# THE HUNTER COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE INC. ANNUAL REPORT



The Hunter Community Legal Centre Inc.



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We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their elders past and present.

Photographs on front & back cover by Julie Vitnell ©

## ABOUT THE CENTRE

Community legal centres recognize the barriers which exist for many people in their interaction with and understanding of the law and our legal system. These barriers are reinforced by the high cost of private legal services, the restrictions on the availability of legal aid, the complexity of the law and legal processes, and the fact that many people are powerless to deal with their legal problems because of social, economic or other disadvantage.

The Hunter Community Legal Centre aims to address this unmet need for legal services and to eliminate the structural and systemic barriers to justice which exist for many disadvantaged members of its community.

The Hunter Community Legal Centre was established in 1991 as a not-for-profit community legal centre to provide free legal advice, assistance and representation to disadvantaged people in the Newcastle and Hunter region. It covers 11 local government areas with a geographic area of approximately 22,000 square kilometres and a population of approximately 600,000. The Centre is currently funded to provide free telephone and face to face legal advice, assistance and representation in many areas of law, as well as community legal education, law reform and clinical legal education. It also provides a number of outreach face to face legal advice clinics in the Hunter region.

## **VISION MISSION AND VALUES**

## Our Vision

An empowered community that values equal access to justice and upholds and respects human rights.

## Our Mission

To enhance access to justice and promote human rights in the Hunter Region by:

- Providing a high quality accessible legal service to disadvantaged and vulnerable people
- Delivering legal information and education to service providers, clients and the community
- Identifying and engaging in law reform activities to address inequalities in the legal system.

## Our Values

- Respect
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Social Justice
- Equality

900 HOURS OF TRAINING FOR LAW STUDENTS

# **HIGHLIGHTS**

PROVIDED LEGAL
ASSISTANCE TO 2461
CLIENTS



WHITE RIBBON MORNING TEA FUND RAISER



NAIDOC – HEALTHY, BLACK & DEADLY



PILCH WALK FOR JUSTICE

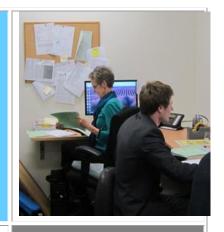


NSW
MOCK TRIAL
COMPETITION





NEWCASTLE VOLUNTEERS SERVICE AWARD



PRESENTED A PAPER
AT THE NATIONAL
CONFERENCE Legal Outreach
Clinics: How to Walk
the Walk.



HUNTER HOMELESS
CONNECT DAY



AUSTRALIAN
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION
COMMUNITY
CONSULTATION



PROVIDED LEGAL
EDUCATION TO OVER
900 PARTICIPANTS



OPENING DOORS –
A PLAY BY
TANTRUM
THEATRE FOR HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS

## **OUR SUPPORT**

We have included some of the thank you notes, emails and letters we have received during the past 12 months. It is thanks to your support that we continue to provide assistance to those who need it.

"Thank you for helping me in court. I appreciate all your help and assistance on the day. Your support was so helpful to me. Thank you I appreciate all your advice."

"I sincerely wish to thank you for your professionalism and time extended beyond the call of duty. I would not have arrived at this point in time had it not been for your service."

Client

"I cannot help but be impressed by the efficiency with which you have dealt with this matter. Your centre must certainly only have the cream of the crop".

Solicitor

"Just writing to say a big thank you for your assistance with Mock Trial. The solicitor did a fantastic job and was very encouraging, supportive and fair with the students. We very much appreciate the time that is given up to support this activity. I know the students get a lot from their participation and also appreciated the assistance the solicitor gave us on the day".

Cardiff High School teacher

I just wanted to say thank you for volunteering for the Mock Trial competition. Without wonderful volunteers such as yourself donating valuable time and expertise this competition would never be able to run".

Community Programs Coordinator - The Law Society of NSW

"I just wanted to say thank you for providing us with a solicitor to speak at our network meeting. We found her talk very enlightening and it certainly gave us another perspective to incorporate into our teaching. She is obviously very dedicated and passionate about her work and this clearly shone through in what she had to say. Thank you also for the resources".

Coordinator Hunter Region Legal Studies Network

"Thank you for having me over the past 3 months. I've learnt so much and couldn't think of a better place to have completed my 75 days of Legal Professional Placement".

Law Student

"I would just like to thank the good folk at the Hunter Community Legal for your kind assistance. I shall gladly get back to you and let you know the outcome of my situation, I am currently acting on the advice I recently had from you. You do a wonderful service for the community, especially for folk who don't have the financial means to go via the usual route. God bless you and thanks very much" Client

"I would like to pass on a message from a client. She saw one of your solicitors this morning and just wanted to let you know how wonderful he was, very helpful, knowledgeable and generally a great help to her. She was very impressed with his service". Community Support Worker



Supporters Thank You Function

# OUR CLIENT'S STORIES Owen

"I needed some free legal advice firstly in regards to Family Law and secondly for assistance with an insurance claim. The divorce and property settlement have been finalised. The solicitor said how it was and what the other party was entitled to and I was happy with that.

The insurance claim, still ongoing but likely to be settled very shortly with the solicitor's help. With the insurance claim I thought my insurance would just straight cover me for the theft. It was a lot more complicated and difficult then I thought. It's been a long process of proving ownership. The stress of it all has led me to have significant health problems. I have been very happy with the service I have been given. The solicitors were straight upfront about it all. No bull!!!. Without places like this, people like us would be in the shit, we would just get manipulated. If you guys close down, we're really in trouble. You've got my full support. People like us, who can't read, and are very slow, would be in trouble (if you weren't here). Without places like this, we're in trouble. Everyone seemed to work well together as a team. I really appreciate all the help."



Owen

#### Amelia

"I was referred to the Centre by the Family Relationship Centre. I had parenting issues with the father of my child and I wanted legal advice on what action to take. I was advised and given a certificate rather than going to mediation it was inappropriate due to family violence. On the first appointment we discussed what the situation was – then they advised me of options. The solicitor said she would be happy to help with a parenting plan if that came up in future. Six months later I contacted the HCLC again to get the parenting plan. The solicitor drafted documents for the parenting plan which was put in place and my ex was able to start having visits with his son according with the plan. The service was good and they were really helpful. I didn't have to wait long to get into an appointment. Within 2 days of the appointment, the solicitor had emailed a draft through to me. It was very efficient. I really appreciated the help. They were very good and thorough. "

#### Brett

"I wasn't going to do anything about my problem until my partner advised me to get legal advice. I rang Law Access and they told me to get legal advice and gave me the number for the Hunter Community Legal Centre. The police charged me with a number of domestic violence offences and took out an AVO against me.

The solicitor at the Centre suggested that I ask for an adjournment so I could get further help. The solicitor helped me work out what I was going to say, how to plead and arranged my Section 32 Application. At the adjournment I was able to speak for myself, I was given thorough advice on how to do this and I was confident to say it to the judge.

I was represented at court by a solicitor from the Centre, at the final day in Toronto. A Section 32 was sought. They filled in appropriate forms and organised to see appropriate people and liaise with them for me.

In the meantime, I was already arrested for breaking the AVO. So I got some phone advice about that and instructed to seek another adjournment at Liverpool.

I was granted Section 32 on all matters and given a treatment plan. This isn't normal behaviour for me but I have bipolar disorder and I was off my medication when all this happened. I wasn't expecting a very good outcome and the solicitor sat me down and said they were probably looking at some custodial sentence, like weekend detention or something, and probably go to parole board to make a decision. So when we got the Section 32 I was over the moon. It's given me a second chance. I probably would have lost my job otherwise, and I don't know where I would have ended up if I didn't get the help. My partner was pregnant at time and couldn't work, and I was leasing a house. I couldn't

afford at the time to pay for legal representation and you can't get legal aid when you have assets, so I'm pretty grateful for the help. "



Brett

## Robert and Margaret

We had a dispute with our neighbours regarding trees on our property. We had tried to resolve the dispute but after 2 unsuccessful mediations we were advised to contact Legal Aid. After receiving a letter from our neighbours stating they were going to take us to the Land and Environment Court, Legal Aid wrote a letter to OP to say it didn't warrant a court hearing. Despite this, we were then served with an application for Land and Environment Court. Legal Aid advised they had taken our case as far as possible. They then gave us the information for the Hunter Community Legal Centre.

We saw a solicitor and a law student at the Centre. The law student researched cases with similar evidence to provide us with more argument. The solicitor and the law student went through the information provided by Legal Aid and we put together an affidavit and submissions for the Land Environment Court. The solicitor took us through the process of the court.

The Commissioner from the Land and Environment Court attended our property. He took on board everything both parties said and was very fair. The Commissioner asked if we had a compromise – we agreed for 2 bushes to be trimmed to veranda height level. Nothing else is allowed to be touched or removed.

The Commissioner found in our favour. The result was much better than what we had expected. We are very happy.

Keep up the good work. Thank you very much for all your assistance. It really makes a difference.

### Corrine

Relationships Australia referred me to the Centre because I needed assistance with a property settlement and other Family Law matters. The solicitors assisted me with writing an affidavit and submitting an initiating application and drafted a parenting plan. They guided you through the court hearing at court, so I was confident to do it myself.

The parenting plan was established and the Court order to that effect and the property settlement was finalised. I hoped for this outcome. This was my ideal situation. I am extremely happy.

I would recommend, and I do recommend, the service to so many people going through it and have difficulty financially.

Everyone was a wonderful support to me. Everyone acted very professionally. Everyone was really helpful from the staff at the front desk through to the solicitors.



**Robert and Margaret** 

## **OUR PEOPLE**

## THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Chairperson Peter Bates
Secretary Kenn Clift
Treasurer Murray Evans

Ordinary Members Bronwyn Ambrogetti

(resigned April 2014)

Jill Evans Colin James Bernie Coulter

Alan Arnold (resigned 2013)
David Jones (Resigned 2013)
Jan Squires (Resigned 2013)
Emma Boylan (Joined 2013)
Nd Mtonga (Joined 2013)
John Sharples (joined 2013)
Liz Pinnock (joined May 2014)

## **Board Meeting Attendance**

	Attended	Held
Peter Bates	3	7
Kenn Clift	4	7
Murray Evans	5	7
Bronwyn Ambrogetti	6	7
Jill Evans	5	7
Colin James	4	7
Bernie Coulter	5	7
Emma Boylan	3	5
Nd Mtonga	3	5
John Sharples	2	5
Liz Pinnock	1	2

## STAFF MEMBERS

Managing Solicitor Liz Pinnock

(to April 2014)

Bronwyn Amrogetti (commenced May 2014)

**Solicitors** Michael Giles

Lynne Jackson Kim Richardson Luke Shearston Judy Stein Briony Manning

Ellie Ryan Ruby Taylor

Coordinator Julie Vitnell

**Administration** Judy Hitchcock

Melissa McCabe Jen Miller

Saal ia Militer

Saskia Whitley (temp)

Suzie Leask

**CLE & Law** 

**Reform Coordinator** Georgia Marjoribanks

**Marketing Coordinator** Amy Stewart

Volunteers / Students Elizabeth McDonald

Roslyn Ricketts
Lyn Flanagan
Claire Bready
Clair Tate
Emily Poole
Amelia Kerridge
Jennifer Spear
Kate Hayes
Olivia Scully
Sam Bower
Mitchell Parish
Georgia Hunt
David Murray

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

I am very pleased to report on another busy and successful year for the Hunter Community Legal Centre.

The Centre continues to work towards its mission of providing access to justice for vulnerable people in the Hunter. The Outreach Legal Services continue to provide accessible services at Muswellbrook, Cessnock, Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay. The Duty Services provide assistance at Newcastle and Muswellbrook Local Courts and the Newcastle Family and Federal Circuit Courts. Telephone advice continues to grow as does, court representation. Moreover the client satisfaction survey this year indicates 100% of clients surveyed felt they were treated with respect, understood the information or advice they received and the service met their expectations.

The Centre's community engagement continues with partnerships with many community organisations, raising the Centre's profile and improving referrals to the Centre. The programme of Community Legal Education to the workers in community services has been very successful with positive feedback and requests for more sessions in the coming year.

Law Reform continues with submissions from the Centre on public housing, domestic violence and credit and debt receiving media coverage. Work on systemic issues affecting the lives of our clients continues at the Centre.

Clinical Legal Education at the Centre continues to provide a quality practical legal experience for law students and graduates.

Over 900 hours of supervised practical legal training was provided in the last year to

students and graduates of many different law schools.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their work this year, giving their time to attend meetings, work on sub committees and oversee the governance of the Centre. The hard work of the Centre staff and the Board subcommittee has seen the Centre maintain its accreditation with the National Association of Community Legal Centres by making continuous progress and meeting its accreditation milestones. In particular I would like to recognise our Treasurer, Murray Evans, for his expert advice in times of funding uncertainty.

I would, on behalf of myself and the Board, like to thank Liz Pinnock, the former Managing Solicitor. Liz was instrumental in engaging independent assessment of the Centre and the eventual restructure of the Centre. Having completed these difficult tasks Liz decided she needed another challenge, and with regret, the Board accepted her resignation. Despite losing Liz there was a bright side, with Bronwyn Ambrogetti taking up the Senior Lawyer position. Bronwyn brings with her years of experience in the general law practice, as well as, a wealth of experience with Community Legal Centres.

Finally I would like to thank all the Board and other volunteers and staff for their commitment to the Centre and look forward to another year working together to improve access to justice in the Hunter.

**Peter Bates** 

Chairperson

## MANAGING SOLICITOR'S REPORT

In the 2013 – 2014 financial year the Hunter Community Legal Centre continued to provide important legal services for disadvantaged members of the Hunter community as well as increasing its community involvement in other ways. Some highlights of the year which illustrate the Centre's growing reputation, community engagement and continuing commitment to providing high quality legal services, community legal education and law reform projects, are:

- Increased numbers of outreach clinics and clients assisted by way of outreach in the Hunter region.
- Increased number of promotional activities such as attendance at Interagency meetings, WEA Hunter Youth Program, Hunter Homeless Connect Day, NAIDOC Family Fun Day and Fund raising activity for White Ribbon Day. Eight staff and four PLT students made up our team to undertake the Walk for Justice.
- Hosting of a community consultation on sex discrimination at work by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, from the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Presentation by two members of staff at the National Conference in Cairns in July 2013, Legal Outreach Clinics: How to Walk the Walk. The presentation described HCLC's evaluation and review of its Outreach Program and the use of NACLC's Legal Needs Toolkit to prioritise and target the Outreach Program to address unmet legal need in its catchment area.
- Participation in external boards and committees such as the Aboriginal Community Justice Group, the Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme, Jenny's Place and Family Insight.
- Greater involvement in CLSD meetings and projects such as the CLSD Interactive Play Opening Doors.
- Continued development of relationships with State and Federal members of Parliament and lobbying on issues

- affecting disadvantaged people such as changes to the Victims Compensation Scheme.
- Increased use of social media, development of marketing materials, and improvement in search engine optimisation of the HCLC website.
- Continued improvement in quality assurance through the NACLC Accreditation Scheme.
- Participation by several members of staff in the RRR Roadshow held at the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre in Lismore in April 2014.
- Continued strengthening of the relationship with the University of Newcastle through Law on the Beach and the Legal Education Program (LEP).

In an increasingly difficult funding environment the staff of the Centre are to be congratulated on their achievements in the past year, in particular in the area of community involvement and engagement. These achievements demonstrate the commitment of the staff to the aims and objectives of the Centre and their willingness to go beyond the call of duty to meet those aims.

"During my time here I gained extensive insight into family law, both from a substantive basis as well as learning about the law in practice in an adversarial setting. I was fortunate enough to observe a range of different judges and to learn about their personal judicial styles and how they applied the Family Law Act. As I am yet to study family law, I think that this placement has been extremely helpful in placing family law in context as I was able to see how the law was applied in day-to-day life. I learned about the entire legal process from separation of parties, to contravention applications for court orders, learning along the way what procedural forms and information are required for the matter to move forward."

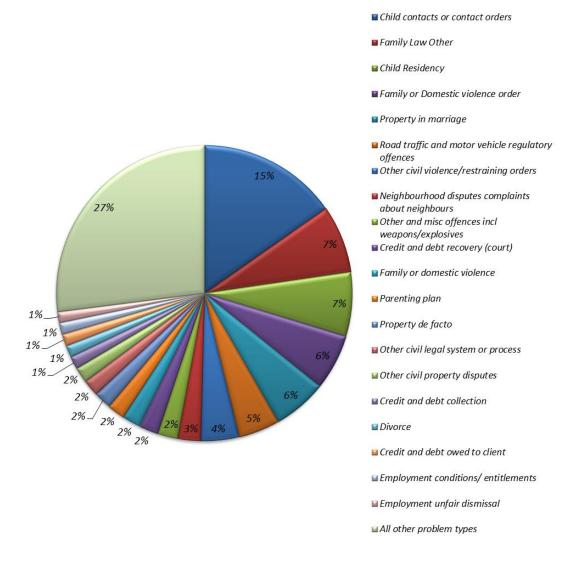
"The Family Law program is an incredible program and I hope that many students after me can also have this positive experience." Comments for LEP Students

## Liz Pinnock

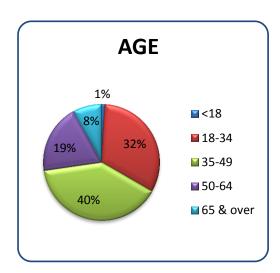
## **ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT**

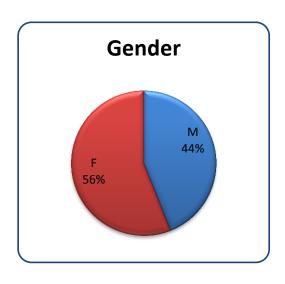
## **Problem Types**

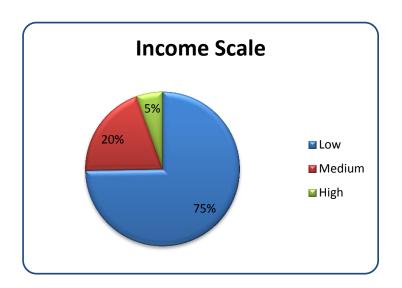
## Top 20 Problem Types

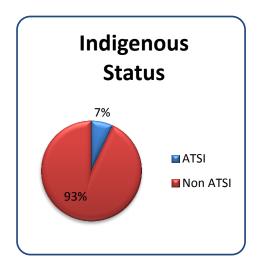


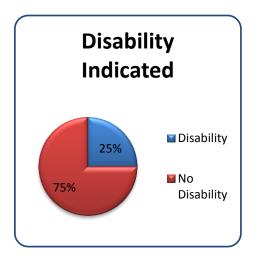
## **Client Demographics**



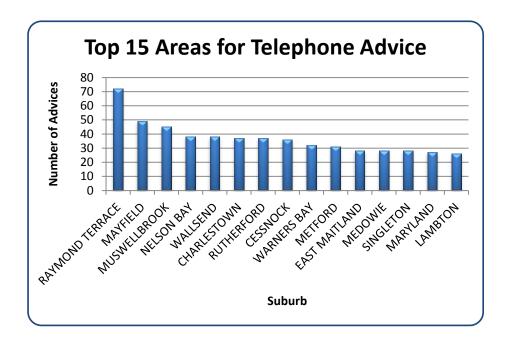


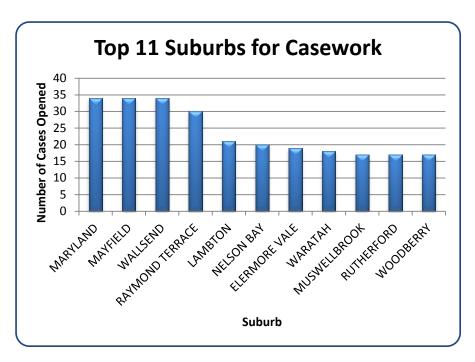


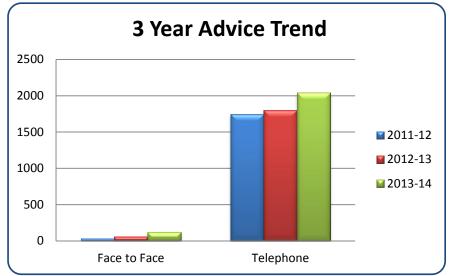


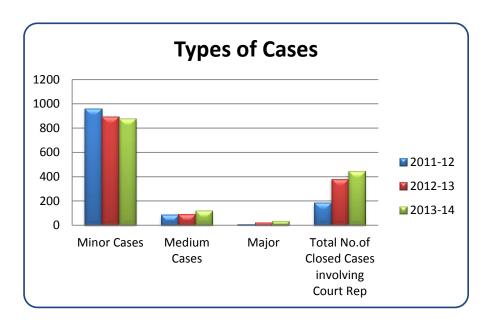


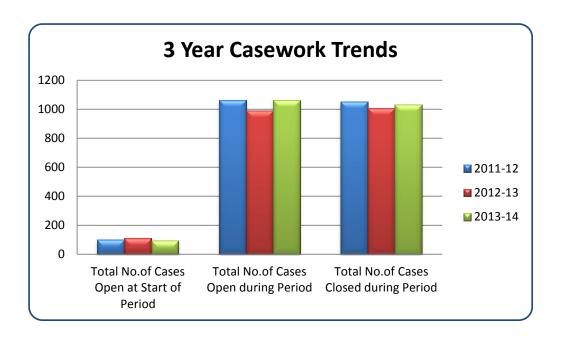
**ADVICES & CASES** 











## **Client Satisfaction Survey**

On a scale of 1-5, how well do you think the person advising you understood your problem?

83.3% responded with a '5' - completely understood and 16.7% responded with a '4'

On a scale of 1-5 was the information and advice you received clear and easy to understand?

88.9% responded with a '5' - very clear and easy and 11.1% responded with a '4'

On a scale of 1-5 was enough information or advice given during the session?

88.9% responded with a '5' - very clear and easy and 11.1% responded with a '4'

On a scale of 1-5 were you treated in a friendly and respectful manner when you first made contact and by the person who advised you?

100% responded with a '5' – yes very friendly and respectful

Did our service meet your expectations?

100% responded yes

# **Balance Sheet**

## Hunter Community Legal Centre Inc As at 30 June 2014

30 Jun 2014

## Assets

otal Assets	374,195
Total Fixed Assets	26,526
Equipment at Cost - HCLC	104,844
Equipment Accum Dep'nHCLC	(76,119)
Equipment Accum Dep'n FLP	(1,260)
Accum'd Dep UniLegalProj	(939
Fixed Assets	
Total Current Assets	24,602
Security Deposit - Hunter Street	12,500
Security Deposit - GPT	6,600
Prepayments	4,858
Cash on Hand	50
Accounts Receivable	594
Current Assets	
Total Bank	323,067
Petty Cash	187
Online Saver Account	54,532
Cheque Account	8,558
6 month Term Deposit Account	259,790
Bank	

## Liabilities

Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	29,102
Annual Leave - FamLawProject	8,097
Annual Leave - HCCAS	(1)
Annual Leave - HCLC	14,434
Annual Leave - Outreach	258
Annual Leave FRC	7,630
GST	15,028
Meal Entertainment	
PAYG Tax Payable	6,327
Prov for Asset Replacement	3,381
Prov. Outreach Travel	
Provision Centre Development	
Provision for Funding Coordinator	
Provision for Outreach Solicitor	
Provision for Publications	
Super Payable	
Total Current Liabilities	84,256

# Balance Sheet

	30 Jun 2014
Non-Current Liabilities	
LSL - Outreach	1,143
LSL FRC	2,309
LSL-FamLaw Project	3,046
LSL-HCCAS	-
LSL-HCLC	6,578
Total Non-Current Liabilities	13,076
Total Liabilities	97,331
Net Assets	276,864
Equity	
Current Year Earnings	37,735
Retained Earnings	239,128
Total Equity	276,864

# **Profit & Loss**

# Hunter Community Legal Centre Inc 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014

	30 Jun 14
Income	
Family Law Project	210,167
FRC Project One Off Grant	116,401
Grants Received - Federal	229,276
Grants Received - State	269,397
Interest Received	15,194
Man Fees FamLawProject	31,992
Man Fees FRC Project	17,496
Man FeeUofNewcLegalEducProject	3,792
Membership Fees	30
Other Income	11,931
Service Generated Income	1,972
Subsidies Received	2,750
Sundry reimbursements	2,048
UniofNewcLegalProject	25,220
Total Income	937,666
Gross Profit	937,666
Less Operating Expenses	
Administration Fees	53,425
Centre development	(4,788)
Communication	3,826
Depreciation	19,407
Finance, Audit & Accounting	7,390
Insurance	11,795
Leave Expense	(12,950)
Library, Resources & Subscript	7,168
Long Service Leave	6,264
Minor Equipment	3,983
Office Overheads	14,028
Other Premises Costs	11,262
Program & Planning	3,290
Relief Wages & Salaries	15,267
Rent	57,488
Repairs & Maintenance	6,205
Reversal of prior year provisions	(76,351)
Staff recruitment costs	2,497
Staff Training & Development	20,063
Superannuation Family Law	9,861
Superannuation FRC	2,637
Superannuation HCCAS	118
Superannuation HCLC	42,949
Superannuation Outreach	4,745
Iravel & Accommodation	12,645
Wages & Salaries	675,764
Workers Compensation Ins.	1,942
Total Operating Expenses	899,931
Net Profit	37,735

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## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF HUNTER COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE INC.

I have audited the accompanying financial report of Hunter Community Legal Centre Inc, which comprises the Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2014, the Profit and Loss Statement for the year ended on that date, a Summary of significant accounting policies, other explanatory notes and the Committee declaration.

## Committees' responsibility for the financial report

The Committee is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations), the Australian Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and in accordance with the By-laws of the Institute. This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances. In the declaration the committee also state that the financials report, comprising the financial statements and notes, complies with Australian equivalents to International Financial Reporting Standards.

#### Audit responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that I comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

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

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

#### Independence

In conducting the audit I have met the independence requirements of the Australian professional accounting bodies. In addition to my audit of the financial report, I was engaged to undertake the services disclosed in the notes to the financial statement. The provision of these services has not impaired my independence.

## Audit opinion

In my opinion:

 the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Hunter Community Legal Centre Inc. as at 30 June 2014, and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretation);

**ACUMON AUDITING** 

CHRISTIAN TAPP

Partner

Dated at East Maitland this 1st day of August 2014

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reen hills: 3c 11 molly morgan drive, east maitland 2323 | po box 2204, green hills 2323 | tel 02 4931 1100 | fax 02 4931 1191 norisset: suite 2, 49 yambo street, morisset 2264 | po box 300, morisset 2264 | tel 02 4973 2877 | fax 02 4970 5352 ewcastle: suite 4, 5 brunker road, broadmeadow 2292 (By appointment) | tel (02) 4962 2199 | fax 02 4962 2196 cumon auditing abn 81 246 167 062 Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.

## **FUNDING**





The Hunter Community Legal Centre gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the funding bodies.

## **CATCHMENT**

The Hunter Community Legal Centre covers the following local government areas:

Newcastle
Port Stephens
Great Lakes
Maitland
Dungog
Gloucester
Upper Hunter Shire
Muswellbrook
Singleton
Cessnock
Lake Macquarie



Hunter Community Legal Centre Catchment area

Total Area: 22,362km<sup>2</sup>

Total Population: approximately 607,500

## RRR Roadshow Lismore









Photographs by Doris Cameron ©



## **Hunter Community Legal** Centre Inc.

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Email: hunter nsw@clc.net.au Web: www.hunterclc.com.au







f @ hunterclc