
Phillip Ryan
Claire Harris
Magda Karagiannakis
Fiona Todd
Alexandra Rose
Sarah Andrews
Anne Mainsbridge
Chris Mitchell

Events

Cecily Hardy
Chas Licciardello
Craig Reucassel
Graeme Innes AM

ICEP law firm partners

Ashurst
Henry Davis York
Herbert Smith Freehills
Hicksons
King & Wood Mallesons
Allens
Gilbert + Tobin

HPLS host agencies and community partners

Edward Eagar Lodge
The Gender Centre
Jenny's Place, Newcastle
Matthew Talbot Centre, Newcastle
Matthew Talbot Hostel,
Woolloomooloo
Mission Australia Centre, Surry Hills
Newtown Mission
Newtown Neighbourhood Centre
Norman Andrews House
Ozanam Learning Centre
Parramatta Mission
Salvation Army Streetlevel Mission
The Shed
The Station
Vincentian House
Wayside Chapel
Women and Girls' Emergency Centre
The Shed, Mt Druitt
The Gender Centre
Matthew Talbot Centre, Newcastle
Jenny's Place, Newcastle

HPLS law firm partners

Allens
Baker & McKenzie
Burke & Mead
Carroll & O'Dea
Corrs Chambers Westgarth
Gilbert + Tobin
Henry Davis York
Hicksons

HWL Ebsworth
Legal Aid NSW
Macquarie Bank
Maddocks
Minter Ellison
Moray & Agnew
Norton Rose Fulbright
Thomson Geer

StreetCare members

Dale King
Mary Sullivan
Damien Sakey
Ken Hamilton
Daryl Smith
Adrian 'AJ' Janssen
Dave Jeffery
Renaë Spice
Melissa Wolfshoerndl

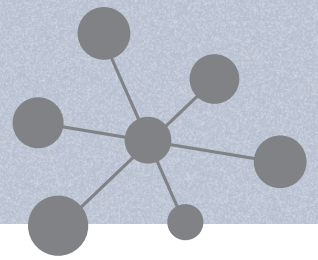
Barristers who provided advice and representation

Adrian Canceri
AJ Karim
Andrew Naylor
Anna Perigo
Anne Healey
Ben Fogarty
Brenda Tronson
Christine Melis
David Hume
Dean Lloyd Del Monte
Elizabeth Raper
Eugene Romaniuk SC
Fleur Ramsay
Geoffrey Gemmel
George Williams AO
Georgie Coleman
Ian Butcher
Ian Denham
Jeremy Kirk SC

Joe Kellaway
Kellie Edwards
Kylie Nomchong SC
Larissa Andelman
Louise Goodchild
Michael Lee SC
Natasha Case
Nicholas Kelly
Patrick Griffin
Paul Batley
Peter Aitken
Rachel Francois
Rob Ranken
Robert Goot SC
Robert Reitano
Sam Horgan QC
Sophie Callan
Talitha Fishburn
Tom Clarke
Tom Molomby
Trish MacDonald SC
Zelie Heger
Alexander H Edwards
Aruna Sathanapally
Justin Brown
Ryan May

Project partners

Australian Conservation Foundation
Australian Human Rights Commission
beyondblue
Brotherhood of St Laurence
Mental Health Australia
StreetSmart



PIAC papers, journals, newsletters and submissions to government and regulatory bodies are available on the PIAC website.
Visit www.piac.asn.au/publications.

Accountable government

Freedom of Information Amendment (New Arrangements) Bill 2014.
Submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, November 2014

Submission to the NSW Attorney General: review of the Coroners Act 2009 (NSW), November 2014

Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry Traditional Rights & Freedoms - Encroachments by Commonwealth Laws (IP 46), March 2015

Submission to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Redress and Civil Litigation, March 2015

Submission to the Review of Police Oversight in NSW, June 2015

Consumer rights

Licensing the public good:
submission to IPART's Review of the Operating Licence for Sydney Water Corporation, August 2014

Moving to a new paradigm:
submission to the Australian Energy Regulator's NSW electricity distribution network price determination, August 2014

Things to like, things to check: PIAC submission to the AER's review of prices for Jemena Gas Network, August 2014

Draft Rule Determination: customer access to information about their energy consumption, September 2014

Multiple risks for uncertain benefit: submission to the Australian Energy Market Commission's First Interim Report on Optional Firm Access, Design and Testing, September 2014

A rare opportunity - PIAC submission to the NSW Government's discussion paper: Rebuilding NSW, September 2014

Prepayment for electricity, September 2014

Submission on the National Energy Retail Amendment (Retailer price variations in market retail contracts) Rule 2014, September 2014

A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single rule change.
Submission to the AEMC's Draft Determination, National Electricity Amendment (Distribution Network Pricing Arrangements) Rule 2014, October 2014

Down, right? Privatisation and the regulatory valuation of electricity distribution network service providers in New South Wales:
evidence and issues report prepared by the Carbon + Energy markets, October 2014

Submission on the National Electricity Amendment (Generator ramp rates and dispatch inflexibility in bidding) Rule 2014, October 2014

Responding to reality: PIAC submission to the Australian Government's Green Paper to inform the development of an Energy White Paper, November 2014

Submission to the Department of Family and Community Services on the Draft NSW Disability Inclusion Plan, November 2014

Submission to 2015 Retail Competition Review Consultation Paper, November 2014

Necessity and complexity:
submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee Inquiry into the performance and management of electricity network businesses, December 2014

When and how to make the switch?
Submission to the inquiry into the supply and cost of gas and liquid fuels in New South Wales, December 2014

A missed opportunity? Submission to the Australian Energy Regulator's Draft Determination for Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Essential Energy, February 2015

Transformation needed. Submission in response to Transgrid's revised network revenue proposal, February 2015

Submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's review of competition in the NSW retail electricity, February 15

Regulating innovative energy selling models under the National Energy Retail Law, February 2015

The slow re-balancing act: submission in response to the Demand Management Incentive Scheme Rule 2015 consultation paper, March 2015

Supporting innovation in consumers' interests: submission in response to Energy Market Reform Working Group paper 'New Products and Services in the Electricity Market' March 2015

This is how we do this now.

Submission to the AER's draft determination for Jemena Gas Network, March 2015

Submission Review of Sydney Water's Operating Licence, April 2015

Submission to the Inquiry into the leasing of electricity infrastructure, May 2015

From complex fragments to competitive consumer-focused markets. Submission in response to Review of Governance Arrangements for Australian Energy Markets: issue paper, May 2015



Submission in response to the Australian Energy Market Commission's draft determination on wholesale market participants bidding in good faith, June 2015

Social justice

Inquiry into tenancy management in social housing, August 2014

Rights and responsibilities 2014

Submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission, October 2014

Submission to the NSW Sentencing Council on the proposal for additional show cause offences in the *Bail Act 2013* (NSW), October 2014

Social housing in NSW - more than a roof over our heads, February 2015

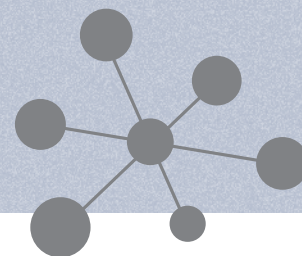
Submission to the NSW Department of Justice discussion paper, *Limitation periods in civil claims for child sexual abuse*, March 2015

PIAC's submission to the Finance and Public Administration Committee Inquiry, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of law enforcement and justice services, April 2015

Newsletters

PIAC bulletin [Issue 39], Spring 2014

PIAC bulletin [Issue 40], Autumn 2015



- Ralph Pliner** Chair, Company director
- Rebecca Gilsonen** Deputy Chair, Principal, Maurice Blackburn
- Eileen Baldry** Professor of Criminology, Social Sciences, University of NSW
- Peter Cashman** Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Sydney
- Coralie Kenny** Senior Lawyer, Suncorp Life
- Alan Kirkland** Chief Executive Officer, Choice
- Katie Kiss** Senior Manager, PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting
- Julian Leeser** Director Government, Policy and Strategy at the Australian Catholic University
- Anmarie Lumsden** Executive Director, Strategic Policy and Planning, Legal Aid NSW (resigned April 2015)
- Kevin Rozzoli AM** Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly 1973-2003
- Matthew Quinn** Company director
- David Weisbrot AM** Emeritus Professor of Law and Honorary Professional Fellow in Medicine at the University of Sydney (resigned March 2015)

NEW BOARD MEMBERS 2014



Eileen Baldry (BA, DipEd, MWP, PhD) is the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Professor of Criminology at UNSW Australia where she has been an academic since 1993. She served as Associate Dean Education, Arts and Social Sciences, from 2007 to mid-2010 and Deputy Dean, Arts and Social Sciences, from mid-2010 to mid-2015.

Eileen is an esteemed researcher in the areas of Criminology, Social Policy and Social Work. She holds an outstanding record over the past twenty years as a Chief Investigator on major grants from the ARC, NHMRC and other funding bodies. She is involved in a voluntary capacity with a number of development and justice community agencies and served two terms as President of the NSW Council of Social Services. In 2009, the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW recognised Baldry's 'indefatigable' support for justice-related causes by awarding her its highest honour: the Justice Medal.



Belinda Bible is the Chief Operating Officer of the Investment Banking Department at Credit Suisse in Australia. She spent eight years as an Equity Capital Markets banker and has extensive experience in corporate equity fundraising and government privatisations. Prior to banking, Belinda practised as a lawyer. Belinda is observing the PIAC board through the Observership Program which places young professionals on not-for-profit boards and runs a structured training program in conjunction with the board placement.

Staff

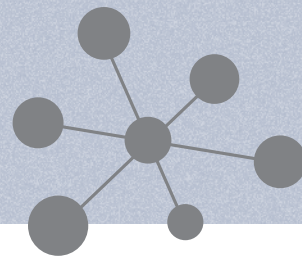
Sarah Bassiuoni	Senior Solicitor, IJP
Michelle Cohen	Senior Solicitor
Roslyn Cook	Senior Solicitor, HPLS
Oliver Derum	Senior Policy Officer, EWCAP
Meredith Downes	Fundraising Manager
Sophie Farthing	Senior Policy Officer
Tobias Freeman	Legal Officer
Danielia Gavshon	Senior Policy Officer
Alexis Goodstone	Principal Solicitor
Jane King	Manager, Finance & Administration
Gabrielle Kuiper	Senior Policy Officer, EWCAP
Jane Leibowitz	Senior Solicitor
Laura Lombardo	Senior Solicitor
Lena Lowe	Administrator, Training & Publications
Sarah Ludowici	Senior Training Officer
Julia Mansour	Senior Solicitor
Sarah Mitchell	Administrator, HPLS
Deirdre Moor	Manager, Policy & Programs
Tim Ngui	Solicitor, HPLS
Camilla Pandolfini	Senior Solicitor
Scott Parker	Administrator, IT Systems
Gemma Pearce	Snr Media & Communications Officer
Melissa Pinzuti	Legal Secretary
Jeremy Rea	Solicitor Advocate, HPLS
Jessica Roth	Senior Policy Officer
Edward Santow	CEO
Louis Schetzer	Senior Policy Officer, HPLS
Sally Spence	Receptionist
Elwyn Ward	Finance Officer

Practical Legal Training Placements

Charlie Brown
Phillipa Crouch
Sophie Glover
Felice Halse
Lewis Hamilton
Natasha Krnjaic-Tesanovic
Greemn Lim
Katherine Nelson
Amira Makki
Jessica de Maria-Ryall
Prudence Mooney
Lonie Pizarro
Davor Tocakovic
Ja-wei Zhu

Secondees

Rafael Aiolfi	Minter Ellison
Stephen Etkind	Minter Ellison
Sarah Evans	Minter Ellison
Emilee Fairlie	Minter Ellison
Leah Grolman	King & Wood Mallesons
Benji Jacobs	Minter Ellison
Michael Jessup	King & Wood Mallesons



Thanks for your support

It is through the generous support of our community of donor organisations and individuals that we can continue PIAC's vital work and meet the increasing need to protect the basic rights of the most disadvantaged members of our community.

PIAC increased our fundraising income from donations, philanthropic grants and our social justice dinner, and we are very grateful to all our supporters.

On 20 February 2015, we held our Social Justice Dinner. Hosted by Craig Reucassel and Chas Licciardello from The Chaser, the evening brought together 250 PIAC supporters who were entertained and inspired. The keynote speaker, Graeme Innes AM, delivered a speech that brought both laughter and a more thorough understanding of key discrimination issues.

In the coming year, PIAC fundraising will be focused on strengthening the donor program by continuing to grow our community committed to achieving social justice.



From left: Julia Mansour, Gisele Mesnage, Alexis Goodstone.



Our social Justice Dinner, hosted by Craig Reucassel and Chas Licciardello from The Chaser, brought together more than 250 PIAC Supporters.



PIAC CEO, Edward Santow.



"I love living in the country of the supposed Fair Go. But truly, is it for all? I support PIAC to provide advocacy for not only those who are unable to afford legal representation, but also for those who have no understanding of how to access their legal rights. I applaud the existence of PIAC in its endeavours to uphold the values we all supposedly love to espouse."

PIAC donor, Trish Burns.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Public Interest Advocacy Centre Ltd
ABN 77 002 773 524

EXTRACT FROM FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY CENTRE LTD
ABN 77 002 773 524

DIRECTORS' DECLARATION

The directors of the company declare that the summary financial statements and notes for the financial year ended 30 June 2015, set out on pages 26 to 28 is an extract from the full financial report for the year ended 30 June 2015 and has been derived from and is consistent with the full financial report of Public Interest Advocacy Centre Limited.

The directors of the company declare that:

1. The financial statements and notes, are in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012:
 - (a) comply with Australian Accounting Standards Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013; and
 - (b) give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2015 and performance for the year ended on that date of the company.
2. In the directors' opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.
3. Pursuant to Schedule 1, Section 7(3) of the NSW Charitable Fundraising Regulations 2008;
 - (a) the Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of income and expenditure of the company for the year ended 30 June 2015 with respect to fundraising appeals;
 - (b) the Statement of Financial Position is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at 30 June 2015 with respect to the fundraising appeals;
 - (c) the provisions of the Charitable Fundraising Act (NSW) 1991 and the regulations under the Act and the conditions attached to the company have been complied with for the year ended 30 June 2015; and
 - (d) the internal controls exercised by the company are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received and applied by the company from any of the fundraising appeals.

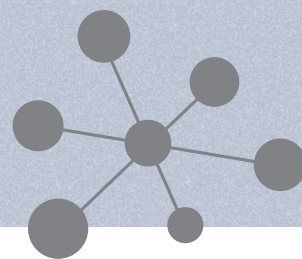
This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



Ralph Pliner
Director

Dated this 8th day of October 2015

PIAC's full financial statements are available on request, and are also lodged with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and available on its website.



EXTRACT FROM FINANCIAL REPORT INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY CENTRE

We have audited the financial report of Public Interest Advocacy Centre Ltd, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2015, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the directors' declaration.

Directors' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The directors of the company are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report of Public Interest Advocacy Centre Ltd is in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the company's financial position as at 30 June 2015 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013.

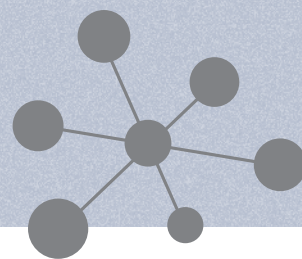
Report in Accordance with Section 24 of the Charitable Fundraising Act (1991)

In our opinion:

- (a) the financial statements of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre Limited show a true and fair view of the financial results of charitable and fundraising activities for the year ended 30 June 2015;
- (b) the financial statements and associated records of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre Limited have been properly kept during the year in accordance with the Charitable Fundraising Act;
- (c) money received as a result of charitable and fundraising activities conducted during the year has been properly accounted for and applied in accordance with the Act; and
- (d) there are reasonable grounds to believe the Public Interest Advocacy Centre Limited will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.



Mark Godlewski
Partner
PITCHER PARTNERS
Sydney
9 October 2015



STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
REVENUE	1	2,992,402	2,737,609
LESS: EXPENSES			
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(25,673)	(26,304)
Employee benefits expense		(2,255,724)	(1,919,544)
Rent		(224,332)	(216,870)
Project and casework expenses		(406,535)	(238,937)
Other operating expenses		(120,919)	(126,011)
		(3,033,183)	(2,527,666)
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)		(40,781)	209,943
Other comprehensive income		-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		(40,781)	209,943

NOTE 1

REVENUE

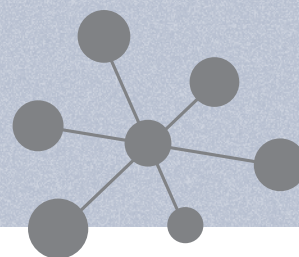
Operating activities			
Grants and other contributions		2,236,685	2,145,897
Casework		291,870	247,893
Training workshops, seminars and conferences		85,533	109,654
Sale of publications		9	1,525
Interest income		44,271	40,403
Other		6,361	9,120
Donations		215,803	183,117
Functions		111,017	-
		2,991,549	2,737,609
OTHER INCOME			
Gain on sales of assets		853	-
		2,992,402	2,737,609

STATEMENT OF FINANCIL POSITION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents		1,699,512	1,743,859
Receivables		952,402	343,246
Other assets		28,145	6,863
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		2,680,059	2,093,968
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Other financial assets		57,090	57,090
Property, plant and equipment		38,129	49,761
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		95,219	106,851
TOTAL ASSETS		2,775,278	2,200,819
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Payables		1,557,226	974,577
Provisions		107,154	78,903
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,664,380	1,053,480
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Provisions		12,943	8,603
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		12,943	8,603
TOTAL LIABILITIES		1,677,323	1,062,083
NET ASSETS		1,097,955	1,138,736
EQUITY			
Reserves		257,750	248,100
Retained surplus		840,205	890,636
TOTAL EQUITY		1,097,955	1,138,736

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Public Interest Advocacy Centre Ltd
ABN 77 002 773 524



STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015.

	Reserves	Retained surplus	Total equity
	\$	\$	\$
BALANCE AS AT 1 JULY 2013	163,430	765,363	928,793
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	-	209,943	209,943
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	-	209,943	209,943
TRANSFERS	84,670	(84,670)	-
BALANCE AS AT 30 JUNE 2014	248,100	890,636	1,138,736
BALANCE AS AT 1 JULY 2014	248,100	890,636	1,138,736
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	-	(40,781)	(40,781)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	-	(40,781)	(40,781)
TRANSFERS	9,650	(9,650)	-
BALANCE AS AT 30 JUNE 2015	257,750	840,205	1,097,955

The PIAC Annual Report is printed and distributed
by Thomson Reuters



For further information, visit
www.thomsonreuters.com.au



PIAC

Level 5, 175 Liverpool Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Telephone: 61 2 8898 6500

Facsimile: 61 2 8898 6555

ABN: 77 002 773 524

E-mail: piac@piac.asn.au

Web: www.piac.asn.au

 [www.facebook.com/pages/
Public-Interest-Advocacy-Centre](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Public-Interest-Advocacy-Centre)

 [@PIACnews](https://twitter.com/PIACnews)