



**Justice and
Equity Centre**

ANNUAL REPORT

2026

The Justice and Equity Centre (formerly the Public Interest Advocacy Centre) stands for a society that is fair and free from discrimination and disadvantage. A society where nobody is left behind.

We work with the community to challenge injustice and address disadvantage.

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.

Contents

From our Chair and CEO	2
Driving change and improving lives	3
How we create impact	4
Impact at a glance	5
Civil rights	6
First Nations justice	18
Disability rights	25
Homelessness and housing justice	32
Energy and water justice	40
Action for Reconciliation	46
Financial performance	48
Our Board	50
Our Staff	52
Our Supporters	54

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

From our Chair and CEO



With so much bad news clamouring for our attention, we are pleased to present some good news. An antidote to the doomscroll.

Our Annual Report is evidence of what we can achieve when we work with skill, focus and determination for a society that is just and equitable. And it's a story of the power found in the partnerships and collaborations we sustain with people who share our values and vision for social justice.

The Justice and Equity Centre brings strategic legal and policy expertise to some of Australia's most persistent injustices, like homelessness; the exclusion and mistreatment of people with disability; a child protection system that is failing Aboriginal children, families and communities; the impacts on women of domestic and family violence; and the misuse of police power in a surveillance age. We work to change laws and practices that are unfair and hold those with power accountable for unlawful conduct and breaches of rights.

We work proactively, co-designing solutions with communities impacted by injustice to realise a positive vision: an energy system that is clean, sustainable and affordable; an aviation industry that is accessible to all; an NDIS that is fair and supports people with disability to thrive; a health-led response for people in mental health crisis, to avoid unnecessary and potentially fatal police intervention; and a system that does better for children and communities by raising the age of criminalisation from 10 to 14 and investing in early intervention to address causes of criminal offending.

Our commitment to working generously in partnership is a strategic choice. It reflects what we know about how social change happens. Individual legal and advocacy successes are important – and

we share them throughout these pages. But they are stepping stones rather than end points.

To shift systems we need to build power in the community, so people affected by injustice can be heard and can lead. When we work in ways that are relational rather than transactional, we build that power.

To be effective, we also need to ensure we are well governed and well run. We thank our Board for the depth and breadth of skills they bring, helping us navigate risk and retain a clear strategic focus; our experienced managers for leadership that brings the best out of their teams; and our staff and volunteers whose dedication, integrity and commitment to excellence is an incalculably valuable asset.

To everyone who has supported our work, funded and partnered with us, and to the clients and community organisations that trust us to work with them: thank you. We hope you share our pride in what we are achieving together.



Sera Mirzabegian SC
Chair



Jonathon Hunyor
Chief Executive
Officer

Driving change and improving lives

Where you can see our impact from 2025-26

- * Australia's first draft Aviation Disability Standards have been released for consultation, following co-design with people with disability, to make air travel accessible to everyone.
- * People in NSW experiencing a mental health crisis will get a health-led response, with Mental Health Acute Assessment Teams replacing Police as first responders.
- * People facing disadvantage can benefit from the energy transition and all NSW households are getting a fairer deal on their energy needs, with:
 - lower electricity bills following changes to the 'default market offer';
 - targeted government subsidies for energy efficiency improvements;
 - pricing and consumer protections for more than 95,000 households in 'embedded networks' like apartment buildings and caravan parks;
 - better and fairer access to real-time electricity use data, enabling savings; and
 - millions in costs from new gas connections, disconnections and redundant assets being kept off the bills of people unable to disconnect from the gas network.
- * Pressure is building on governments to raise the age of criminalisation from 10 to 14, with more people in NSW agreeing that young children do not belong in prisons and expert advice highlighting the power of the Commonwealth Government to intervene to protect the human rights of children.
- * Uber Australia's operations are being independently reviewed to improve services for people with disability so they get a fair ride.
- * More than 800 people facing homelessness were supported to find or stay in a safe home, resolve legal problems or access other supports they need for safety and wellbeing.
- * The NSW Audit Office is auditing psychological assessments of Aboriginal children and parents by the NSW Children's Court Clinic, responding to community concerns about a lack of cultural safety.
- * People harmed by handcuffing and denied healthcare in Australian immigration detention have had their stories heard and laid a foundation for reform.
- * A sixth young lawyer has commenced the First Nations Social Justice Graduate Program, building the skills, confidence and relationships for a successful career in social justice.
- * Children in NSW can challenge a 'Firearms Prohibition Order' made inappropriately against them, to avoid years of oppressive police surveillance and invasive searches.
- * The disability community has been empowered with legal advice and resources to respond to complex and wide-ranging changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and hold Parliament accountable for the significant human cost.
- * More people – including lawyers, judges, teachers and students – understand the impact of NSW laws and policies on Aboriginal people, having engaged with Towards Truth.
- * First Nations young people are setting the agenda for justice reform and exposing discriminatory practices that are harming their communities.



How we create impact

We build a fairer, stronger society by:

Exposing injustice

We show where laws, policies or practices are causing or entrenching disadvantage.

- > We called out local councils for threatening people living in parks with evictions, fines and confiscation of property, highlighting the lack of social housing that drives people to sleep rough and the need for whole-of-government solutions.

Challenging decision-makers

We hold those with power to account over actions that are unlawful or unfair.

- > We held police accountable in the Supreme Court and Law Enforcement Conduct Commission for repeated and oppressive home attendances that interfere with privacy and family life and have a disparate impact on Aboriginal communities.

Identifying solutions

We work collaboratively to develop and promote legal and policy solutions that deliver fair, practical outcomes.

- > We successfully argued for energy efficiency upgrade grants targeted to low-income households, where government investment will have the greatest impact and prevent people from being left behind in the energy transition.

Engaging the public and decision-makers

We lead conversations and campaigns that bring about change.

- > Following years of high-profile work to expose and challenge discrimination by airlines, we worked with the disability community to secure a government commitment to aviation disability standards. We helped co-design draft standards with government and people with disability, and are working to finalise standards that will remove barriers to air travel.

Empowering people

We support individuals, groups and organisations to initiate, inform and influence positive change and become leaders in social justice.

- > We worked with advocates Kim and Lincoln to share their lived experience of early contact with the criminal legal system and their knowledge of what is required to make safer communities with parliamentarians on the NSW Select Committee Inquiry into Youth Justice.

Impact at a glance

Over the year, the Justice and Equity Centre has:


helped

892
people
resolve their legal problems


supported

146
organisations
to achieve their social justice objectives with our legal and policy expertise


connected with
11,285
followers
on LinkedIn


secured

\$1,125,960
for our clients
in compensation, debt relief and other entitlements


attracted

114,000
visitors
to our website


reached up to

5,771,700
people
each month in the media


influenced with

256
briefings, letters
and submissions
to politicians and decision-makers


leveraged over

\$17.5
million
worth of pro bono support
from pro bono partners

* Civil rights

Because those with power must be held accountable.

'The Justice and Equity Centre has given a voice to my child self - the young person without a home, without an advocate, the child locked in a cell without hope. It has given me and others a platform to become the advocate those children needed, for the young people in prison now and the adults they will become.'

Lincoln Tarrow Lynch, Justice Reform and Reintegration Advocate

The JEC's Impact Litigation Fund is supported in 2026 by: Alexander Edwards, Blake O'Connor, John Cameron, CASL, Chambers Russell Lawyers, Christopher Withers, Echo Law, Eric Braun, HKA Global, John Temple-Cole, Mayweathers, People One Pty Limited, Phi Finney McDonald, Shine Lawyers, Slater and Gordon Lawyers, and Woodsford Australia Pty Ltd.

We thank the Ross Trust and Williams Fund (Australian Communities Foundation) for supporting our Civil Rights work.

The Raise the Age campaign is generously supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, Dusseldorp Forum and the Jennifer Sullivan Foundation.

Accountability for intrusive home attendances by NSW Police

We resolved a test case for two mothers who sued NSW Police for trespass, following months of intimidating and relentless home attendances while their sons were on bail.

For years, the Justice and Equity Centre has called out NSW Police for conducting 'bail checks' at people's homes without court authorisation or reasonable suspicion of a breach of bail conditions. In 2021, we settled our first test case challenging unauthorised police attendances, for two Aboriginal clients who had been subjected to repeated and oppressive visits to their home.

In 2024, we filed two new test cases in the NSW Supreme Court on behalf of two mothers who each endured months of police attendances while their young Aboriginal sons were on bail. Police would regularly visit in the middle of the night, sometimes more than once, disrupting sleep and causing anxiety. We argued officers were trespassing when they carried out the checks without court authorisation.

In 2025, the NSW Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, found there is a 'powerful argument' that NSW Police cannot lawfully undertake these home checks without court authorisation. It called for an end to the practice and recognised our Supreme Court cases could resolve the question.

In June 2026, three weeks before the trespass cases were due to go to trial, the respondent (the State of NSW) requested mediation and our clients settled their claims on confidential, mutually agreeable terms.



JEC lawyers at the NSW Supreme Court

'This has been a long battle but I'm happy we brought this case. Police seem to think they're a law unto themselves and it's wrong. I filed the case because I wanted to have some accountability.'

Joanne*,
mother and JEC client

In reporting by the ABC, we called on NSW Police to heed the LECC findings and change policies and practices, to ensure use of bail checks complies with the law.

We continue to pursue police accountability through a separate racial discrimination case, filed on behalf of one of these families, which remains underway in the Federal Court (see page 19).



Scrutinising expansion of police drone surveillance

The NSW Police roll-out of remotely-operated drones impacts on civil rights and increases surveillance of already over-policed communities. We are a leading expert voice in the public debate and helping ensure community perspectives are heard.

In January 2026, NSW Police began trialling AI-enabled drones in Moree, with little transparency around how the technology would be used or how the trial would be evaluated. Alongside the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), we called out the absence of meaningful community consultation and clear legal safeguards to protect civil rights.

The Guardian reported our concerns that police use of drones would most impact local First Nations communities, already disproportionately targeted by police. In regional paper *The Land*, we also questioned how NSW Police would protect people's rights to privacy and freedom from surveillance.

When NSW Police finally undertook community consultation months into the trial, we made submissions calling for stronger protections for individual rights and greater accountability for police use of new, untested technologies. Police have indicated drone use will be expanded into other regional areas in NSW like Tamworth and Kempsey.

In response to the drone trial, the Youth Justice Coalition, co-convened by the JEC, formed a Working Group on Proactive Policing and Surveillance. Membership includes community organisations in Moree, who inform the Working Group's advocacy. The Working Group's submission to NSW Police gave voice to local communities, who highlighted the anxiety being experienced in the face of escalating surveillance, and the belief that drone activity is concentrated in areas with high proportions of Aboriginal residents.

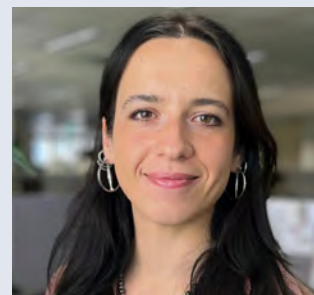


Emerging surveillance technologies and accountability

The JEC is collaborating with the Human Technology Institute (HTI) at the University of Technology, Sydney, to examine how strategic litigation can be used to seek accountability for harms to people and communities arising from the use of AI and emerging technologies.

'As AI and other emerging technologies reshape policing practices, accountability cannot be an afterthought. It must be built in from the start.'

**Nicola Colagiuri,
JEC Senior Solicitor and
Human Technology Institute Strategic
Litigation Fellow**



Contesting oppressive police search powers

We are challenging an opaque legal regime that gives NSW Police unconstrained search powers, which are being used to target already over-policed communities.

Since 2013, police have used Firearms Prohibition Orders (FPOs) to search people, and their homes, workplaces and cars, without a warrant or reasonable suspicion of a crime. FPOs can be imposed on people with no history of firearms offending and never expire.

People targeted by FPOs report police searches that are harassing and intimidating. The extremely low rate of successful searches (as low as 0.1% in 2022-23) raises serious questions about whether police are using these powers properly.

We won a significant reform when NSW Parliament closed a loophole that had prevented children with FPOs from challenging them in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). A successful challenge can avoid years of police surveillance and invasive searches under an FPO. We have filed what is likely the first application for an FPO review made by a child, for a client with disability who has never been involved in firearms-related offending.

We continued to raise public awareness about the extraordinary and excessive nature of FPO search powers, including with media commentary on concerning data showing police disproportionately use FPOs on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

In response to our advocacy with partner organisations, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) has commenced an investigation into police use of FPOs on young people, examining whether police are properly using these powers.

We supported young people and their families to understand their rights and make complaints to the LECC about their experiences with FPOs by developing a fact sheet and template complaint form with the Aboriginal Legal Service. These resources have been distributed throughout the state by the Law Society of NSW and through our Youth Justice Coalition partner network. This work will give the LECC a better understanding of the scope and nature of the issues and the harmful impacts of FPOs on young people.



Challenging the solitary confinement of children

Children in NSW are held in solitary confinement for prolonged and indefinite periods. Through legal, media and policy advocacy, we have opposed this practice and helped expose the lifelong mental and physical harms it causes.

Daniel* was held in solitary confinement for 25 days. He was in youth detention on remand, aged just 17.

Each day, he was locked alone for more than 20 hours and allowed to leave his cell just once. During these short 'recreation' periods, he was handcuffed, ankle-cuffed and escorted by two detention centre staff.

'It does a lot of damage... Like my mental health from then has gotten a lot worse. It stays in your head for a long time,' Daniel said.

We represented Daniel in a Supreme Court case against the State of NSW, arguing his isolation was unlawful. Over 8 days at trial, we interrogated the decision making and policies of youth justice staff.

The Supreme Court found against our client and we have lodged an appeal. We will continue to test the legality of youth detention processes that allow isolation.



JEC lawyers with Counsel at the NSW Supreme Court

With the Aboriginal Legal Service, we briefed the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Youth Justice to highlight the devastating impacts of using solitary confinement on children in prison and urge reform. Daniel's story illustrated the harms and helped make the case for only allowing isolation in exceptional cases where there is imminent threat of serious harm.

Our CEO Jonathon Hunyor spoke to No Child In Solitary, a national, youth-led campaign to end the solitary confinement of children. In a video viewed thousands of times, Jonathon called for a change of course on youth justice and an end to punishments that set children up for failure.



James Clifford from the Aboriginal Legal Service, Aileen MacDonald MLC and Jonathon Hunyor

A youth justice system that delivers for children and communities

Locking up children harms them and does not prevent crime. We are calling on the NSW Government to do better by funding services that support young people and tackle the drivers of crime.

Data released in August 2025 showed a 30% **surge in the number of children held in custody**. More than 70% of children in youth detention were on remand, and 60% were First Nations children. On the ABC and 2GB, we argued this was proof the NSW Government's heavy-handed approach to youth offending was failing and urged a shift in focus to evidence-based alternatives to custody that increase community safety.

We influenced an **Independent Review into doli incapax**, the legal presumption that children under 14 lack capacity to knowingly commit crime. The review's report followed recommendations we made, calling for 'engaging [children] in diversion processes or therapeutic interventions' rather than punitive legal responses. When the NSW Government responded by rushing through a law making it more likely young children will face criminal convictions, we voiced our opposition in the media.

Our evidence-led solutions have been persuasive in parliamentary forums. A report from the **NSW Parliament Inquiry into regional community safety** agreed with our submission that 'regional youth crime is not a problem we can "police our way out of".' We have also been invited to appear at NSW and Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiries, where we have advocated for community-led responses to reduce the number of children locked up.

In an article in The Australian about a proposed bail support program for young people in Moree, we **defended diversionary support for young people** from simplistic attacks, explaining how these types of programs reduce offending at a significantly lower cost to locking children up.

'The NSW Government needs to get serious about real solutions and invest in programs and services in the community that address causes of offending.'

Jonathon Hunyor, CEO



The JEC's Emily Mayo and Jonathon Hunyor at the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Community safety in regional and rural communities (Photo courtesy of NSW Parliament)

'Children should not be held in solitary confinement. It's damaging and dangerous. NSW youth detention facilities have a duty to keep young people safe, protect their rights and dignity, and not subject them to further harm.'

Sophie Leaver, Senior Solicitor



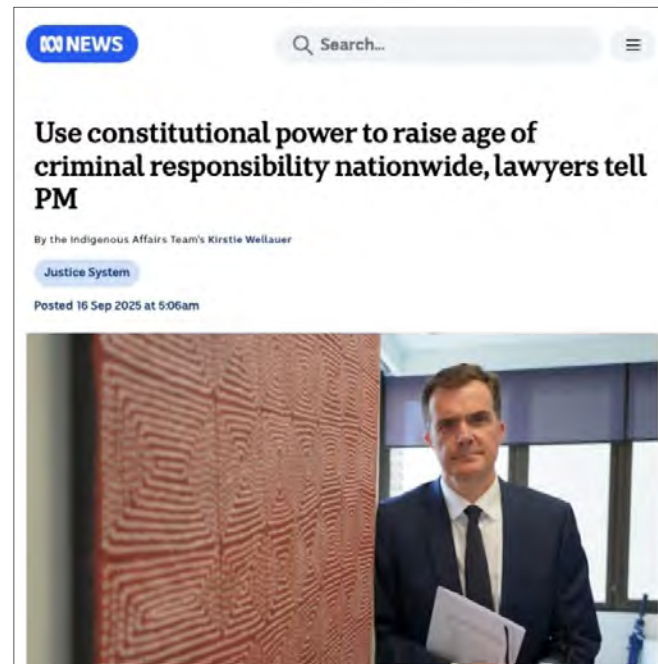
Calling for Commonwealth leadership on youth justice

As states and territories introduce even harsher laws and penalties for young people, the Commonwealth has the power, and an obligation, to protect the rights of children coming into contact with criminal legal systems.

We obtained legal advice from barristers Kate Eastman AM SC and Emma Dunlop, which confirms the Commonwealth can use the Australian Constitution's external affairs power to legislate in line with international treaty obligations on children's rights.

With the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, we coordinated an open letter signed by more than 200 organisations and leaders, urging the Prime Minister to act. This was reported nationally in the ABC and the National Indigenous Times.

The advice has been referenced in dozens of media stories, parliamentary speeches and inquiry appearances, and used by advocates to press for Commonwealth laws to raise the age of criminal responsibility and protect the rights of children in custody.



Supporting First Nations and youth-led solutions for justice reform

We partnered with Mouny Aboriginal Youth & Community Services (MAYCS) to refresh and co-convene the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC), a forum empowering Aboriginal and youth-led responses to the criminal legal system.

The YJC brings together Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, community legal service providers, young people, youth workers and academics with significant expertise in community-led advocacy, research and law reform.

A submission to the Select Committee Inquiry into Youth Justice, co-authored by the JEC and MAYCS, introduced the new YJC to the NSW Parliament. Noting that Aboriginal young people and communities are experts and leaders, we called for their contributions to be prioritised. A YJC submission to the inquiry into the NSW Human Rights Bill 2025 explained how the NSW Police drone trial in Moree underscored the need for a Human Rights Act.

The JEC has supported YJC members to build skills in advocacy to government, through training on NSW Parliament's budget estimates processes and explainers on parliamentary inquiries and reviews.



Members of the Youth Justice Coalition in November 2025

10-year-olds don't belong in prisons and police cells

The Raise the Age NSW Campaign is changing the narrative on youth justice.

Our 'ten is too young' advertising campaign ran for a second time as website ads, and on TV, radio and billboards across NSW from August 2025 to December 2025. Carat, one of our media partners, assessed the campaign's reach:

- Radio ads reached 35% of the Sydney radio audience.
- Nearly 100,000 people saw the ad in cinemas during the summer school holidays.
- Billboard and bus stop advertising was estimated to be viewed more than 3.3 million times, with each viewer seeing the ad 24 times on average.

Media consultancy FiftyFive5 assessed the advert's impact on public sentiment, confirming it is boosting support and reducing opposition to raising the age:

- 55% of people surveyed now support raising the age to 14, up from 48% in February 2025.
- 81% of people who have seen the ad think NSW should raise the age, compared to 51% of people who have not seen it.
- 11% of people who have seen the ad oppose raising the age, versus 26% of people who have not seen it.

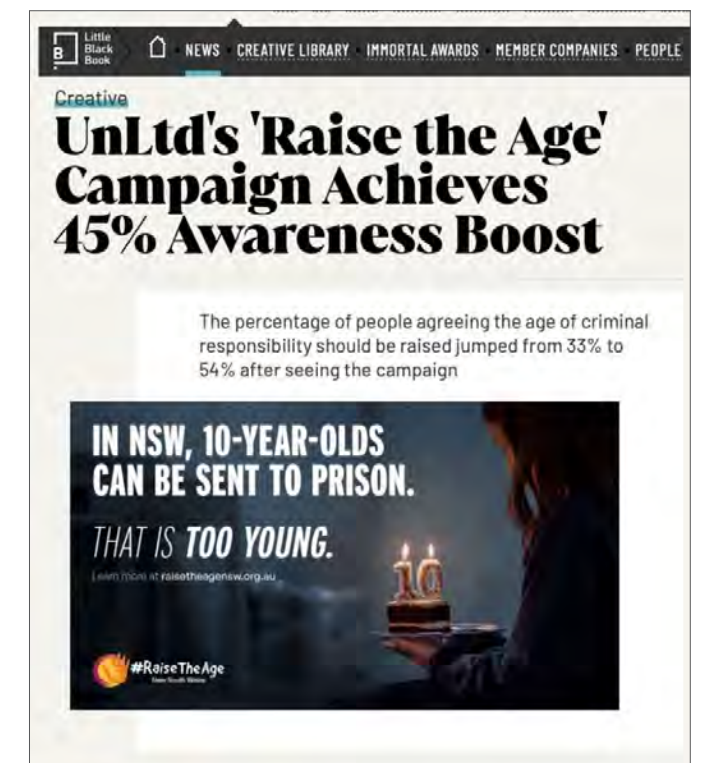


Advocates Kim and Lincoln at the NSW Parliament

We also delivered a powerful video campaign featuring human rights, First Nations and community service leaders from our partner network.

The videos were released to coincide with the first day of hearings of the NSW Select Committee Inquiry into Youth Justice and were viewed thousands of times across social media. The launch of the video campaign was covered in the National Indigenous Times and advertising trade media.

The videos supported the message of the Raise the Age NSW submission to the Inquiry, which was endorsed by 80 cross-sector organisations. We also supported a lived experience submission to the Inquiry from Kim and Lincoln, two adults with experience of early contact with the criminal legal system. Their powerful accounts were heard directly by decision-makers when they were invited to appear.



Defending prisoner rights

We called out the NSW Government for ignoring Ombudsman recommendations to protect prisoner rights and overriding a fundamental principle: that guilt must be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

In late 2025, the NSW Government lowered the standard of proof for offences in prisons, against the advice of the NSW Ombudsman and other legal experts. People in prison can now be found guilty on the balance of probabilities and face harsh punishments, including solitary confinement, bans on in-person visits and extra time in prison.

With the Aboriginal Legal Service, we prepared an open letter calling on the NSW Minister for Corrections to reverse the change. The letter also criticised the stalled implementation of 34 Ombudsman recommendations to reform the inmate discipline system, made after its review found 'systemic failure' to follow laws and policies and 'maladministration at all steps in the disciplinary process'. The letter was endorsed by 16 leading legal and human rights organisations and covered in legal media.



Trans prisoner justice

We pushed back on regressive and dangerous changes to prison laws and regulations that force trans women into men's prisons.

We spoke up in the media when the NT Government moved to bar trans women from female prisons. Echoing local advocates, Director of Policy and Advocacy Alastair Lawrie called for prisoners to be held in prisons aligned with their gender identity and highlighted the risk of harm and assault that trans women face in men's prisons.

We also called out a concerning change to NSW regulations that make it easier for authorities to place people in prisons that do not align with their gender identity. In coalition with trans advocates, we raised community awareness and built pressure on the NSW Government to respect the human and civil rights of trans prisoners.

'Placing trans and gender diverse people in prisons not aligned with their gender identity endangers their safety. Trans women in men's prisons regularly report experiencing harassment, intimidation, abuse, and violence.'

Alastair Lawrie, Director of Policy and Advocacy



Reforming anti-discrimination laws

Commonwealth and NSW anti-discrimination laws are outdated and in need of reform. We are at the forefront of advocacy to modernise and strengthen protections for human rights and fair access to all aspects of community life.

In 2021, our report *Leader to Laggard* detailed how the NSW *Anti-Discrimination Act* is failing in its most basic duty – to adequately protect people against discrimination as they go about their lives. In 2023, we welcomed the Attorney General's announcement that the Act would be reviewed by the NSW Law Reform Commission. Our comprehensive submission to the first consultation paper, released in August 2025, called for significant expansion and strengthening of the protections offered to vulnerable communities, as well as narrowing exceptions offered to religious institutions.

We have also continued to call on the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to protect LGBTQ+ students and teachers at religious schools against discrimination. A public forum hosted by the JEC featured Rev Dr Angus McLeay discussing his research into how Christian organisations manage rights to religious freedom with rights to non-discrimination for LGBTQ+ employees. The forum drew an engaged audience of discrimination law experts and community advocates, with discussion on how to progress this critical reform.

Combating hate speech

Preventing hate speech is an important protection for our community. But laws must be carefully drafted to avoid unintended harms and protect all vulnerable groups.

In February 2026, our CEO Jonathon Hunyor appeared at the **NSW inquiry into measures to combat right-wing extremism**. He spoke about the harms of hate speech, including that it silences the speech of others. He acknowledged the value of hate speech prohibitions but also urged the Parliament to look at proactive measures to build community cohesion.

The JEC made submissions to the **Sackar review of NSW hate speech protections** for vulnerable communities and the Commonwealth Parliamentary inquiry into the Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill. We recognised the role of appropriately targeted laws that prohibit hate speech and advocated for protections to cover not just race, but also religious belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and disability.

After a nine-month delay, the NSW Government tabled the Sackar review in mid-2026. The review extensively referenced our evidence and broadly agreed with our recommended approach, supporting the expansion of inciting hatred offences to protect more vulnerable groups. Disappointingly, the NSW Government rejected the review's recommendations.

Our submission to the **Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion** focused on policy and legal responses to racism including antisemitism, calling for implementation of the National Anti-Racism Framework (developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission), introduction of a 'conventional' Religious Discrimination Bill, and retention of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth).



'Beyond imagination': experiences of handcuffing in immigration detention

We shared first-hand accounts of people in Australia's harsh immigration detention system, revealing how detention practices are breaching human rights, causing physical and psychological harm and preventing access to critical medical care.

For over a decade, the Justice and Equity Centre has opposed mandatory and prolonged detention policies, while working to improve conditions for people held in immigration detention centres. Our focus has been on access to healthcare and the impacts of excessive use of force, including handcuffs.

Our new report *Beyond Imagination* shared accounts from more than 40 former and current detainees, including Hassan, who fled Iran to seek asylum in Australia. Hassan was held in offshore detention centres and handcuffed when flown to Australia for medical treatment for a heart attack.

'Knowing that my story is now part of a public report gives me hope that the suffering experienced by many people in immigration detention will not be forgotten. I hope this report helps raise awareness and contributes to meaningful changes in policy and practice so that others do not have to endure similar treatment in the future.'

Hassan, refugee and former immigration detainee



Protecting the right to protest

Protest rights in Australia are increasingly under attack. We pushed back on increased policing of protest activity and urged governments to protect the right to peaceful dissent.

Following reports of police violence against protestors in the Sydney CBD in February 2026, we stood with civil society to demand an independent review of police actions by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) and a broader inquiry into policing of protests in NSW.

In media and social media, we urged the NSW Government to recognise that peaceful protest is critical to democracy. We called out moves to restrict peaceful protest that had stoked community distrust and division. We developed the explainer 'What to do if you are arrested or injured by police' with the Human Rights Law Centre, helping people understand how to preserve evidence and present it to the LECC as part of a complaint about police conduct. We welcomed the subsequent news that the LECC would be investigating police actions at the CBD protest.



Resisting Commonwealth attempts to stifle accountability

We were part of a successful coalition that pressured the Australian Government to abandon controversial changes to freedom of information (FOI) laws.

The Government's Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2025 proposed changes to laws governing FOI requests for government information that would have increased delays and imposed unfair costs, while making it easier for requests to be refused.

With legal, media and transparency advocates, we opposed the Government's plan, explaining how the proposal was an erosion of democracy and accountability.

Following sustained pressure, civil society celebrated a win in March 2026, when the Government withdrew the controversial Bill.





First Nations justice

Because reconciliation
requires action.

'The JEC is an important partner for Mouny. We work together through the Youth Justice Coalition, community-led youth justice and broader advocacy to make sure the voices and experiences of Aboriginal young people, families and community reach the places where decisions are made. JEC brings strong legal, policy and advocacy expertise while knowing when to listen, when to back community and when to use their influence. That's what genuine partnership looks like to us.'

Daniel Daylight, CEO of Mouny Aboriginal Youth and Community Services

We gratefully acknowledge generous financial support from Allens for our work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice. The JEC and Shopfront First Nations Social Justice Graduate Program is supported by a generous grant from the Matana Foundation for Young People, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer and David and Marcia Atchison.

Our Indigenous Child Protection (Family is Culture Advocacy) Project is supported by a generous grant from the B B & A Miller Foundation.

Towards Truth is made possible by generous financial support from the following firms, foundations and people: Allens, Ashurst Perkins Coie, Clayton Utz Foundation, Colin Biggers & Paisley, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Heather and Malcolm Crompton, Hall & Wilcox, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, Lander & Rogers, Maple-Brown Family Foundation, Macquarie Group, Murugan Thangaraj SC, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, MinterEllison, Squire Patton Boggs, Angus and Emma White, Williams Fund, Wotton Kearney.

Challenging discriminatory policing in the Federal Court

First Nations people in NSW are unfairly targeted by discriminatory policing practices. We are representing two Aboriginal brothers in a ground-breaking racial discrimination test case to challenge the disproportionate use of 'bail checks' by police against First Nations young people.

The brothers and their family endured more than 120 intimidating home checks by police across 10 months. The boys were just 11 and 13 when the checks started, while they were on bail for the first time after being passengers in a stolen car. Neither had a significant criminal record and the court had not authorised home checks.

'It feels like police target blackfellas more than anyone else. It feels like discrimination. By taking this to the Federal Court, my boys are standing up for their community and saying "enough is enough".'
– Megan*, JEC client and mother of the two boys

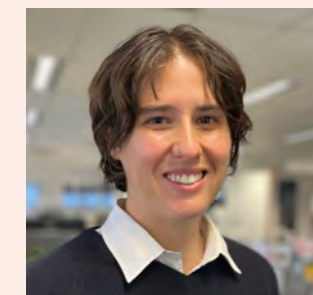
Expert analysis of NSW Police data commissioned by the Justice and Equity Centre revealed police disproportionately surveil First Nations children while they are on bail: they were 11.7% more likely to be checked and subjected to 42% more checks on average. First Nations children were also twice as likely to be subjected to 'very frequent' checks (more than 11 per month).

After a race discrimination complaint against NSW Police could not be resolved in the Australian Human Rights Commission, we filed the test case on behalf of the family in the Federal Court. Reporting by the Guardian, National Indigenous Times and Australian Associated Press highlighted the case and broader issue of discrimination.



'Everyone should be treated equally by police. But First Nations people are far more likely to be targeted by intimidating police powers because of race. This case is about holding NSW Police accountable for discriminatory practices that harm First Nations children and our communities.'

Kate Sinclair, Solicitor



Towards Truth reaches a milestone

Towards Truth is our ground-breaking truth-telling partnership with the UNSW Indigenous Law Centre. This year, Towards Truth deepened connections with community and published its 100th research subject.

In July 2025, Towards Truth hosted award-winning Wiradjuri author **Dr Anita Heiss** AM in conversation with journalist Nicole Abadee at the Museum of Sydney. Anita and Nicole discussed the role fiction can play in truth-telling, highlighting its ability to build empathy and understanding across centuries of history.

Georges River Council invited us to share our research into the Frontier Wars at their ‘Yarn Up’ event, co-delivered with Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation and attended by members of the local First Nations community. We highlighted how orders from NSW colonial authorities contributed to violence against Aboriginal people and the early history of resistance to dispossession of land. Georges River Council won a Local Government Award for truth-telling initiatives, including this work with Towards Truth.

The Australian Human Rights Commission’s Social Justice Report 2025 showcased Towards Truth as an example of non-government truth-telling in practice. And we delivered visual snapshots of our work via a Towards Truth Instagram account, reaching nearly 50,000 people in three months.

Towards Truth was **invited to present research** to NSW Treasury staff and secondary school teachers, as well as at the Supreme Court of NSW at an event hosted by the Francis Forbes Society and Judicial Commission of NSW. We also participated in National Reconciliation Week events at Commonwealth Bank Australia, Allens, Wotton Kearney, Hall & Wilcox and Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer.

In this financial year, **we completed research** on the Frontier Wars, criminal offences, contemporary policing and Aboriginal reserves, reaching a milestone of 100 subjects published. Upcoming research includes Land Rights and Criminal Sentencing.

‘Towards Truth is an important contribution to truth-telling in Australia—grounded in evidence and designed to endure beyond political cycles. Having supported my family through Queensland’s Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry, and experienced the emotions that came with its abrupt and unfinished conclusion, I hope to see the Towards Truth model replicated more broadly across Australia.’

Brooke Scott, Executive Manager First Nations Strategy of CommBank



Nicole Abadee and Anita Heiss in conversation



L-R: Jonathon Hunyor (JEC), Justice Phillip Boulten, Anna Harding (Towards Truth), Kate Sinclair (JEC) and Shane Phillips (Tribal Warrior) at the Supreme Court of NSW

Towards Truth year at a glance



Boosting our truth-telling team



Matilda Slater-Phillips

The Towards Truth team received a major boost in 2026, with the addition of two new First Nations research assistants, Jessica-Lee Arnott and Tallas Lynch. Dharug woman Matilda Slater-Phillips also joined the team as a research lawyer.

‘I was drawn to the opportunity to bring together my experience as a lawyer with my research and academic skills,’ Matilda said.

‘Towards Truth gives me the chance to investigate, in a greater level of detail, histories that have personally affected my own family. That personal connection makes the work particularly meaningful to me.’

‘Exploring these histories has reinforced for me how important it is to understand not just what happened, but how legal institutions enabled those experiences to occur.’

‘The value of truth-telling is in what we do with that knowledge, particularly how it can lead to greater understanding, accountability and meaningful change.’



Towards Truth team members and collaborators celebrate the milestone of 100 published research subjects

Supporting safety and wellbeing for First Nations families

First Nations children should be able to stay safe and connected to culture, community and Country. But Aboriginal children in NSW continue to be removed at alarming rates.

In NSW, Aboriginal children make up less than 8% of the child population but almost 50% of children in out-of-home care. In partnership with AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW / ACT) and the UTS Jumbunna Institute, we are demanding better outcomes. Our coalition maintains pressure on the NSW Government to place power in the hands of First Nations communities and commit to reforms that can keep First Nations families safe and together.

Our Working Group highlighted serious concerns about the **cultural safety of psychological assessments** of Aboriginal children and parents carried out by the NSW Children's Court Clinic. The assessments closely inform decisions by Children's Court judges to remove children or not restore them to their families. We brought these concerns to the attention of the NSW Audit Office, which has announced an audit of these assessments.

In discussions with the **NSW Office of the Children's Guardian**, we exposed how changes to Working with Children Check appeal rights make it harder for prospective First Nations carers to be approved. We now meet monthly with the Office, to inform the Guardian's work and put reform priorities identified by Aboriginal families and communities on the agenda.

We raised concerns in NSW Parliament that the **NSW Office for Youth** was established without a clear remit or adequate consultation with First Nations communities and organisations. We also cautioned that the Office risked threatening the

independence of the Advocate for Children and Young People. The Parliamentary Committee extensively referenced our evidence and made recommendations aligned with our calls for action.

The JEC also raised serious concerns about proposed changes to **child protection laws in the Northern Territory**, in a submission informed by our First Nations partners. The NT Government's proposal was introduced without proper consultation and threatens long-standing legislative safeguards for Aboriginal children and families. The NT Children's Commissioner expressed her deep thanks for the JEC's submission and its 'significant weight', helping to reinforce the views of NT Aboriginal leaders and legal experts.

'A strong, supported family is the best place for every child to grow up. First Nations families and communities have been raising happy, healthy and resilient children, strong in culture, for countless generations. It's time governments recognise this expertise, respect the right of First Nations communities to determine their own futures, and invest in community-led initiatives that empower families to stay safe and together.'

Lucy Kelley, Solicitor



Jonathan Hall Spence, Principal Solicitor, giving evidence at the Inquiry into the impact of the Office for Youth

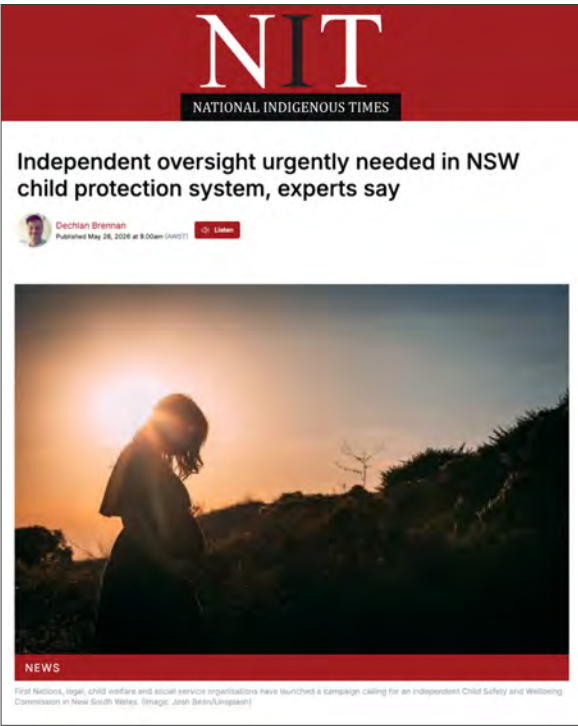
Calling for a Child Safety and Wellbeing Commission

Countless reports and inquiries have exposed systemic failures and inadequate accountability in the NSW child protection system. We have joined with First Nations, legal, child welfare and social services organisations in a campaign for a new **independent Child Safety and Wellbeing Commission**, to help keep children safe and with their families.

Disproportionately high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are involved across all parts of the NSW child protection and out-of-home care systems, with the worst rates of reuniting children with their families in the country. Oversight of child protection is scattered across government agencies and authorities, leading to gaps in supervision and wasted costs through duplication and lack of coordination.

With AbSec, we led the launch of the campaign for a Child Safety and Wellbeing Commission, explaining how it would be a circuit-breaker to cycles of harm by providing independent regulation and oversight of the child protection system from end-to-end. For families pulled into the system, it would be an independent place to take concerns and complaints, separate to the agencies that have the power to remove children.

The launch was covered in the National Indigenous Times and Newcastle Herald. We prepared and shared an explainer for community service organisations working with children and families to build understanding and momentum for change. We hope to work collaboratively with government to develop this critical oversight body.



First Nations Social Justice Graduate Program

Justice for First Nations people requires more First Nations lawyers.

The First Nations Social Justice Graduate Program is a partnership with The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, equipping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early-career lawyers with the skills, experience, confidence and relationships that are the foundation for a successful social justice legal career.

The two-year experiential program in criminal law and civil litigation gives participants the opportunity to explore career pathways, with access to experienced mentors across two highly-skilled, passionate and creative legal teams.

This year, we welcomed our sixth participant, Aimee Lawson, who will spend her first year working as a criminal law paralegal and graduate lawyer at The Shopfront. Luca Sawyer joined the team at the JEC after her year with The Shopfront, and will work across our Strategic Litigation team and Homeless Persons' Legal Service.



Proud Wiradjuri woman Luca Sawyer says the First Nations Social Justice Graduate Program is increasing her confidence and helping her learn what kind of lawyer she hopes to become.

'At the Justice and Equity Centre, I'm looking forward to expanding my skills in different areas, in a culturally safe and supportive environment. The JEC aligns with my values, which is super important to me.'

'My family are very proud of the progress I've made in my law career. They know how long and hard this journey has been. Starting university at seventeen and living so far away from them was challenging. I wouldn't have made it this far without their unwavering support.'

'We need more First Nations representation in the legal sector. There are many barriers that make that difficult. Often First Nations law students will have to leave Country, family, their cultural network, choosing between sorry business and study, or be stereotyped as a 'big noter'. There is also this ethical dilemma of becoming part of a system that oppresses our people every day.'



Luca Sawyer

'This program is fundamental to assist new First Nations law graduates, give us valuable experience that we can use for future jobs and ensure our voice is present in a profession that has a profound impact on our communities.'



Disability rights

Because people with disability should be able to thrive.

'Working with the JEC is always a positive experience. Their professionalism, expertise, practical advice and commitment to disability rights make a real difference, even when outcomes are challenging. The JEC plays a valuable role in bridging the gap between technical legislation and real world disability needs by translating the technical to plain language and providing invaluable advice and guidance.'

Darryl Steff, CEO of Down Syndrome Australia

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

Left behind in Australia's emergency response

We are holding Commonwealth agencies accountable for international evacuation processes that failed an Australian teenager with disability, leaving him stranded and at risk.

Australian teenager Sean Senbel-Lynch was in Vanuatu with his family when the 2024 earthquake hit. Sean has cerebral palsy, a visual impairment and epilepsy. A power outage meant his medication was destroyed and he and his family were traumatised by ongoing aftershocks. While hundreds of other Australian citizens and residents were evacuated safely, Sean was told he could not board a government evacuation flight. Sean believes this was because of his disability.

We have filed a disability discrimination case on Sean's behalf in the Federal Court, arguing the government agencies involved did not properly assess Sean's ability to board the evacuation flights or consider adjustments that could have allowed him to travel.

In coverage on ABC TV, radio and online, we raised our concerns about discrimination in Australia's emergency evacuation processes. We are calling on the Commonwealth to review policies and practices, to ensure other people with disability are not left stranded in high-risk and traumatic situations. The case is ongoing.

'We work with clients and disability partner organisations to run test cases that improve accessibility in Australia. Because people with disability have the right to full participation in our community.'

Ellen Tilbury, Principal Solicitor



Uber acts on disability discrimination

Our client Paula Hobley took on Uber after she was refused rides by Uber drivers more than 30 times while travelling with her assistance dog. With our support, Paula reached a settlement of her disability discrimination case in the Federal Court, with Uber committing to action.

Australian discrimination law is clear: people with disability have the same right to access rideshare services as anyone else. We filed Paula's case after refusals by Uber drivers regularly left her stranded, causing immense stress and severely limiting her independence.

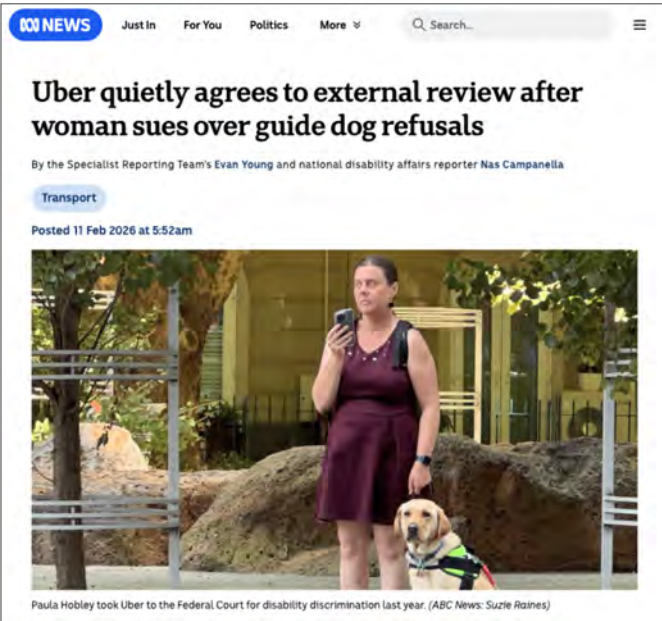
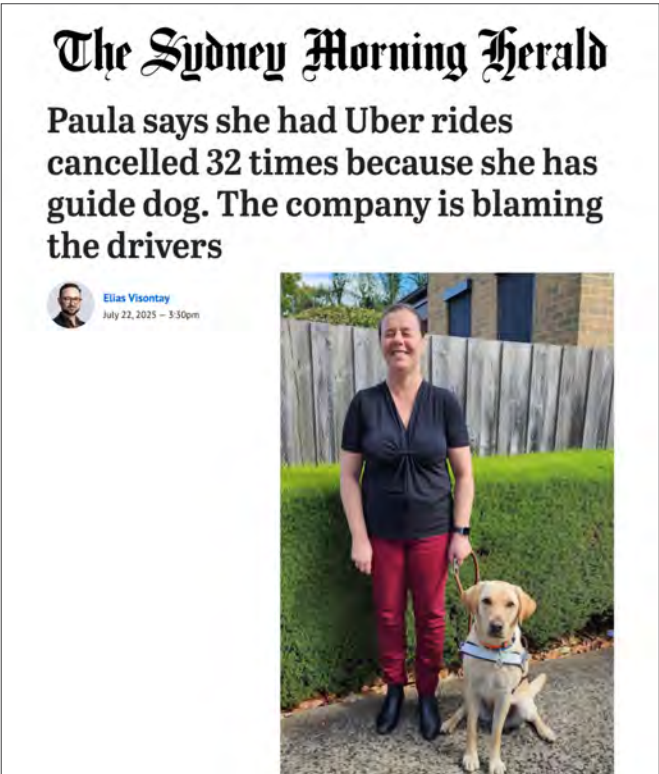
Following mediation, Paula and Uber settled the case on confidential terms, without admission of liability.

In a joint statement, Uber committed to an independent review of its Australian operations. The review, to be led by a person with disability, will examine how Uber can prevent its drivers refusing to transport people with assistance animals. The review's findings and recommendations, and evaluation of Uber's implementation of those recommendations, will be released in 2028.

The outcome of Paula's case was reported widely across ABC TV, radio and online.

'We often see in the media Uber say, "We do not tolerate discrimination" and "We take this seriously". Well, now this is a really good time and a really good way to show that.'

Paula Hobley, JEC client, to the ABC



The right to fly

Air travel is an essential service in Australia, connecting people with family, work, education and healthcare. But millions of Australians with disability face barriers at all stages of the journey. Our work challenges systemic discrimination, so people with disability can travel safely and independently.

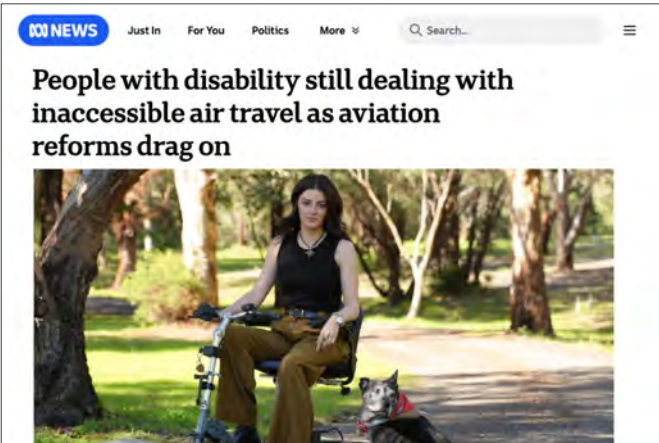
Challenging Qantas for systemic failures

Chelsea Hopkins-Allan has a health condition that can cause muscle weakness, so uses a mobility scooter, including when she travels. When flying with Qantas, she encountered a series of errors and failures that caused her to miss flights and left her stranded hours from home in Perth airport, putting her health at risk. We represented Chelsea in a disability discrimination complaint at the Australian Human Rights Commission, alleging she was let down by Qantas’ inaccessible systems.

When Chelsea shared her story with the ABC, Senior Solicitor Sheetal Balakrishnan explained how it highlights the need for systemic aviation reforms. Chelsea and Qantas have since settled the complaint.

‘I felt genuinely afraid and really shocked because it wasn’t just one obstacle, it felt like this constant failure at an organisational level. I’d done everything right on my end ... and nothing I did made a difference.’

Chelsea Hopkins-Allan, JEC client, to the ABC



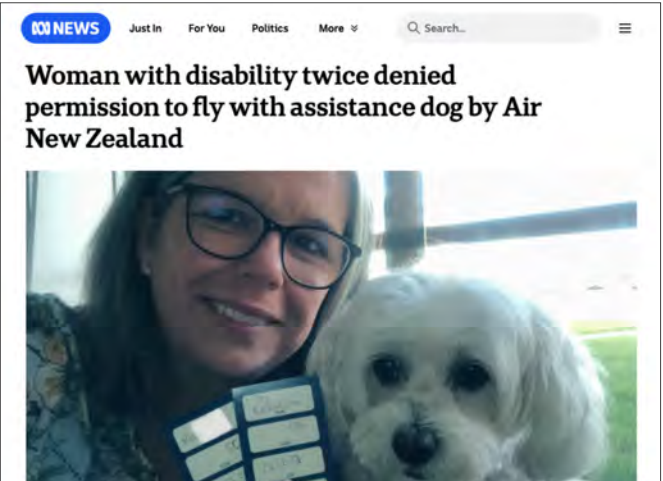
Improving Air New Zealand’s assistance animals policy

In 2025, we supported Lisa Robinson to challenge Air New Zealand over unfair and unlawful barriers for people travelling with assistance animals. After the airline twice refused to let her fly with her assistance dog, Lisa complained that the airline’s policy was discriminatory.

Air New Zealand improved its policy, but we explained to the ABC how the new policy still excludes some people with assistance animals recognised under Australian law.

We are now challenging Air New Zealand’s new policy in the Federal Court, on behalf of another client. Air New Zealand refused to let them travel with their assistance dog, because its new policy only recognises assistance animals that have passed an Australian state or territory government Public Access Test (PAT). The client lives in NSW, where there is no government PAT available. They are arguing the airline discriminated against them, as their dog is an assistance animal under the Disability Discrimination Act.

We hope this case will compel Air New Zealand to finally adopt a fair policy that recognises the rights of all Australians with assistance animals – and obliges all airlines operating in Australia to respect Australian discrimination laws.



Removing barriers for wheelchair users

Maina Gordon uses an electric wheelchair and requires a ‘lift’ to safely transfer in and out of an airline seat. When Maina flew to Griffith with Qantas, she was assured the equipment she needed would be available – but neither the lift nor the equipment needed to get her wheelchair off the plane were there. Maina had no option but to agree to a risky

and undignified manual transfer from the plane and had to use an unsuitable and unsafe non-powered wheelchair while in Griffith.

We represented Maina in a disability discrimination complaint against Qantas. The complaint was resolved following conciliation.

Breakthrough reform for airline accessibility

Working closely with the disability community, we are improving air travel accessibility by driving systemic change.

We continue to shape disability standards for aviation as a member of the Aviation Accessibility Steering Committee, alongside People with Disability Australia and the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations. These standards are the first of their kind for Australia and the Justice and Equity Centre has been instrumental in their development. A draft of the standards has been released alongside a public consultation paper. We are supporting the disability community to engage in this process and deliver major systemic change.

We were also successful in having the Australian Government enact recommendations we made to improve consumer protections for people travelling by air, in its Aviation Consumer Protections Bill. The strengthened protections will improve air travel for everyone, with an enhanced impact for people with disability.

Many recommendations we made to improve the Government’s proposed Aviation Consumer Protections Charter were taken up. The Charter will set out the consumer rights of people travelling by air. Our intervention ensures airlines and airports will have specific obligations to people with disability, leading to additional protections under consumer law.



‘People with disability shouldn’t have to take on a multi-billion-dollar corporation to challenge discrimination and get a fair outcome. Australia needs comprehensive disability standards for air travel, with a regulator given enough power to hold airlines and airports to account.’

Sheetal Balakrishnan, Senior Solicitor



Making the NDIS Fairer

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a major investment in our social infrastructure, holding out the hope of full and equal participation for people with disability.

Over years, we have worked with Disability Representative Organisations to make the NDIS fairer and more effective for the people with disability who rely on it. Through the **NDIS Systemic Working Group**, we provide expert legal advice to the disability community and support advocacy for NDIS legal and policy reform.

In 2025, our advice to Government improved the **NDIS 'Integrity and Safeguarding' Bill**, which the Government said was aimed at preventing NDIS rorting and enforcing compliance by providers. Several of our recommendations were implemented, protecting participants and avoiding legal uncertainty that would cause harm, such as people being unfairly penalised.

In February 2026, we released **NDIS Insights 2025-26**, the fifth in our annual series of reports informing the disability community about NDIS developments. The report was shared with our disability partners and accessed more than 3,000 times online.

In 2026, when **the Australian Government announced drastic changes to the NDIS** to remove hundreds of thousands of people from the scheme, restrict access for new participants and slash funding available to people who rely on NDIS support, we worked closely with our disability partners to oppose changes that would have harmful consequences.

Our explainer helped the disability community understand the most significant changes proposed in the Government's Bill, supporting informed participation in the consultation process. It was viewed at least 4,000 times and described on LinkedIn as 'brilliant' and 'incredibly helpful'. We also shared our analysis at disability community public forums.

Despite a shamefully short consultation timeline, the Senate Inquiry into the Government's Bill received more than 4,000 submissions. Our explainer and submission were cited by several advocacy organisations in their submissions.

We focused **our appearance before the Committee** on amendments to the Government's Bill that would alleviate harm. The ABC reported our concern that a requirement to access 'all appropriate treatment' would unnecessarily delay NDIS access for many people with severe and permanent disability.

Our **strategic and legal advice to Disability Rights Organisations** supported them to focus their advocacy on the most damaging consequences of the Bill, and to design solutions to protect participants from the most harmful measures. Our support helped combat government narratives that disability community concerns were overblown or based on misunderstandings.

Ultimately, the Government received support from the Opposition to pass its Bill. We are proud to have secured some targeted amendments by engaging directly with the Government, but share the disability community's dismay with the sweeping changes that were made and the harm they will cause.

'The NDIS is a critical social guarantee set up to enable equal participation in society for people with disability. We stood with the disability community to push back on changes that will prevent countless Australians from getting the support they need, causing immense harm.'

Mitchell Skipsey, Senior Solicitor



A Federal Court win reversed by Parliament

In February 2026, we won a game-changing case representing Lee Eastham in the Federal Court.

After an initial refusal by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), Lee secured NDIS funding for a mobility scooter at the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART). The ART said Lee was eligible for funding because of a combination of his vision impairment, physical impairments and the location of his home in a regional area. The NDIA appealed that decision, arguing Lee should only be eligible for supports where a need arose directly from the impairment that gave him access to the Scheme: his vision impairment.

In the Federal Court, we argued the ART had made the right decision and correctly interpreted changes to legislation that we and the disability community had fought for. The Court found in Lee's favour, in a judgment that required the NDIS to take a 'whole of person' approach when making funding decisions.

Media reported on this 'extremely significant' outcome. Lee told the ABC, 'I feel like I've actually achieved something that's going to not only benefit me, but everyone else that's going through the same process.'

We were deeply disappointed this important win for people with multiple disabilities was reversed by the Australian Government's changes to NDIS laws passed in August 2026.



Securing independent living support for Kim

We represented Kim to successfully challenge the NDIA when she was denied funding for the support she needs to live independently.

'Winning the Tribunal case means I have a secure future knowing I have the supports I need with ILO [individualised living options] funding. This gives me a lot of confidence for my future. It has reduced my anxiety, and I am less stressed about how I will look after myself when I move.'

'Justice and Equity Centre lawyers helped me through every step of the process, in a professional, clear, concise manner that was easy for me to understand. They were always available if I had any questions.'

'Having the support of JEC lawyers meant I felt well supported during the whole process. The lawyers were always very knowledgeable and had great insight as to the process of the tribunal and what steps to take next in order to win.'



Homelessness and housing justice

Because everyone should have a safe and secure home.

'StreetCare has made me feel so inspired and empowered to advocate for people experiencing homelessness. It makes me feel determined to change housing policy so that it is more empathetic to homeless people. It's also allowed me to be an advocate for the trans community, who experience high levels of homelessness. I really enjoy being involved with the wonderful group at StreetCare.'

Lauren, StreetCare member and housing advocate

We acknowledge the generous support for the Homeless Persons' Legal Service, including StreetCare, from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments' Community Legal Centres Program, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, the Public Purpose Fund NSW, Australian Government Solicitor, Allens, Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers, Gilchrist Connell, Hicksons | Hunt & Hunt | Holman Webb, Maddocks, Mallesons, MinterEllison, Ray Wilson and Plenary Group, and Wotton Kearney.

The Homeless Health Justice Partnership project is supported by the City of Sydney.

We thank the Judith Neilson Foundation, Clark Family Foundation and Mary Alice Foundation for providing valuable funding for our HPLS Women's Service.

Homeless Persons' Legal Service

Our Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) provides free legal help and representation, and challenges systemic barriers preventing people from having a safe home.

With the rising cost of living and severe lack of safe, affordable housing, our free legal advice has been more vital than ever. In the 2025-26 financial year, under a refined service model, **we gave legal help or referrals to 566 people** experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless: a more than 30% increase on last year. Client retention increased by 43%, indicating people are given the specialist support they need to stay engaged until their issues are resolved.

Strong relationships with the legal sector saw our **pro bono partners** grow from 4 to 6, with 3 additional firms providing secondees to work for HPLS in-house. We were also honoured to be chosen as the Law Society of NSW President's Charity.

Our advocacy for the rights of people sleeping rough has been guided by lived experience advocates and highlighted in media. Our **legal interventions in Wagga Wagga** challenging move-on orders, fines and threats of confiscation of personal property were successful for individual clients and led the local council to stall threatened enforcement actions.

'Having a secure home is a critical foundation for safety and wellbeing. The people who come to HPLS for help have been let down by broken support systems and often have nowhere left to go.'

Wes Burton, Managing Solicitor, Homeless Persons' Legal Service



Homeless Persons' Legal Service in 2025-26



Helping Daniel avoid homelessness

Daniel is in his 60s and on the Disability Support Pension. He had lived in the same private rental for 30+ years but was struggling to pay around \$700 per week in rent, even with help from family. Daniel had been on the priority social housing waiting list for almost a year and was increasingly concerned about becoming homeless.

Daniel's landlord went to NCAT to evict him around the same time Daniel underwent unexpected major surgery with an extended recovery period. His health issues significantly affected his ability to participate in the proceedings and find another place to live. Not knowing his rights as a long-term tenant, Daniel signed an agreement to vacate the property on a short time frame, without any compensation.

Daniel was referred to us by partner organisation the Wayside Chapel. We advised Daniel about his rights and represented him at NCAT, successfully securing Daniel more time to find an alternative home and \$3,000 in compensation to support his move. Our advocacy to Homes NSW escalated Daniel's social housing application, ensuring he had a safe home to move to before his eviction date.

How we help

Housing

We helped **232 people** resolve housing issues: preventing evictions, reversing social housing blacklisting and forcing landlords to repair properties. We secured **\$26,685** in rent reductions and compensation.

Criminal law issues

We supported **175 people** facing criminal charges, with a focus on assisting clients with complex mental health issues and diverting them from custody into therapeutic programs.

Financial issues

We helped **95 people** facing financial hardship and cleared **\$81,733** in debts and fines, alleviating severe economic stress, fear of eviction and risk of criminal enforcement.

Policing and government

We helped **32 people** understand and enforce their rights: by making complaints against police and other government agencies, or making requests relating to Freedom of Information, immigration, the NDIS and guardianship.

Compensation payments

We supported **33 people** to make claims for compensation payments after being a victim of a violent crime. Three successful claims finalised this year secured **\$18,615**.



Helping Sam challenge criminal charges

Sam* is transgender and lives with a disability, complex mental health needs and a neurodevelopmental condition. They were sleeping rough or staying in temporary accommodation while on the Disability Support Pension and awaiting NDIS support.

Sam came to HPLS after being charged with possession of a prescribed illicit substance but with no prior history of offending. Sam had expressed suicidal ideation to a friend, who called emergency services. When the police located Sam and detained them under the Mental Health Act, they found three oxycodone tablets and charged Sam.

HPLS lawyers gave advice and legal representation to Sam, who pleaded guilty. Following our submissions at sentencing, the Court issued a non-conviction order and Sam received no other penalty. HPLS is continuing to support Sam to secure long-term housing.

Jeremy Rea recognised with Bondie award

Jeremy Rea, HPLS Senior Solicitor Advocate, was honoured with the Bondie Award in recognition of outstanding work in criminal defence at the 2025 Legal Aid Gala. The award is named for the late Greg Bond, an Aboriginal Legal Service solicitor renowned for his deep commitment to justice for First Nations clients.

Jeremy has worked as the HPLS Solicitor Advocate since 2008, representing thousands of people and often helping to divert them from jail. Lawyers and advocates Jeremy has worked with over these years expressed how the award reflects Jeremy's unwavering commitment to supporting clients through challenging circumstances.

Jeremy Rea receiving the Bondie Award, photo courtesy of Salty Dingo

Supporting women facing homelessness

The HPLS Women's Service gives specialist support to women facing homelessness who have also experienced domestic, family or sexual violence, while challenging the complex social and economic factors pushing women into homelessness.

Now in its third full year of operation, the Women's Service continues to grow and deepen its impact. In 2025-26 we helped 260 women with legal help and additional supports, a 15% increase on last year.

Building the specialisation of the Women's Service has been an ongoing focus. In the past year we have invested in updating staff induction, training and resources. Our refined eligibility criteria and intake procedures are resulting in better and earlier identification of clients' needs, with appropriate support and advice at the earliest stages.

Referrals to our service are growing, reflecting our engagement efforts and the reputation we have built as a specialist service.

'Many women who ask us for help are facing disadvantage due to poverty, mental health concerns and insecure or unsafe housing. We couple trauma-informed legal support with access to an experienced Community Caseworker to address our clients' legal problems and wider needs.'

Tempe McMinn, Managing Solicitor, HPLS Women's Service



L-R: Anna-Jane Lark, Kira Levin, Christina Kasavetis, Tempe McMinn and Kate Bittar from the HPLS Women's Service

This year we helped:

- **143 women** with housing issues, including clearing unfair debts, accessing priority housing lists and advising on ending a tenancy with a violent partner. We secured **\$56,486** in rent reductions and compensation.
- **40 women** with financial issues and cleared **\$25,724** in debts and fines.
- **76 women** with criminal issues, including several cases where women were charged with a crime as a result of their experiences of domestic or family violence.
- **51 women** make claims for government compensation after being a victim of a violent crime, with clients successfully accessing **\$77,370** in the financial year.
- **47 women** with casework and other non-legal support that helped them access temporary accommodation, financial support, mental health services and social housing.

Helping Cara regain stability

Cara* was homeless, experiencing mental health issues and living in emergency accommodation with a limited support system, after escaping from two successive violent relationships. Women's Service lawyers helped Cara gather evidence for a victim's support application, outlining the violence she had experienced and the resulting trauma.

Cara received a \$10,000 recognition payment, 22 hours of counselling and \$600 of immediate financial assistance. We also helped Cara get \$5000 worth of fines written off, including many incurred by her ex-partner. One incident in particular had resulted in Cara's licence being suspended. With our support, Cara now has a home and some financial stability, and her licence suspension has been lifted.

Challenging 'misidentification' of victim-survivors of DFV

Women who are victim-survivors of domestic and family violence (DFV) are being unnecessarily dragged through the legal system when police make wrong decisions when responding to DFV call-outs.

Our criminal practice has represented dozens of victim-survivors facing criminal charges for offences alleged to have been committed against their abuser and/or an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) made against them to 'protect' their abuser. This systemic 'misidentification' creates trauma for victim-survivors when they need safety and protection.

We have successfully had charges and AVOs dropped or dismissed for nearly all clients we have represented. But this has often come after months of anxiety and trauma. For some women, it has meant losing their home, their job or even custody of their children.

We hold police accountable for poor practice through costs applications and complaints. We were awarded \$1,500 in costs in one matter where the officer in charge did not attend court on the day of the hearing and no witnesses were subpoenaed.

Helping Sophie overcome abuse and injustice

Sophie* moved to Australia from a war zone and soon met her partner, who began physically and psychologically abusing her when she became pregnant with their child. After the child was born, Sophie fled to a women's refuge and the Family Court gave her primary care of the child.

Her ex-partner engaged in systems abuse and coercive control, repeatedly undermining Sophie's parenting through breaches of court orders, withholding information, and attempting to have her Single Parent Payment cancelled, compounding her isolation and financial insecurity.

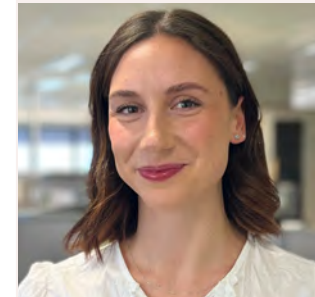
Police came to Sophie's home when her ex-partner alleged she had sent him text messages threatening to hurt herself and their child. Despite her repeated denials, offers to show police her phone, and disclosures of her ex-partner's abuse, police made an AVO application against her. Sophie was involuntarily admitted to a psychiatric ward for two weeks. During that time, the Family Court granted her ex-partner full care of their child.

We are building a coalition of legal practitioners to coordinate advocacy, which includes representatives from 10 Community Legal Centres, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Legal Aid. We are also helping increase awareness: meeting with decision-makers including the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner and senior policy staff in Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), and educating community lawyers about the role legal services can play in supporting clients facing unfair legal consequences from misidentification.

When Sophie came to the Women's Service, our Criminal Solicitor identified significant concerns with the police brief and compiled comprehensive evidence supporting Sophie's account. We twice asked police to withdraw the proceedings on the basis Sophie had been misidentified. They refused both requests.

On the hearing day, with no new evidence to support the allegations, police withdrew the application for the AVO.

Alongside legal representation, we gave Sophie support to navigate complex housing, social security and legal systems in a second language and connect with community groups to reduce her isolation. This combined support gave Sophie a pathway back towards safety, stability and reunification with her child. She has repeatedly told us that having someone to stand beside her throughout the process made all the difference.



'We represent women who have been subjected to horrific physical, financial and emotional abuse, who are further harmed when police misidentify them as the primary aggressor. When police respond to a DFV call-out, they have an opportunity to provide safety and support to women at risk. It's devastating so many of those opportunities are being missed.'

Kate Bittar, Criminal Solicitor, HPLS Women's Service

Driving change on the causes of homelessness

When safety nets break and systems fail, people already facing disadvantage are too easily pushed into homelessness. Our policy advocacy calls attention to what needs to change for people to get the support they need to have a safe and secure home.

The NSW Government called on our expertise to help improve protections for people living in shared accommodation, including boarding houses. We urged the Government to expand the scope of protections to include more kinds of shared living situations and advocated for stronger safeguards against eviction.

We harnessed the insights of lived-experience advocates in a submission to the Commonwealth Inquiry on Intergenerational Housing Inequity. First-hand accounts from members of StreetCare and the Housing and Mental Health Agreement Lived Experience Committee showed how disadvantage spans generations and called on the Australian Government to enshrine the right to adequate housing in law.

After the tragic death of Bikram Lama, a young Nepali man sleeping rough in Sydney's CBD, we joined calls for a coronial inquest, emphasising that lives can be saved with early housing and health supports. We have advocated for action on deaths linked to homelessness since the death of long-term StreetCare member Amir in 2024.

In City Hub, Policy Officer Alannah Daly highlighted the dire outcomes people face when the social housing safety net fails them: how people like Therese*, a woman in her 70s with mental health conditions and challenges with hoarding, are getting eviction notices rather than support. Alannah reminded readers that the best way to prevent homelessness is to ensure people are supported to stay in a safe home.



StreetCare member Glenn and Policy Officer Alannah Daly at 2SER, pushing for a coronial inquest into homelessness-linked deaths

StreetCare takes lived experience expertise across NSW

Homelessness is increasing rapidly in NSW. But lived experience advocates in our StreetCare group are influencing decision-makers and making a difference.

In the past year, StreetCare expanded its activities into regional NSW, thanks to increased funding from the NSW Government that recognised the value of lived experience expertise.

StreetCare advocates consulted with people experiencing homelessness in **9 regional centres** across the state, building trust with local communities and an understanding of local issues. Insights from the consultations are driving our advocacy to local and state governments. A visit to Wagga Wagga was a foundation for work by our Homeless Persons' Legal Service, providing direct support to people threatened with eviction from rough-sleeping camps and assessed the lawfulness of local government move-on activities.

A **NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into public toilets** was significantly influenced by StreetCare's recommendations. It found poor public toilet provision and design disproportionately impacts people experiencing homelessness, and echoed the evidence of StreetCare members in recommending a more private design for new public toilets.

The **City of Sydney** asked StreetCare to contribute to their homelessness action plan. StreetCare members recommended improved guidelines to regulate food safety for voluntary mobile food services, like food vans and soup kitchens.

Peak agency **Homelessness NSW** requested a partnership to co-design a sector-wide approach to lived experience engagement. StreetCare members developed lived experience frameworks, key principles and practice guides to be used by homelessness organisations to support trauma-informed practise.

StreetCare members have been invited to talk at influential forums, ensuring lived experience is heard by people with power.

Lauren spoke to judges at a **NSW Local Court Conference**, describing how homelessness makes dealing with the justice system harder. Judges said Lauren's speech was 'incredibly powerful' and a 'really insightful presentation regarding the impact of our actions on vulnerable people'.

Anna addressed NSW Ministers, MPs and social service CEOs at the **NCOSS post-budget briefing**, highlighting her experience of unsafe temporary accommodation and social housing.

'We were honoured to provide a platform for Anna to tell her story, ensuring that our most senior parliamentary and governmental decision-makers hear directly from people with lived experience.'

Cara Varian, CEO at NCOS



StreetCare visits local services in Byron Bay

Recognition for Tony's homelessness advocacy

StreetCare member Tony won the Homelessness NSW Sector Achievement Award, acknowledging the positive impact of his years of advocacy for people experiencing homelessness. Tony has been a StreetCare member for more than 4 years.

'From speaking to the media to sharing his story with parliamentarians and government officials, Tony helps people understand the human impact of policy decisions,' said StreetCare Project Manager Charmaine Jones.



NCOSS prize for Anna

Anna received the inaugural Amir Bodenstein Award for lived experience advocacy from NCOS, which is named after a former StreetCare member. Anna has been part of StreetCare since 2021 and represents the group in the Sydney Zero Action Group.

'This award is a perfect acknowledgement of Anna's passionate and tireless work for people experiencing homelessness,' Charmaine said.



Specialist advocates advising on housing and mental health

We support people with lived experiences of mental health conditions and insecure housing to advocate for change, through the Housing and Mental Health Agreement Lived Experience Committee (HMHA LEC).

The HMHA LEC was part of lived-experience consultation that helped shape potentially life-saving changes to how services in NSW respond to **mental health call-outs**. The NSW Government announced funding for a new health-led approach to mental health emergencies, following years of advocacy from experts including the JEC.

With JEC policy support, the HMHA LEC provided crucial 'gaps analysis' to the 13 **NSW Housing and Health Districts** tasked with delivering the Housing and Mental Health Agreement. This analysis helps Districts understand their readiness to include lived experience perspectives, and the work they still need to do.

HMHA LEC members developed a training module for **Homes NSW and NSW Health staff**, to support improved communication and engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness.

Members also determined recommendations in the JEC submission on the **NSW Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy**. These included improved availability of affordable, ongoing, personalised supports; trauma-informed training for government service staff; and greater access to safe, secure housing.

Our work embedding lived experience with the HMHA LEC was recognised with a **Mental Health Services Award** in September 2025.



Energy and water justice

Because everyone should have affordable, sustainable and dependable energy and water.

'The Justice and Equity Centre has been an invaluable partner in joining with the efforts of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW to ensure people facing financial hardship are not left behind in the energy transition. Through the combination of the JEC's policy and technical expertise and Vinnies' frontline experience supporting communities across NSW, we have advanced practical reforms to make energy services more affordable, accessible and equitable. We are deeply grateful for their generosity, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to achieving lasting systemic change for the people who need it most.'

Yolanda Saiz, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

We gratefully acknowledge the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, for funding our Energy and Water Consumers' Advocacy Program; and an anonymous donor for funding the JEC's Sustainable and Fair Energy Transition (SAFE) project.

Setting the agenda for a fairer energy transition

Australia's energy system is transforming at pace, to meet the demands of new technologies and imperatives for emissions reduction. Our work is ensuring people already facing disadvantage are not left behind in the transition.

Australia's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 is at risk unless we increase efforts to reduce energy-related emissions, which are around a third of overall emissions.

But the transition to a net zero energy system must be equitable. Our Energy and Water Justice team builds support among businesses, regulators and government for solutions that improve efficiency, lower costs, share costs fairly and accelerate renewable generation, to ensure reliable and affordable energy for the community. We draw on deep legal and policy expertise and work in coalitions to build shared understanding and power: generating momentum for reform and ensuring community voices are heard loudly by decision-makers.

Welcoming equity in the Home Energy Saver Program

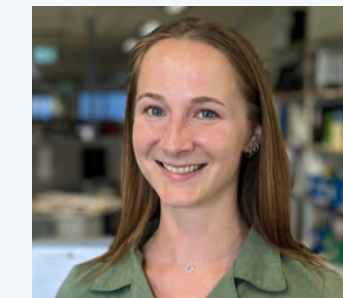
Efficient and all-electric homes are cheaper and healthier to live in. But upfront costs can put upgrades out of reach for renters and low-income households. Our advocacy helped ensure the NSW Government's flagship Home Energy Saver Program gives substantial support to households who would otherwise be left out of the energy transition. The program's focus on equity was influenced by our recommendations to target households where efficiency measures would have the most impact.

Zero-interest loans and \$4,000 subsidies are now available to low-income households for efficiency investments including heat pump water heaters, ceiling insulation, draft-proofing and double glazing.

In line with our recommendations, the Home Energy Saver Program was designed to enable wider electrification and energy efficiency objectives, including by supporting implementation of minimum energy efficiency standards for rental homes.

'This up-front support unlocks long-term benefits for households struggling with high energy costs and homes that are inefficient and expensive to run.'

Kira van Os, Policy Officer



Energy efficiency for rental homes

Too many renters are living in homes that are unhealthy and expensive to heat and cool. After years of persistent advocacy from organisations including the JEC, the NSW Government committed to investigating options for minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties in its 2024 NSW Consumer Energy Strategy. These standards will make rental homes safer, healthier, more comfortable and cheaper to run.

In 2025, the NSW Government consultation process for minimum standards began, with the JEC taking a lead role in developing the shared objectives and recommendations for reform. These include mandating electrification, adopting a ratings-based approach, and committing to a timeline for full implementation from day one. The Government has received a clear and coordinated message of support for minimum standards, and our approach offers a template that advocates in other jurisdictions can look to recreate.

Delivering fairer rules on gas use

We are helping to re-write gas network rules to power the transition away from gas to renewable electricity, while protecting households that cannot yet make the switch.

Many people who have the choice are disconnecting from gas and benefitting from efficient electrification. But renters and households who can't afford the upfront costs are locked into increasingly expensive gas use. Our work is delivering fairer gas regulation to smooth the path away from household gas use, while protecting people stuck on the network.

Who pays for new gas connections?

Gas companies have encouraged network growth by subsidising the cost of new connections, spreading those costs across the bills of all gas consumers. This has slowed action on climate change, while unfairly increasing costs for existing gas users.

While working to prevent new connections, we helped win an important rule change with a rapid timeline for implementation, in partnership with Energy Consumers Australia (ECA). By the end of 2026, the full cost of any new connection will be charged directly to the person or business requesting it. This makes a new gas connection less appealing and means gas consumers who cannot leave the network do not unfairly pay for unnecessary expansion.

Winning fairer costs for disconnections

The Australian Energy Market Commission has adopted our proposed gas network rules framework, limiting the costs that can be charged for disconnections to the minimum necessary to do so safely and ensuring those costs are paid upfront by the person or business requesting the disconnection. This again ensures people stuck on the network are not unfairly footing the bill.

Protecting consumers from the cost of 'stranded assets'

We have also initiated gas network regulatory reform aimed at ensuring the rules deal fairly with the challenges and costs of the energy transition.

Changes we proposed in collaboration with ECA will support the shift away from gas, by ensuring gas businesses do their part to help manage network retreat. They also seek to ensure consumers aren't responsible for all the costs of network assets, which are increasingly uneconomic and redundant as people electrify.

'We have fundamentally changed the conversation about gas network decline. The regulator has called out the need for operators to actively manage the inevitable retreat and recognised consumers are not responsible for guaranteeing the costs of stranded assets.'

Douglas McCloskey, Program Director



CLEAN ENERGY NEWS AND ANALYSIS

Governments urged to share costs of gas network death spiral, as rule maker lays down the law



Driving fairness in the energy system

The NSW energy system is vast and complex, with a tapestry of energy generators, network operators and energy service providers. Our expertise plays a critical role in driving system-level planning, regulation and government intervention that is fair, efficient and protects the interests of all NSW households.

Protecting consumer choice for energy tariffs

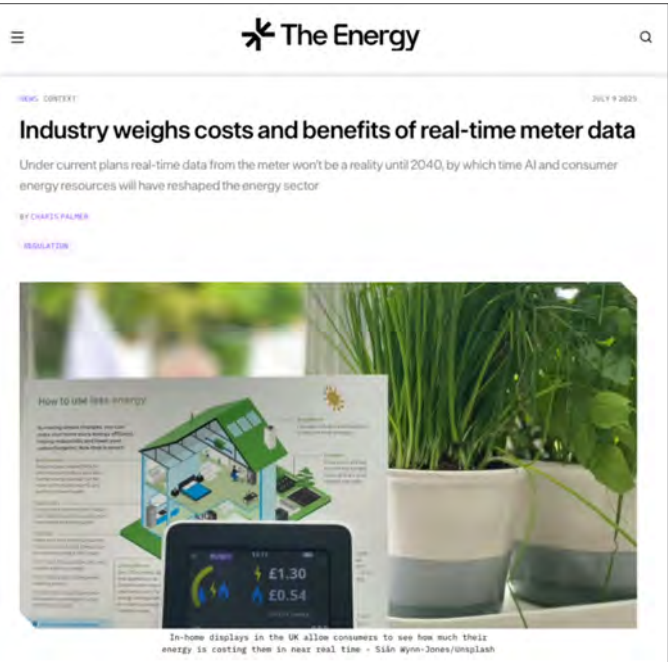
Our work on electricity tariff reforms influenced the NSW Government to continue to require that energy users give explicit informed consent before a retailer can switch them to a 'demand tariff' from a flat-rate tariff. A demand tariff can mean higher bills for households that cannot time-shift energy use or invest in batteries and smart appliances.

Securing fairer access to energy data

Our recommendations were reflected in an AEMC ruling on consumer access to real-time energy data, including moving forward the deadline for companies to give consumers free access from 2040 to 2028.

'New rules that give consumers better access to data will help households make informed choices about energy plans, make it more likely they get accurate bills and enable them to save money on the energy they use.'

Jan Kucic-Riker, Policy Officer



A win on embedded networks

After pushing for reform for more than a decade, we celebrated the NSW Government's action to improve protections for the more than 95,000 households across the state who live in 'embedded networks'

Embedded networks involve the owner of a site buying bulk electricity and on-selling it to residents. They are regularly found at apartment buildings, retirement villages, caravan parks and strata schemes where people often have no choice of energy provider, are left paying more and face other kinds of disadvantage.

The Government commitment reflects many JEC recommendations. When fully implemented, residents in embedded networks will pay fairer prices and have consistent access to the important consumer protections, hardship supports and dispute resolution processes that most energy consumers can expect.

Leading public debate to promote energy fairness

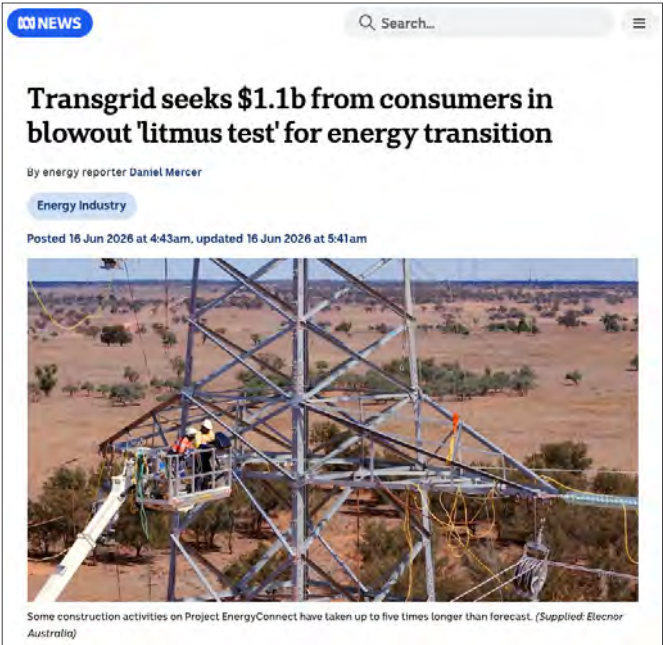
Our expert media commentary highlighted inequity in energy system planning, how that impacts household bills and what can be done to improve fairness and affordability.

In ABC reporting, we explained how some new and proposed transmission projects will result in unnecessary costs for consumers and significant delays to the energy system transition. This is part of our work pushing government and regulators to make better planning decisions that minimise overall costs for energy consumers.

We used media and an appearance at a NSW Parliamentary inquiry to warn about the risk posed to energy and water services by an influx of data centres. We pushed for comprehensive data centre regulation to focus on community needs and priorities.

We argued for smarter investment in energy system strength and made the case against a \$400 million bill for NSW energy consumers proposed by transmission giant Transgrid to buy equipment that may be redundant before it is built. And our work opposing Transgrid's attempts to mis-use energy rules to unfairly charge consumers \$1 billion+ for cost overruns was reported by the ABC, The Australian and industry press.

'Transgrid's bid is a litmus test for Australia's energy regulations.'
Craig Memery, Senior Advisor, to the ABC



Improving the Default Market Offer

The Default Market Offer (DMO) is a critical consumer protection and an important tool for shaping the retail energy market. Recent JEC-led reforms mean the DMO's objective is now squarely focused on outcomes for consumers.

The DMO gives energy consumers a fair price when they cannot secure a more competitive offer and is a trusted comparison point for all market offers. The JEC has led consumer advocacy for a more effective DMO since its inception 8 years ago, building understanding of how an inadequate DMO impacts consumers.

This year, we influenced the Commonwealth Government's review of the DMO and shaped the outcome. The DMO now has a single objective: to protect household consumers. Consideration of retail profits or the interests of competition have been removed and the explicit focus on efficiency has led to DMO prices \$30-90 lower than they would have been under the old rules.

Reforming unfair retail practices and improving protections

Energy is an essential service and energy retailers should act fairly and transparently. We work to make energy accessible and affordable for all members of the community.

Consumers secured an important protection this year when the Australian Government banned unfair trading practices. We helped drive this reform as part of a coalition of consumer groups. Energy consumers regularly report unfair practices that leave them confused and paying more for services that do not meet their needs. These strengthened consumer laws will pressure all energy service providers to treat people fairly and do better in how they structure and sell their services.

Our work exposing the challenges of switching energy plans led to change. We countered energy industry claims that switching is 'fairly easy' in the media. And our recommendations helped drive regulator action, including a new requirement that energy retailers must communicate 'better offers' more prominently on bills and in emails.

Protections for households with life-saving energy needs

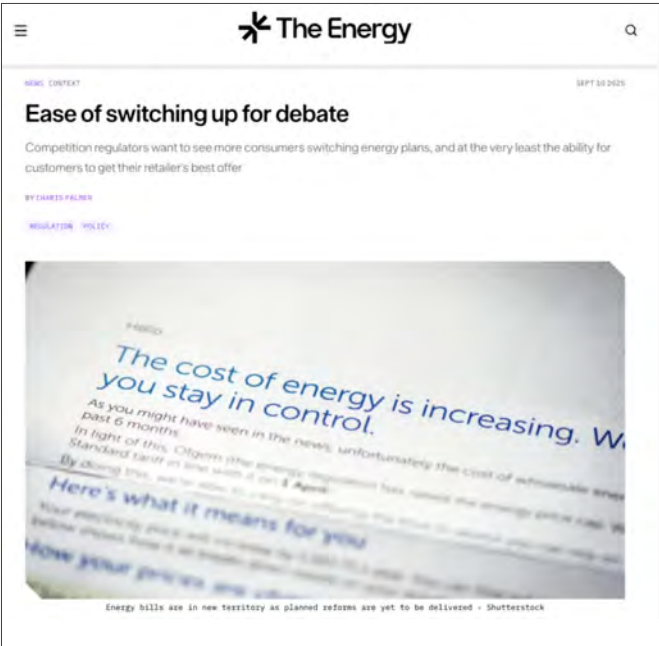
The Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) finalised a rule change enhancing protections for people who rely on energy for medical and life support. Responding to our coordinated community advocacy and aligning with our recommendations, this included streamlining registration processes, mandating annual check-ins and ensuring households can choose how to be notified of any planned outages.

Working to prevent energy disconnections

Our *In-person visits before electricity disconnection* report built on years of evidence of the impacts of disconnection. It explored how properly structured visits, instead of threats, can be the critical circuit-breaker that stops the cycle of debt and helps households access the support they need. The report builds on momentum for reform of disconnection processes, and its key findings have been recognised in Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and Commonwealth Government review and reform processes.

Shaping grants to reach diverse communities

We welcomed the finalisation of the NSW Government Inclusive Energy Outreach Grant, which we played an influential role in shaping. This work helped our partners Sydney Community Forum and Ethnic Communities Council NSW secure funding to expand their work with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, building energy literacy and supporting improved affordability and access to NSW electrification and upgrade programs. This grant will help those organisations build and share models of community outreach and capacity-building to ensure the transition works for everyone.





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.

Deepening our commitment

The Justice and Equity Centre is committed to reconciliation. We remain staunch supporters of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its calls for Voice, Treaty and Truth.

Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) concluded in March 2026, with nearly all objectives completed. Reconciliation Australia has invited us to step up to a 'Stretch' RAP, a more advanced commitment requiring organisations to use their sphere of influence to progress reconciliation. We are developing that new RAP and expect it to be in place soon.

We acknowledge with gratitude the work of Gamilaraay woman Emma Bastable, who chaired the RAP committee for more than two years until leaving the JEC in 2025, and was integral to the Plan's success.



Solicitor Kate Sinclair with Aunty Lynda Holden

'Meaningfully pursuing reconciliation means being willing to listen, to be challenged and to put our words into actions. It requires effort and commitment, and it is wonderful to see this commitment embedded in all aspects of the work of the JEC, including the work we do with our partner organisations and pro bono supporters.'

Elizabeth Clark, RAP Committee Chair



Building cultural awareness

As an organisation working for First Nations justice and in partnership with First Nations organisations, it is essential JEC staff develop understanding of First Nations histories and cultures.

Last year, we introduced a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning plan, to cultivate staff, board and volunteer understanding of First Nations culture. We began implementation by engaging Aboriginal-owned cultural education organisation Mirri Mirri to deliver foundational and advanced cultural awareness training for JEC staff.

We asked firms partnering with the Homeless Person's Legal Service (HPLS) to provide their staff with cultural awareness training, as many HPLS clients are First Nations people facing intersecting disadvantage. We welcome the commitment by Allens, MinterEllison, Gilchrist Connell and Corrs Chambers to provide this training, which will support firm lawyers to work more effectively with First Nations clients.

Reconciliation highlights

Participating in contemporary First Nations cultures by attending *Yolŋu Power: the Art of Yirrkala* exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and *Tony Albert: Not a Souvenir* exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Hearing insights from Dhunghutti elder Aunty Lynda Holden in a NAIDOC Week conversation with JEC Solicitor and Dharug woman Kate Sinclair, hosted by Mob Strong and Financial Rights Legal Centre. Staff learnt about First Nations resilience and resistance to unfair structures as Aunty Lynda shared her story of the forced adoption of her baby and her work to improve the healthcare system for Aboriginal people.

Learning about truth-listening at a UTS National Reconciliation Week event, with ANTAR's National Director Blake Alan Cansdale explaining why people must be willing to experience the discomfort that can arise from truth-telling and encouraging allies to become accomplices, to help bear the cost of Reconciliation.

Deepening knowledge of local Aboriginal and colonial history by attending Seeing Sydney, Knowing Country exhibition at the Museum of Sydney.



Book covers reproduced with permission of University of Queensland Press and Text Publishing.

Engaging with and learning from Aboriginal storytelling and culture through our Girinyalanha Book Club. Girinyalanha means 'talk together' in Wiradjuri, in recognition of lasting traditions of Aboriginal storytelling. Staff read and discussed *Where the Fruit Falls* by K A Ren Wyld, *Homecoming* by Elfie Shiosaki, *Me, Antman and Fleabag* by Gayle Kennedy and *Always Will Be* by Mykaela Saunders.



JEC staff at the Museum of Sydney

Financial performance

The Justice and Equity Centre finished the 2025-26 financial year in a strong financial position thanks to the ongoing support of our funders, donors and pro bono partners.

We recorded income of \$9.5 million, a 23% increase on the last financial year, driven primarily by growth in grants. This expanded our capacity to deliver legal services and public advocacy.

The resulting surplus of \$592,000 reflects our ongoing focus on securing funding that covers the full cost of delivering our services, including the organisational infrastructure and support functions that make this work possible.

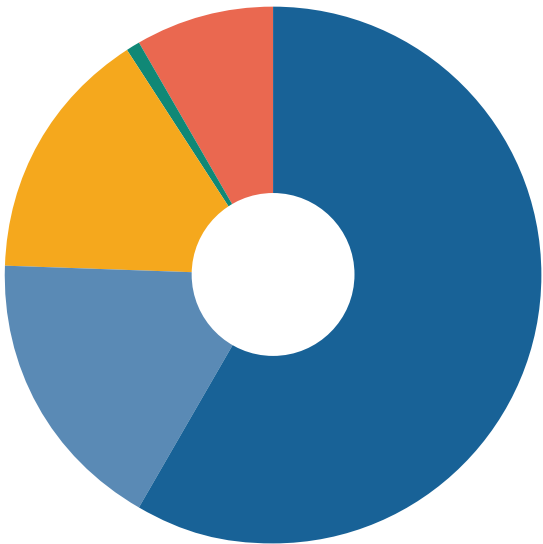
As demand for our services continues to grow, and with some uncertainty in the funding environment, maintaining adequate reserves remains important. At 30 June 2026, our net assets of \$3,536,706 provide a solid foundation.

We continue to benefit from generous in-kind support from pro bono partners, who contribute through staff secondments, volunteer engagement, and the donation of resources and facilities. We leveraged \$17.5 million in pro bono support this financial year, reflecting the strength of our partnerships and reputation as a leading social justice law centre.

FUNDING SOURCES

Grants \$5,550,715	58%
Includes grants from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments and the NSW Public Purpose Fund	
Philanthropic \$1,613,384	17%
Income from philanthropic trusts and foundations	
Donations and events \$1,468,321	15%
Income from donations, fundraising appeals and events	
Fee for service \$141,241	1%
Income from legal casework	
Other income \$742,280	8%
Includes interest income, fees for participation in regulatory processes and recovery of rental costs	
Total	\$9,515,941

INCOME 2026

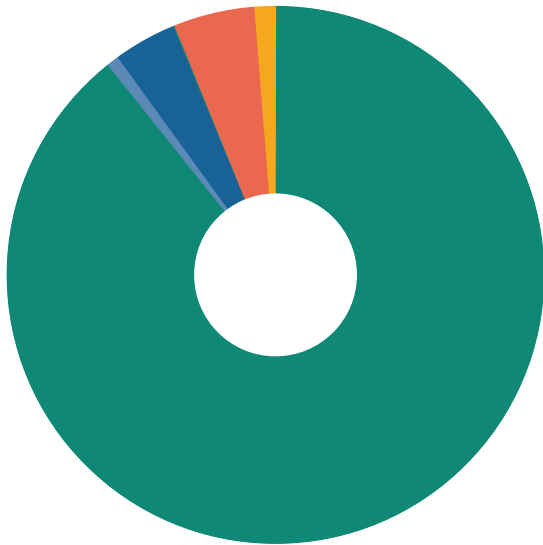


- Grants
- Philanthropic
- Donations and events
- Fee for service
- Other Income

PROGRAM COSTS

Employees \$7,266,839	81%
Includes staff salaries and related costs	
Consultancy \$111,295	1%
Includes the cost of experts assisting with program delivery	
Depreciation and amortisation expense \$588,077	7%
Includes occupancy costs	
Administration \$785,320	9%
Operating expenses associated with administration including finance, IT, office costs and telecommunications	
Other \$171,601	2%
Miscellaneous costs	
Total	\$8,923,133

EXPENSES 2026



- Employees
- Consultancy
- Depreciation and amortisation expense
- Administration
- Other

The JEC'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.

Our Board



Appointed November 2022, Chair since November 2023

Chair, Sera Mirzabegian SC is a senior barrister who practises in class actions, commercial litigation, regulatory investigations and litigation, and human rights. She has acted for major Australian and international companies in a variety of industries, independent statutory commissions, and marginalised individuals and communities on a pro bono basis. She has previously served as a Councillor of the NSW Bar Association and chaired the NSW Bar's Diversity and Equality Committee.



Appointed October 2025

Alexandra Shehadie is a respected expert in organisational culture and integrity, with over two decades of experience advising Australian institutions on systemic reform, accountability, and the prevention of harm, including sexual harassment, bullying, racism and other forms of discrimination. She is recognised for her work leading major reviews into workplace culture for national and international organisations across diverse industries. She has worked as a solicitor with the Legal Aid Commission and Macquarie Legal Centre and a Ministerial Adviser (Child Protection, Domestic Violence, Disability and Ageing). She has served as Chair of the Board of Guthrie House, a residential program for women exiting prison.



Appointed November 2025

Ali Rahman is the National Clinical Manager of Multicultural Practice at headspace, Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services. Ali is also on the Governance Committee of the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative, a national body that advises on policy, strengthens health equity for multicultural communities, and guides cross-sector reform. Ali is a registered psychologist with extensive experience in mental health and substance support. He has led national initiatives to strengthen cultural capability, embed co-design, and ensure migrant and refugee voices are central to service design and policy.



Appointed November 2023

Brooke Massender is a partner and Global Head of Pro Bono at Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, where she leads the direction of pro bono services across a network of 26 offices. She has extensive experience in social impact, using advocacy for systemic change, and bringing together cross-sector stakeholders to achieve tangible outcomes for disadvantaged communities. Brooke is an experienced advocate with expertise in access to justice and working with First Nations clients. She provides strategic and executive advice for many non-profits, including as Chair of Justice Connect and a member of PILnet's Pro Bono Leadership Council.



Appointed November 2025

Jade Harley is a purpose-driven leader with a proven record of forging cross-sector partnerships that deliver measurable social impact. As Director of Impact at UnLtd, she works with media, marketing and creative industries to unlock their financial and cultural influence to drive positive change for children and young people facing disadvantage. A passionate advocate for justice, Jade played an active role in supporting the Justice and Equity Centre's Raise the Age NSW campaign, helping amplify its message and mobilise support. Jade brings expertise in ethical storytelling, inclusive communications, and mobilising collaboration to drive systemic change.



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.



Appointed June 2023

John Temple-Cole is a Partner at advisory firm HKA Global. He is a Forensic Accounting Specialist designated by Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand. For over 30 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.



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 contributed to Indigenous human rights advocacy both nationally and internationally. Kirsten worked on the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory and led First Nations Policy and Engagement at the Disability Royal Commission.



Appointed May 2020

Penny Gerstle is Chair of our Community Engagement Committee. She has spent 30 years working to improve the lives of people facing disadvantage, with a human rights focus. She also co-chairs the Human Rights Watch Australia Committee and is a Director of Hand Up Foundation and Palmera Projects. She was Director Marketing and Fundraising for Participate Australia, Chair of the Aminata Maternal Foundation, and a disability policy officer with the Australian Human Rights Commission. Penny has advocated as a volunteer at the Refugee Advice and Casework Service and with Australia for UNHCR's Women's Steering Committee on Maternal Health.



Appointed May 2020

Sally Karandrews is a not-for-profit, community, and disability sector leader with 20 years' experience in policy development, program design and delivery, community engagement, and advocacy. A vision impaired and neurodivergent leader herself, Sally is passionate about access and inclusion, and regularly writes on the topics of disability leadership, accessible education and accessible employment. Sally was the Chief Executive Officer for Blind Citizens Australia until September 2023. She is now consulting with several organisations on employment, governance, and audio description.



Appointed March 2025

Simon Rice is a consultant at Chalk & Behrendt, advising Local Aboriginal Land Councils, and is an Emeritus Professor of Law at the University of Sydney, where he was previously Kim Santow Professor of Law and Social Justice. He is an expert in human rights law, and in anti-discrimination and equal opportunity law. He has extensive experience in not-for-profit leadership, governance and strategy, and is currently a board member of the NSW Council of Social Service.



Appointed February 2025

Stuart Price is the Chief Executive Officer, Managing Director, and co-founder of CASL, with over 30 years of experience in banking, investment banking, and litigation finance across the UK, Middle East, and Australia. He has held senior positions in litigation finance for over a dozen years, notably leading the resolution of a \$190 million class action against the Queensland State Government for alleged stolen wages on behalf of over 12,000 First Nations people.

Our Staff

EMPLOYEES

Aimee Lawson First Nations Social Justice Graduate	Elizabeth Clark Research Manager	Kate Bittar Criminal Solicitor
Alana West Policy Officer	Ellen Tilbury Principal Solicitor, Strategic Litigation	Kate Sinclair Solicitor
Alannah Daly Policy Officer	Emily Mayo Lead, Campaigns and Organising	Kira Levin Principal Solicitor, HPLS
Alastair Lawrie Director, Policy and Advocacy	Emma Bastable Solicitor	Kira van Os Policy Officer
Anna Harding Project Director, Towards Truth	Erin Turner Manners Senior Solicitor	Luca Sawyer First Nations Social Justice Graduate
Anna-Jane Lark Liaison Officer / Project Officer	Grace Gooley Senior Solicitor	Lucinda Nadj Criminal Solicitor
Briana Ewing Relationships Coordinator	Holly Fitzsimmons Legal Research Assistant	Lucy Kelley Policy Lawyer
Brydie Zorz Research Assistant	Jade Fielding Office Coordinator	Marls Filmer-Sankey Client Intake Officer
Charmaine Jones Project Manager, StreetCare	Jan Kucic-Riker Policy Officer	Matilda Slater-Phillips Research Lawyer
Christina Kasavetis Community Caseworker	Jenny Barton Legal Secretary	Melissa Pinzuti Legal Secretary
Craig Memery Senior Advisor, Energy	Jeremy Rea Senior Solicitor Advocate	Michael Lynch Senior Policy Officer
Cris Parker Head of Philanthropy and Relationships	Jessica Leung Executive Officer	Mitchell Skipsey Senior Solicitor
Dan Buhagiar Media and Communications Manager	Jessica-Lee Arnott Research Assistant	Nicola Colagiuri Senior Solicitor
Daniela Taylor HPLS Coordinator	Joanne Green Chief Operating Officer	Oliver Williams Aboriginal Social Justice Graduate
Dannielle Duval Policy and Communications Officer	Jonathan Hall Spence Principal Solicitor, Strategic Litigation	Petra Franks Solicitor
Douglas McCloskey Director, Energy and Water Justice	Jonathan Struggles Senior Solicitor	Rachael Barwick Senior Solicitor
	Jonathon Hunyor Chief Executive Officer	Rivkah Nissim Impact Manager
		Scott Parker Operations Manager

Seamus May Communications Coordinator	Grace Walker Hicksons Hunt & Hunt Holman Webb Secondee, HPLS
Sheetal Balakrishnan Senior Solicitor	Kate Kenny Australian Government Solicitor Secondee, HPLS Women's Service
Sophie Leaver Senior Solicitor	Kitty Radojev Australian Government Solicitor Secondee, Towards Truth
Stephenie Cahalan Philanthropy Lead	Lily Faulkner Australian Government Solicitor Secondee, HPLS Women's Service
Tallas Lynch Research Assistant	Maggie Crowe MinterEllison Secondee, HPLS
Tempe McMinn Managing Solicitor	Maggie Tang Johnson Winter Slattery Secondee, Strategic Litigation
Thea Bray Senior Policy Officer and Research and Community Projects Lead	Myumee Hossain Wotton Kearney Secondee, Towards Truth
Thomas Guetin Administration Officer	Nashita Khan MinterEllison Secondee, HPLS
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We are very grateful to Yvonne Weldon AM for sharing her heartfelt Welcome to Country, special guest speaker Shankari Chandran, host Fran Kelly, and to our staff, board and committee members, family and friends for their generous contributions to our silent auction. Photos courtesy of Keith Saunders Photography.

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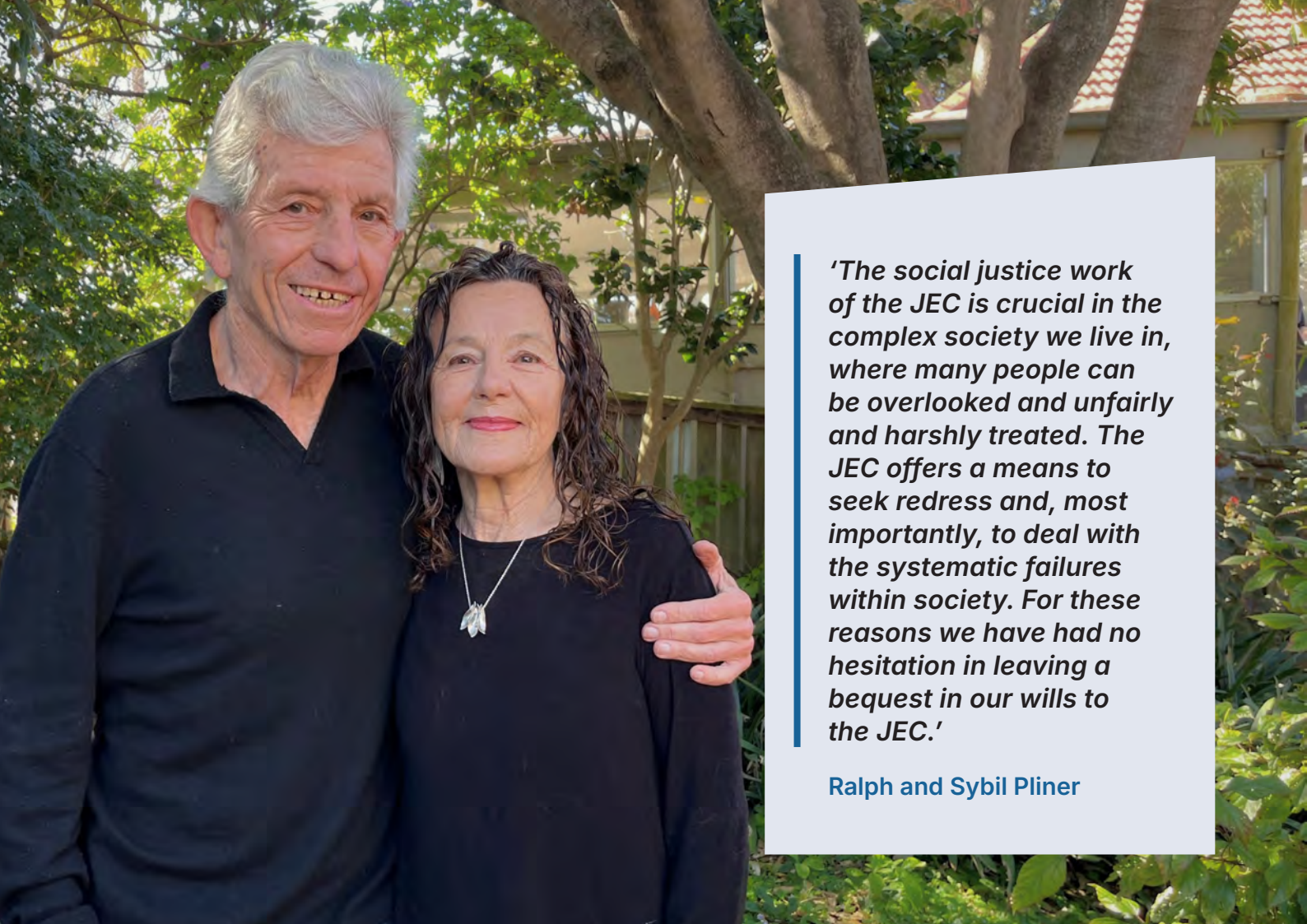
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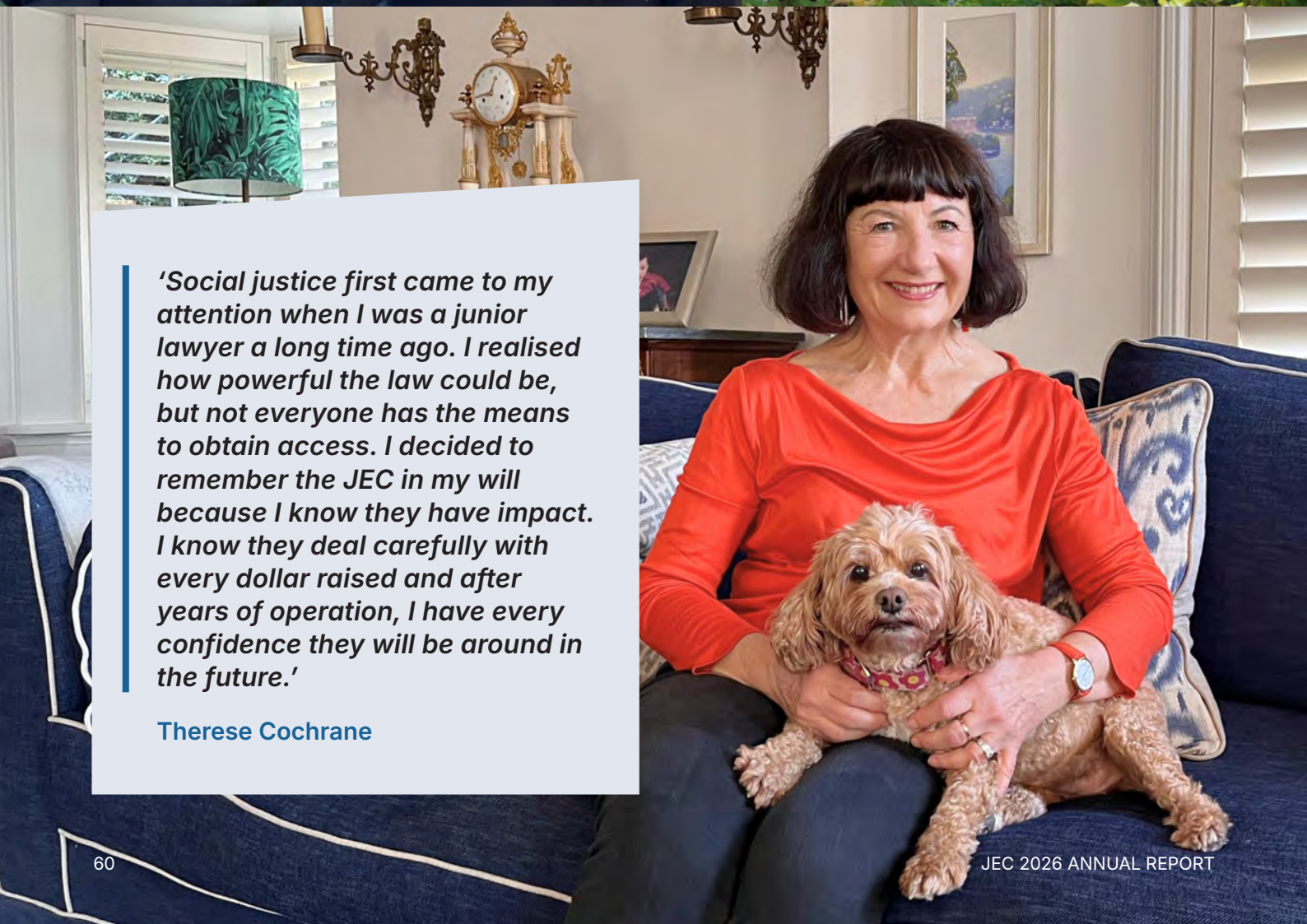
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