

**Annual  
Report  
2023**

**Public  
Interest  
Advocacy  
Centre**



# **TACKLING INJUSTICE AND INEQUALITY**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Gadigal as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our office stands and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We recognise that sovereignty over Gadigal land was never ceded and stand with First Nations people in their struggle for justice.



**The Public Interest Advocacy Centre is a leading independent law and policy centre.**

**Our purpose is to build a fairer, stronger society by helping to change laws, policies and practices that cause injustice and inequality.**

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**\* Throughout this report we share stories of our clients. Where we have changed the name to protect privacy, it is denoted with an asterisk (\*).**

# FROM OUR CHAIR AND CEO

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## **This report draws together another year of PIAC's work to challenge injustice and build community power to make social change.**

We have honed our priorities across five areas in which our expertise and relationships deliver the greatest impact: First Nations Justice, Disability Rights, Civil Rights, Homelessness, and Energy and Water.

We have seen real successes across these priority areas: improving access to emergency housing for people in crisis; reforming NDIS decision-making and the culture of the NDIA; legislative change to ensure active efforts are made to prevent Aboriginal children being removed from their families; justice for clients subject to discriminatory or unlawful conduct by police and while in immigration detention; and helping vulnerable households avoid energy disconnection for unpaid bills. We have supported more than 140 women through our new Women's Homelessness Prevention Service; and taken a step closer to comprehensive reform of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act.

We also launched our ground-breaking Towards Truth website, a partnership with the UNSW Indigenous Law Centre, supporting truth-telling about the history of Australian laws and policies and their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Changes of state and federal governments have brought new opportunities for engagement and reform. Being a respected voice with a track record of working effectively across civil society means we can be in 'the room where it happens'.

In some cases, we take big steps towards social justice with the people and communities we work with. In others, our vigilance prevents a step backwards or our tenacity sets us up for the long path towards meaningful change. Our supporters understand it's not all about quick or easy 'wins'.

The year has also been one of challenges. Many in our community are struggling with the cost of living and insecure housing. The brutalising impacts of putting children and young people in detention centres have filled headlines. People with disability have shared harrowing stories of their abuse and mistreatment with the Royal Commission while commentary about the cost of the NDIS suggested their rights and dignity may not be 'worth it'. Having been asked how to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the constitution, First Nations communities have been battered by the hostility of debate over their request for a Voice.

Through all of this, PIAC has remained on the side of possibility and hope. We take pride not just in what we have achieved but how we have achieved it: in partnership with the people most deeply affected by injustice and as a determined ally of those seeking equality and fairness.

**Rebecca Gilsenan**  
Chair

**Jonathon Hunyor**  
CEO

# HOW WE MAKE CHANGE



## What we do

Our work combines:

- legal advice and representation, specialising in test cases and strategic casework;
- research, analysis and policy development; and
- advocacy for systems change and public interest outcomes.

We actively seek to collaborate and partner in our work to maximise its impact.

## Our values

We work with compassion and respect.

We amplify the voices of people who are marginalised or excluded.

We are tenacious and courageous.

We are creative and open-minded.

We do everything with integrity and are committed to excellence.



# YEAR AT A GLANCE

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Over the year PIAC has:

**helped people  
over 760 times**

to resolve their legal  
problems

**influenced  
politicians and  
decision-makers**

with 330 briefings,  
letters and submissions

**spoke up for  
social justice**

across more than  
100 media outlets

**supported  
more than 180  
organisations**

to achieve their social  
justice objectives with  
our legal and policy  
expertise

**leveraged over  
\$10 million**

worth of pro bono  
support from 21  
pro bono partners

**reached up  
to 3,000,000**

**people** each  
month in the media\*

**attracted  
85,955 visitors**

to our website

**secured  
\$1,646,724  
for our clients**

in compensation,  
debt relief and other  
entitlements

**connected  
with 14,000+  
followers**

on social media

\* figures only available from December 2022 to June 2023

# WHAT CHANGE LOOKS LIKE

PIAC's advocacy has contributed to systemic reform that improves lives.

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 NSW law now requires the government to take 'active efforts' to keep families together and prevent Aboriginal children going into care, after reforms recommended by the landmark Aboriginal-led Family is Culture review were finally passed by Parliament.

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 People in housing crisis have better access to government-provided temporary accommodation.

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 Pressure increased on NSW Police to stop using consorting laws on children and in relation to minor offences following damning findings in an investigation by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission.

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 The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) improved decision-making for Specialist Disability Accommodation: making many decisions more quickly, with more people given the supports they requested.

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 Revenue NSW wrote off thousands of fines issued to children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 Energy companies signed on to a Customer Code that will help households struggling to pay energy bills stay connected.

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 The ABC made more programs available with audio description, so they are accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired.

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 The NSW and Tasmanian Electoral Commissions are working with disability advocates on ensuring accessible voting options are available for future elections in those States.

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 Energy consumers in NSW are getting a fairer deal under a PIAC-led model for recovering the costs of transmitting electricity generated within Government-designated Renewable Energy Zones.

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 The NSW Law Reform Commission is reviewing the Anti-Discrimination Act on referral from the Attorney General, creating an opportunity to reform this outdated and inadequate legislation.

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 People with disabilities will be better able to understand the types of supports the NDIA is funding and the agency will be more accountable, having committed to publishing settlement outcomes from challenges to NDIS funding decisions.

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 Government, NGOs and private businesses are strengthening their commitment to treating people experiencing homelessness respectfully, with dignity and without discrimination under a revised Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places.

# FIRST NATIONS JUSTICE

Because reconciliation  
requires action.

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**PIAC is a critical partner in working for justice for young people in this state. Whether it be on the Raise the Age campaign or protecting children from Suspect Target Management Plan policing, PIAC has been an invaluable ally of the ALS.**

James Clifford, Managing Solicitor,  
Children's Criminal Practice, Aboriginal Legal  
Service (NSW/ACT)

We gratefully acknowledge generous financial support from Allens for PIAC's work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice, and the support of secondees from Moray & Agnew Lawyers and the Australian Government Solicitor.

The PIAC & Shopfront Aboriginal Social Justice Graduate Program is supported by a generous grant from the Matana Foundation for Young People, the BB & A Miller Fund and Herbert Smith Freehills.

PIAC's Aboriginal Child Protection Project is supported by a generous grant from the BB & A Miller Foundation.

# SUPPORTING SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ABORIGINAL FAMILIES



PIAC was honoured to receive the 'Walking Together' award from AbSec, the peak organisation for Aboriginal children and families in NSW. The award recognises the contribution of a non-Aboriginal agency in partnering with Aboriginal communities.



PIAC's Family is Culture advocacy is a perfect demonstration of PIAC's standing with Aboriginal communities and organisations to achieve change.

AbSec Judging Panel

**PIAC works in partnership with AbSec, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) and UTS Jumbunna Institute, to drive reforms to the NSW child protection system where Aboriginal children and families remain significantly over-represented. Achieving full implementation of the recommendations of the Aboriginal-led Family is Culture (FIC) Review – a roadmap for urgently needed reform – continues to be our focus.**

Progress has been frustratingly slow. However, as a result of determined advocacy, we celebrated a step forward in late 2022 when a set of FIC reforms passed the NSW Parliament two years ahead of the Government's proposed schedule. Amongst other changes, the reforms created a positive obligation on the NSW Government to take 'active efforts' to keep families together and prevent Aboriginal children going into care.

PIAC assisted AbSec and the ALS with a second annual FIC Community Report Card, an independent, Aboriginal-led assessment of the NSW Government's progress

on implementing FIC. The assessment was once again damning, documenting a piecemeal approach driven by government – not community – priorities, with many actioned reforms failing to reflect the spirit or intent of the FIC proposals.

Ahead of the NSW state election, PIAC helped coordinate advocacy to key parliamentarians, seeking commitments to further reform. The change of government has brought new opportunities for engagement. With our partners, we briefed the incoming Minister for Family and Community Services Kate Washington on solutions that can improve outcomes for Aboriginal families. We attended an Aboriginal Child Safety and Wellbeing Reform Forum at the invitation of the new Minister, resulting in a commitment to create a new Ministerial Aboriginal Partnership Group to advise the Minister on further reforms.

PIAC is proud to stand with First Nations organisations as they continue to call for transformational reform and meaningful self-determination in the NSW child protection system. ✨

# RESPONDING TO THE CALL FOR TRUTH

In June 2023, PIAC and the UNSW Indigenous Law Centre launched Towards Truth. A world-first project, the ambitious new website shows in forensic detail how laws and policies have disempowered and dispossessed First Nations people since 1788. It also tells a story of resilience and resistance – the long history of Aboriginal people fighting for justice and driving reform.

Towards Truth emerged after First Nations participants at the Uluru Dialogues spoke about the need for Australians to know their history. It responds to the Uluru Statement from the Heart’s call for ‘Voice, Treaty, Truth’ by providing practical, factual resources for truth-telling about our history.

Towards Truth is also available to researchers, academics, educators, legislators, policy-makers and all Australians with an interest in our shared history.

PIAC has led and coordinated the project’s extensive legal research and website development. The Indigenous

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**This is the story of the Australian nation. The subjugation of these people. The massacre of these people. The dispossession of their land. This wasn’t done in secret – it was in our Parliaments.**

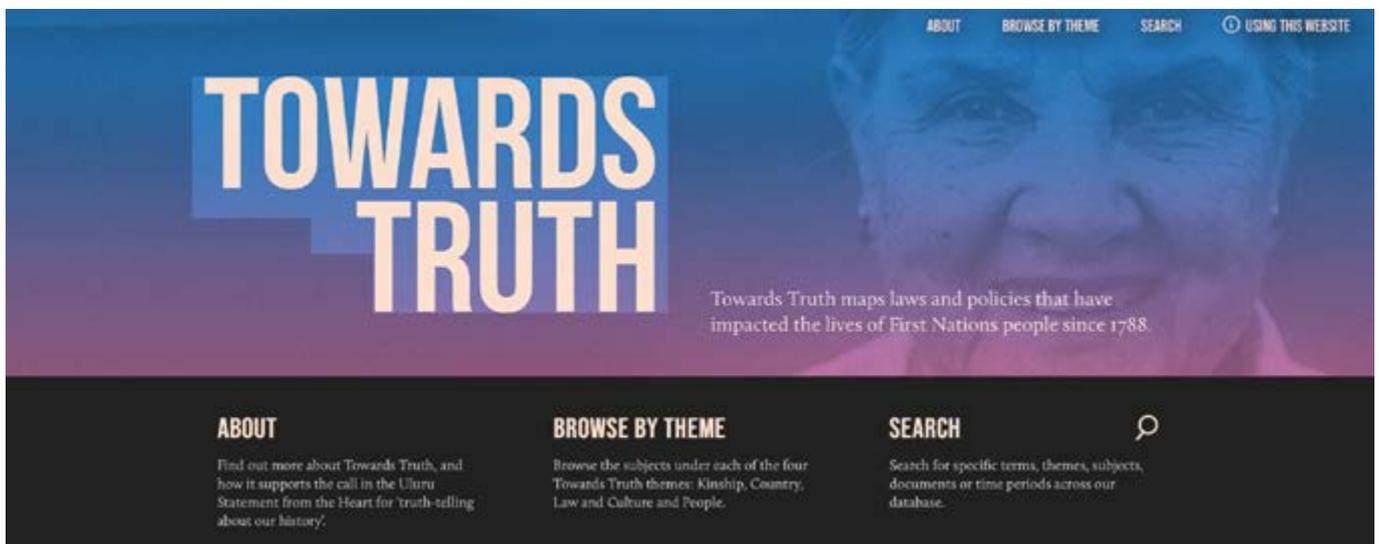
Scientia Professor Megan Davis, UNSW Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous and Co-chair Uluru Statement from the Heart



Towards Truth staff at the website launch (L-R): Bridget Cama (ILC), Anna Harding (PIAC), Kishaya Delaney (Herbert Smith Freehills), Professor Megan Davis (ILC), Corey Smith (PIAC), Jonathon Hunyor (PIAC), Sally Treveton (PIAC) and Brent Woolf (PIAC)

Law Centre, led by Scientia Professor Megan Davis, has provided specialist legal and cultural oversight. Our work gained support from an extensive team of pro bono lawyers from some of Australia’s leading firms and companies.

Towards Truth was launched with an initial body of research on hundreds of NSW laws and policies across topics including land and water rights, child removals, and language suppression and revitalisation. We will be adding additional topics and considering expansion to other jurisdictions in the future. ✨



762

laws and policies analysed and catalogued

8

First Nations staff employed

3734

supporting documents analysed and catalogued

276

pro bono researchers from 6 partner organisations

60

subjects completed

15

subject matter experts engaged

“

What an important piece of work – a real game changer. What will shock many is that the impacts continue to be so current...too many assume colonisation is part of history and don't acknowledge its destruction in the present.

Rachel Kerry, Executive Officer, Cages Foundation

### The Sydney Morning Herald

#### Truth quest to right history's wrongs

A century ago, dissenters fought racist laws, writes Caitlin Fitzsimmons.

When NSW parliament passed Aboriginal child removal laws, they were talking about children the Minister Deane's great-grandchildren in Western Australia in western NSW. The bill was passed in the presence of the Aboriginal Protection Board to "ensure full control and custody" of some Aboriginal children. Deane's ministerial role as High Commissioner in the United States was used to lobby for the bill. Deane, 38, resigned office as Towards Truth's Indigenous truth-telling project that aims to contribute to the 100th anniversary of the first world network, alongside 'Voice and Treaty'. The project, which aims to document all the laws and policies that have affected First Nations people since white colonisation, is a

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perhaps not as far as they are going to get. The archivist's role is to ensure that the records are preserved and that the stories are told. The project is a testament to the power of truth-telling and the importance of preserving our history for future generations.

Aware of our research into Aboriginal voting rights in NSW, the Parliament of NSW engaged PIAC to develop information for educational resources. Project Coordinator and Ngemba man Corey Smith was also invited to share his research at an event hosted by the Parliament.

“

It's so important we get this information out to people – our work has the power to change minds and hearts. Audience members found our research invaluable and started to connect the dots between historical laws and the ongoing effects for Aboriginal people voting today.

Corey Smith, Towards Truth Project Coordinator



Corey Smith (PIAC), Lauren Davies (Parliament of NSW) and Adam Phelan (NSW Electoral Commission)

We continue to work with the Parliament to help them deliver educational resources based on material unearthed by Towards Truth, covering law and policy including child removals and languages.

Towards Truth is supported by the Maple Brown Family Foundation, Australian Communities Foundation Impact Fund, Keith & Jeannette Ince Fund, Jump Start, Juno Fund, Reve Fund, Williams Fund, Fairer Futures Fund, Grace Projects, JRA Support Fund, Tass Nyungar Fund, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, Macquarie, Clayton Utz Foundation, Harbour, Herbert Smith Freehills, Lander & Rogers, Origin, Heather and Malcolm Crompton AM, and Sam and Barbara Linz.

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# BUILDING MOMENTUM TO RAISE THE AGE



**We must work together to raise the age in NSW. It's a matter of political will and leadership. We know, and the NSW Government knows, that what we do now harms children and doesn't work. It's time to do better for our kids and our communities.**



**Emily Mayo,  
Raise the Age  
Campaign  
Manager**

**Right now in NSW, children as young as 10 are arrested and held in police cells or prisons, away from their families and communities. Far from making our communities safer or stronger, medical, legal and child development experts agree that criminalising children causes lifelong harm and increases reoffending.**

By every measure, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are disproportionately impacted by contact with the criminal justice system.

Governments are slowly recognising that our system is failing and pushing children down a path that crushes their chances and often leads to adult prison. The ACT, Northern Territory and Victorian Governments have gradually taken steps to raise the age of criminal responsibility – but reforms do not go far enough.

PIAC is coordinating the campaign to raise the age of criminal responsibility in NSW to at least 14.

The NSW campaign received a boost in early 2023 with a generous commitment of campaigning and financial support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation. PIAC used this funding to employ an experienced Campaign Manager, and channel additional communications support towards the campaign to amplify impact.

Our work since has focused on strengthening the Raise the Age NSW coalition. We have assembled a lead group of First Nations, legal, human rights and non-government organisations, peak bodies and trade unions, gathering diverse expertise. The reach of this group is formidable, with hundreds of thousands of supporters, members and followers across NSW.

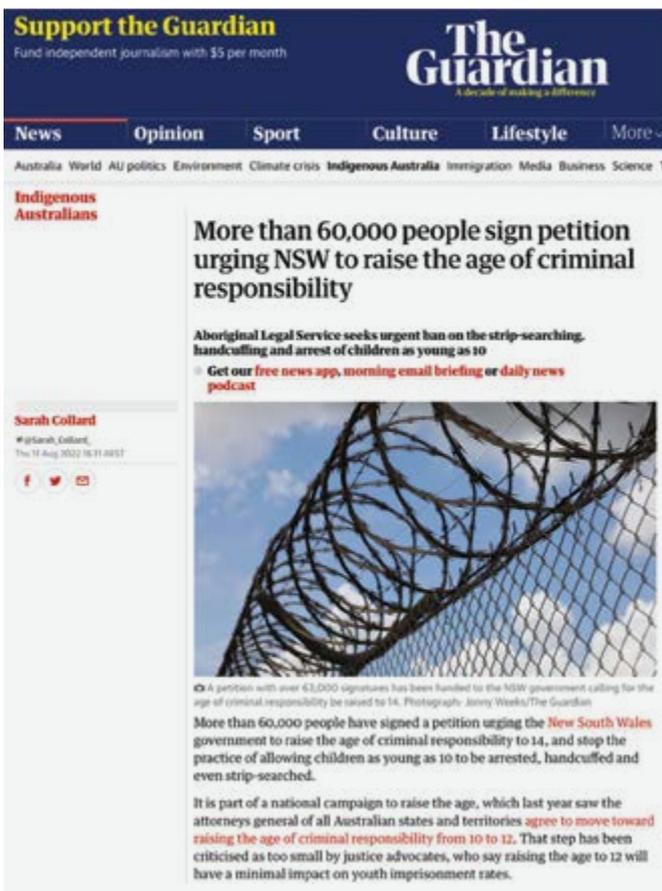
With our children and communities bearing the growing cost of failure, momentum is building for change. The Raise the Age NSW coalition is in a strong position to drive real reform. ✨

In August 2022, PIAC and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) took the NSW Raise the Age petition with more than 63,000 signatures to NSW Parliament House. In discussions with the Attorney General, Shadow Attorney General and minor party MPs, we emphasised the proven alternatives that can keep our communities safe and help children get their lives on track while they are supported by their families and wider networks.

The petition demonstrated wide-spread community support for change and gained coverage in The Guardian, ProBono Australia and Lawyers Weekly.



Keisha Hopgood (Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT) and Jonathon Hunyor (PIAC) deliver the Raise the Age petition to Attorney General Mark Speakman



We gratefully acknowledge the Paul Ramsay Foundation for supporting the Raise the Age campaign, along with a collective of legal counsel.

PIAC hosted a special performance of Jailbabe by multi-award-winning playwright and former PIAC solicitor Suzie Miller, where more than 100 PIAC supporters and partners were updated on the NSW campaign to Raise the Age.

Jailbabe examines the lasting harm caused by the criminal justice system. In a conversation following the play, Miller emphasised the importance of keeping young people out of prison, based on her own observations as a criminal lawyer. She drew parallels between the powerful persuasiveness of art and the systemic change at the heart of PIAC's mission.

Raise the Age NSW Campaign Manager Emily Mayo urged attendees to become active supporters of raising the age of criminal responsibility.



Suzie Miller (second from left) with PIAC's Hilary Blackman, Emily Mayo, Jonathon Hunyor and Briana Ewing

# EXPOSING THE CRISIS OF OVER-POLICING ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES



Arrest and detention should be a last resort, but the figures show police are not taking that seriously. How much more evidence do police and government need before recognising their methods aren't working?



Jonathon Hunyor, CEO

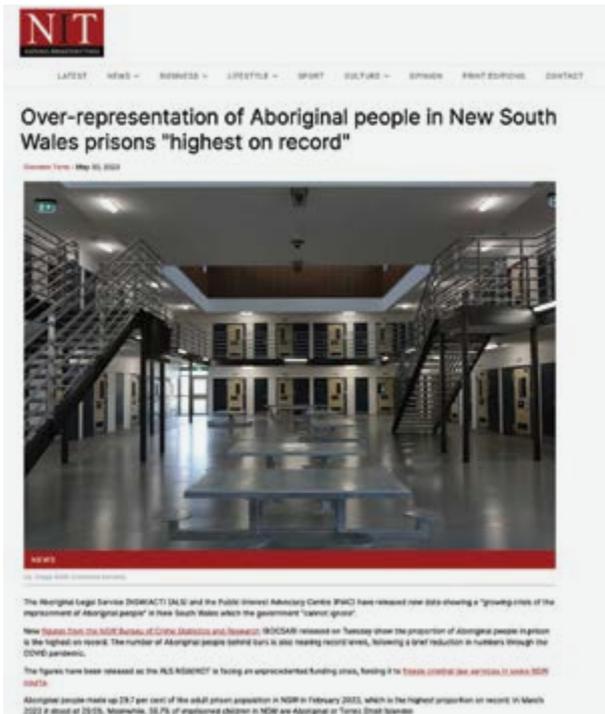
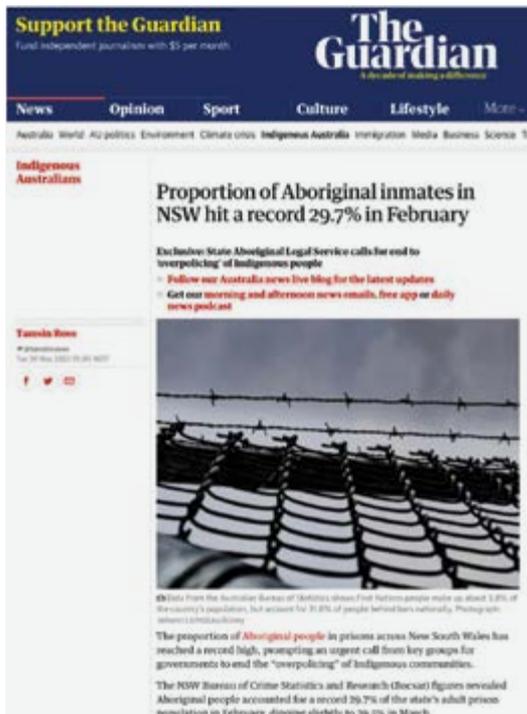
## PIAC stood with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) to demand government action after figures from early 2023 highlighted new depths of the crisis of over-incarceration of Aboriginal people in NSW.

Following a reduction in prisoner numbers through the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportion of Aboriginal people in prison in February 2023 was 29.7%, the highest on record, and the number of Aboriginal people behind bars was at near record levels. Aboriginal children remained grossly overrepresented in NSW youth detention, comprising 56.7% of detainees. This is despite Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander people making up less than 4% of the NSW population.

Our joint advocacy put the issue in headlines across The Guardian, National Indigenous Times and Law Society Journal, on ABC and commercial radio, and on ABC TV's The Drum.

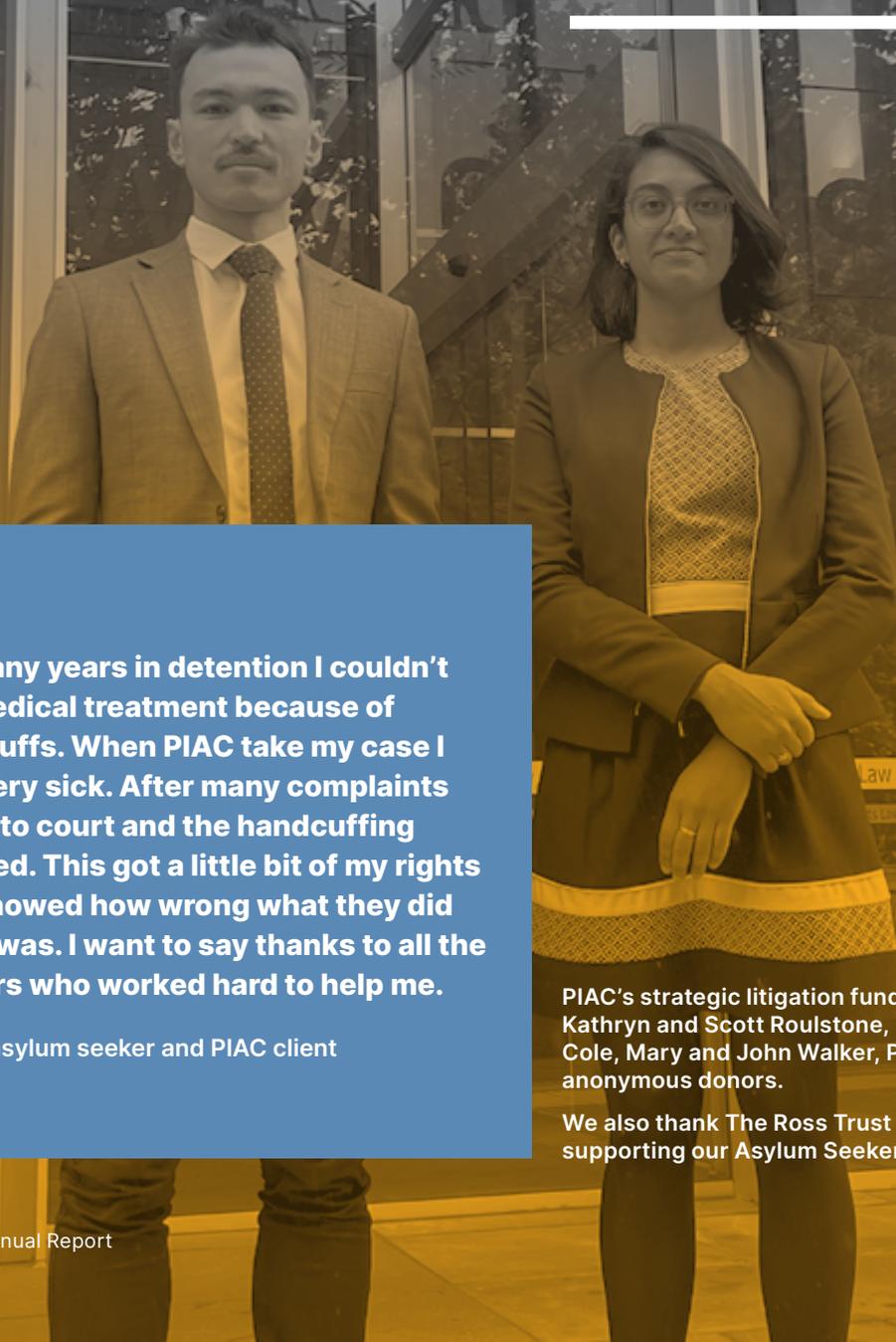
We continue to work with First Nations organisations to expose and challenge systemic bias within policing, prison and youth detention systems which drives these alarming figures and perpetuates harms to First Nations communities. ✨



# Law CIVIL RIGHTS

**Because those with power must be accountable.**

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For many years in detention I couldn't get medical treatment because of handcuffs. When PIAC take my case I was very sick. After many complaints we go to court and the handcuffing stopped. This got a little bit of my rights and showed how wrong what they did to me was. I want to say thanks to all the lawyers who worked hard to help me.

Yasir\*, asylum seeker and PIAC client

PIAC's strategic litigation fund is supported by Woodsford, Kathryn and Scott Roulstone, KordaMentha, John Temple-Cole, Mary and John Walker, Paul Lindholm and several anonymous donors.

We also thank The Ross Trust and Williams Fund for supporting our Asylum Seeker Rights work.

# EXPOSING DEHUMANISING PRACTICES IN YOUTH DETENTION



Expert evidence shows that locking kids alone in a cell causes considerable harm and may be exacerbating the risk factors the segregation is intended to overcome. Better training around de-escalation strategies and therapeutic supports for young people could avoid these harmful interventions.



Grace Gooley,  
Senior Solicitor

## As the brutalising impacts of youth detention made headlines across Australia, PIAC played a leading role in exposing dehumanising and harmful practices in NSW.

We brought media attention to the NSW Ombudsman's report of a significant rise in the use of prolonged periods of solitary confinement (referred to as 'segregation') in NSW youth justice centres. In ABC coverage, we advocated for proven alternatives for working with young people with complex needs, including better training for staff and investment in support programs.

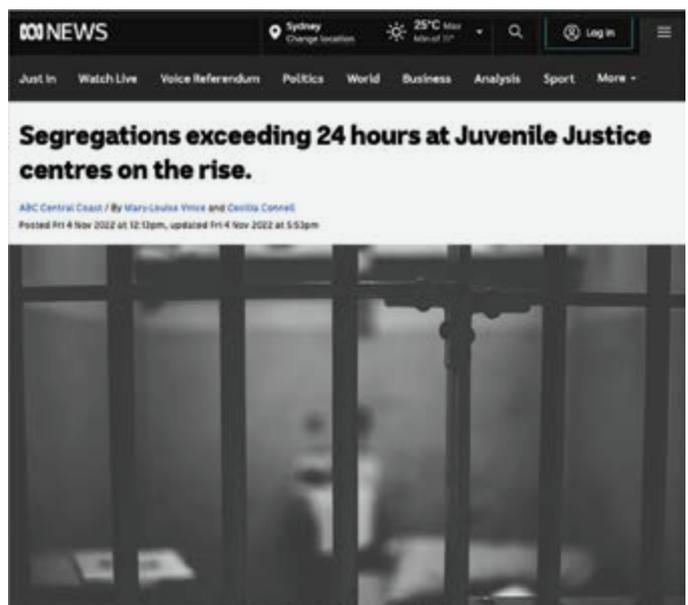
As a result, the Executive Director of NSW Youth Justice invited PIAC Senior Solicitor Grace Gooley to visit the Frank Baxter Youth Justice Centre, where a significant number of the segregation periods had occurred. The visit developed our understanding of how segregation is used in practice, informing our advocacy.

We progressed our test case in the Supreme Court representing Daniel\*, who was just 16 when he was held alone in a cell for 25 days in the Cobham Youth Justice Centre. We used NSW Supreme Court powers to obtain information supporting his allegation that his segregation was unlawful because it was imposed as a punishment and served no genuine rehabilitative purpose.

Following particularly disturbing reports about young people in detention in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, the National Children's Commissioner launched an investigation into Youth Justice and Child Wellbeing Reform. PIAC's submission

made recommendations for more stringent oversight of the use of segregation in youth justice centres, given its potential to interfere with child development and profoundly traumatise a young person, causing permanent psychological damage.

We continue to support other legal organisations preparing to challenge harmful segregation practices in other states and territories, and amplify the voices of advocates across the legal, medical and child welfare sectors calling for urgent reform of an undeniably broken youth detention regime. ✨



# PURSUING POLICE OVER FAULTY STMP TARGETING

**PIAC acts for several young people targeted by NSW Police under the secretive and oppressive Suspect Targeting Management Plan (STMP). A disproportionate number are from First Nations communities.**

A young person placed on the STMP becomes a target for 'pro-active attention' and 'disruption', increasing their interactions with police and the risk of on-going and invasive stops, searches and home visits at any time of day or night. Young people say STMP policing is extremely distressing and makes it harder for them to get back on track if they have been in trouble with police in the past.

The STMP does not create new legal powers for police. In our experience it encourages police to act outside the law – for example conducting personal searches without a lawful basis. We support young people to get removed from the STMP and to pursue legal claims when police have overstepped their powers.

Informed by our casework, we have coordinated advocacy with a coalition of legal organisations and academics. We provided joint analysis and recommendations to the LECC's investigation into the use of the STMP on young people. A final report is imminent and will be the focus of further media and advocacy activities. In preparation, we have briefed key members of the NSW Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice about the harms caused by this flawed policy and how it encourages police to act unlawfully. ✨

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**PIAC's commitment to advocacy, capacity building and working in partnership, has resulted in an effective, ongoing challenge to the STMP. Working with PIAC for many years has been an absolute pleasure, I've learned so much.**

**Dr Vicki Sentas, UNSW Faculty of Law  
and member of the STMP Working Group**

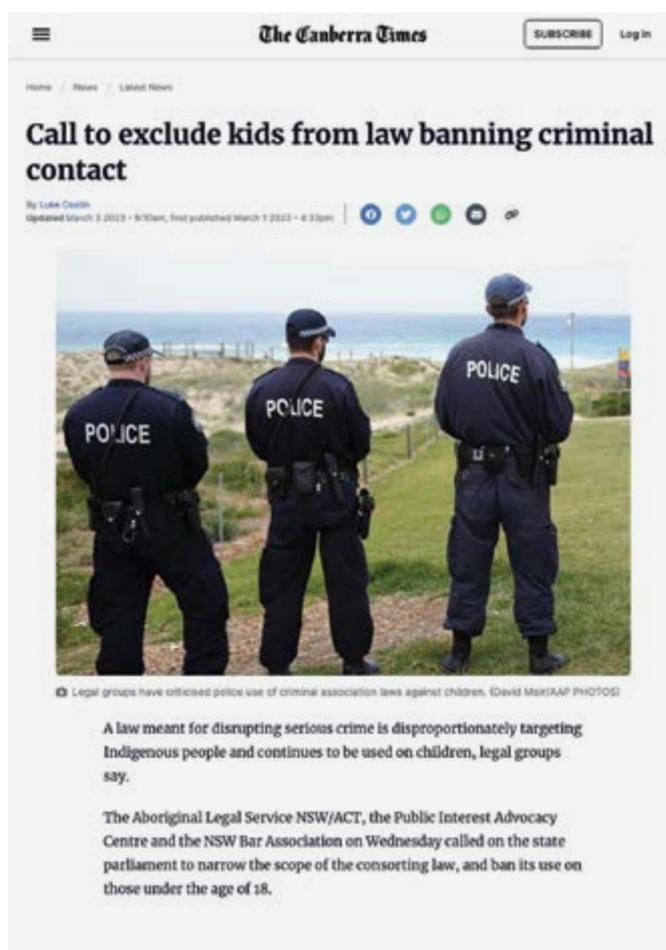
Mia\*, a young Aboriginal person, was only 13 when she was placed on the STMP. Despite PIAC's requests, police have not provided evidence that they followed the required process to make Mia a target. Even when Mia's placement on the STMP was suspended, she still experienced ongoing, intimidating interactions with police. Mia was eventually removed from the STMP, after more than 6 months, but was so distressed by the police targeting that she now barely leaves her home.

# EXPOSING DAMAGING MISUSE OF CONSORTING LAWS

Consorting laws allow police to warn and charge people simply for spending time with a person previously convicted of an indictable offence. The laws purportedly allow police to deal with serious organised crime, but PIAC has consistently drawn attention to their misuse.

The 2023 review by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) revealed the extent of misuse of the laws against Aboriginal people in NSW who had no involvement with organised crime. The LECC report adopted several key recommendations made by PIAC, including that the laws should not be used against children and young people.

PIAC coordinated a media response to the report's release with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) and the NSW Bar Association, which secured coverage in The Guardian and AAP, and syndicated across regional newspapers. We urged reform to ensure the laws can only be used for their intended purpose – to target serious, organised crime. \*



The Canberra Times

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## Call to exclude kids from law banning criminal contact

By Luke O'Neill  
Updated March 3 2023 - 9:10am, first published March 1 2023 - 4:23pm



Legal groups have criticised police use of criminal association laws against children. (David McKinnon PHOTOS)

A law meant for disrupting serious crime is disproportionately targeting Indigenous people and continues to be used on children, legal groups say.

The Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the NSW Bar Association on Wednesday called on the state parliament to narrow the scope of the consorting law, and ban its use on those under the age of 18.

# CHALLENGING HEAVY-HANDED PANDEMIC POLICING

NSW Police handed out more than 60,000 fines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Around half have since been withdrawn following concerted advocacy by PIAC and sector partners and a successful court challenge by our colleagues at the Redfern Legal Centre (RLC).

The heavy-handed tactics used by police at a time when communities were struggling with changing public health orders and the impacts of a global pandemic must be scrutinised.

PIAC and RLC asked the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) to investigate the lawfulness of the NSW Police approach and directives by the Police Commissioner that might have encouraged unreasonable issuing of fines.

The Sydney Morning Herald, The Guardian, the ABC and the Law Society Journal reported on the complaint. ✨

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During the pandemic, governments used extraordinary powers that had significant impacts on people’s lives. While exceptional measures can be justified to protect public health, the community must have confidence that actions are taken for the right reasons.

Jonathan Hall Spence, Principal Solicitor



# ACCOUNTABILITY AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ben\* was detained under COVID-19 public health orders in 2021, in an apartment designated ‘Special Health Accommodation’. Ben has a history of mental illness, and his family provide critical, regular support. After being held for nearly two weeks and in distress, Ben attempted to escape by jumping off a balcony, breaking his ankle.

PIAC sought information about Ben’s detention, to determine its lawfulness. The documents provided were heavily redacted, so we sought a review in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Just minutes before the hearing, the government provided an updated version of the documents with significant additional information revealed. We can now fully scrutinise Ben’s detention and help him understand his rights. ✨



(L) The heavily redacted version first received (R) the updated version received prior to the NCAT hearing

# UN OVERSIGHT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DETENTION

## In late 2022, a UN delegation investigated Australia's compliance with obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

Ahead of their Australian visit, PIAC alerted UN investigators to two concerning issues in Australian immigration detention: a lack of access to essential healthcare; and misuse of force and restraints, such as handcuffs. We urged close examination of the health implications of detention, including the profound consequences of prolonged detention.

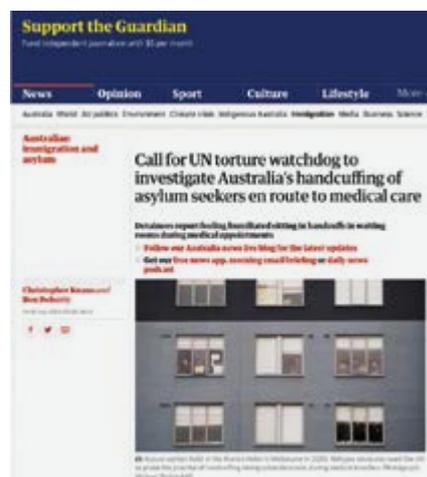
We highlighted Yasir's\* story in The Guardian, SBS News and Junkee to call for an investigation of handcuffing in immigration detention. Yasir was forced to choose between wearing handcuffs, despite a history of handcuff-related trauma, or missing out on essential medical care.

In a letter coordinated with leading human rights organisations and academics, we raised further serious concerns about Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and the Australian Government's long history of ignoring findings and recommendations.

When the NSW Government refused to give inspectors access to certain detention facilities, we joined with civil society to condemn the obstruction. While the NSW Government failed to reverse its position, our joint advocacy exposed the lack of cooperation as unreasonable and in breach of Australia's international obligations.

Following the Australian visit, the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture released a report reflecting many concerns raised by PIAC in our advocacy on asylum seeker rights, policing and detention and raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility.

We continue to advocate for the full implementation of OPCAT and essential protections for all people in detention, including an effective and nationally consistent oversight mechanism. ✨



# GETTING JUSTICE FOR YASIR

**In 2020, PIAC launched a landmark test case in the Federal Court for our client Yasir\*. Following a protracted three-year battle, the case against the Commonwealth and its security contractor finally settled in mid 2023.**

When Yasir was a small child, he and his family were imprisoned in his country of birth where they were tortured and handcuffed by guards. He also witnessed the torture of others.

When he sought asylum in Australia, Yasir was held in immigration detention centres for almost 9 years. Although he was diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder, detention centre staff refused to allow him to attend offsite medical appointments without handcuffs.

PIAC alleged Yasir's treatment unreasonably denied him access to essential medical care while in detention and was accordingly a form of disability discrimination. We also alleged the handcuffing was unlawful as there was no power in Australian law that allowed authorities to use restraints on people in immigration detention in Yasir's circumstances.

While the terms of the settlement are confidential, Yasir is pleased with the outcome and feels there has been some accountability for his mistreatment.

PIAC is now investigating a class action challenging the use of handcuffs on others like Yasir, as a next step to push the Government to reform the policies and practices enabling excessive, harmful and unlawful use of restraints in immigration detention. ✨

**We gratefully acknowledge generous financial support from The Ross Trust, Australian Communities Foundation – Williams Fund, Igniting Change, Collier Charitable Fund, Modara Pines Charitable Foundation, Planet Wheeler Foundation, Perpetual, River Capital Foundation, Spotlight Foundation and Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation for this work, and the support of a secondee from Johnson Winter & Slattery.**



**Asylum seekers in immigration detention are in an impossible position – they must either accept the harm and distress from being handcuffed in circumstances where it's unjustified or lose their access to healthcare.**



**Jonathan Hall  
Spence, Principal  
Solicitor**

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# ACTION ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE

## Empowering discrimination complaints and advocacy

PIAC has helped community members and advocates to understand changes to federal discrimination complaints processes and new powers to investigate systemic discrimination.

We produced and promoted a plain English fact sheet to help people understand their rights and the timelines for making a complaint.

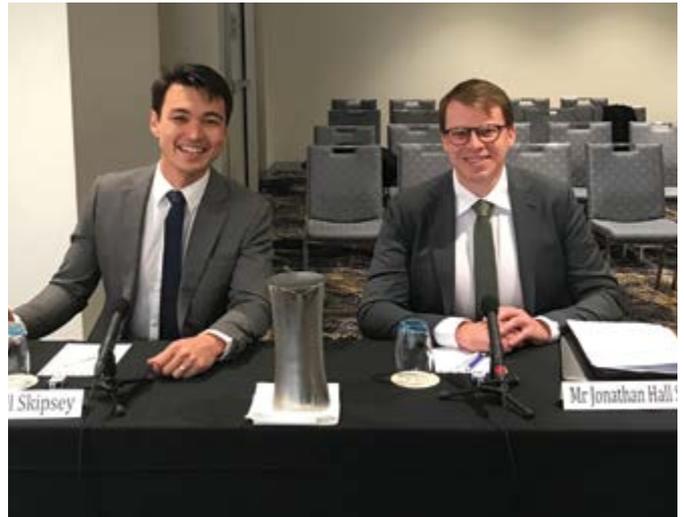
We also highlighted how advocacy organisations can take advantage of the changes: through representative claims or by asking the Australian Human Rights Commission to investigate systemic unlawful discrimination within a business or across an industry or sector.

Feedback from our partners highlighted the value of this community legal education: a number reported that understanding these changes will help them to advocate more effectively.

## Fairer approach to costs in court proceedings

The rules for awarding costs in federal discrimination cases that go to court create major barriers to people bringing claims for sexual harassment or discrimination. PIAC was part of the 'Power to Prevent' coalition, a group of more than 60 community organisations, unions, academics, peak bodies, health professionals, lawyers and victim-survivors calling on government for reform.

PIAC and our partners proposed an 'equal access' model in a submission to a parliamentary inquiry, a public joint statement and the media. The equal access model would allow people who have been harassed or discriminated against to bring claims without the significant financial risk of adverse costs – but still recover their own costs if they are successful.



Senior Solicitor Mitchell Skipsey and Principal Solicitor Jonathan Hall Spence at the parliamentary inquiry into the operation of Commonwealth Freedom of Information (FOI) laws

## Fixing the broken FOI system

Government transparency and accountability are critical to democracy. But Australia's freedom of information (FOI) framework is vastly under-resourced and clouded by a culture of secrecy.

PIAC uses FOI processes to expose unfair practices, challenge unjust decisions and inform the legal advice we give our clients. But like many who rely on FOI laws, we are consistently frustrated by unreasonable delays and inadequate responses.

Our experience of the broken system informed our submission and evidence to a Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth FOI laws. We also shared our recommendations through widely viewed social media. ✨

# MAJOR ADVANCE FOR DISCRIMINATION LAW REFORM

In June 2023 the Attorney General Michael Daley announced a comprehensive review of NSW's broken and outdated discrimination laws. This is a major step forward and the result of five years of PIAC's determined advocacy, including our influential report 'Leader to Laggard: the case for modernising the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act'.

PIAC will work collaboratively with partner organisations to shape the reform agenda, to ensure everyone in NSW is protected from discrimination in all its forms. ✨



**The Anti-Discrimination Act is failing in its most basic duty – to adequately protect people against discrimination as they go about their daily lives. It is so out-dated, ineffective and broken, that we need to start over and rewrite NSW anti-discrimination law with the modern protections our communities expect.**

Alastair Lawrie, Director of Policy and Advocacy

# RAISING CONCERNS OVER CONFLICT OF RIGHTS

PIAC supports prohibiting vilification against people on the basis of their faith. But we raised concerns when the NSW Government introduced reforms much broader than equivalent laws in other jurisdictions that risk conflict with the rights of others in the community. We worked with Greens and cross-bench MPs to propose amendments that respect all rights, but the Government refused to accept them.

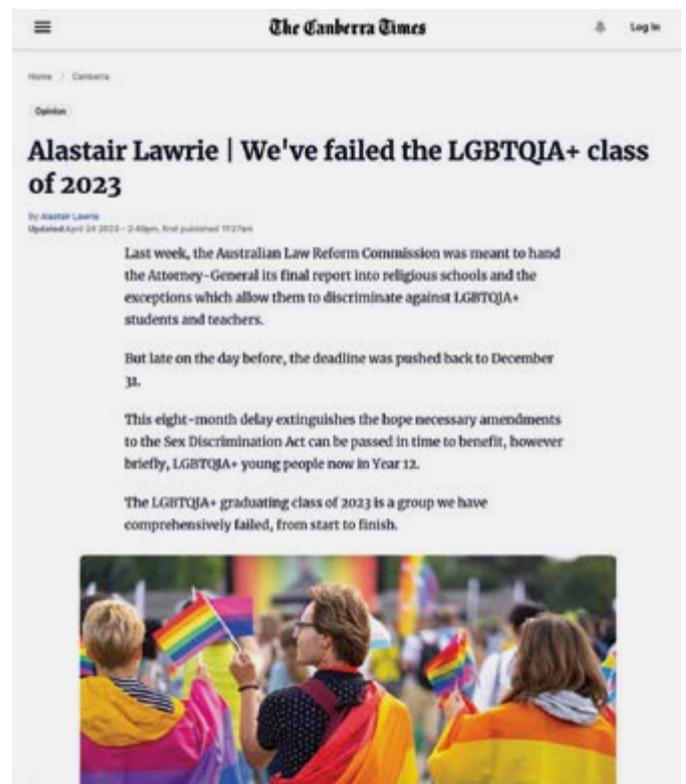
PIAC will seek to have these concerns addressed when the Law Reform Commission reviews the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act and considers vilification laws more broadly. We will also seek to ensure other groups are also protected against vilification. ✨

# CALLING OUT DELAYS FOR PROTECTION OF LGBTQ STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

PIAC has been a leader in calling for reform of Commonwealth laws that allow religious educational institutions to discriminate against LGBTQ students and teachers. We welcomed the Attorney-General's announcement late last year that the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) would review the legal exceptions allowing discrimination.

In a meeting with the ALRC and a detailed submission, we outlined the simple changes that can protect all students and teachers from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Just before the ALRC was due to conclude its review, the reporting date was extended by eight months. The delay unnecessarily prolongs the mistreatment of vulnerable young people in religious schools. PIAC's Director of Policy and Advocacy Alastair Lawrie maintained pressure on the government to act in an opinion piece in The Canberra Times, syndicated across regional newspapers. ✨



# DISABILITY RIGHTS

**Because people with disability should be able to thrive.**

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**PIAC plays a vital role supporting people with disability, through our representative organisations, to respond to complex legal issues about the NDIS. The PIAC team have worked with us on understanding legislation, adding their voice to our calls for change and assisting us with their expertise. It is a pleasure to collaborate with PIAC, to ensure people with disability have a support system that works for them.**

El Gibbs, Director of Policy and Advocacy,  
Disability Advocacy Network Australia

We gratefully acknowledge the Paul Ramsay Foundation in partnership with an anonymous donor for supporting A Fairer NDIS.

The Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) project is supported by a generous grant from the Summer Foundation.

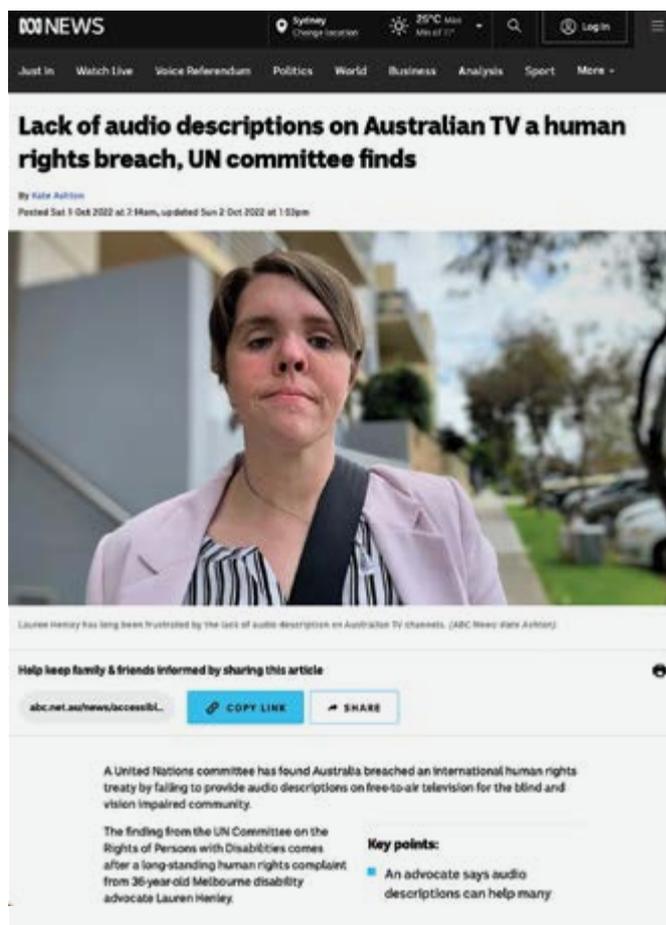
# EQUAL ACCESS TO AUSTRALIAN TV

PIAC represented disability advocate Lauren Henley in a successful complaint to the UN, challenging the Australian Government's failure to require that audio description (AD) is provided on Australian TV.

AD provides verbal narration of important visual elements in TV and films, such as settings, actions, costumes and on-screen text. It gives people who are blind or vision impaired equal access to TV, in the same way that captions (which are required by law) make TV accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities found Australia in breach of its human rights obligations and called on the Government to update laws and policies to require AD be provided. The UN finding was reported on ABC TV news, ABC online and in specialist disability media.

Disappointingly, the Government has not implemented the UN recommendation. But Lauren and other advocates have welcomed federal funding to increase the audio-described content available on the ABC and SBS, and the relevant Minister's commitment to work with commercial broadcasters to improve availability of AD. ✨



# DEFENDING AND IMPROVING THE NDIS

**The National Disability Insurance Scheme was set up to ensure people with disability have independence and improved quality of life. But flaws in its administration have left many NDIS participants and their carers frustrated and dismayed.**

PIAC has brought its expertise to the work of disability advocates who are leading reform and improvement of this vital investment in our public infrastructure.

At the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Capability and Culture of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), PIAC highlighted the human impacts of poor decision-making. We proposed solutions to improve transparency and accountability, and reduce stress and hardship for participants. The inquiry's interim report echoed many of PIAC's recommendations and urged immediate reform.

As a trusted expert in NDIS litigation, PIAC was invited to join a select advisory group convened by the Minister for the NDIS Bill Shorten, to resolve the backlog of thousands of appeals lodged at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and propose reforms to the external review process. The advisory group's work led the NDIA to pilot the Independent Expert Review (IER) program, designed to resolve NDIS appeals in the AAT more quickly and with reduced cost and stress for NDIS participants. PIAC influenced the design of the program and its evaluation, making it more transparent, fair, and accessible for people with disability.

“

**Nobody says the NDIS is perfect. It's not working for everyone, and any scheme needs to be effectively managed, including to ensure it's reaching the right people. But slashing support that people need is not the answer.**

Jonathon Hunyor, CEO in The Canberra Times

In early 2023, the NDIS came under attack via a concerted campaign to cut supports people need under the guise of 'sustainability'. In a well-received response published in The Canberra Times and on LinkedIn, PIAC CEO Jonathon Hunyor emphasised the disastrous consequences of valuing 'efficiencies' over the lived reality of people entitled to support. ✨



# SECURING A SAFE AND SECURE HOME FOR NDIS PARTICIPANTS

PIAC exposes systemic problems in NDIS decision-making by supporting clients to challenge wrong decisions. Our cases demonstrate where National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) policies or practices block funding for reasonable and necessary supports, preventing the NDIS from achieving its purpose: supporting people with disability to gain independence and participate in our community.

Securing funding for appropriate Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) has been a focus of our work. With PIAC's representation at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), our clients have received appropriate funding to live in a home that gives them dignity and greater independence.

In 2022, PIAC and Summer Foundation released *Housing Delayed and Denied*, which described the systemic issues people faced when applying for SDA funding or appealing a funding decision.

## PHILIP'S STORY: THE TRAGEDY OF BARRIERS TO CARE

In 2019, Philip\* was diagnosed with a serious degenerative nerve disease – similar to Parkinson's – that was rapidly progressing. By mid-2021, Philip's doctor told him he had less than two years to live.

Philip and his family sought support through the NDIS so he could maintain quality of life for the time he had left. As Philip's home in rural Western Australia could not accommodate his needs, they applied for SDA.

Despite having substantial medical evidence in support, they spent the better part of a year battling the NDIA.



Getting access to the right Specialist Disability Accommodation is truly lifechanging for the people who need it. People with disability should not need to wait for months or years, or fight stressful legal battles against the government, to get independence, safety and dignity in their own home.



Mitchell Skipsey,  
Senior Solicitor

The 2023 *Housing Delayed and Denied – Data Update* showed how the NDIA responded.

There have been significant improvements in the time taken to finalise a funding request or appeal, and more people are receiving the funding they ask for. However, many participants continue to experience frustrating and damaging delays; often compounded by persisting poor planning and decision-making within the NDIA. \*

Philip and his family were not consulted about planning and funding decisions that affected them, opaque and delayed processes were not explained, and policies were applied without appropriate flexibility.

Within a few weeks of PIAC taking on the case, the matter settled and Philip received the support he was entitled to: funding to live in a home where he could receive appropriate medical and palliative care. \*

# EVERYBODY HAS A RIGHT TO TRAVEL

**We continue to tackle the systemic barriers in air travel and other public transport, that deprive people with disability their independence and freedom.**

To address entrenched problems exposed through our legal casework, our submission to the federal review of disability transport standards offered novel legal solutions. Drawing on international experience, we showed how law reform can make air travel and ride-share services safe, comfortable and convenient for all travellers. Our work received several endorsements from disability organisations and legal centres, demonstrating PIAC's thought leadership on improving transport accessibility.

We were successful in putting disability access on the agenda in the Federal Government's review of aviation policy, which will shape the industry until 2050. An early consultation paper has recognised that a specific disability standard for aviation could better facilitate access and inclusion in air travel.

PIAC attended workshops run by the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), where people with disability spoke to the common challenges they face when travelling by air. In our own submission to the DRC, we showed how failure by government, airlines, and airports to protect the rights of people with disability amounts to abuse and neglect. After hearing the concerns raised by PIAC and the disability sector, the Commission Chair wrote to the CEOs of Australia's airlines and domestic airports, urging them to act on suggestions made by people with disability for a more inclusive experience for all air travellers. ✨

“

**The practices of airlines and airports can expose people with disability to discrimination, humiliation and violations of privacy and dignity. Many people feel excluded from air travel, which is an essential social and economic connector. It's been pleasing to see steps taken in the right direction – towards providing people with disability equal access.**



**Michelle Cohen,  
Principal Solicitor**



## A LIFE-CHANGING ASSISTANCE DOG FOR SALLY

**Psychiatric assistance dogs provide cost-effective, clinically proven support to people with a broad range of mental health conditions. But the NDIA has refused to fund them unless a person's only psychological diagnosis is 'long term but stable PTSD'. Most people with PTSD have additional mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression.**

Toby (pictured) was life-changing for Sally\*, who has multiple complex mental health conditions as a result of severe and prolonged physical, emotional and sexual abuse while she was a child and young adult. Toby comforts Sally through night terrors, helps her return from periods of dissociation and gives her confidence to live independently.

“

**I was forced to fight the NDIA for two and a half years and had to take my case to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It was stressful and exhausting. Finally, with help from the compassionate lawyers at PIAC, the NDIA settled and I got the funding I asked for.**

**Sally**

Sally was refused NDIS funding for Toby's training and maintenance despite extensive medical evidence showing her claim was reasonable and necessary. With PIAC's support, she successfully challenged the decision.

Sally's story featured on ABC TV's News Breakfast and ABC online. PIAC used the opportunity to draw attention to the faulty NDIA guidelines that mean many people who would benefit from an assistance animal are missing out. ✨

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# EMPOWERING DISABILITY ADVOCACY

**PIAC builds capacity in the disability community by creating specialist resources used by peak bodies, membership organisations and individuals. Our work this year has included:**

## **NDIS systemic advocacy**

PIAC has facilitated the NDIS Systemic Advocacy Working Group since 2021, building the capacity of organisations representing people with disability to advocate effectively on the NDIS. Over the past year we've provided advice and research on NDIS legislation, case law, appeals processes and proposed reforms. The group continues to be a unique and powerful forum for collaborative work to drive reform.



PIAC's NDIS Systemic Advocacy Working Group

## **Creating resources to empower NDIS participants and advocates**

Challenging NDIS decisions can be daunting. PIAC and Housing Hub created fact sheets to help people through the NDIS review process and improve the chance of having a decision made in their favour.

PIAC also shared information on navigating NDIS appeals on the 'Reasonable and Necessary' podcast with leading disability rights advocate Dr George Taleporos, in an expert panel discussion for participants and advocates, and at the Community Legal Centres Australia national conference.

## **Supporting challenges for assistance animal funding**

After sharing the story of Sally's successful challenge to the NDIA's refusal to fund her psychiatric assistance dog, PIAC heard from others who had also had requests refused. To support challenges to the NDIA's unfair and possibly unlawful guidelines on assistance animals, we produced an information sheet explaining the legal issues Sally's challenge was based on, which we shared on our website and with national peak disability rights organisations.

## **Breaking down NDIS laws, policies and cases**

Our second *NDIS: Year in Review* helped people with disability and disability advocates understand and engage with NDIS law, policy and processes. A collaboration with La Trobe University, the report was circulated to disability rights organisations and advocates, shared widely across social media and accessed on our website more than 250 times. \*

# HOMELESSNESS

**Because everyone should have a safe and secure home.**

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**HPLS lawyers work in partnership with our caseworkers to provide a respectful space for clients to talk about their legal problems and find solutions. Clients are often apprehensive about meeting lawyers, but the HPLS lawyers are very supportive and understanding of the need for patience.**

Graciela Luna, CEO The Station

We acknowledge generous support for the Homeless Persons' Legal Service, including StreetCare, from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments' Community Legal Services Program, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, the Public Purpose Fund NSW, Maddocks, Macquarie, Moray & Agnew Lawyers, MinterEllison, Hall & Willcox, Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers, Norton Rose Fulbright, Ray Wilson and Plenary Group, and The Honourable Justice David Hammerschlag.

We also thank The Fred P Archer Charitable Trust, The Palmdale Trust, The Myee Codrington Foundation for Homeless Women, George Pitt Wood Trust (NSW) and The Helen Elizabeth Pagan Trust for providing valuable pilot funding for our Women's Homelessness Prevention Service.

# HOMELESS PERSONS' LEGAL SERVICE

## Our Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) supports people deeply affected by the worsening housing and homelessness crisis.

In the 2022-23 financial year, we assisted more than 600 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness with legal assistance, representation or referral. We helped people fight unfair evictions, access priority waiting lists for public housing and confront legal challenges that cause homelessness, including unfair fines and debts, domestic and family violence issues and discrimination that impacts housing or employment.

The work of our small in-house team was extended by nearly 500 pro bono lawyers from 8 partner firms, who provided legal support by telephone and at more than 10 drop-in locations across Sydney.

Many of the people we helped required specialised support due to complex needs, including concerns relating to mental health and substance misuse. HPLS works actively to reach clients who face challenges accessing mainstream legal services, and to provide trauma-informed training to the lawyers who may be their last avenue for support. ✨

## 616

people helped

## 17%

were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

## 62%

had a disability

## How we help

## 22% Housing:

We negotiated with social housing landlords and took claims to the Tribunal to prevent vulnerable clients being evicted and becoming homeless.

## 17% Criminal law issues:

We supported people facing criminal charges, with a focus on diversion from custody into therapeutic programs that deal with the causes of offending.

## 14% Financial issues:

We helped people facing financial hardship by resolving issues relating to fines, credit and debt.

- \$98,437 in fines waived
- \$58,585 in debt waived

## 7% Compensation payments:

We supported people to access victims of crime recognition payments

- \$64,000 in victims of crime recognition payments

We also support clients with a range of other legal issues including consumer and contract issues, social security, discrimination, employment, AVOs, guardianship, and complaints about government authorities.

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# AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT

**Ciara Murphy, a HPLS lawyer on secondment from MinterEllison, valued the opportunity to develop her professional skills while making a real difference to the lives of clients.**

'I felt I had a lot of impact. I provided a service that was culturally safe and wasn't just a legal service. I could chat to clients about what was going on for them, which helped me to better support them with their legal issues.'

Ciara worked closely with Alan\* who has been supported by HPLS over four years while facing the challenges of homelessness and isolation.

**'Alan said it genuinely saved his life that we would text him at points where he was feeling really low. It made him feel that someone cared about him. By treating him not just as a legal problem but as a person, we made a real difference.'**

Ciara says her time at HPLS has given her the courage and empowerment to pursue a career at the bar.

'Whether it's for a long-term career or purely for a skills-building experience, HPLS is an incredible place to work.' ✨



# ONE YEAR OF OUR SPECIALIST WOMEN'S SERVICE

Recognising an urgent need for a specialist legal service to support women experiencing or at risk of homelessness in NSW, we launched the Women's Homelessness Prevention Service (WHPS) in 2022.

WHPS gives women specialist, trauma-informed legal support, access to an experienced in-house Community Caseworker and connection to a range of support services across Sydney.

WHPS focuses on early intervention and targeting factors that cause homelessness. We help women understand their rights as tenants, support them to apply for protection orders, make referrals for family law support and assist with financial matters such as applying for victims of crime compensation payments or writing off debts and fines.

We hold drop-in clinics at women-only spaces with a women-only team of lawyers, to provide legal services in settings where a diverse group of women can feel safe. \*

## Outcomes from our first year:

**143**

women given legal advice

**50**

women given legal representation

**31**

women given ongoing social work support

**60**

housing issues resolved (eg priority housing approved, maintenance or repairs completed)

**30**

financial issues resolved

**\$20,000**

debt written off for one client

**\$16,200**

in victims' compensation payments

**23**

court and tribunal matters

**68**

pro bono lawyers recruited

**125**

telephone and face-to-face clinics

“

Women are often pushed into homelessness by family and domestic violence or poverty. WHPS focusses on helping women holistically, to respond to complex needs and circumstances that can exacerbate or compound their legal issues. Our first year has shown what can be achieved by an integrated practice that puts the client at the centre.



**Kira Levin,**  
Principal Solicitor,  
Homeless Persons'  
Legal Service

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# HELPING WOMEN THROUGH THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

**PIAC is piloting a specialist criminal legal service for women who have been charged with criminal offences and who have experience of domestic or family violence (DFV) or sexual assault, as part of our Women's Homelessness Prevention Service.**

The number of women charged with offences in NSW is growing. The majority of women who are criminalised are victim-survivors of DFV or sexual violence and there is evidence of a link between domestic and family violence, homelessness, criminalisation and imprisonment.

Our service focusses on diverting women out of the criminal legal system with suitable supports. The stories of our clients inform our advocacy highlighting the reasons why women are criminalised and the harm caused by our current approach to criminal 'justice'. ✳



**The criminal law system is failing women who are victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual assault. Early intervention and targeted support for women coupled with improved practices by police can address the growing numbers of women being criminalised and imprisoned.**



**Laura Russell,  
Solicitor, Women's  
Homelessness  
Prevention Service**

## **Criminalising the victim: Sky's story**

Sky\* was in a long-term domestic relationship with an abusive partner. When neighbours heard fighting, they called police who visited Sky's home. On being prompted by police, Sky disclosed she had been trying to end the relationship and was assaulted by the man when she asked him to leave. But Sky didn't want to press charges.

In response to police questions, she admitted to throwing a plate. Sky was then charged with property damage and police applied for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order naming her as the defendant. HPLS successfully supported Sky to have the charge and ADVO application withdrawn, but this was a distressing experience that put Sky at further risk of violence from the perpetrator. ✳

# STREETCARE: A TRUSTED VOICE ON HOMELESSNESS

PIAC supports StreetCare advocates to use their lived experience of homelessness to advise decision-makers and influence better outcomes for others experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

StreetCare has ensured the voices of those who have lived experience of homelessness are heard in the media and parliamentary debate on the current housing crisis. Across SBS news, the Daily Telegraph and 2SER radio, StreetCare members emphasised the traumatic impacts of homelessness on people and families, highlighting housing as a human right and reducing stigma for people experiencing homelessness.

StreetCare improved NSW Government housing and homelessness policies and programs by ensuring issues important to people who use housing and homelessness services are prioritised.

StreetCare members also advised health clinicians, NGO caseworkers and staff of the Department of Communities and Justice on how best to allocate funding and assess the suitability of supports for people transitioning from chronic homelessness into secure accommodation.

The value and integrity of StreetCare's work was acknowledged by two NSW Parliamentary Community Recognition Statements, and invitations to meet former NSW Government Minister McClaren-Jones and current Minister Rose Jackson. In these meetings, the lived experiences shared by StreetCare members supported PIAC's successful advocacy for changes to Temporary Accommodation and Rental Diary policies. ✨



HPLS staff and StreetCare members with NSW State MP Jenny Leong in the NSW Parliament

# EMPOWERING ANNA TO SHARE HER STORY

**Anna Nagel has experienced homelessness twice – first in her twenties, then again later in life after suffering burnout in her healthcare job.**

StreetCare helped Anna find the confidence to use her story in a safe environment, where she meets with a community of people who have lived experience of homelessness.

In her work with StreetCare, Anna draws on her past challenges to benefit the community and knows her influence as an advocate with lived experience of homelessness is powerful.

'StreetCare was exactly what I needed. It gives me connection and purpose.

I enjoy meeting the Members of Parliament. I'm not afraid to put my face out there and be seen and share my perspective with them.

I feel productive, knowing that I can now advocate not only for myself, but for others.' ✨



# IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR HOUSING AND MENTAL HEALTH

**The NSW Government Housing and Mental Health Agreement (HMHA) commits government agencies to work together to ensure people with mental illness can access safe and secure housing, and the supports they need to sustain it.**

Recognising StreetCare's success in amplifying the voices of people with lived experience, NSW Health and the Department of Communities and Justice approached PIAC to develop a lived experience committee to advise on the agreement's implementation.

PIAC has recruited advocates with lived experience of accessing both social housing and publicly provided mental health supports. The group will guide the HMHA State Steering Committee and ensure client voices define the HMHA implementation, delivery and governance frameworks. ✨

# PREVENTING UNFAIR EVICTIONS AND HOMELESSNESS

**Preventing evictions that cause homelessness is an important part of HPLS's work. But legal assistance can only do so much. In NSW, landlords can evict tenants without having to provide a reason. Too often, landlords get away with retaliatory and unfair evictions. And the possibility of a 'no-grounds' eviction undermines every other right a tenant has.**

HPLS has worked to expose how inadequate regulation of rental housing contributes to disadvantage, housing insecurity and homelessness; highlighting the impact of unfair evictions, advocating to MPs, supporting the Make Renting Fair campaign, and raising the issue through parliamentary inquiries.

Strong and persistent advocacy for transparency, fairness and housing security is paying off. Both major parties have now committed to reform.

HPLS was also part of a coalition that successfully challenged problematic reforms in the NSW Government's Rental Fairness Bill. At a parliamentary inquiry, we explained how the reforms would have entrenched rent auctions and risked driving rents up further. The Bill was amended, allowing positive reforms to pass. HPLS also contributed to the NSW Rental Commissioner's Technical Expert Roundtable, providing expertise on reform of tenancy legislation. ✨



PIAC's Thomas Chailloux (second row, fifth from left) appeared at the Homes For People Forum

## Challenging unreasonable rent increases to prevent homelessness

Mary\* was recovering from serious domestic abuse and living on Jobseeker payments of less than \$400 per week. Although she was on the priority list for affordable housing, she had to stay in private rentals until a long-term home became available. In October 2022, her landlord said her rent would increase from \$300 to \$600 per week, putting Mary at risk of homelessness.

HPLS lawyers applied to NCAT for an excessive rent order on Mary's behalf. On the morning of the hearing we persuaded the landlord to agree to an increase of just \$30 per week for a few months. Mary was relieved she had more time to arrange alternative accommodation and did not have to go through with the NCAT hearing where there was no certainty of a favourable outcome. ✨

# WINNING IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE FACING A HOUSING CRISIS

**Temporary accommodation (TA) is a last resort for people in crisis with nowhere else to go. For too long, it was only offered to people three days at a time, with stringent conditions on access and extensions. We saw firsthand how this created unnecessary bureaucratic challenges during a time of crisis, with significant impacts on people's health and wellbeing.**

After years of persistent advocacy for TA that provides genuine support, in 2023 we secured change, having made the case that providing greater certainty to people who need TA achieves better and more cost-efficient outcomes over the long term.

The initial support period for TA has now been extended to 7-9 days, the requirement for people to show they are also applying for private rentals has been suspended, and the 'asset cap' (a means test on eligibility) for people escaping domestic or family violence has been removed. ✨

## **Helping Jane\* access vital temporary accommodation**

Jane\* urgently needed a safe place to stay after fleeing domestic violence. HPLS supported her to successfully apply for TA, which gave her a place to rest and recover.

But Jane had to reapply every two or three days. This took up time and energy she could have spent applying for rental properties or doing the personal admin she needed to do to get her life back on track.

Visiting the housing office was stressful, especially because Jane has PTSD and chronic anxiety disorder after her experience of domestic violence. She would

often leave without receiving the support she needed because she felt the staff did not listen to her and she was asked the same questions over and over. She stopped applying for TA because it was too difficult. She started couch surfing instead, which put her in unsafe situations – but she felt she had no choice while she waited for a permanent home.

Recent changes to TA, secured through PIAC's advocacy, have taken away some of the barriers Jane struggled against and will help others accessing the system. ✨

# ENERGY AND WATER

**Because everyone should have access to affordable, sustainable and reliable energy and water.**

“

**PIAC and ACOSS have been working together to ensure people on low incomes benefit from the clean energy transition. PIAC are generous with their time, resources and expertise, helping to build up the skills and knowledge of consumer advocates, energy companies and decision makers to create systemic change.**

**Dr Cassandra Goldie, CEO, Australian Council of Social Service**

We gratefully acknowledge the NSW Government Office of Energy & Climate Change for funding our Energy and Water Consumers' Advocacy Program; the Australian Council of Social Services and Boundless Earth for supporting the Efficient Electric Homes Collaboration; and an anonymous donor for funding PIAC's Sustainable and Fair Energy Transition (SAFE) project.



# A SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR ENERGY TRANSITION

The impacts of climate change fall most heavily on people and communities experiencing disadvantage, and they are often least equipped to adapt to its effects.

We need urgent action if we are to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change and achieve Australia's goal of a net-zero economy by 2050. Our energy system must move from a reliance on fossil fuels to sustainable, clean energy sources to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But a just transition must be underpinned by social and economic transformation that puts people and communities first, especially those experiencing disadvantage.

Launched in late 2022, PIAC's Sustainable and Fair Energy Transition (SAFE) project will contribute to a just transition by ensuring government policies and energy regulation



The SAFE project builds on PIAC's decades of experience in energy policy, strategic litigation and law reform. We will bring innovative legal thinking to solve the regulatory challenges which are delaying fast and fair climate action.



Jonathan Struggles,  
Senior Solicitor

deliver a sustainable, equitable and climate resilient Australia. We want all households to have access to the advantages of a modern energy system that delivers cheaper, cleaner energy.

We are working with energy experts and consumer advocates to influence decisions and propel change on key issues in the National Electricity Market through regulatory processes and potential legal actions. ✨



# WHO PAYS FOR THE ENERGY TRANSITION?

**The rapid energy transition we need to meet the challenge of climate change requires massive investments, with costs to be recovered for decades to come. Decisions on what is built, who pays for it and who carries the risks have enduring implications for the community.**

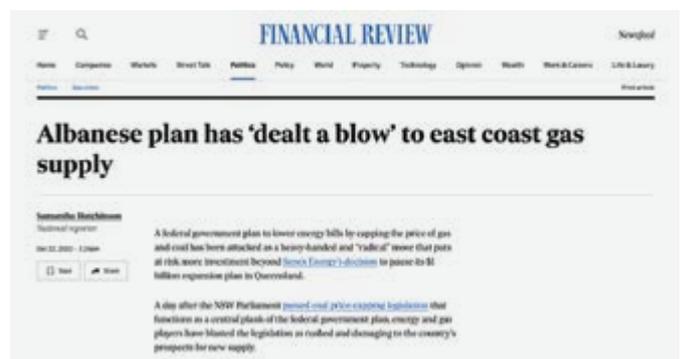
When households pay more than their fair share, those already disadvantaged feel the most pain. PIAC is a leading voice for relieving the burden by changing regulations and policies to shift more costs of the transition to Government and those businesses profiting from new energy infrastructure.

We are a leading voice for household consumers in the media, including ABC TV, the Australian Financial Review and The Guardian. We have been particularly critical of the Commonwealth's deeply flawed Snowy 2.0 project, with our concerns justified by further revelations of multi-billion dollar blowouts and delays.

We are working with the NSW Government and market institutions to keep policies and programs on track to deliver lower-cost, clean and reliable energy. A number

of our recommendations to the Electricity Supply and Reliability Check Up were adopted by the Government, which will make real reductions in household energy costs.

PIAC staff also advance consumer interests on influential advisory and statutory energy bodies, including as member of the Australian Energy Market Commission's Reliability Panel and as co-chair of the NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board. ✨



# GREEN ENERGY WITHOUT 'GREENWASHING'

**Concern about climate change has motivated many people to make efforts to support affordable, renewable energy. 'Greenwashing' by energy businesses with vague or misleading claims about 'clean', 'green' or 'carbon neutral' energy undermines these efforts and the success of energy companies with genuine sustainability credentials.**

PIAC detailed these concerns to the Senate Inquiry into Greenwashing and explained how false claims mean higher costs for households and delays to our transition to net-zero. We made practical recommendations on how to give consumers reliable information and genuine choice and are continuing to raise this issue with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission as they develop guidelines for green claims. We also highlighted these issues in the media and told people how they can avoid supporting companies profiting from climate delay. ✨

# BUILDING A COALITION FOR EFFICIENT ELECTRIFICATION

**Creating more efficient electric homes is a key part of a fair transition to a more affordable net-zero energy system. It can have the biggest benefit for households experiencing disadvantage.**

PIAC and ACOSS have brought together 65 organisations across communities and industries to form the Efficient Electric Homes Collaboration. Our work has steered agreement on a shared objective prioritising decarbonisation, equity and household health while taking rapid action to electrify.

Our role enables us to guide cross-sector advocacy on household electrification and focus on solutions that work for low-income households, renters, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and First Nations communities.

The ambitious electrification project requires community awareness and support. PIAC has contributed explainers and interviews to SwitchedOn, a new website supporting Australian households to electrify. On 2SER radio, we explained the financial and health costs of using gas, and the supports available to make the switch. ✨

“

The task of electrifying and improving the efficiency of homes across the country is huge. It requires governments, industry, the community and the market to agree on where we need to go and how we want to get there. But this challenge is also an opportunity to do better for many in the community who would otherwise be left behind.



**Craig Memery,  
Senior Advisor,  
Energy**



# GIVING COMMUNITIES A SAY IN ENERGY DECISIONS

**We have successfully influenced the Australian Energy Regulator's strategy to engage the community in its own decision-making and its assessments of how well NSW energy businesses are delivering on community engagement.**

We helped shape how the Australian Energy Market Operator engaged the community in updating its Integrated System Plan, a 20-year roadmap for the national energy system. We are also making progress on ensuring that community preferences influence key market settings that determine the cost of energy.

Our work has challenged energy distributors in NSW to demonstrate how their proposals reflect community values. We have helped focus engagement on where people can have the greatest influence: how we balance investment in a more resilient future with maintaining equity and affordability. \*



Putting people and communities at the centre of decisions that impact them is an enduring priority of PIAC's work. Giving communities a say in decisions about the energy system helps them influence the costs they pay and promotes equity and fairness.



**Douglas McCloskey,**  
Program Director,  
Energy and  
Water Consumer  
Advocacy Project



PIAC staff with the NSW Energy and Water Ombudsman Janine Young at a community outreach day

# HELPING PEOPLE STAY CONNECTED

**PIAC and sector partners helped develop Knock to Stay Connected, an industry code aimed at reducing the thousands of household electricity and gas disconnections occurring every year. By signing on, energy companies commit to an early, in-person notification, and improved information about supports available for people.**

We welcomed the code's launch and urged all energy retailers to sign on in an interview on ABC News Radio.

Trials in NSW have been promising, with disconnections reducing by up to 80%. Our upcoming research on debt and disconnection will examine wider impacts and opportunities to further reduce disconnections. \*

# EXPOSING THE HARM OF UNREGULATED CREDIT PRODUCTS

As people struggle with the cost of living, more and more are relying on 'buy now, pay later' (BNPL) and unregulated credit products to get by, even though they end up costing more.

PIAC partnered with the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network to research how these products are used to pay for essential services, including energy. People are unaware that energy providers must offer payment support and increasingly turn to credit products that hit them with charges instead. Concerningly, vulnerable households are using these products at substantially higher rates.

Our findings and proposed solutions were reported in media including the Sydney Morning Herald and helped improve regulation. ✨



Credit products like BNPL are being used to fill a consumer need for small, predictable bill management and unexpected expenses. But more and more people are relying on credit products to afford essential services, including energy. By improving access to energy retailer and government supports, and making sure they offer the same benefits as BNPL without the downsides, we can minimise the harm of extra costs for the disadvantaged households who can least afford them.



Thea Bray,  
Senior Policy  
Officer, Energy  
and Water

## ENERGY PROTECTIONS FOR PEOPLE IN 'EMBEDDED NETWORKS'

Hundreds of thousands of people living in caravan parks, retirement villages, and some apartment developments get their energy through embedded networks that sit outside the standard energy framework. Embedded networks limit options and protections for people and are often exploited by developers and operators who profit from the less strict regulation and responsibility.

PIAC focused attention on this bad deal through a parliamentary inquiry into embedded networks. Responding to PIAC's recommendations, the NSW Government charged the regulator with a review of pricing within embedded networks, to protect consumers from unreasonable costs. ✨

## SECURING EFFICIENCY UPGRADES FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

People in social housing stand to benefit most from effective support for efficient electrification as they often rely on inefficient appliances in dwellings that are poorly designed and insulated. PIAC and our leading partners were instrumental in securing \$300 million from the Commonwealth budget to support efficiency upgrades for this community.

To build on our effective advocacy, we met with the NSW Housing Minister to recommend that NSW match the Commonwealth support and make real improvements to health and wellbeing through more efficient, electrified social housing. Our proposals, which would help people in social housing save hundreds of dollars each year, are being considered by the NSW Office of Energy and Climate Change. ✨

# ACTION FOR RECONCILIATION



Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) commits us to practical action to promote reconciliation and the rights of First Nations people. It guides us to provide a culturally safe environment for First Nations staff, partners and clients, and opportunities for the wider PIAC community to strengthen understanding of the central place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in our nation's history and future.

## SAYING YES! FOR A VOICE

**PIAC has been a proud supporter of the Yes campaign for a First Nations Voice to Parliament. Led by First Nations staff, we joined and initiated actions backing the Uluru Statement's call for Voice Treaty Truth.**

Hundreds of people took part in more than 30 information sessions delivered by PIAC lawyers, with each presentation featuring at least one First Nations lawyer, where we explained the proposal for a First Nations Voice, the legal and political history that brought us to the referendum and why PIAC supported the campaign for Yes.

Our submission to the Inquiry into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum supported the proposed Constitutional change and recognised the importance of First Nations advice to Parliament.

In the media, social media and communications with our supporters, we emphasised the historic opportunity to recognise First Nations people in our founding document and give them a right to be heard on decisions that affect their lives. ✨

# HIGHLIGHTS

**\* Broadening understanding of colonisation and culture** in Decolonisation workshops hosted by Garuwa. More than 40 staff took part in discussion and reflection on our nation's history and how our partnerships and practices can aid recovery.



Image courtesy of Shifting Ground (GARUWA)

**\* Celebrating First Nations authors** with Merinda Dutton for National Reconciliation Week. Hosted by PIAC, the co-founder of Blackfulla Bookclub shared her love of literature and reflections on how Aboriginal storytelling is transforming cultural conversations.

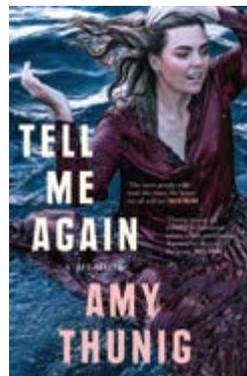


PIAC staff with Merinda Dutton in National Reconciliation Week

**\* Connecting with First Nations culture** at the Art Gallery of NSW Yiribana Gallery. We were guided through a collection inspired by burbangana, a word from the Sydney language that speaks of reciprocity and the generosity of artists inviting us into their world to bring greater understanding of Country, history, culture, and the connections we share.

**\* Promoting cultural exchange**, deepening understanding and igniting conversation through Reconciliation Book Club events. Staff have explored novels, poetry and documentaries, including:

- *Dropbear* by Evelyn Araluen
- *Born-Again Blakfella* by Jack Charles
- *This All Come Back Now: An anthology of First Nations speculative fiction*, edited by Mykaela Saunders
- *Tell Me Again, A Memoir* by Amy Thunig



Book covers are reproduced with the permission of University of Queensland Press (UQP)

**\* Launching a new RAP** to continue our journey towards reconciliation. Our new Innovate RAP sets the pathway for action on our continued commitment to First Nations justice and self-determination.

**\* Increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working at PIAC.** This financial year, we were proud to have a team of 10 First Nations staff members out of a total of approximately 60.

# FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

PIAC remains in a strong and stable financial position that allows us to work effectively across priority projects and respond to emerging challenges.

The audited financial result for the 2022-23 financial year is a surplus of \$190,193, which is 2.9% of our annual income. At 30 June 2023, we maintained healthy net assets of \$3,239,720.

Our total income was \$6,529,544, reflecting the generous support of a diverse range of partners.

We continue to receive generous in-kind support from our pro bono partners, including secondment of staff, volunteer engagement and donation of resources and facilities.

## Income 2022-23



● Grants	48%
● Philanthropic	23%
● Donations and events	16%
● Fee for service	3%
● Other income	9%

## Funding sources:

### Grants: \$3,127,967

Includes grants from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments and the NSW Public Purpose Fund

### Philanthropic: \$1,493,142

Income from philanthropic trusts and foundations

### Donations and events: \$1,072,207

Income from donations, fundraising appeals and events

### Fee for service: \$224,635

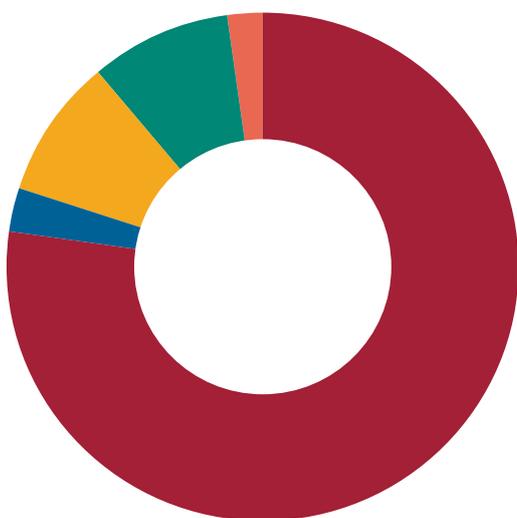
Income from legal casework

### Other income: \$611,593

Includes interest income, fees for participation in regulatory processes and recovery of rental costs

### Total: \$6,529,544

## Expenses 2022-23



● Employees	78%
● Consultancy	3%
● Depreciation and amortisation expense	9%
● Administration	9%
● Other	2%

## Program costs:

### **Employees: \$4,946,995**

Includes staff salaries and related costs

### **Consultancy: \$173,185**

Includes the cost of experts assisting with program delivery

### **Depreciation and amortisation expense: \$555,881**

Includes occupancy costs

### **Administration: \$562,430**

Operating expenses associated with administration including finance, IT, office costs and telecommunications

### **Other: \$100,860**

Miscellaneous costs

### **Total: \$6,339,351**

PIAC's full financial statements are available on request and at the Australian Charities Register on the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission website: [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au).

# BOARD



**Rebecca Gilsenan – Chair**

Appointed May 2012

Rebecca Gilsenan is a Principal Lawyer in Maurice Blackburn's class actions department. She has extensive experience in running complex and novel litigation, including class actions in the areas of price fixing, failed investment schemes, product liability and securities.



**Maha Krayem Abdo OAM**

Appointed November 2022

Maha Krayem Abdo OAM is a passionate advocate for social justice and uses the common language of faith to clarify in the community how Islam regards justice and equality. She serves as the CEO of Muslim Women Australia, a representative body for Muslim women working to enrich humanity, advocating for equality and the rights of all women, through authentic leadership based on Islamic principles. She is also a member of the SBS Australia Community Advisory Committee. Maha holds a Bachelor of Social Work, a Master's degree in Social Science, and a Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution. In 2022 Maya received an Honorary Fellowship from Western Sydney University.



**Sally Karandrews**

Appointed May 2020

Sally Karandrews is a not-for-profit, community, and disability sector leader with more than 15 years' experience in policy development, program design and delivery, community engagement, and advocacy. A vision impaired leader herself, Sally is passionate about access and inclusion, and regularly writes or presents on the topics of disability leadership, accessible education and employment, as well as disability, sex, and gender. Sally is currently the Chief Executive Officer for Blind Citizens Australia and a student and Peer Assisted Study Session Leader at University of New England.



**John Temple-Cole**

Appointed June 2023

John is a Partner at advisory firm KordaMentha. He is a Forensic Accounting Specialist designated by Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand. For over 25 years, John has led complex disputes and financial and accounting investigations. He has provided expert evidence in a range of Australian Courts, the High Court of Singapore and in international arbitration proceedings. His engagements have required him to investigate or provide expert opinions on issues including fraud, false accounting, failed investments, tax avoidance and breaches of contract. John attained a Bachelor's degree in Management Sciences, with Honours, from Loughborough University (UK).



**Andrea Durbach AM**

Appointed November 2021

Andrea Durbach is Emeritus Professor of Law at UNSW where she was Director of the Australian Human Rights Centre (now Institute). She practised in South Africa as a political trial lawyer representing victims and opponents of apartheid laws before moving to Sydney in 1989, working initially in private practice and joining PIAC in 1991, becoming Executive Director in 1997. Andrea has held senior positions in the human rights field, including as Deputy Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner. A Foundation Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law, in 2013 she was awarded the Australian Human Rights Commission Human Rights Law Award for her promotion and advancement of human rights in Australia.



**Eileen Baldry AO**

Appointed February 2015

Professor Emerita Eileen Baldry (Criminology in Law and Justice UNSW) has served as Deputy Dean, Interim Dean and Deputy Vice Chancellor EDI at UNSW. Eileen regularly chairs government committees and working groups and appears as a witness in commission and government inquiries in relation to social justice issues.



**Kirsten Gray**

Appointed February 2022

Kirsten Gray is a Muruwari/Yuwaalaraay woman, mother and lawyer. She started her career representing parents in child protection matters and has gone on to work extensively in Indigenous policy and human rights. Kirsten has served numerous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioners at the Australian Human Rights Commission and has contributed to Indigenous human rights advocacy both nationally and internationally. Kirsten served as a senior policy officer on the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory and supported the Queensland Treaty Working Group in the development of the Path to Treaty report.



**John Walker**

Appointed February 2016

John Walker is recognised as a leader in the emerging global litigation funding market. He is the Managing Director of Investor Claim Partner Pty Ltd and ICP Capital Pty Ltd. John came to litigation funding more than twenty years ago after working in accounting and economics and practicing as a commercial litigator in Sydney.



**Kate Morgan SC**

Appointed November 2019

Kate Morgan is a leading Sydney barrister who appears throughout numerous jurisdictions (civil and criminal) with a focus on regulatory matters. Her practice includes regulatory investigations and litigation, corporate and commercial litigation, class actions and general appellate matters. Before being called to the Bar, Kate practiced as an attorney in New York State, and as a solicitor at Mallesons Stephen Jacques and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.



**Penny Gerstle**

Appointed April 2020

Penny Gerstle has advocated for asylum seekers and refugees for over 30 years, holding honorary and voluntary positions at organisations including the Refugee Advice and Casework Service, and Australia for UNHCR's Women's Steering Committee on Maternal Health. Penny has been Co-Chair of Human Rights Watch Australia (Sydney Committee) since April 2018, a Director of Participate Australia since 2015 and joined the Board of Mahboba's Promise this year. She holds Master's degrees from the University of Sydney in Japanese, in International Law and in Development and Global Health Studies, and worked at the Australian Human Rights Commission in the Disability Discrimination and Race Discrimination Teams.



**Jade Tyrrell**

Appointed November 2020

Jade Tyrrell is a Senior Associate in Johnson Winter Slattery's Dispute Resolution and Employment Team. She has experience acting in complex and large-scale commercial litigation, employment-related disputes, and defamation proceedings. In addition to her commercial work, Jade has a strong interest in supporting pro bono projects and assists with matters referred through Johnson Winter & Slattery's pro bono program. Jade is a Councillor of the Law Society of New South Wales and sits on various Law Society committees.



**Sera Mirzabegian SC**

Appointed November 2022

Sera Mirzabegian SC is a senior barrister who practises in commercial litigation, regulatory investigations and litigation, class actions and human rights. She has acted for major Australian and international companies in a variety of industries (including financial services, property, infrastructure, pharmaceutical, media and technology) and independent commissions such as the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. She regularly acts for human rights and environmental organisations as well as marginalised and disadvantaged individuals and communities on a pro bono basis. She is currently the Co-Chair of the NSW Bar's Diversity and Equality Committee and has previously served as a Councillor of the NSW Bar Association.

# STAFF

## Employees

Alana West, Policy Officer, Energy and Water

Alastair Lawrie, Director, Policy and Advocacy

Anna Harding, Project Director, Towards Truth Project

Annie Barker, Executive Assistant

Ashley Agar, Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Brent Woolf, Research Assistant, Towards Truth Project

Briana Ewing, Relationships Coordinator

Camilla Pandolfini, Principal Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Charmaine Jones, Project Officer, StreetCare

Christina Crawford, Paralegal, Women's Homelessness Prevention Service

Christina Kasavetis, Community Caseworker, Women's Homelessness Prevention Service

Corey Smith, Project Coordinator, Towards Truth Project

Craig Memery, Senior Advisor, Energy

Dan Buhagiar, Media and Communications Manager

Daniela Gavshon, Program Director, Truth and Accountability

Daniela Taylor, Coordinator, Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Daniella Burt, Paralegal, The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre

Deirdre Moor, Deputy CEO

Douglas McCloskey, Program Director, Energy and Water Consumers' Advocacy Program

Ellen Tilbury, Senior Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Emily Mayo, Campaign Manager, Raise the Age

Emily McCarron, Senior Policy Lawyer

Emma Bastable, Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Erin Turner Manners, Senior Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Erol Gorur, Technology Officer, Truth and Accountability

Grace Gooley, Senior Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Hilary Blackman, Relationships Manager

Jadyn Bryant-Smith, Office Coordinator

Jan Kucic-Riker, Policy Officer, Energy and Water

Jenny Barton, Legal Secretary

Jeremy Rea, Senior Solicitor Advocate, Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Jonathan Hall Spence, Principal Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Jonathan Struggles, Senior Solicitor, Strategic Litigation, Energy and Climate Change

Jonathon Hunyor, Chief Executive Officer

Kara McKee, Criminal Solicitor, Women's Homelessness Prevention Service

Kiani Fukui, Paralegal, Women's Homelessness Prevention Service

Kira Levin, Principal Solicitor, Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Krista Gerrard, Legal Research Officer, Towards Truth

Laura Russell, Criminal Solicitor, Women's Homelessness Prevention Service

Lucy Geddes, Senior Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Mary Flanagan, Senior Legal Officer, Truth and Accountability

Melissa Pinzuti, Legal Secretary

Michael Lynch, Senior Policy Officer, Energy and Water

Michelle Cohen, Principal Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Mitchell Skipsey, Senior Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Nadeshda Jayakody, Senior Legal Officer, Transitional Justice

Oliver Williams, Research Assistant, Towards Truth

Philippa Rich, Paralegal, Homelessness Prevention Service

Porsha Bolte, Paralegal, Homelessness Prevention Service

Rivkah Nissim, Impact Manager

Sally Treveton, Legal Research Officer, Towards Truth

Scott Parker, Operations Manager

Seamus May, Communications Coordinator

Sheetal Balakrishnan, Senior Solicitor, Strategic Litigation

Stephanie Everson, Paralegal, Aboriginal Social Justice Graduate

Tara Imrie, Senior Solicitor, Women's Homelessness Prevention Service

Thea Bray, Senior Policy Officer,  
Energy and Water Consumers'  
Advocacy Program

Thomas Chailloux, Policy Officer

Tim Ngui, Senior Solicitor, Homeless  
Persons' Legal Service

Verity Smith, Senior Solicitor,  
Strategic Litigation

## PLT Placements

Ahmed Jalal

Ariella Buckley

Aryana Cascao

Cassandra Evans

Celeste Bird

Emily Dasan

Emily Hamilton

Kit Siew

Maneesha Gopalan

Olivia Roney

Prem Kumar

Rachel Yang

Zi Bin Huang

## Legal Secondees

Amber Barney  
Australian Government Solicitor,  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Caley Bawden  
Australian Government Solicitor,  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Ciara Murphy  
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Legal Service

Emma Cuelho  
MinterEllison, Homeless Persons'  
Legal Service

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Strategic Litigation

Georgia Berriman  
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Jade Philip  
Australian Government Solicitor,  
Women's Homelessness  
Prevention Service

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Moray & Agnew, Strategic Litigation

Kelly Zhang  
Johnson Winter & Slattery,  
Strategic Litigation

Kelsey Gray  
Norton Rose Fulbright, Homeless  
Persons' Legal Service & Truth  
and Accountability

Lara Douvartzidis  
Johnson Winter & Slattery,  
Strategic Litigation

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Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Nicola Colagiuri  
Australian Government Solicitor,  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Siena Monterosso  
Norton Rose Fulbright, Truth  
and Accountability

Veronica Gregory  
Johnson Winter & Slattery,  
Strategic Litigation

## Interns

Britney Tassone  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Casey Lawler  
Policy and Advocacy

Crystal Huang  
Truth and Accountability

Declan Lee  
Strategic Litigation

Elena Gilbertson  
Truth and Accountability

Emily Hamilton  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Isabella Grundseth  
Truth and Accountability

Jasmine Lee  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Jennifer Stoddart  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Jenny Stephens  
Truth and Accountability

Krista Gerrard  
Truth and Accountability

Krystal Ingram  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Martina Theodorakakos  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Melina Kerswell  
Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Michelle Ke  
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Philippa Sawyer  
Strategic Litigation

Rebecca Pearce  
Strategic Litigation

Skye Deedman  
Strategic Litigation

Trudy Wyse  
Truth and Accountability

**PIAC  
STAFF  
2023**





# OUR SUPPORTERS

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A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a light-colored sleeveless top and a dark skirt, stands at a wooden podium with a microphone. She is speaking and gesturing with her hands. The background is a blurred audience seated at tables with glasses, suggesting a formal event or conference. The lighting is warm and focused on the speaker.

**We gratefully  
acknowledge our  
partners in justice who  
share our passion and  
determination to tackle  
injustice and inequality.  
Together, we change  
laws, lives and society.**

# THANK YOU

Substantial funding for PIAC's work is provided by the Public Purpose Fund NSW; NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment; NSW Department of Communities and Justice, and the Community Legal Centres Program funded jointly by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

We also rely on significant donations from the following people and organisations who make our work possible.

## Principal Partners

Allens  
Williams Fund  
B B & A Miller Foundation  
The Fred P Archer Charitable Trust  
Karen Loblay AM & Matana Foundation for Young People  
Paul Ramsay Foundation  
Ross Trust  
Summer Foundation

## Major Supporters

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## 2023 Social Justice Dinner

### Major Sponsors

The Law Society of NSW  
Maurice Blackburn Lawyers  
MinterEllison

### Supporting Sponsors

Lawcover Insurance  
Macquarie  
Litigation Lending

We are grateful to Yvonne Weldon for sharing her heartfelt Welcome to Country, special guest speaker Dr Kimahli Powell, host Fran Kelly, Keith Saunders Photography and to our staff, board and committee members, family and friends for their generous contributions to our silent auction.

## PIAC Engagement Committee

Penny Gerstle (Chair)  
Wendy Brooks  
Catherine Brooks  
Therese Cochrane  
Jane Marquard  
Ralph Pliner  
Phillipa Sawyer  
Ann Sloan  
Jade Tyrrell  
John Walker

# THANK YOU

We gratefully acknowledge our partners for making an essential contribution to PIAC's sustainability and strength through leadership and regular giving. We also acknowledge PIAC's supporters who wish to remain anonymous.

## PIAC PARTNERS

### Ambassadors

The Association of Litigation Funders of Australia  
Professor Simon Bronitt, on behalf of Sydney Law School, University of Sydney  
CASL Management Proprietary Limited  
Jane and Andrew Clifford & JAAM Foundation  
Danny and Kathleen Gilbert  
Verity and Bruce Hodgkinson AM SC  
KordaMentha  
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Sam and Barbara Linz  
Sue Mahony  
Andrew and Emma Maple-Brown  
Annette Olle  
Omni Bridgeway  
Kathryn and Scott Roulstone  
Wendy Brooks & Partners

### Social Justice Defenders

Emily Aitken  
Ashurst  
David and Marcia Atchison  
Banco Chambers  
Robin Banks and Michael Small  
Margaret Berkovic  
Alex Borda  
Chipkin Family  
Adjunct Prof Nicholas Cowdery AO KC FAAL  
Geoff Connellan  
Daniel and Lyndell Droga  
Joanna Elliott and David Ryan  
The Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC  
Fairer Futures Fund  
Ian Farmer  
Stephen Free SC  
Oliver Gayner  
Lisa George and Paul Hunyor  
Rebecca Gilsean and Grant Marjoribanks  
Murray Goot  
Grace Projects  
Julie Hamblin and Professor Martin Krygier AM  
The Honourable Justice David Hammerschlag

Sue Higginson  
Verity Hodgkinson and Bruce Hodgkinson AM SC  
Brett Johnson  
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Craig Lenehan SC  
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Brooke Massender  
K C Morgan and R G McHugh  
Anh Nguyen  
Olav Nielssen  
Blake O'Connor  
Nick O'Neill  
Julia Pincus and Ian Learmonth  
Susan and Stuart Lloyd-Hurwitz  
Alisa Pincus and David Nathanson  
Ralph Pliner  
Garry Rich SC  
Reve Fund  
David Robb  
Paul and Kate Saunders  
Christopher Saxon  
Julian Sexton SC



PIAC supporters at the Social Justice Dinner 2023

John Sheahan KC  
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### Friends

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Sonia Tame  
Jade Tyrrell  
Liz Stephenson  
John Temple-Cole  
Stephen Walmsley SC  
Mark Zihrul

# THANK YOU

PIAC is driven by partnerships and a commitment to strengthening the community. The passion for social justice shared by our pro bono partners, barristers and community partners is vital to PIAC's success and we gratefully acknowledge your generous support.

## Pro Bono Partners

Allens  
Emma Buxton-Namisnyk  
Jason Behrendt  
Michael Bennett  
Clayton Utz  
Gilbert + Tobin  
Jones Day  
Moray & Agnew Lawyers  
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Dani Larkin  
Krystal Lockwood  
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John Maynard  
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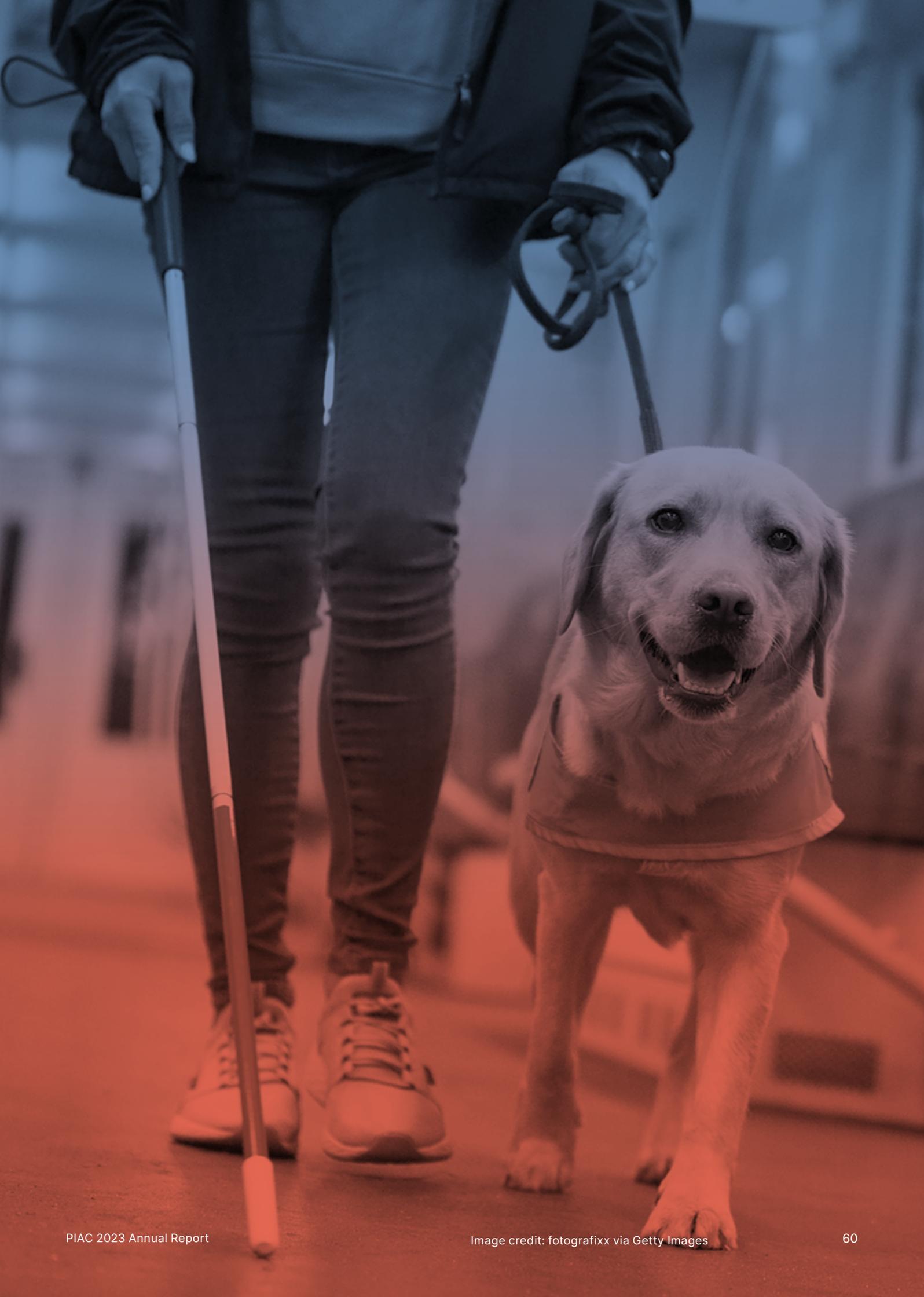


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## Community Partners

Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)	Foundation House	Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (QAI)
AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation	Guide Dogs NSW/ACT	Redfern Legal Centre (RLC)
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)	Griffith University	Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS)
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)	Grata Fund	Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)
Australian Centre for Disability Law (ACDL)	Associate Professor Paul Gray, UTS	Rights Information and Advocacy Centre (RIAC)
Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)	The Housing Hub	Lisa Robinson, Assistance Animals International
Amnesty International Australia	Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC)	Dr Vicki Sentas, UNSW
Blind Citizens Australia (BCA)	Human Rights for All (HR4A)	Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)	Dr Tamar Hopkins	Shopfront Youth Legal Centre
Dr Sara Dehm	Inclusion Australia	SCALES Community Legal Centre
Darwin Community Legal Service	Indigenous Law Centre, UNSW	Summer Foundation
Disability Advocacy NSW (DANSW)	Graeme Innes	Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA)
Disability Voices Tasmania (DVT)	Just Reinvest	Sydney Policy Lab
Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)	Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, UTS	Sydney Community Forum
Darren O'Donovan, La Trobe University	Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, UNSW	Tenants Union NSW
Dog Guide Handlers Australia (DGHA)	Professor Mary Anne Kenny	University of Technology, Sydney
Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON)	Legal Aid NSW	Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc
Ethnic Communities Council NSW	Mental Health Australia	Victoria Legal Aid
Every Australian Counts (EAC)	Mid-North Coast CLC	Dr Anthea Vogl
Financial Rights Legal Centre (FRLC)	MobStrong	Natalie Wade, Equality Lawyers
First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN)	National Justice Project (NJP)	Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
	National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)	Professor Erin Wilson, Swinburne University of Technology
	National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network (NITAN)	
	NS Council of Social Service (NCOSS)	
	People with Disability Australia (PWDA)	
	Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN)	



# DEFEND JUSTICE AND EQUALITY WITH PIAC

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Donations make it possible for us to do the work that changes laws, policies and practices that are unlawful or unfair.

Every gift, large or small, helps change the lives of people and communities who are marginalised and disadvantaged.



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Systemic change doesn't happen quickly or easily. Policy and law reform often follows years of advocacy. A bequest is a powerful way to do something meaningful and lasting for the future. Search 'legacy' on our website for more information.

### Contact

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