



ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016



Pilbara Community Legal Service recognises the traditional owners of the lands across the Pilbara region and particularly the traditional owners on which the Pilbara Community Legal Service Offices are situated. We pay deep respect to Elders both past and present.

PUBLICATION DETAILS:

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Community Legal Centres (CLC's) are community-based not-for-profit organisations providing legal services to disadvantaged people and communities. CLC's have been a vital component of access to justice in Australia for over 30 years. Today there are more than 200 CLC's throughout the country – in metropolitan, suburban, regional, rural and remote areas. CLC's strategies include legal information, advice and casework services to individuals, as well as community legal education, law reform, and community-capacity building projects. CLC's work to improve the legal knowledge and skills of their clients and communities so that fewer legal problems arise and, of those that do arise, more can be resolved earlier.

The Pilbara Community Legal Service Inc. (PCLS) is a not-for-profit, government-funded community organisation that provides a range of free services which include legal, financial counselling, tenancy advocacy and support, domestic violence advocacy and victim support and community migrant services. The PCLS aims to reduce legal disadvantage, increase the capacity of individuals to manage their lives effectively and ensure people understand their rights and obligations. PCLS is part of a large national network of community legal service providers (NACLCL) who occupy a unique position in law reform in Australia, pursuing a range of reform and public interest issues on behalf of disadvantaged people and the community at large.

Over the last 23 years, PCLS has developed to be a highly valued part of the Pilbara's social infrastructure. The service began in a small single office in Newman in 1993. A regional office was established in Hedland under the auspices of the Pilbara Social Justice Council to address a number of needs identified by a working party who lobbied hard for funding. They conducted forums over a period of four years to address the growing concern related to social justice issues. As the socio-economic demands and the shortage of housing continued community demand brought the need for an expansion of services. As

and when funding was acquired, additional offices were opened. PCLS is now a well-established service operating in four centers; Karratha, South Hedland, Roebourne and Newman. The PCLS also provides outreach services across the Pilbara region to isolated communities such as Marble Bar, Nullagine, Onslow and Jigalong.

Legal problems often have considerable adverse impacts on a broad range of life circumstances, including health, financial and social circumstances. For many individuals PCLS is often the first point of contact about an issue. PCLS strives to provide assistance to virtually anyone who walks in the door and then targets more intensive services such as casework, advocacy, court representation, and community education to those experiencing or most at risk of social exclusion. PCLS does not only provide legal advice and assistance, but also encourages and enables people to develop skills to be their own advocates. As a service delivery strategy, PCLS makes every effort to provide information, referral and advice early to prevent problems escalating.

PCLS aims to assist low income and disadvantaged members of the community as a matter of priority. These include people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with intellectual, mental or physical disabilities and people who may face discrimination in their access to services because of a particular characteristic such as age or gender.

The organisation's current strategic service delivery model is the outcome of an evidenced-based, pro-active, community involved process. As PCLS provides many services the team is able to work together and deal with multiple client issues simultaneously which results in clients being put in a much better position sooner. At the root of the work are the concepts of justice, human rights and community. These beliefs affect

not just the outcomes of the work but also the processes used. A rights-based, holistic, community development approach to the delivery of the service means dealing not just with the immediate presenting problems of clients, but also with other broader social issues.

The demands for the services are expected to continue to increase significantly as the population of the Pilbara increases. All PCLS services try to target emerging needs and be flexible and responsive, making PCLS a vital community organisation that contributes to the growth and fast-growing pace of the Pilbara region.

The PCLS Staff and the Board of Management are confident that despite issues associated with the rapid growth of the region, they can continue to demonstrate excellence in terms of governance, program and service delivery to empower the people of the Pilbara to effectively manage their lives in relation to personal and family conflict, legal issues, mortgage and financial stress, unemployment, homelessness and family and domestic violence.

The PCLS employs a range of staff including lawyers, social workers/counsellors such as financial counsellors and tenancy support workers. PCLS also has volunteer solicitors, barristers, law students and others working in the sector to extend the legal services. PCLS currently employs 25 full-time and part-time staff who are responsible to the Chief Executive Officer and the Principal Solicitor under the guidance of a voluntary Board of Management. All staff are sensitive to the presenting issues, they are also encouraged to promote the service by

participating in local community events, meetings and networking opportunities. As a result, they have developed a particular expertise working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

PCLS is unique because it provides all the support needed in one organisation so the client is not going on a referral roundabout. It is impossible to plan for when many legal issues might arise. People do not budget for legal fees for issues like marriage breakdown, eviction or debt problems, however, PCLS ensures that every person can access the services in the Pilbara regardless of their financial situation, social circumstances or geographic location. PCLS actively continues to improve their current services and expand where the need is.

PCLS is recognised through official accreditation by the National Association of Community Legal Centres. This certification supports and gives recognition to good practice in the delivery of services. In 2013 PCLS reached a 20 year milestone of delivering services in the Pilbara.



Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for the governance of the organisation, providing leadership and strategic direction, accepting responsibility for the organisation by overseeing and monitoring and setting the direction through the strategic plan, policies and procedures. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day management to the CEO. The Board of Management is accountable to the membership ensuring that the organisation produces results, remains solvent, and complies with all of its legal, financial, and ethical obligations.

Rozkva Brabazon	Chairperson
Metua Mitsy Strickland	Deputy Chairperson
Stephen Gwynne	Secretary
Dale Purdy	Treasurer
Daphne Trevurza	Member
Lesley Murray	Member
Dee Van Beek	Member
Nellie Connors	Member
David Thomas	Member

Vision

“Empowering the people of the Pilbara to manage their lives effectively”.

Purpose

Provide accessible, equitable, responsible and culturally appropriate advice, support and advocacy to the people of the Pilbara.

Office Locations and Hours of Operation

Hours of operation 8.00am – 4.00pm

Karratha Office (Regional Office)

Unit 1, 2, 3 Morse Court
Welcome Lotteries House
PO Box 132
KARRATHA WA 6714
Tel: 08 9185 5899
Fax: 08 9185 6633



Roebourne Office

2 Padbury Street
PO Box 269
ROEBOURNE WA 6718
Tel: 08 9182 1169
Fax: 08 9182 1180



South Hedland Office

Unit 2, 9 Leake Street
South Hedland Lotteries House
PO Box 2506
SOUTH HEDLAND WA 6722
Tel: 08 9140 1613
Fax: 08 9172 2333

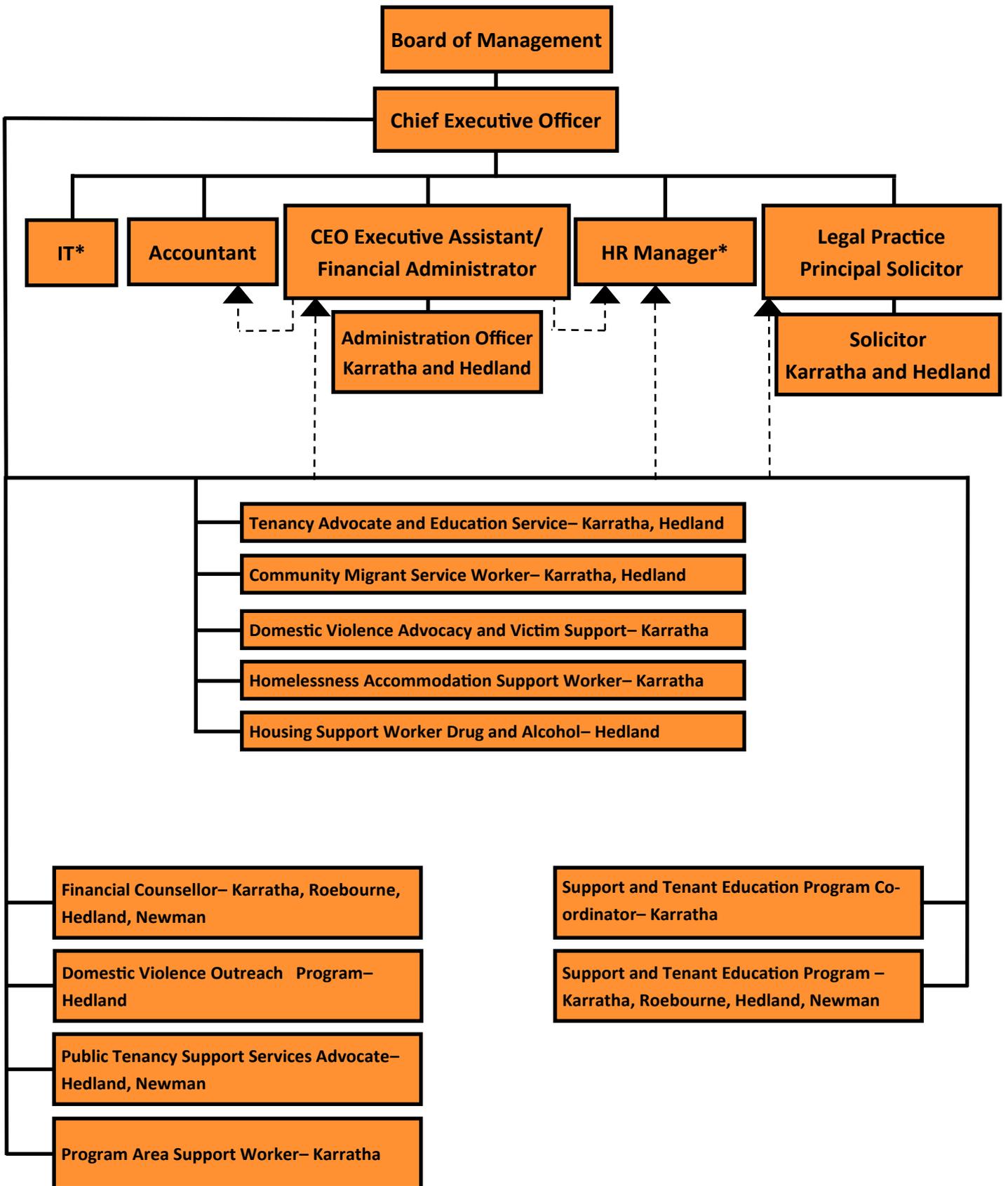


Newman Office

Unit 4, 46 Iron Ore Parade
Newman House
PO Box 1
NEWMAN WA 6753
Tel: 08 9175 0148
Fax: 08 9175 5298



Organisational Reporting Chart



Services

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Karratha

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the operation of the organisation's physical, financial and human resources.

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Nanette Williams (March 2008- current)

Funding Body: Federal Department of Attorney General, Community legal Service Program

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR

Karratha

The Executive Assistant is delegated responsibility from the CEO. The Executive Assistant is the supervisor of the Administration Officers and the Financial Administrator who is also responsible for the day-to-day administration of the service in the area of accounts payable, payroll, communications and resources.

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Christy Reed (August 2013- current)

ACCOUNTANT

The Accountant provides financial information to management by researching and analyzing accounting data and preparing reports.

Name of Staff Member:

Ruwan Silva

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

Karratha, South Hedland

The Administrative Assistants are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the service in the area of accounts payable, payroll, communications and resources. They provide relevant assistance to the CEO, other staff and the Board of Management as required.

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Rachel Reed (Jan 2013- current); Danielle Boyle (Relief); Vivien Kamen (Relief)

South Hedland: Kesi-Maree Prior (June 2015- current); Vanessa Cooper-Tims (Relief)



RURAL WOMEN'S OUTREACH SERVICE - PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR - PILBARA

Karratha

This position is based in the Karratha office and is

responsible for the supervision and delivery of community legal education and legal casework throughout the Pilbara to ensure that people are aware of and able to access their legal rights. The Principal Solicitor is the responsible person for the monitoring of file management and risk management supervision of all other legal and non-legal staff.

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Colin Baker (July 2014- current)

Funding Body: Federal Department of Attorney General—Community Legal Service Program

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S PROJECT - PILBARA

South Hedland

This position is based in the South Hedland office and is responsible for the delivery of community legal education and legal casework throughout the Pilbara to ensure that people are aware of and able to access their legal rights.

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Jana Francis (January 2015– September 2015); Murray Jones (January 2016– current)

Funding Body: Federal Department of Attorney General—Community Legal Service Program/ Department of Premier and Cabinet

SOLICITOR

South Hedland

This service is responsible for providing community legal education and legal casework in the East Pilbara to ensure that people are aware of their rights and able to access relevant information and services.

Name of Staff Member:

Position vacant

Funding Body: Federal Department of Attorney General

SOLICITOR

Karratha

This service is responsible for providing community legal education and legal casework in the West Pilbara to ensure that people are aware of their rights and able to access relevant information and services.

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Tara Jane Torrisi (March 2014– August 2015)

Funding Body: WA Public Purpose Trust



Financial Counsellors

Karratha, Roebourne, South Hedland and Newman

Financial counsellors are responsible for providing support and advocacy for people experiencing financial difficulty with the objective of developing clients' skills, knowledge and confidence to effectively manage their financial and housing situation.

Names of Staff Members:

Karratha: Robert Williams (January 2009-current); Mark Hayes (March 2016- current)

Roebourne: Sue Philpot (August 2015- December 2015); Tania Aldridge (January 2016); Lynn Hart (February 2016- current)

South Hedland: Jayne Jarito (March 2015-current)

Newman: Francesca Manuela (April 2009 - current)

Funding Body: Department for Child Protection and Family Support; Department for Local Government and Communities



TENANCY ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION SERVICE

Karratha and South Hedland

The service advocates for and supports clients seeking to access housing. The service provides tenancy education and advocacy to people in the Pilbara to ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities as tenants and are able to access relevant information and services.

Names of Staff Members:

Karratha: Flordeliza Larrazabal (February 2015-current)

South Hedland: Sue Baker (January 2014- current)

Funding Body: Department of Commerce

SUPPORT AND TENANT EDUCATION PROGRAM (STEP)

Karratha, Roebourne, South Hedland and Newman

The STEP Program is responsible for providing support to tenants to maintain their public housing tenancy, to assist families and individuals to increase their knowledge and skills to maintain stable accommodation and ensure tenants meet their overall obligations and responsibilities in accordance with their tenancy agreement.

Name of Staff Members:

Coordinator: Karla Kelly (July 2013-current)

Karratha: Jo Drummond (September 2015-current)

Roebourne: Angela Mitchell (February 2015-current)

South Hedland: Micah Buenvenida (November 2013- current)

Newman: Ettie TeMiha (January 2014-current)

Funding Body: Housing Authority

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS (NPAH):

HOUSING SUPPORT WORKER (NPAH)

Karratha, South Hedland, Roebourne

The service engages with and ensures that people who are experiencing homelessness are effectively linked with mainstream services to address a range of issues, including employment, health, financial management and social integration, to obtain housing and sustain their tenancy as long-term, secure and stable. Support is targeted to meet the needs of the individual or the family as a whole.

Name of Staff member:

Karratha: Tania Aldridge (January- May 2016); Courtney Coburn (May 2016- current)

Roebourne: Angela Mitchell (April 2015- current)

South Hedland: Gretchen Ncube (January 2015-current)

Newman: Ettie TeMiha (May 2014- current)

Funding Body: Department for Child Protection and Family Support



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OUTREACH INITIATIVE – PILBARA REGION (NPAH)

South Hedland

This service covers the Pilbara region. The service assists at-risk families and individuals to resolve crises. The service ensures the safety and well-being of women and children and assists them to find solutions to problems both practical and personal that have arisen due to family domestic violence. The service supports women and children who have experienced family domestic violence and as a result have accepted a referral to the service at the time of, or shortly after the issue of a police order for the removal of the perpetrator.

Name of Staff Member:

South Hedland: Ellysha Melville (January 2014-current)

Funding Body: Department for Child Protection and Family Support

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCACY AND VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICE

Karratha

This service covers the Pilbara and contributes to the Department for Child Protection's desired outcome 'that at-risk families and individuals are able to resolve crises and promote the safety and wellbeing of themselves and their family members and falls within the service delivery area of supporting individuals and families at risk or in crisis.'

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Janette Tallon (March 2015– March 2016); Melissa Swiatek (March 2016– current)

Funding Body: Department for Child Protection and Family Support



SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Karratha, South Hedland

Arriving and settling in a new country can be daunting. Located in our Karratha and South Hedland office, Migrant Settlement Services is an information and referral service that assist newly arrived migrants in the Pilbara to become self-reliant and participate in Australian society.

During the "settlement period", migrants may need assistance to access basic services such as housing, employment, legal, education, health and medical services. The length of the settlement period varies for each migrant, depending on factors including their skills, qualifications, level of English language and their ability and familiarity with Australian culture and institutions.

Migrant Settlement Service provide one-on-one casework, support, information and linkages to other mainstream services to assist migrants. Community development activities are undertaken which include the implementation of projects that aim to support and empower newly emerging community groups. Face-to-face, individual and group assistance is available to newly arrived migrants

Name of Staff Member:

Karratha: Shirley Simpson (October 2015– February 2016); Isabelle Galtier (March 2016– current)

South Hedland: Victoria Malyk (October 2015– current)

Funding Body: Department of Social Services

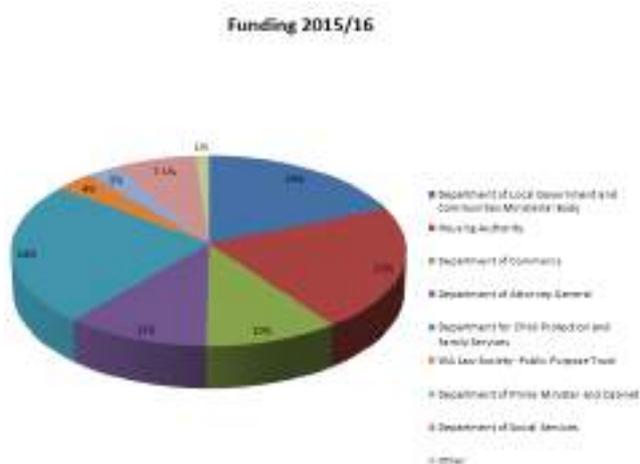
Funding 2015/16

PCLS derives funding from a range of sources, including the Commonwealth Community Legal Service Programs, other state government programs such as Department of Commerce, Department of Family and Children Protection Service and Housing Authority, as well as donations from the local governments and other businesses e.g. City of Karratha, Fortescue Metal Groups, Easternwell Community Grants, Lottery West and more.

Obtaining funding for PCLS is competitive, there are many hours spent on writing submission for grants and funding proposals. PCLS currently faces a challenge in remaining financially sustainable and meeting demand to minimise the further erosion of access to justice for the Pilbara's most disadvantaged and vulnerable clients.

The Federal Government also restricted the use of funding to direct service delivery, which has excluded important preventative policy and law reform work. Regardless of funding cuts the staff at PCLS continually strives to provide assistance to anyone who walks in the door. However this can be challenging, especially with the huge demand for the services the range of programs all face. The collective effort of staff, volunteers and Board members actively lobbying and raising awareness of PCLS to give PCLS a voice and obtain sponsorship and partnerships, PCLS is again strongly positioned to move forward.

PCLS would like to thank everyone for their support in the 2015/16 financial year.



Organisational Review

Access and Equity

PCLS aims to assist low income and disadvantaged members of the community as a matter of priority. These include people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with intellectual, mental or physical disabilities and people who may face discrimination in their access to services because of a particular characteristic such as age or gender.

PCLS legal services target those who do not qualify for legal aid or those who cannot afford a private lawyer. However PCLS provides assistance to virtually anyone who walks in the door to ensure everyone has access to justice and to ensure that everyone understands their rights and responsibilities regardless of their social, economic or geographic situation. Legal Advice is given to anyone regardless of their income however more intensive services such as casework is provided for clients who are low-income and/or disadvantaged, or who are not capable for whatever reason to fully represent themselves in such situations. Other services such as domestic violence support focuses on women and children of the Pilbara and tenancy services has a focus on tenants, not landlords.

Accreditation

PCLS is an accredited organisation.



PCLS has Work Plans which greatly enhanced PCLS Policies and Procedures infrastructure and translates into benefits in terms of client services, documenting PCLS' planning and progress and other operational day to day matters.

PCLS was granted a non-exclusive licence to use the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) certification trademark until

June 2017. PCLS is required to report on its Work Plan every 6 months.

Administration and Other

PCLS Newsletter

PCLS distributes a monthly newsletter via email to all interested members of the Public. This newsletter provides an update on what is happening at PCLS as well as what is happening in the Pilbara. Karratha Administration has the task of compiling this. As a result PCLS has had many positive feedbacks about the newsletter. The newsletter will continue in 2015/16.

PCLS Website

The PCLS website is currently under construction. In 2015/16 the website transitioned from Joomla to Drupal.

PCLS Organisational Review– Cultural Analysis

PCLS undertook a cultural analysis which was designed to capture employee attitudes and opinions about the functioning and operation of PCLS which would to develop the next all staff quarterly training session. The training was based on business processes, job roles, team work, effective communication, resiliency and compassionate burnout. As a result it was found that staff wanted:

- Appointment of a Human Resource Manager
- Structural Review
- Instrument of Delegation– communication/ chain of command
- Program specific meetings
- Staff meetings

Appointment of Human Resource Manager

In response to the organisational review PCLS appointed a dedicated Human Resource service. This was an exciting time for PCLS as it closely aligns with future strategic projection for the growth of the organisation and changes in the economic environment. The appointment was given to Mr Adrian Robinson from AzureHR who has assisted in creating a work environment that encourages effective employee engagement and joining the team to drive and shape culture operational practice and ensure each employee is supported through structured supervision and monitoring of key performance indicators.

Community Legal Education

One of PCLS' major marketing strategies is community legal education. Not being able to identify when they have a legal problem is one of the barriers that individuals face.

In delivering community legal education, this helps individuals realise they have a legal problem and where they can go for assistance.

Community legal education is an effective strategy for building people's awareness about legal issues or issues that have legal consequences, informing people about their rights and avenues for assistance and resolving these issues earlier.

Conducting community legal education also provides the opportunity for individuals to ask questions which enable PCLS to see where the needs are.

Highlights for 2015/16

- NAIDOC Week Celebrations
- LINK Teddy Bear's Picnic
- Homelessness Week 3-9 August
- Migrant cooking classes



Community Awards

- HESTA Community Sector Social Impact Award 2015
- Regional Achievement Community Awards— Prime Community Group of the Year and Development of the Northern Regional WA Award

Information Technology

An IT Contract with Montec was approved for an Information Technology and Communications equipment service and support agreement for 12 months.



PCLS staff are thankful for Montec's support over the past 12 months. The contract will be continued for a further 12 months for 2016/17.

PCLS also renewed a contract with BeingThere who provides videoconferencing facilities for all PCLS offices. PCLS thanks Gerry Murphy and Pam Richardson for their continued support with the set-up and training. This facility encourages communication via videoconference across all PCLS offices and also facilitates the Board of Management members to attend meetings.

Insurances

The following insurance policies were renewed:

- Commercial Motor
- Business
- Corporate Travel
- Journey Accident
- Voluntary Worker's Compensation
- Landlord's Insurance

These were all arranged by the PCLS Broker—Insurance Advisernet Australia Pty Ltd. We thank them for their continued business.

The Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurances were renewed through NACLCL.

Marketing Strategies

PCLS uses various communication channels such as:

- Television commercials
- Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter via the Community Law Australia campaign
- Organisational website
- Regular appearances in the media such as local newspapers, radio, local talk show programs
- Paid and unpaid placements e.g. local community directory
- Promotional materials e.g. pens, fridge magnets, enviro bags, brochures
- Communications e.g e-newsletter
- Special events e.g. NAIDOC Week, Homelessness Prevention Week, White Ribbon Day
- Networking e.g. Pilbara Business Luncheon and local networking with other agencies
- Annual report
- Word of mouth

Plans for Business Growth

PCLS is focusing on four key objectives which are:

- Client Services – Increase the scope, standard and accessibility of the service to clients. Attracting additional funding for services. Develop clear brand identification and organisational positioning as a necessary focus in order that clients identify with the “face” of the organisation.
- Administrative Systems and Corporate Services – Increase administrative systems efficiency. Increase profile as provider of choice through media, award nominations, sponsorships and grants.
- External Relationships – Establish collaborative community partnerships to work together in new and flexible ways to meet the different needs of each person.
- Employee Support Services - Invest in staff development and wellbeing.

PCLS is focusing on improving service quality, increasing awareness and ensuring that the surrounding town/communities particularly indigenous people and their communities are

healthy and enjoy the emotional and social wellbeing experienced by other Australians.

A partnership arrangement was established with Perpetual Trust to provide Financial Management workshops to their members.

PCLS continues to monitor the needs of the community and continuously applies for grants to expand or improve the delivery of existing services or implement new services. PCLS lobbies hard with funding bodies/local government on the importance of the work PCLS does and the importance of continued funding.

PCLS plans to extend services by implementing new programs such as a diversity and social cohesion program focusing on social participation. A community migrant support service was established with funding from the Department of Social Services. This program is delivered to the Karratha, Hedland and Goldfields. It assists migrants who have arrived within the last five years to become orientated to and integrated into Australia. A major focus of the work is on women who generally do not have the benefits of socialisation offered in the work place. Many migrants require information about migration for themselves and for family members. All of the workers are able to assist with the provision of information, which is normally in the form of explanatory booklets and forms. The service brings together the many cultural groups as they transition into the region and learn the English language. Activities would be directed on the basis of learning from one-another utilizing the cultural means of song, dance, poetry, dance, music and cooking. Classes, workshops and information sessions would increase connectedness, friendships and learning as well as assisting them with their rights and responsibilities, issues, practices and outcomes.

PCLS has also engaged in the ATO's voluntary Tax Help program to assist low income and disadvantaged members of the City of Karratha and surrounding communities with their tax returns.

PCLS purchased land for the purpose of the provision of a Regional Community Justice Centre.

Research

The demands for the services are expected to continue to increase significantly as the population of the Pilbara increases. To ensure the PCLS is responsive to the ongoing and changing needs of the people of the Pilbara, as a component of the planning cycle, an environmental scan was conducted. As a consequence, the following trends were identified:

- Increased level of mortgage stress and bankruptcies due to downturn in price of Iron ore and redundancies by resource companies.
- Low income earners impacted upon due to high cost of living.
- An increase in debt more noticeable in the middle income range due to unemployment
- Increased level of relationship breakdown due to the current working and lifestyle environment – including FIFO, long working hours, shift work, isolation and high disposable incomes.
- Increased level of anti-social behaviour, family and domestic violence and other negative aspects of social, economic and environmental wellbeing associated with unemployment and high level of drug and alcohol misuse.
- Increased population and rate of FIFO across the whole Pilbara causing a breakdown in infrastructure. Discrepancies between the actual population and what is indicated by the 2006 Census means there is no accurate data available to support the need for more services, programs and infrastructure.
- High level of unemployment.

PCLS identifies unmet legal needs through a variety of techniques including:

- monitoring casework patterns and statistics,
- research, including consultation with and/or surveys of clients, legal and non-legal service providers and communities
- demographic data,
- socio-economic data and reports.

Submissions, Grants and Funding Agreements

The revenue stream was increased with the acquisition of financial counselling funding to 2018 from the Department of Local Government and Communities.

PCLS was allocated the Migrant Settlement Services contract for the Pilbara and Kalgoorlie.



PCLS was successful in obtaining a WA Law Society Public Purpose Trust triennial grant which funds a full-time Karratha Solicitor.

The Support and Tenant Education Program funded by the Housing Authority was extended for 12 months.

The Department of Child Protection and Family Support varied the services of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness services and was extended for 12 months.

PCLS was successful in the signing of an MOU subcontract with Mission Australia to deliver Emergency Relief Services. PCLS was also successful in obtaining funding for emergency relief through Lottery West grants.

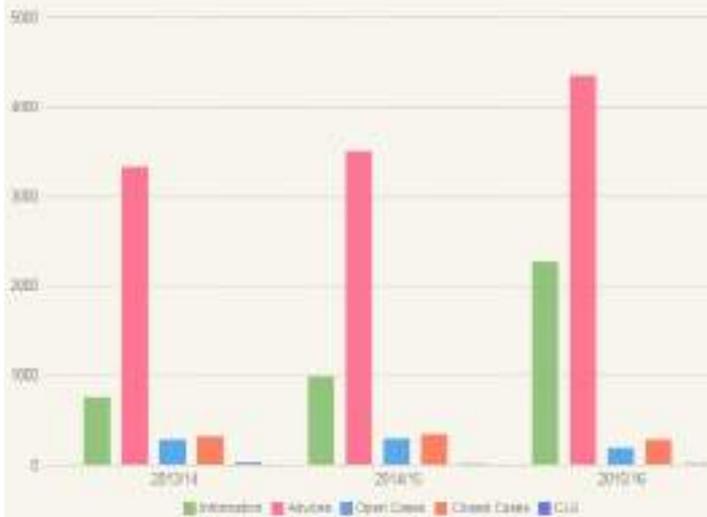
Easternwell Community Grant was successful to purchase ipads for each office.

The City of Karratha granted PCLS funds towards the Migrant Settlement Services for community events.

Fortescue Metal Groups kindly donated furniture to PCLS clients as well as providing funds for the Migrant Settlement Services in South Hedland for cooking classes.

Pilbara Community Legal Service Statistical Data

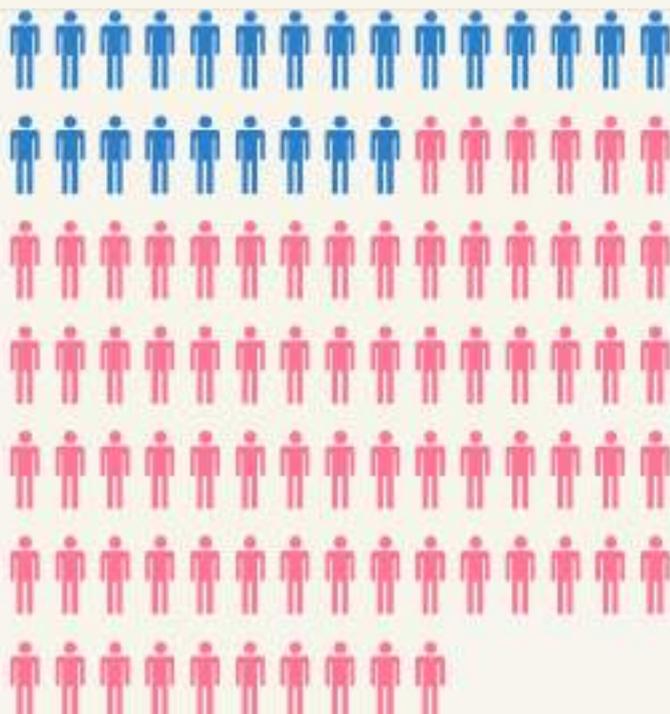
Three Year Trend Report for Activities



Activity	2013/1	2014/1	2015/1
Information: Target set	700	700	700
No	759	983	2273
Advice Target set	2000	2000	2250
No	3327	3501	4348
Open Cases: Target set	300	300	300
No	280	294	187
Closed Cases: Target set	300	300	300
No	321	341	281
C.L.E: Target set	7	10	10
No	25	9	11

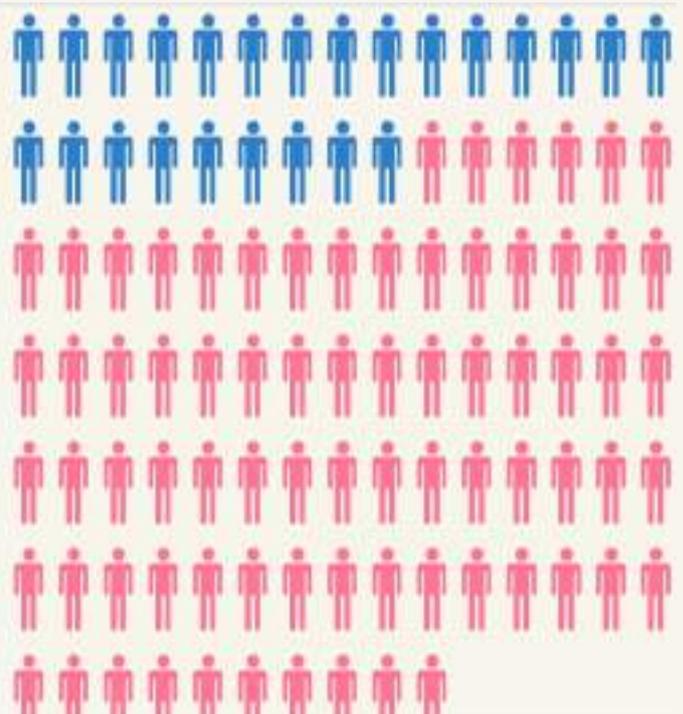
Total Number of Male and Female Client Matter

Client Demographics 2014/15



Male (23.91%) Female (76.09%)

Client Demographics 2015/16



Male (23.83%) Female (76.17%)

Clients of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Background



2015/16 (34.06%) 2014/15 (34.41%) 2013/14 (31.53%)

Client Demographics by Age

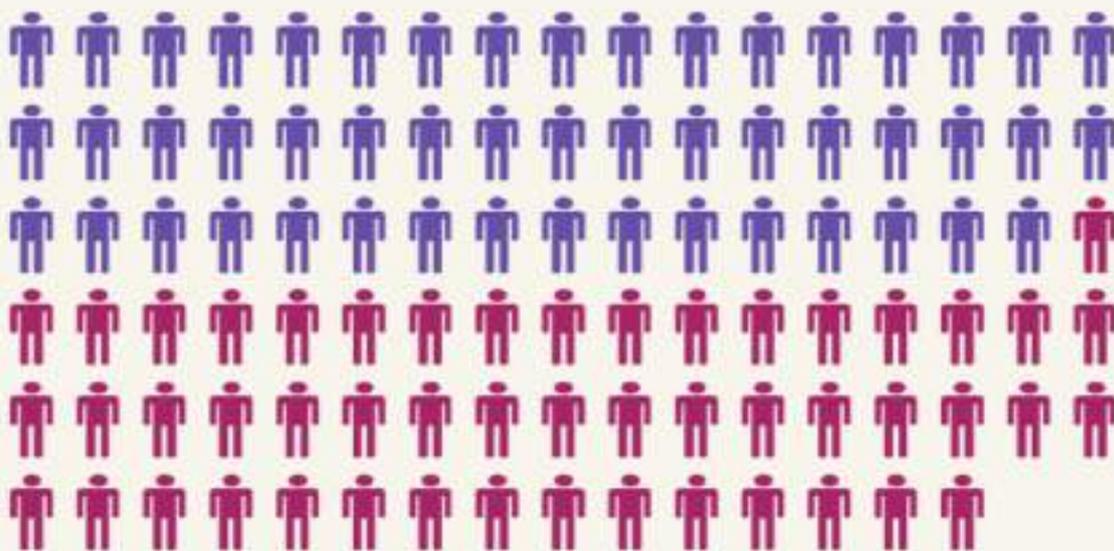


<18(1.27%) 18-34(39.68%) 35-49(34.22%)
50-64(19.82%) 65 & Over(5.02%)

Client Demographics by Income



Total Number of Clients Assisted in 2014/15 to 2015/16



2014/15 (50.30%) 2015/16 (49.70%)



Board of Management Chairperson's Report

The objective and vision of the Pilbara Community Legal Service (PCLS) over the last 23 years has been to ***“Empower the People of the Pilbara to manage their lives effectively”***.

That focus has seen a commitment by PCLS to reduce the social, economic and legal disadvantage of vulnerable people across the Pilbara.

A focus on the justice aspects of individual disadvantage related to housing, welfare and the law, has resulted in a tailored and specialist approach to individual client care that works to empower and develop client capacity to more effectively manage their lives.

This vision is focussed on supporting the real needs and valid aspirations of clients, and requires that all staff, management, and the board, are committed to, and share that vision, and that all consciously work towards achieving it with the best use of the resources available.

The ongoing global and national economic situation of recent years, has subsequently reduced the capacity of government and other funders to supply the necessary finances to enable PCLS to maintain or expand its programs to service clients in a time of expanding needs.

The impact of the economic slowdown has seen a change in the demographic and an increase in clients seeking to access PCLS specialist services.

The resultant increase in workloads and case complexity have significantly challenged resources and propelled the need for more staff training and professional development to ensure a continued ability to achieve meaningful outcomes for clients.

However reduced access to resources has also greatly impacted on the capacity of PCLS to recruit, train and maintain appropriately skilled and motivated staff.

In short, the economic downturn that is causing the increased demand being experienced, is also reducing the resources available to manage that demand; and therefore the clear and present challenge for PCLS is to be able to service vulnerable clients by delivering an adequate and professional service, delivered by professional, committed staff, whilst also ensuring that we are also remunerating our staff at a rate to attract the skills we require as well as providing appropriate training to ensure that PCLS remains a best practice agency.

A key element to the success of PCLS, has been the client centred approach in service delivery, with a clear purpose focussed on delivering justice, in housing, welfare and social law, and it is underpinned by strong values to drive social, economic and legal change to reduce the systemic disadvantage on those most vulnerable to structural disadvantage.

That is a commitment shared at all levels of the organisation through the consistent approach by PCLS to investment in training and professional development for PCLS staff to increase job skills – skills that deliver the best possible outcomes and build resilience and capacity in clients, and thus add genuine value to program and service delivery, and thus maintaining our credibility to seek ongoing program funding.

The focus of the board has been to consistently implement yearly planning, with a commitment to the development of a strategic structure that encompasses understanding of the current economic environment, and which is mindful of the current downward pressures on funding.

The board has in collaboration with senior management, developed an organisational approach to risk management that allows for risk taking within the parameters of purpose, vision and the skills set of the organisation, and which

allows for collaborative partnerships with like organisations to enhance service delivery, without diluting the specific justice perspective of PCLS.

Thus the organisation can be best placed to pursue all options for program funding, to best enable delivery of service potential for the target clients of PCLS.

In an economic environment where agencies experience downward pressure on funding resources, in an environment of increasing need for services, There is always a very real chance that other agencies competitively may seek to encroach or poach into the service area of other agencies to ensure their own survival, and that may be to the detriment of the service quality experienced by clients.

PCLS is the agency best equipped to deliver justice related to social, economic and legal disadvantage, and its staff and board must be flexible, vigilant and committed to ensure it consistently maintains and sustainably builds its service delivery within the vision and objective of PCLS's mission.

I feel that the future of PCLS will require that the organisation must operate efficiently and productively in the current economic environment, whilst acknowledging the many perspectives, views and ideas that add strengths to service delivery and continue team building through solid investment in up-skilling which increases the capabilities and knowledge of a committed and passionate staff.

Whilst commitment is made by PCLS to up-skill and support committed and loyal staff binding commitment must be sought from all staff to drive service excellence through display of responsibility, loyalty and dedication to the organisation's vision and purpose.

On a personal note, I would like to thank members for their commitment and dedication and ask that members in some capacity will continue to get behind the management and staff in an effort to ensure continuance and commitment to service delivery that meet best practice outcomes.

Roz Brabazon
Chairperson



Chief Executive Officer's Report

Federal Department of Attorney General Community Legal Service Program (CLSP)

A forward-looking CEO must do three things: Manage the present, selectively forget the past, and Create the future". by Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble

I am pleased to report that The Pilbara Community Legal Service (PCLS) has had a most successful year. Income for the year of \$3.5 M has provided a solid base for the organisation as we move forward in developing and delivering more programs, increasing our commitment to the people of the Pilbara.

The Pilbara Community Legal Service (PCLS) works to alleviate the personal, social and economical burden being felt by so many people, and we do so with the ongoing support of both the State and Federal Government. As a result of this support, the organisation has grown to deliver a range of vital free services.

The number of people assisted by our organisation during the last financially year grew dramatically with 1,919 individuals coming through our door, some of whom would never before have contemplate doing so.

PCLS staff across the region undertook and provided a total of 4,347 advices and 510 client cases involving 1,141 problem types. 1,173 instances of information were distributed and 3,607 referrals received from 26 different sources.



The 1,919 individuals who presented at our door were facing difficult situations be they financial, tenancy, domestic violence or legal. Situations such as separation, divorce or the passing of a loved one.

Each of these 1,919 individuals had a different situation to contend with, or a painful story to share – the distraught parent who wanted to spend time with their children after not seeing them for a year, the young mother who needed support after leaving the family home and everything she owned due to family violence. The grieving partner left to deal with the complex funeral affairs arising from their loved one passing away without a will complicated by the fact that she was on his visa. There are those who suddenly lost their job with no way to turn to pay the mortgage. For some who failed to acquire some level of employment it meant Bankruptcy, for others they simply handed in their keys at the bank and left town.

There are so many stories and while each one is unique, there's one common theme. Each one came to PCLS because our services are free, confidential and non-judgemental.

With the use of improved technology and video conferencing, we were able to reach and support people from isolated communities across the Pilbara, hold inter-office meetings without travelling for hours and link our staff to metro-based professional development opportunities.

The appointment of a Human Resource Consultant saw the overseeing of various aspects of employment such as compliance with labour law and employment standards, administration of employee benefits and improved recruitment.

PCLS views its employees as its most important assets whose value is enhanced by further learning and development. Similarly our Board of

Management members were encouraged and supported to participate in corporate governance training, attendance at the Better Boards Conference and the AES Evaluation Conference.

As a result PCLS Risk Management Plan, Strategic Plan and Organisational Plan is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that our priorities are set, focussed and energised and our resources and operations, strengthened so that employees and other stakeholders are working toward established outcomes We will continue to assess and adjust the organisation's strategies to achieve our mission.

A new file management process was implemented along with client feedback and complaint processes. These systems will be further advanced with the introduction of a new data Recording system at the end of the year.

PCLS staff participated in a range of community activities, workshops and community legal education forums working in partnerships with government departments, other agencies and organisations. Meetings were held with local Members of Parliament and State Ministers. Media interviews were conducted with Regional ABC radio, local and state newspapers and ABC World News. The GWN advertisement "Pilbara Community Legal Services are free" catchcry was heard far and wide.

During the course of the financial year PCLS was allocated the Migrant Settlement Services contract for the Pilbara and Goldfields and all other contracts were renewed or extended. In support of the Migrant Settlement Services contract, our solicitors undertook Migration Agent training and mediation training.

The Board of Management of The Pilbara Community Legal Service have worked tirelessly for the last 20 years to invest and save in order to meet a strategic objective to ultimately purchase our own building from which to operate. An Engineer and an Architect were engaged and a feasibility study conducted on the potential of

renovating the existing building to provide the required facility – A Regional Community Justice Centre accommodating a range of services providing the people of the Pilbara with wrap around justice services on all levels. The recommendation is to demolish the old building. Schematic designs for a "New Build" have been prepared that compliment the current Karratha City Centre standards. Funding submissions were prepared and we await the outcome for the development of this visionary concept for the Pilbara.

Culminating the 2015-16 financial year, I was delighted to accept a Cabinet appointment to represent the Not-for-Profit sector of the Pilbara on the Pilbara Strategic Regional Advisory Council.

"Membership of the Strategic Regional Advisory Council (SRAC) was determined by Cabinet and members appointed by the Ministers."



"The SRAC has been established to enable effective strategic engagement between the State Government, Commonwealth Government regional Aboriginal advisors and the not for profit sector."

I am in my fourteenth year with The Pilbara Community Legal Service. I was initially engaged as a Financial Counsellor in 2002 and appointed to the position of Chief Executive Officer in 2009.

There have been many challenges along the way, but the rewards far outweigh the challenges. The next Financial Year will present more challenges, but I am confident that our team of dedicated staff guided by a skilled and equally dedicated Board of management will see the Pilbara Community Legal Service achieve great outcomes that will endorse our vision "to empower the people of the Pilbara to manage their lives effectively".

Nanette Williams
Chief Executive Officer– Karratha



Principal Solicitor's Report

*Federal Department of Attorney General
Community Legal Service Program (CLSP)
Rural Women's Outreach Program*

The end of the 2015/2016 financial year marks almost nine years for the Pilbara Community Legal Service having a Principal Lawyer funded under the Community Legal Services (CLSP) Rural Women's Outreach Program.

It is almost two years since I commenced in this position and during that period of time there has been further staff changes in the legal practice section.

Tara-Jane Torrisi resigned her position and was replaced in Karratha by Jana Francis, our unrestricted lawyer from South Hedland. Murray Jones accepted a position as a restricted lawyer in our South Hedland office with his supervision coming from the Karratha office.

One of the difficulties that we experience in the Pilbara is the vast distances of the area. Access to legal information and representation of clients presents issues of their own. Although we have the four locations, we also attend outlying areas for our Outreach Services and yet still find that we have clients who are isolated and far from legal assistance that one may well take for granted in urban localities.

Our client base is predominantly in the low income and disadvantaged groups, however with the high costs of living in remote areas such as the Pilbara, families that may have both parents employed also experience financial hardship and their needs for appropriate legal assistance representation and advice must also be addressed.

The service that we provide in Karratha is mainly centred on Family and De Facto Law, Criminal Injuries Compensation, Wills and Probate and general civil actions. It is the usual case that our clients have other matters in addition to their primary issue that also requires assistance and as a result the services that we provide need to expand depending on each individual client's needs. It is a

rather delicate balancing exercise to assist people in the areas of funding and also be able to assist clients where there are no other alternative options for referral.

In addition to our Karratha practice we also provide a weekly service in Roebourne as part of our Outreach.

In addition to our Karratha, Hedland and Roebourne offices we also attend Newman office on a regular basis. Outreach services to Tom Price, Nullagine, Marble Bar and Jigalong are also included in provision of legal assistance.

It has been a rewarding experience since commencing in July 2014 as Principal Lawyer continuing the existing casework and maintaining the structured team approach to providing quality representation to our many clients. Our case load and representation has been partly instrumental in the Family Court determining to resume Court sittings in the Pilbara instead of matters being held in Perth for determination. This allows the client to have access to justice in their home town instead of having to travel to Perth and seek accommodation and outside representation to complete their legal matters.

One of the principal objectives in establishing a community based legal centre is the importance of presenting a professional and efficient perception of our practice. Through my career in both Government and private practice I have often encountered a mistaken belief that if one is represented by a Government funded body then the representation is not up to the standard of private representation. Having experienced both sides of legal practice I know this to be totally unfounded. In the majority of matters, clients feel far more at ease with an organisation that is not profit based and, provided the service and representation is of a professional level, their opinion does not change.

Now that the Principal Lawyer and an unrestricted lawyer are based in Karratha, the client base has continued to expand. The legal service endeavours to make appointments for new clients within two days of an enquiry and also services the needs of “walk in” clients with urgent problems that require immediate assistance.

During the last twelve months we have successfully completed three complex Family Law matters that required in excess of four days trial time. In addition, matters of some less complexity

have been completed in trial times of one to two days. It has been our practice to commence as many matters as possible in the Magistrates jurisdiction to ensure a quicker resolution and local representation.

I will be leaving the Pilbara at the end of June 2016 and am sure the legal practice will continue to perform well under the new Principal Lawyer.

Colin Baker
Principal Solicitor– Karratha

Indigenous Women's Outreach Program

Federal Department of Attorney General/ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Community Legal Service Program

The Solicitor is funded through Prime Minister and Cabinet: Indigenous Advancement Strategy; Outreach Services in the Pilbara

We are providing the majority of Family Law services in the Pilbara. Because of the limited number of service providers, 'Conflict' is a significant issue in the region and we refer to the CLSIS database before engaging.

Legal Aid WA has a focus on Criminal law, and we often receive referrals for Family Law and Child Protection matters.

Aboriginal Legal Service has a focus on Criminal law, with some civil matters serviced via Perth.

Aboriginal Family Law Service is limited to matters involving an element of Domestic Violence; significant local focus on Criminal Injury Compensation matters.

We allocate a significant proportion of our efforts to the support of victims of entrenched Domestic Violence. In this reporting period we have sought to promote an environment of dialogue and education whereby victims are encouraged to actively participate in the Legal processes available for their particular circumstances, rather than continue in the role of passive acceptance of everything that takes place around them. We have noted the positive effects of this approach through Victims seeking and then maintaining Violence Restraining Orders to protect themselves and their children; we assist with the process and provide support, but encourage the Victims to represent themselves where possible. The feeling of empowerment that this approach engenders is palpable as the Victims realise that they can actually take steps to break the chains of Domestic Violence and put a supportive framework in place to help them move forward with their lives.

Legal assistance has been provided to clients in

matters of Family Law, Protection and Care, Violence Restraining Orders, Criminal Injuries Compensation claims, Deceased Estates, Tenancy and Housing,

Solicitors are located at our main office at Karratha, and at South Hedland. Outreach services are provided to Roebourne, Newman, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Jigalong, and other smaller communities as may be required.

The Client was a mature-aged female, literate and articulate.

She had lived continuously with the same partner for approximately 23 years and for most of that time was subjected to ongoing Domestic Violence ('DV') including regular physical and emotional abuse. She had grown to accept the DV situation as a normal part of life.

The Client and partner both felt that their domestic arrangements and behaviour were matters to be dealt with between them, with no involvement by external parties. Some of the physical abuse against the Client required her attendance at the Hospital Emergency Department for medical treatment, but in each case the injury was explained as being the result of an accident at home or whilst walking to the shops. Incidents of DV were not reported to the Western Australian Police ('WAPOL').

The partner subsequently formed a relationship with another woman and spent the majority of his time staying at her home, although he still kept his personal possessions at the Client's home and would frequently attend at unreasonable hours of the night to pick up or drop off various items and to assert his right to enter the premises and perpetuate the entrenched DV behaviour.

After about 6 months the Client finally sought Agency support and assistance; she had been

made aware the availability of Agency services through media (television and radio) campaigns against DV.

The Client relocated to another property but the partner would not accept that the relationship had ended and caused the Client to fear for her safety; over the next 4 months the Client allowed two different Legal Agencies to seek Violence Restraining Orders ('VRO's) on her behalf, but on both occasions the partner opposed the VRO Application and the Client did not feel confident to attend Magistrates Court in support of the VRO. The submissive role of the Client in this relationship was perpetuated.

On the third occasion the Client was encouraged to participate in the Legal process rather than passively submit to it. The Client was given Legal assistance to prepare her submission; she attended at the Courthouse to make her Application for a VRO. When the partner opposed the Application the Client was given Legal support and encouragement sufficient to attend the Magistrates Court (with the Lawyer in support) and to speak for herself. The Application was upheld, and the sense of empowerment felt by the Client was apparent to all concerned.

The Client has felt confident to move on with her life, and has stated that she will have no hesitation

in working with Pilbara Community Legal Service in the future.

There is a lack of Family Mediation resources available. A significant proportion of demand for Legal assistance is related to family disputes and issues which could be well served by mediation in the first instance, but which have escalated into more severe conflict as a consequence of long delays, or unavailability of services. The Legal practitioner is under pressure to seek exemption from mediation at the earliest opportunity on behalf of clients and to seek redress through the Courts; not an efficient use of time and resources.

Delivery of remote services is a challenge.

(1) We lack a designated (larger) vehicle suited to long distance driving and unsealed roads of the Pilbara.

(2) Arranging for facilities for meeting and supporting clients is achieved through ongoing co-operation with other organisations and is dependent on workers' networking skills.

Funding constraints are placing increasing pressure on obtaining and retaining adequate staff.

Murray Jones
Solicitor – South Hedland



Solicitor

WA Public Purpose Trust

This year has been busy yet again in the role of Solicitor - Public Purposes Trust. The program has attended to a variety of legal issues including family law, wills and estates and criminal injuries compensation for clients in Karratha and Roebourne.

The client base for this program is predominately indigenous women living in and around Karratha and Roebourne. Roebourne clients are met once a week in our Roebourne office and additionally on an as required basis.

Our casework and advices would be predominately family law based. At present we have over 30 open cases, with at least 70% being family law based. We provide assistance in all areas of family law including child contacts, recovery orders, divorce, and property settlements. Our case work service is reserved for low income earners however we provide general advice to most people provided no conflict exists and that assistance would not create a conflict for low income earning females in the future.

We have continued to provide much assistance with Criminal Injuries Compensation applications. We utilise the assistance of the Victim Support Services located at the Karratha Magistrates Court for Victim Impact Statements which enables us to spend less time on these matters and as such take on additional work. The Office of Criminal Injuries is incredibly back logged at this point in time and we are waiting many months to be notified of awards for our clients.

There has been a real economic downturn in Karratha in recent years coming from the end of the mining boom. As such, more and more Karratha residents are fitting our case work criteria of being low income earners.

We have begun providing a legal service to the broader community in recent times. Many clients

who previously were unsuitable for our service due to their financial means are now seeking assistance. The downturn has had a ripple effect into a number of legal areas we have provided assistance with. For example, with numerous layoffs and redundancies in the mining and construction sector, we have had numerous employment law queries. Whilst we try our best to provide basic assistance in this area, we often utilise the Employment Law Centre in Perth who have telephone hotline and advise clients to make contact with them for more detailed assistance.

Another example is assistance in civil disputes and debt collection. Whilst our financial counsellors assist with negotiating with creditors for clients, we can assist with relevant paperwork for this jurisdiction including Statement of Claims and Statement of defence.

With the mining downturn, we have seen an increase in divorce queries and property settlement issues at the service. Whilst in past years our family law practice was more heavily focused on child contact orders, we have noticed a real increase in property settlement queries. With respect of property settlements, our client base is predominately non indigenous women. Many of these clients seek assistance in obtaining property settlements as they cannot obtain assistance from Legal Aid due to the size of the asset pool. Stay at homes find it difficult to obtain assistance as their spouse is earning a good income or has had control of the finances throughout the relationship. Many of these clients feel they cannot leave bad relationships as they have no financial means of doing so as the male has been the 'bread winner'. Applications for spousal maintenance in these scenarios are often advised and we have prepared Orders accordingly. Spousal maintenance provides these kind of clients the money necessary to leave

Property settlements in Karratha are becoming

increasingly difficult with many clients having mortgages well above the property sale value. The drop in housing prices in the Pilbara is demonstrated in the graph below. As can be seen, the average price for a property in Karratha in 2011 was \$850,000.00, and went down to \$600,000.00 by the end of 2014. At present, 3 bedroom houses are selling for as low \$200,000.00.

The real difficulty this substantial drop in property prices poses in terms of a family law property settlement is that even if the parties can reach agreement regarding how they wish to deal with their house and mortgage, the bank holding the mortgage may not be agreeable given the bank's liability is too great. Many of these clients feel bankruptcy is their only option and sadly, this may very well be the case. There seems to be an increase in mortgagee in possession sales in the Pilbara.

We have continued to try and educate community members on the need for a Will. We attended a local Soroptimist women's lunch to discuss the

importance of having a Will and advise we are able to assist in preparing same. We have created Wills for our clients in Roebourne and our Roebourne staff are continuously trying to engage more and more clients to attend the office to create their Will.

We remain in close contact with numerous agencies and private solicitor in the Pilbara, Perth and beyond to achieve the best results for our clients. We liaise frequently with the Public Trustee in Perth for Guardianship issues, Estate Administrations, and lodging clients' Wills in the WA Will Bank.

All in all, the program has been running well. Whilst we are broadening our areas of assistance and client base and whilst this at times can be stressful, it is a fantastic opportunity to involve the Pilbara Community Legal Service in the community more and more.

Jana Francis
Solicitor– Karratha

Financial Counselling

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

Working as a Financial Counsellor at Pilbara Community Legal Service Inc (PCLS) is both challenging and rewarding. Every day is different with a diversity of clients. Karratha is a mining City being a combination of the wealthy and the poor. Two years ago, Dampier which is located 15 minutes from Karratha, was reported as the highest income area per capita in Australia.

Over the past eighteen months property prices have plummeted. Along with this downturn we have observed a number of job losses. Financial stress and hardship is a large component of the work at PCLS. It is not uncommon to assist with two or three bankruptcies each week.

Debt accumulation is a characteristic of the Australian economy being highly pronounced within the Karratha region. Whether it is property investment or lifestyle and hobby activities, people have accumulated debt.

My role as a financial counsellor is one of support and providing options. Financial concerns are more often than not connected to social and relationship problems. Within Australia, the highest single factor contributing to divorce is finances. Being a good financial counsellor is about identifying client's issues and referring them to relevant professional services, e.g. relationships counselling.

Pilbara Community Legal Service is a not-for-profit, government funded agency where our services are available to the local community, without cost to the clients. My colleagues provide a number of services from legal advice to domestic violence and homelessness. There is also a program to work long term with clients who need to develop life skills around keeping the family home and basic practical skills.

There is a wide range of clients who are experiencing financial hardship. With the mining

boom now over there has been a progression of the middle class into the poverty class. The property downturn has observed Karratha becoming one of the most affordable areas in Australia from being the most unaffordable. Prices have decreased anywhere from 20% to 70%. Most property investors who invested from 2009 to 2012 have negative equity.

Financial Counsellors are trained to negotiate debt through moratoriums, loan restructures and even principle reductions. Banks and financial institutions are negotiable when hardship cases are well presented and appropriately justified.

In the last four months we have witnessed a number of clients wanting to file for bankruptcy. For some clients this is unavoidable. We work hard to look at all options to avoid bankruptcy. There are circumstances where bankruptcy is a good solution. The option of bankruptcy for some clients is a new start and a huge relief. We demythologise the false claim that bankruptcy is the end of the world.

Three months ago a client and her partner were struggling with debt. Their situation was deteriorating and bankruptcy was becoming inevitable. Through negotiations, the bank cancelled just over \$180,000 of their debt allowing them to avoid bankruptcy and recover from their present position.

Another case has been a family of four where they had acquired a number of investment properties over the past six years. The rents on these properties have reduced by up to 80%. We communicated with the bank prior to them going into arrears and the bank has reduced their debt by just under \$500,000. These clients are now in a position to service their debt and will recover over the next three to five years.

Financial Counsellors spend a lot of their time

educating clients. Financial literacy is poor. School teaches us to read, write and count but does not teach anything about money management. I would estimate that for 80% of PCLS clients have never drawn up a budget.

Credit cards and personal debt are on the rise. These should be treated as loaded guns that require training. Many of our clients are having their lives destroyed by debts that they simply cannot afford. Just last month a client presented with a credit card owing over \$8000 with an interest rate of 22%. PCLS was able to negotiate this debt and the balance was completely "forgiven". In banking terms, this means the credit card was closed with zero balance and the client was able to get on with their life.

Living in the Pilbara presents many challenges with its hot climate. One of the challenges is the power bill. It is not uncommon for clients to present with horizon power bills of over \$2000 for just one quarter. At PCLS we work closely with Horizon Power to assist clients to apply under the Hardship Utility Grant Scheme (HUGS). After we assess a person's financial situation we can apply for a grant of almost \$900 towards their power bill. There are also grants available through St. Vincent De Paul's Power Assist. Depending on the circumstances we can apply for assistance from them of up to \$400.00. There is nothing worse than a family presenting who has just been disconnected from their power and it is forty degrees Celsius.

Education is what brings long term change. PCLS is committed to educating its clients. Last month the PCLS Financial Counsellors travelled to Broome to complete the ANZ Money Business course. This training is to assist our counsellors to educate people in managing money and get out of debt. Mixing with elders from the Kimberley region was a great privilege and insight into the generational poverty and hardship experienced by Aboriginal people. We are preparing culturally appropriate training to deliver to Aboriginal groups over the coming months.

On the 30th August we will host a financial education night. "The Buck\$ Night" is all about managing money and what to do when one is in financial stress. We have special guest speakers including local bank managers, real estate agents and our consultant barrister who specialises in bankruptcy and managing debt agreements. Our financial counsellors will share some real life stories of locals who have worked through financial difficulty and what is available to those struggling with debt. We hope this will go some way to creating an awareness that money does not need to rule one's life and there are always

people like financial counsellors who can help find a resolution and provide the needed support along the way.

Mark Hayes
Financial Counsellor – Karratha



Financial Counselling

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

Let me start with this quote from one of the best-selling authors - Garth Stein. He once said that *"The true test of a champion is not whether he can triumph, but whether he can overcome obstacles."*

How does one really overcome an obstacle? Perhaps a financial obstacle? An obstacle that exempts no one! Matt Angell, Chief Operating Officer of Credit Corp captivated everyone in the room including myself when he shared his personal story at the Financial Counselling Association conference in Adelaide when he said *"we are all only one event away from finding ourselves in financial difficulty"*. This is true. The everyday encounters I have with my clients have me witness the distress and anxiety they face. As part of this annual report I would like to give you a glimpse of the highlights, achievements and challenges met by the service.

During the first half of the year 60% of the total clients attending the service were seeking assistance with payment of their power account. It became difficult to negotiate with the utility provider for people who could not afford to make the required upfront payment. Clients were being asked to make an additional payment on top of their Centrepay deduction arrangement. The service had been advised that there was going to be a change in the way the Hardship Utilities Grant Scheme (HUGS) was going to be delivered.

While a financial counsellor would still be able to negotiate with the utilities provider on behalf of a client, the actual HUGS assessment would be done by the utilities provider. For a client to be eligible for a grant, they would need to prove that they were in extreme financial hardship. Clients were all informed of this change and encouraged to seek budget education to enable them to deal better with this change. Clients were also provided with the necessary information on how to reduce their power consumption.

During the course of the financial year there was also an alarming increase in the number of clients presenting with breach notices from the Housing Authority for rental arrears. Some had been in arrear with their rent for almost a year and, as a result, their debt was very high. The only arrangement the Housing authority is permitted to accept in such cases is an up front payment of half the total amount owing with the remainder being paid on a realistic time-payment plan that enables the remainder of the arrears to be finalised within a set timeframe while also maintaining the usual fortnightly rental payment. Unfortunately, because in most presenting cases the rental arrears had escalated to such a large amount, most of the tenants were not in a financial position to pay the required up-front half of the rental arrears.

Housing Authority tenants finding themselves in this situation are assisted with a budgeted payment plan to enable them to continue to pay their usual fortnightly rental with an additional sustainable amount to address the arrears. Unfortunately, in some cases, this arrangement does not stop court action taking place. However, the proposed payment plan is presented to the court to demonstrate that the tenants are trying to address the debt to the best of their financial capacity and with time the arrears can be negated. Prior to the court judgement, clients who are members of an Aboriginal Corporation or Trust are urged to seek some financial assistance from their respective groups.

During the second half of the financial year, HUGS was no longer being assessed by Financial Counsellors but by the utility provider. However, clients who did not have the confidence to negotiate with the utility provider themselves continued to seek assistance from the financial counsellor with payment of their power bills. These clients were assisted to negotiate with the

utility provider for reconnection and a reduced payment plan arrangement. In situations of assessed extreme financial hardship when it was apparent that the client did not have the financial capacity to meet the full cost of the power account before their next power account was due, they were further assisted with an application to St Vincent de Paul for Power Assist. Such occasions, are also seen as good opportunities for the financial counsellor to provide clients with some overall budgeting training to help them meet their household accounts within their financial means.

The new rent income assessment from the Housing Authority has now changed to 25% of the "total household income." Centrelink Family Tax Benefit was previously assessed at 15% with other allowances at 0%. The inclusion of the Family tax Benefit in the overall 25% rent assessment process has significantly affected many families who are public housing tenants. As a result, they fall short on their rent payments. Some of these tenants are the elderly and people who have limited understanding of the written notices they receive from the Housing Authority. Unfortunately, breach notices are issued because of a rental debt which accumulates because some of these tenants delay seeking assistance until the last moment and by then the debt has accumulated beyond what they can pay as a lump sum or the required 50% payment.

There has been a marked increase in the number of clients wanting early access to their superannuation due to several reasons. Moreover these clients do not seem to have any other option because their financial situation is one of extreme hardship. These clients seek the early release of their superannuation because they see it as being the only way they will save their car or home and meet their immediate needs. The Service has also been approached by individuals in the mid to high income bracket which is due to the ongoing effects of the downturn in the mining sector. Investment properties' loan to value ratio has had a significant drop. Moratoriums and variation requests does not seem to help with these situations because the main problem is an enduring issue that they

ultimately have to face. These are some of the emerging issues for home owners with large mortgages, who have been directly impacted as the price of investment properties continues to plummet and such properties once rented out at a rent that easily enabled them to meet their mortgage payments are now unoccupied..

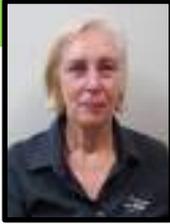
The Pilbara community legal Service signed up as a No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) Agency early this year and training took place in South Hedland in March. This is another good avenue to help the pension card holders and health care card holders to purchase goods or services that will uplift their way of living. NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) is a better alternative to "rentals" which costs more as additional charges are applied.

There is a need for the financial counsellor to continuously build on communication with the external stake holders such as the Housing Authority in order to reach our goals for our clients. The financial counsellor also works collaboratively with our Tenants' Advocate to achieve the best outcomes for our clients through court representation, advocacy and expert witness on the client's financial position.

During the financial year I have conducted money management training for the Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Health Service Centre, at their Well-being Centre and with the Ngarlawangga Aboriginal Group. This training serves to empower the community through education. It also gives them a new perspective of how to better manage their money no matter what the amount. The workshop was developed customised to their specific area of need and level of financial literacy.

The conference presented a range of speakers, by far the best to date in my experience. Great speakers from all over Australia shared genuine stories to which many of us could relate. The range of diverse issues presented by the guest speakers provided us all with an opportunity to learn, better understand and develop professionally.

Jayne Jarito
Financial Counsellor– South Hedland



Financial Counselling

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

My role is to assist clients to budget, meet their household bills, advocate for clients when dealing with situations and authorities they feel they cannot handle themselves and also to liaise on their behalf so that debts, fines, bills and their tenancy remains intact.

In Roebourne our clientele are mainly indigenous and live in Public Housing. I assist clients to keep their rent, water and tenant liability payments up to date, as required by the Housing Authority. I deal with Centrelink, banks and local organisations as well as utilities and Housing Direct who administer house maintenance for tenants. Clientele are mainly self-referred and use our service on a drop in basis.

I was able to assist an 80 year old local resident who was sold a state of the art phone with costs of \$130 per month attached to it. The phone stayed in the box for 4 months because he had no idea how it worked. Someone finally got hold of the phone and racked up a bill of \$2350 in one month. He was very worried about how he would be able to pay this bill but I contacted the Hardship Unit at the telco and asked for a complete waiver on the account as inappropriate and unconscionable behaviour by the salesperson in the store. The phone was returned to the company and the debt was completely cancelled. I include this case as an example of how much people worry about bills and debts and the best option is always to immediately seek help.

The Roebourne office has assisted over 250 clients. The main contact is for housing related issues as the Housing Authority has no physical presence in Roebourne at this time and we assist with form filling, income verification and explaining the meaning of letters and timelines for clients. I set up Centrepay for clients for power bills and negotiate for clients with utilities. We try to be the One Stop Shop and refer internally or

externally if necessary when we can't deal with it ourselves.

I have assisted clients with direct debits being taken from their accounts for various charities, funeral plans and from photo studios signing clients and delivering little. Luckily these businesses have begun to be scrutinized by the ACCC but it is always satisfying to free up some more income for clients struggling to feed their families and maintain their tenancies.

I have been lucky to work alongside Mrs Angie Mitchell who is the Support and Tenant Education Program Service Provider (STEP). Angie is well known and respected by all in the community and this has made it easier for me to connect with clients and to understand their problems. Angie assists by getting forms signed and bringing back information when she is out in the field. I find clients respond very well to text messages and will often attend the office really quickly to resolve an issue.

Despite high unemployment, lack of suitable housing, overcrowding, high cost of living, lack of public transport, substance abuse, gambling, domestic violence, low literacy levels and being on low fixed incomes there is a wonderful sense of community in Roebourne and the people are a pleasure to work with.

In my role I have met with many of the local organisations and key people who keep the place humming. I have also attended community events that increased opportunities for liaison and referral. I would like to spend more time offering informal financial counselling events where people can learn to budget, anticipate billing cycles, learn about saving, ask questions and manage their money more effectively. With that end in mind the other Financial Counsellors and myself are lucky enough to have secured places in a

MoneyBusiness Facilitator Course being held in Broome which will equip us to increase the amount and the quality of our public presentations. The MoneyBusiness course materials were developed by ANZ in consultation with Indigenous communities to build money management skills and develop a stronger savings culture in remote communities.

Tenancy debts resulting in the issuing of Breach and Termination Notices by the Housing Authority is an ongoing problem. Tenants without financial literacy skills often leave it very late to seek help in getting into a Payment Plan. Some of our clients have water arrears of up to \$16,000 dating back many years. The Housing Authority is calling in these debts which it can rightfully do but it would seem that the core issue is that tenants are not dealing with the Water Corporation directly. The Water Corporation could act much more quickly and stop the debts from spiralling so high for tenants. By monitoring changes in water usage and acting on water leaks much more quickly and effectively than the current system within Housing, tenants would be better served. Water bills issued to tenants are confusing and offer no usage pattern visual cues for people with limited literacy and numeracy. Educative material produced by the Water Corporation on water saving could be passed onto tenants more frequently.

Due to diminished Royalty payments many Groups are unable to assist struggling families in the same way as previously and it is now more important than ever for householders to recognise their debts before they become unmanageable and for my role to be involved with maintaining cooperative and positive working relationships for clients dealing with government agencies so that

our clients remain empowered and engaged.

I would like to encourage more Roebourne residents to have a Will prepared by our solicitor and to use the State and Federal Ombudsman service to make complaints related to equity and access issues. I wish the WA State Government would introduce Centrepay as an option for car registration payments as the Victorian Government did this year.

I encourage clients to keep important paperwork and I explain to them on why it is a good thing to do?

For example, Rent receipts, electricity bills, employment contracts, Wills, mobile phone contracts, birth certificates, car lease agreements, bank statements and warranties might look boring but are all important to keep. This paperwork can keep a person in control of their money by helping them to know what needs to be paid and when. This can help ensure their money will last until next payday and it also helps to keep them up to date with essential things like rent and electricity bills. Most importantly, people know what money is left at any given time for food and treats for the kids.

Clients are encouraged to keep their previous electricity bill so that it is easy for them to check when the next bill is due. They can then plan to try to have extra money ready to pay it. Also, if a car repayment is due they are able check their bank statement to see what date the money will next be taken from their account and how much is then leftover.

Lynn Hart
Financial Counsellor– Roebourne



Financial Counselling

Department for Child Protection and Family Services

The role of a financial counsellor is to work with individuals and/or families to resolve financial crisis such as the risk of legal action, loss of essential services or repossession/eviction. PCLS provides financial services such as information, budgeting, advocacy and support for the purpose of assisting individuals who are in financial difficulty due to circumstances such as:

- Debt
- Over commitment
- Unemployment
- Family breakdown and much more.

Our role is not only to provide on-going support to clients who are experiencing financial difficulties, but also to provide training to enhance client's skills and knowledge, for example.

- Teach the client to negotiate a payment arrangement with a service or credit provider by conducting the negotiation by speaker phone. This enables the client to hear both sides of the discussion.
- Working with the client to prepare an income and expenditure statement to clearly demonstrate the method of calculation to enable the client to learn how to budget their income to meet all their financial commitments.
- Assisting clients to modify expenditure

In my role as the financial counsellor for the Newman office, I have found during the last financial year that the predominant presenting issues are tenancy related debts, i.e. rent, water arrears and power. As all of these debts are essential to living, the presenting clients are assisted with money management advice to enable them to better budget their income. However, rental and water debts are resulting in a high number of breach notices. In October 2015 the Housing Authority implemented a new policy stating that if the arrears of a property is over \$300 the tenants will be issued with a breach notice. Inadvertently, this new policy has allowed

our services the opportunity to assist clients at an early stage, not when the debts have escalated to a point where they are unmanageable. As a result, payment plan negotiation is easier and outcomes for clients are positive.

In some instances however clients do not attend our office until the debt has increased to an unmanageable point when they are at a high risk of eviction. One couple, for example, attended at our office when their rental arrears were \$3,433 putting them at a high risk of eviction if a payment plan was not put in place. The Housing Authority was immediately contacted and with the client's permission asked to provide a copy of the client's statement of accounts. The client was asked to supply a copy of their Centrelink Income Statement. Once we had all the information needed, the client was assisted to fill out a Rent Assessment Form, a Rent Deduction Scheme form and a Centrepay Arrangement was put in place to ensure all payments were coming out of their Centrelink income each fortnight in order to pay their rent with an extra amount to gradually pay off the debt. The client was then assisted to budget their remaining Centrelink money, but with the knowledge that the important payments to enable them to avoid being evicted from their tenancy were being taken care of. With this arrangement in place the Housing Authority did not proceed with eviction action.

There are also other new initiatives that the Housing Authority has put in place, but tenants do not always properly understand their responsibilities when renting public housing. Arrangements are in place for the Financial Counsellor to partner with Housing Authority staff to conduct a workshop in Newman with public housing tenants. The workshop will address the Authority's new 6x6 month lease agreements as well as helping tenants understand what public housing leases mean, why and when they get a

breach and why and at what stage they are susceptible to eviction

The other issue that we hope to address is the issues that occur when extended family members visit and stay with the tenants in their Housing Authority properties. This will be a topic that will be high on the agenda at the workshop. We hope to get the message across to both the tenants and the extended family members so as to hopefully change the way extended family visitors treat the properties of those tenants who have been granted Housing Authority properties. There are a number of cultural reasons why tenants are so lenient when it comes to extended family visiting them. We will invite the elders to attend the workshop so that we can get a better understanding of these cultural obligations.

The PCLS Newman Forum that we have held every year at the Newman House will be replaced by these workshops which we plan to hold in the Parnpajiya Community Reserve in Newman, Nullagine and Jigalong. In other words, the workshops will be taken to the clients in their communities!

Although there are a lot of difficulties that come with being a financial counsellor it is always worth it in the end when we can achieve great outcomes for clients.

This financial year we have worked closely with St John Ambulance to assist with debts that have been incurred for the use of the ambulance to get to the Newman hospital. There is a fee of \$484.00 if a person needs the use of the St John Ambulance Services to get to the hospital. Many clients come in quite stressed that they are unable to afford this fee. We have started to encourage clients to sign up for a yearly membership which only costs one payment of \$76.00. Having this membership will alleviate any stress when it comes to payment for the use of the ambulance services.

We are still however working with the St Johns Ambulance to find ways to defray some of the

costs of taking clients to the hospital. BHP Grants are on offer and St John Ambulance applies for some of these grants to help with the mounting debts that are not paid. We have been successful in signing up clients who understand the reason for the provision of the yearly subscriptions. This not only helps our clients avoid a debt, but also helps St John Ambulance who has asked for our assistance with the 69 overdue debts that they currently have. Carrying these debts is unsustainable for St John's and for us to ask for the debts to be waived is not realistic.

PCLS gives all staff great opportunities to attend training related to our roles to ensure we have the best knowledge when it comes to assisting our clients. This financial year I have had the opportunity to attend:

- Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia Conference in Perth.
- Public Speaking with Confidence training in Newman, and
- Financial Counsellors Association Conference in Adelaide.

Another financial year has come to a close and again it has shown us the issues our town is facing in regards to financial situations. We have taken on board all the successful and not so successful outcomes during the course of the year and we hope to enhance and implement new ways to minimise the financial struggles our clients face on a daily basis.

Financial Counselling services, especially in remote locations like the Pilbara, need to be continually funded to minimize the risk of family breakups, homelessness, child neglect, family violence and all the other emerging issues that come with financial stress. Rural and remote areas in Australia have limited services and the cost of living in these areas put people in a more vulnerable situation when they are faced with debts that they are unable to manage.

Francesca Manuela
Financial Counsellor- Newman



Domestic Violence Advocacy and Victim Support Service

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

Domestic violence Advocate and Victim Support Services (DVAVSS) is a service offered by Pilbara Community Legal Service to provide support, advocacy, safety planning and support planning and assist client with the challenges they face with being in a relationship in which they are being abused, in any way such as physical, verbal, psychological, financial, spiritual, social, sexual, stalking, controlling behaviours, separation violence and domestic homicide.

My name is Mel Swiatek and I have working in the DVAVSS service since March 2016. I thoroughly enjoy my role and find it can be both challenging and rewarding. I have previously worked as an Enrolled Nurse and have worked in community services for 2 years in suicide postvention. I have completed a Diploma in Alcohol & Other Drugs and Mental Health. I utilise this knowledge on a daily basis as many of the Family Domestic Violence report stem from excess alcohol or drug use.

The DVAVSS service has received over 605 referrals in the past year from a variety of sources, such as the Family & Domestic Violence Coordinated Response team (which is made up of Police, Department of Child Protection and Family Services and Mission Australia), the women’s refuges in Karratha and Roebourne, internal referrals and others. This amount of referrals show the high incidence of Family & Domestic Violence across Karratha and surrounding area, and this number only reflects the number of people who give consent to Police to pass on their information to support services.

Of the 605 referrals received a total 315 have been in contact with DVAVSS Service. There are a number of reasons why this number is significantly lower compared to referrals received. The issues DVAVSS faces in contacting client ranges from incorrect details provided on referral, clients disconnecting their number, not answering phone

or returning messages. Another mode of attempting to engage with client is to conduct home visits, however this is a significant risk to the workers, especially if the perpetrator whereabouts unknown.

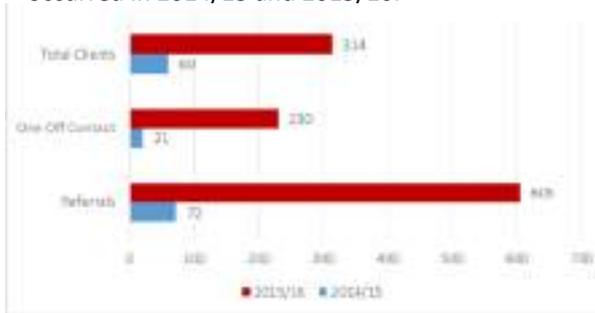
Reasons for No Contact Jan - Jun 2016



DVAVSS provides a variety of support services which is tailored to the client’s needs. The referral process is extremely simple. Any female or child that is a victim of Family or Domestic Violence can present to or be referred to the service support. DVAVSS is designed to be able to simply offer support for when the client is ready to seek assistance, provide information regarding Family & Domestic Violence and what support they can receive, assist with Violence Restraining Order applications and hearings at court as well as ongoing simple or complex case management.

The DVAVSS service has become significantly busier over this past twelve months. It is difficult to determine if this is due to a significant increase in Family Domestic Violence or if more people are reporting these incidences and there is better communication between support services to ensure victims receive the support they need. Please refer to the table below to see the

differences in referrals and one off contacts that occurred in 2014/15 and 2015/16.



In my short time in the role I found that there is often the same client being referred over and over again. By having recidivist victims referred to the service, we are able to provide contact to the client each time which reminds them of the service available and the concerns that are held for her and the children's safety which in turn create a slight rapport that the client feels comfortable to engage with support when they are at the stage of ending and leaving the relationship.

There are times when a client is contacted and services are offered, however, for many reasons they are not ready to engage in support. A majority of these clients will thank DVAVSS for their offer of support and say they will store phone number for future if they deem necessary for contact. What is even more fulfilling for this position is when these clients make contact at a later stage for support. It makes for me to feel that I have made an impact on the client and that they feel comfortable contacting me for support. It is a very rewarding feeling.

One example of this is Client A. The service has received 14 referrals for this client over a twelve month period. This family also has three young children whom have witnessed this violence on multiple occasions. Each time a service tried to engage with this client, she refused support and stated that everything was alright between them. After consistent contact with this client, she eventually got to the point in her relationship when she decided enough was enough and she reached out to local support services and applied for a Violence restraining Order to protect herself

and her children. In this instance the perpetrator breached this order and the courts worked with other services and bailed him to another town with his family. This resulted in the client and the children being safe with no further violence and the distance making it more difficult for the perpetrator to attempt a reconciliation. This was a huge success story for all the services involved, such as DVAVSS, DCPFS, Mission Australia, Corrective Services and Police.

Some of the difficulties faced by clients include long wait times for VRO hearings at court, waiting in the same room as the perpetrator at court, difficulty accessing accommodation, short term and long term, immigration issues. It is also difficult for client as they often love the person who is hurting them and want to continue with the relationship but want the violence to stop.

This service would not be successful without the collaborative approach taken with other services, such as Department Child Protection and Family Services, Mission Australia, Western Australian Police Service (Family and Domestic Violence Officers) and Corrective Services. Working collaboratively with these agencies with a single goal in mind is effective and improves client outcomes greatly. We all work to prevent further violence and to keep women and children safe.

I have attended and Introduction to Family Domestic Violence course hosted by AnglicareWA. I found this very insightful and gave me a deeper understanding of the Cycle of Violence, which so many women can relate to when discussing their relationship.

I look forward to further challenges in the coming year and hope to continue to see client that have been repetitively abused move towards a safer and healthier lifestyle for themselves and their children.

Mel Swiatek
**Domestic Violence Advocate and Victim Support-
 Karratha**



Domestic Violence Outreach Initiative

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

My name is Ellysha Melville and I am employed as the Domestic Violence Outreach worker for the Pilbara. The Domestic Violence Outreach program operates in remote & regional locations across Western Australia and is funded via the State & Federal Government's National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

Police refer clients to the service after their attendance at domestic violence callouts. Prospective clients are asked whether they would like to be contacted by a support worker. The Outreach service will then attempt to contact consenting women within 24-48 hours to provide follow up, offer various assistances such as safety planning, advocacy & support or referrals to an appropriate service. In its essence, the program is referral based and I commonly refer clients to both internal and external programs and services.

The Pilbara Community Legal Service (PCLS) is able to support domestic violence referrals in a number of areas including tenancy advocacy, financial counselling, entrance into the Drug & Alcohol homelessness program, Supported Tenancy & Public Tenancy programs, migrant support & family law advice.

Externally common referrals are made to professional counselling services, legal services such as the client's local Community Legal Centre, Legal Aid & private solicitors where appropriate. Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Health service & Yaandina Drug & Alcohol rehabilitation provide specific supports to the region's clients and Hedland Women's Refuge & the Aboriginal hostel support our clients with emergency short term accommodation whilst arrangements are made to access long term accommodation.

The Domestic Violence Outreach can utilise brokerage to financially support clients to overcome barriers brought about by domestic violence. A key object of brokerage usage, being

an NPAH (National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness) program is try to minimise the disadvantage and homelessness often experienced when women and children flee from their homes. In the last reporting period DVO brokerage money has been integral to supporting women to safely relocate to other regions, to secure or maintain tenancies or standards in their tenancy (such as fixing damage caused by a perpetrator), to establishing tenancies by provision of the required advance of two weeks rent, to provide medical assistance & access emergency accommodation.

The Domestic Violence Outreach has been consistent having assisted 215 clients this year, equal to the previous year where 216 clients were recorded as having received support.



In 2015/2016 the percentage of Aboriginal clients accessing the service was 70.2%, the previous reporting period had this percentage at 72.2%.



In 2016, 35.9% of referrals were for new clients previously not known to PCLS and 51.5% of referrals were from police. Again, this is very similar to the previous reporting period where 31.9% of referrals were for new clients and 58% of referrals to the program came directly from police.

Unfortunately an ongoing issue for the service is that client phone details on many police referrals are absent, incorrect or out of date. This occurs for a broad array of reasons including poverty, geography, kinship, homelessness and violence. In essence, many prospective clients cannot sustain continuous telephone access. This means that there are many clients who have agreed to be contacted for support but as yet have not been contacted by the service.

The Domestic Violence Outreach service is the only external (as opposed to live in) domestic violence centric service in the Hedland region. As a result, the service commonly receives self-referrals, internal referrals and external agencies referring in such as from CPFS, counselling services & Hedland Women's Refuge. These external referrals often assist me to locate clients I had previously been unable to contact. At other times, I can obtain the client's consent to obtain the DVIR (Domestic Violence Incident Report) history whereby the client effectively transitions into funding body's catchment as a 'consenting' client. Clients may not be comfortable talking to police or accepting assistance at the time of a domestic violence incident but may reach out later when circumstances alter or when they are more comfortable to do so.

Clients have had many successful outcomes over the last 12 months. The service has assisted in numerous relocations, locally and interstate & assisted clients to access the necessary supports in their new locations.

Many clients have been supported by counselling referrals and have found the strength to leave their abuser and commence a life free from violence.

The service has provided safety planning, in

particular around strategically exiting an abusive relationship.

The service has assisted clients to maximise safety around their homes utilising advice from the metropolitan 'Safe at Home' program.

The service has supported clients through court processes and advocated to ensure that their stress and re-traumatisation is kept at a minimum where ever possible.

The service has advocated for clients to assist them in accessing their own accommodation.

The service has assisted clients to access appropriate medical assistance.

Additionally the Outreach service works towards Domestic Violence awareness and advocates for a cultural shift in our community. The Outreach service assisted to organise Hedland's White Ribbon March which is an annual event held across many towns in Australia to specifically highlight the extensive issue of men using violence against women in domestic relationships. Last November, our attendees took the pledge to never use violence against women and pledge to speak out when they witness violence against women in their lives and communities.



Men and women gathered in South Hedland last week to march against domestic violence. Picture: Courtney

Ellysha Melville
Domestic Violence Outreach– South Hedland



Housing Support Worker

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

I commenced in the position of Housing Support Service - Karratha on the 16th May 2016. I took over the role from Mrs Tania Aldridge who was previously in the position during this financial year.

Being fairly new to this role and this avenue of work I have found it challenging, but very interesting. I have learnt considerably along the way. I enjoy being able to create a working relationship with each individual client all of whom are very different.

There are many factors which can lead someone to become homeless and they are of all a different age range, ethnic background and nationality.

The Housing support Service – Karratha, as with my colleagues in South Hedland and Newman, focus on 3 key strategies:

- Prevention and early intervention to lessen the impact of homelessness.
- Breaking the cycle of homelessness to help people get back on their feet, find stable accommodation and obtain employment.
- A better connected service system that will build more connected, integrated and responsive services that strive to achieve
- Sustainable housing, and improve economic and social participation of those at risk of homelessness.

The Housing Support Service is provided across the Pilbara Region and liaises with organisations such as The Housing Authority. The program is allocated 10 properties by The Housing Authority each financial year specifically for homeless clients who are eligible to be housed under the program.

The program then supports housed clients over a 12 month period to help them maintain and sustain long term tenancies through assistance with:

- Initially – the sourcing of suitable accommodation, then

- establishing the home - furniture/household effects,, followed by
- tenancy specific support to help maintain their tenancy- maintenance, independent living skills etc.
- Resolving any financial issues that may develop
- Referral to Centrelink, assisting with access, to education, employment and training where possible, and
- linking clients to local health services and providers as required.

Currently the service is supporting eleven open cases, all of whom have successfully been on the program for a short period of time. During the course of the financial year, two cases were closed whereby tenants have completed their twelve months of support successfully.

Issues that have occurred for current supported tenants include:

- Non-payment of rent or deductions that have not been satisfactorily processed.
- Tenant liability and understanding how that works and instances where it is charged.
- Disruptive behaviour and knowing what behaviour is acceptable in Housing Authority tenancies.
- Understanding the process of items of tenancy maintenance and how to report.

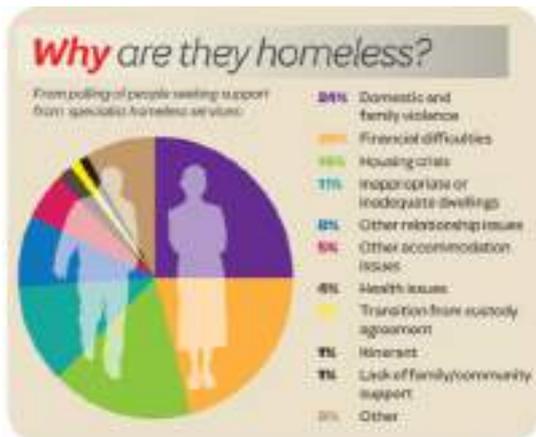
Working with many different clients, all with different situations, needs and backgrounds can be challenging at times. Many are under a great deal of stress due to their situations being understandably difficult. Finding somewhere for people in primary homelessness to stay during the interim time of being accepted into the program and being allocated a house is the biggest challenge.

Karratha does not have many places for people who are homeless to go, women and young children can stay at the women's refuge shelter,

but there is a limit on the age of the children which means that there are occasions when families are broken up at a time when they need each other's support most.

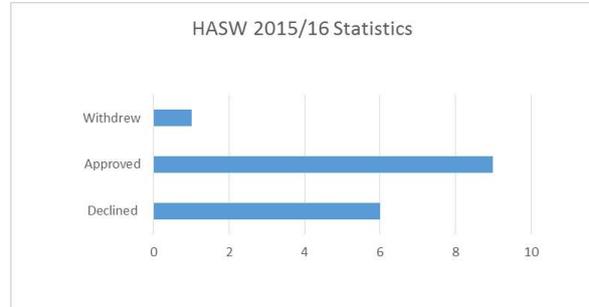
Homeless men unfortunately have nowhere to go – there are no emergency shelters for men in the Pilbara. One gentleman client during a very low period in his life was unfortunately left living in his car.

Pets are also a common issue that arises when people becoming homeless. These are beloved family pets who they are not wanting to leave behind. Emergency shelters cannot allow pets and these clients have to choose to leave their pets or to live in their cars due to the fact they are not able to put their beloved pet somewhere safe until they are able to find themselves some stability again.



The Housing support Service program can be very successful. Earlier in the year there was a client who due to the sudden passing of her late husband found herself in a situation of becoming homeless due to the fact that she was living in the company house attached to her late husband's

employment. The client also had dependent children in her care and as a result, she was approved for the program and was given a property and a chance to set herself up once again with her children.



As shown in the above table we had a total of 16 Clients apply for the program. One client withdrew their application due to their relocation to another town. The remaining nine were all approved and have now been successfully housed. All are now completing their 12 month support period. Unfortunately the 6 were declined for different reasons that varied from having a prior exit debt with The Housing Authority to already having what is deemed a suitable property. Clients are referred to other services offered by our organisation. Services such as financial counselling, Supported Tenancy Education and Tenants' Advocacy, dependant on the issues they may be facing.

I am looking forward to the next 12 months in this role. To be able to support and nurture my current clients and any new clients that present so that they are all assured of retaining their new home.

Courtney Coburn
Housing Support Worker – Karratha

Photos courtesy of Homelessness Australia
<http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.a>



Housing Support Worker

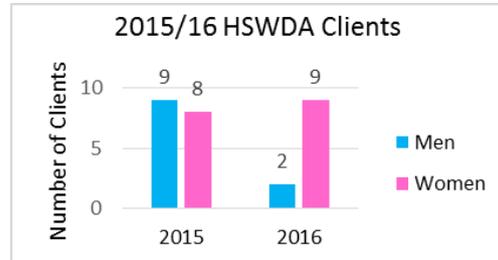
Department for Child Protection and Family Support

The Housing Support initiative is a program funded by the Department of Child Protection & Family Support under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The program is allocated 10 houses each year by the Housing Authority.

In my role as a housing support worker, I assist people having difficulty securing stable accommodation. My clients are people who are rehabilitating from substance abuse and are keen and committed to start living a new life free from drug and alcohol use. Clients are referred to the service from Drug and Alcohol counselling services and Turner River Rehabilitation centre. Additionally I may receive an internal referral or a self-referral who I refer out to counselling and treatment centres whilst they engage with the program in preparation for a house allocation.

This financial year, we received 21 referrals from different Drug and alcohol Services, 10 were successful in the program, 11 were not accepted for various reasons; non-engagement, non-completion of the 12 week counselling requirement or sometimes because PCLS has a conflict – in that the applicant may be the perpetrator of Domestic Violence against another client who accesses PCLS services. When this occurs, we need to protect the safety of victims which also leaves the service available for use by victims of domestic violence – one of the leading causes of homelessness in Australia.

Sixty percent of my clients this year were referred from the Turner River Rehabilitation; this increase was a direct result of PCLS building a sound working relationship with the service. Eighty percent of accepted clients to the service this year were women. Below is a graph to show the decrease in number of the males in the program, the previous year we had 9 males compared to 2 this past financial year. This is mainly the result of the prevalent domestic violence in the community as outlined previously.



The biggest achievement for the 2015/16 financial year was the new relationship between the service and the residential rehabilitation services, both Turner River Rehabilitation and the Milliya Rehabilitation situated in Broome. In the past, clients remained homeless and in Hedland whilst attending 12 weeks of drug and alcohol counselling, this created difficulties and it was common for clients to leave a counselling session and go straight to socialising and drinking to excess with the wrong mob. This would then have repercussions for clients once they were housed. Having clients who opted to remove themselves for a time for a full treatment program in a bid to overcome their substance abuse is a sign of real commitment which is the main requisite for the program. This commitment and the tools taught in rehabilitation have led to more successful tenancies.

This year the Housing Authority introduced three month fixed leases for NPAH clients so that clients could be assessed at this time for a six month lease extension in the first instance. If the client continues to maintain the property to the appropriate standards, they move to a periodic lease. This has led to increased engagement with clients because if they are always available for the weekly home visits, issues that could affect their tenancy are quickly spotted and resolved. I am happy to report that all the clients housed have successfully completed their three months tenancies and have moved to the six months which eventually leads to a periodic lease.

Last year the HSWDA program was part of the Homelessness Prevention Week. We managed to

secure \$500 funding from Shelter WA and also some homelessness promotional posters from Homelessness Australia. This was to raise awareness on the impact of homelessness in our community and educate people on the services available to help them. This was a huge success as the whole community including the school children were involved and much needed awareness was raised.



The biggest issue at the moment which is making it difficult for the program to get the required outcomes is the lack of in-house treatment for substance abuse. Here in the Pilbara there is the Turner River Rehab and the Roebourne detox centre which is 200km away, the other one is in Broome 600km away. The lack of other available choices leaves most clients with the only option of staying in the community and attending D&A counselling. This does not take them away from the problem but because their families are still drinking, clients are forced to join in or succumb to the pressure and hence full rehabilitation is not attained and most clients easily 'fall off the wagon'.

Another pressing issue this past financial year has been house abandonment. Three of the clients failed to cope with the challenges of having a home and thought the best way out of it was to leave their properties. Culturally they are not supposed to chase their relatives away from their home, overcrowding, disruptive behaviour and damages to the house were the end result, so for them the easy way out was to leave and move back to the community. This does not help the client in any way because they are still left with a huge debt with the Housing Authority. In order to curb this we now ensure that upon house sign up, a Liquor Restricted Premises Application is lodged to deter people from coming to a clients' home for drinking parties. Also the three month fixed term tenancy agreement ensures that we are able to help a client before issues get out of hand.

We still experience the same issues we have been experiencing in previous years like the lengthy wait for a home. I still have three clients from the previous year who are still waiting to be allocated a tenancy. This affects a client's commitment to the program as they get frustrated having to wait so long. It also affects the number of clients kept in the program because each client after being allocated a tenancy is required to be case managed for a year. If it takes them longer to get a house then they are on the program for a long time i.e. the waiting time and the 12 months support time.

Furniture sourcing for clients is proving to be difficult. The 'boom' is gone and there are less people in Hedland than before and this affects the furniture donations. Sometimes the client is now forced to move in to an empty home making the transition difficult. The money allocated to clients from the brokerage is not enough to purchase furniture. However I urge my clients to apply for a NILS loan after they get a house so that they are able to purchase basic household furniture and repay it on an interest free loan.

The rise in the Meth use in the community is another area of concern which is proving difficult for the Housing Support Worker, because clients using Meth are subject to mood swings and violent behaviour. The Pilbara community legal Service (PCLS) has ensured that Housing Support Workers receive training in this area so that they are better equipped to assist these clients with the process.

Overall the program is of great importance to the community as it ensures that we not only 'house' our clients but we help them every step of the way. The satisfaction one gets from watching a family or individual transition from being homeless to being a proud home owner is beyond explanation. Such moments make the job worthwhile. I look forward to the coming year with PCLS and will endeavour to support my clients to the best of my ability. I feel fortunate to work with such a great team of people.

Gretchen Ncube
Housing Support Worker– South Hedland



Housing Support Worker

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

I commenced in the role of Public Tenancy Support Service provider in October 2015. Since starting in the role I have found the work challenging but also very rewarding.

I initially found that the Housing Authority's Regional Office staff in South Hedland Department were not totally conversant with the Public Tenancy Support Service program. Meetings were therefore conducted with the Department's regional Housing Support Officers and with time this has changed. The program is now receiving many more referrals from the Housing Authority and from other agencies such as Strong families. Every effort is made to meet regularly with as many local agencies as possible to provide them with information about the program and how it can assist and support their clients.

My very first client was referred to me by the PCLS Tenancy Advocate who had assisted the client to obtaining a house via the Housing authority's priority wait-list. The client had been couch surfing with her young child in often rough and unsuitable places. She wanted to distance herself from her family who she felt lived in unsuitable housing with drinking and violence and this was not how she wanted to bring up her daughter.

The client moved into the house with her young child. she had nothing but a few pieces of clothing and a mattress on the floor. Via the PTSS I was able to assist her to set up her house through various donations and brokerage. We have worked together well and she has grown to trust me and feels comfortable telling me what she hopes to achieve in the future for both herself and her child. I set up an appointment for this client to meet with the financial counsellor so that she could learn about setting up automatic payments for her rent and water. The client also started saving so that she could buy some of her own furniture. When she had saved enough she bought herself a washing machine and an air conditioner from a garage sale. She was so proud of this

achievement and called me to ask me to come around so that she could show me her purchases and how she had set up her house. This client is a very house proud person.

I have assisted this client to enrol into TAFE to study a certificate 2 with the hope of continuing through to something higher but her only option to do this will be to study externally as unfortunately TAFE in South Hedland have stopped running a number of courses. I helped her put her child into childcare and to also start looking for part time work. This client has worked hard whilst with PTSS. The client's first six monthly inspection recently took place with the Housing Authority who praised her for keeping her house so clean and being up to date with all her payments. I asked if some sort of written acknowledgement of this could be sent to her from the Authority. The Housing Authority's Housing Support Officer happily organised this. My client was so proud when she received it and brought it in to the office to show me.

Another client I have been assisting originally came into the office to see if she could speak to someone about an issue she was having with the Housing Authority. I assisted her with this and then asked if she would like some ongoing help and then explained my role to her. This person had been living in her home with her children for a while and did not need furniture and such, but did need some assistance with obtaining some cleaning materials for her home as she was struggling to make ends meet. I made an appointment for her to meet with the financial counsellor to assist her to remedy her Centrepay deductions and to start putting some money towards her housing debt. I also assisted her in putting together a resume as her main concern was to obtain employment as she wished to give her children a better life and for them to join in activities that she never had the chance to do as a child. I helped her to enrol her child into

kindergarten and to start applying for jobs. The client obtained some part time work and continues to work hard to provide a good life for her children away from some of the bad influences that had previously been in her life. This client has negated her housing debt and should soon have extra money that she can put towards enabling her children to join in local activities.

I ensure that my clients when they start on the PTSS program are well equipped with the knowledge that is needed to keep their home to the standards that the Housing Authority expect but I offer advice in a way that does not take away their dignity or make them feel that they have to conform to something unrealistic. Often my clients come from a background that has not involved certain domestic standards and have little understanding in this area.

A large percentage of my clients are single parents who are dealing with a range of complex issues such as mental health illness, alcohol abuse, unemployment or domestic violence. Most need assistance with a range of things over and above housing matters.

The current emerging issues that I find relate to clients who obtain a home after many years on the public housing wait-list. They are then allocated a property and move in to the tenancy with little or no understanding of how to maintain a home and pay their bills. Also, due to cultural reasons along with the limited availability of public housing other family members who have nowhere else to go move in to the tenancy or stay for long periods at a time. This creates an overcrowding problem which then leads to other problems such as excessive water consumption, disruptive behaviour and damage to the property causing a large debt for the tenant who is responsible and as a result, is often threatened with eviction and court action. These family members who take up residency in a tenancy rarely help with the debts and will often just move on to the next family member who may have public housing, leaving the tenants with large debts that they are then expected to pay within a short time frame or face eviction. It is all so very unfortunate and very difficult to resolve.

I also find that the Housing Authority seem to charge excessively for repairs which the clients could on occasions have possibly been able to arrange themselves if given an option to do so. Charging someone in excess of \$200 just to call past the house when they are not home is outrageous and saying that the client was informed, without taking into consideration that the client may be illiterate or not have a phone is unfair.

By way of example, a client wished to have the locks on his property changed as other family members had keys. On calling the Housing Authority to enquire about this and the cost associated with it, we were advised that it could cost anywhere from \$900 to \$1000. When we researched this by calling a local locksmith, the quoted cost was approximately \$250 including labour.

The fact that the Housing Authority are charging these high charges to people who cannot afford, without first giving them a choice to obtain an independent quote and attend to the repairs themselves seems unfair especially considering that costs for such repairs in the Pilbara are decreasing due to the economic downturn.

I also find that clients are often being charged for household damage that they did not cause, or are allocated properties that are in a poor state of repair when they initially move in. I always stress to clients to make a detailed note of everything on the ingoing inspection report and take photographs so that they have solid proof when they move out of the property of the prior damage and the condition of the property when they moved in, so that they are not charged tenant liability.

I look forward to the coming year and what it may hold. I expect to expand my client base and to continue to build solid relationships with my clients and other agencies and to learn so much more. I am fortunate to work with a team of caring and dedicated people in the South Hedland office and I thank them for their ongoing support.

Sarah Formby
Housing Support Worker– South Hedland



Housing Support Worker

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

The initiative of the program is to provide support for Housing Authority tenants' facing difficulties with maintaining their tenancies and also those struggling to secure stable accommodation. The main focus of the program is to prevent tenants from reaching the point of eviction and possible homelessness by way of building the capacity of the tenants to resolve any issues and challenges that come their way with the result of sustaining a long term tenancy. Any new HA tenants' who are considered "at risk" are encouraged to participate in the program by way of consenting to the program which is designed to assist them not only at the out-set of their tenancy but for a continual and sustainable long term tenancy. They may withdraw at any time, but are advised it would be to their benefit that they avail themselves of the services for better management of their tenancies.

Tenants on the program are to receive personal home visits from the service worker on a regular basis providing support and advocacy, practical assistance and links to other agencies and mainstream services. i.e. Centrelink, financial counselling [where they are assisted with managing budgets], hospitals, disability services, health, training and employment. Currently, one of the tenant's on the program is being trained at Roy Hill mine-site [along with other women from Newman], as a cleaner thus allowing her the opportunity to know what is required when it comes to maintaining her own home. However, the risks still surface, so at times the service worker especially and kindly remind the tenants' about their responsibilities and obligations toward their tenancies and the Housing Authority by way of reiterating excerpts taken from the Residential Tenancies ACT 1987 [RTA] and the Tenancy Agreement [TA].

The caseload for the program is 10 clients at a time over a six month period. Currently there are five tenants on the HSW program with another five to be referred thereby increasing the caseload

to its capacity of ten.

The over-all element in assisting tenants to maintain and sustain their tenancies and avoid eviction and possible homelessness is to assist the tenant to assimilate with mainstream services. The HSW will work collaboratively with other services to meet the needs of the individual or family. The needs could include:

- helping with suitable accommodation
- helping to establish a home with furniture
- referrals to other agencies
- supporting their tenancies
- linking children to schools and recreation
- linking to support services including education and training
- linking to all local health services
- Linking to family and DV services for safety and support.
- Linking to legal services for family law

By having a workable relationship with all the agencies and mainstream services, it makes for early referrals [before a matter gets worse] with good outcomes for the client/s. By the same token, the client needs to obligate him/herself to address any tenancy issues which have been discussed and fully engage with the appropriate services to have a successful outcome.

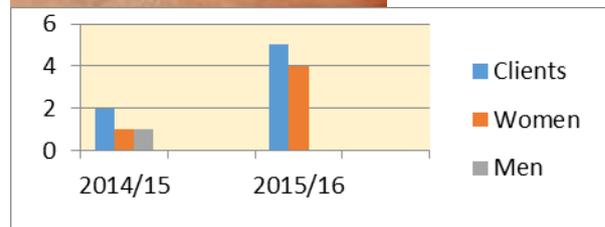
The HSW service has several clients who have self-referred to be assisted with stable accommodation. These are the ones who know it will take a while for them to secure housing from the Housing Authority so they head in the direction of the private sector. There have been a number of self-referrals to the HSW service requesting help with Bond Assistance of which many are approved by the Housing Authority. These are termed open/closed cases.

The shelter manager approached the service on behalf of a client and her young child staying at the shelter as she had nowhere to go and no funds for a bond. The manager was advised to send the

client to PCLS office for assistance. The HSW prepared the Request for Bond Assistance form for the client to complete and sign. It was then sent with supporting documents to HA. Sometimes it helps when sending the documents to give a very brief reason why we want the client to be assisted immediately, especially those with no debt to HA. HSW informed HA that the client was desperate to know how soon she could be assisted with the bond as she had already chosen the property she wanted to rent and needed the bond as soon as possible to secure it. The very next day we received the conditional approval, meaning the landlord had to complete his paperwork to make it un-conditional and send it to HA who then released the bond and the client was then housed and happy in her private rental accommodation.

Client attended court on 13/4/2016 regarding breaches for non-payment of rent, water and tenant liability [TL]. Later client was advised by the RRO to attend PCLS office to be assisted with working out another payment plan to cover her fortnightly payments which were already in place but not enough. With assistance from the F/C the HSW and the PHSO the tenant is on the road to better management of her tenancy. The tenant was also directed to one of our programs by the RRO. Tenant was assessed by the PHSO & HSW who ascertained that the tenant would be suitable for the HSW program given the tenant is not a complex case. Following her court hearing we prepared the Housing Appeals Mechanism Request Form together and it was lodged on 19/4/2016. We have contacted the Regional Appeals Co-ordinator on three occasions and have been advised that the Tier 2 Appeals Review will take place on 30th August 2016 in the PCLS office in Newman. Meanwhile the tenant is constantly making payments towards her water and TL. Tenant is now in front with her rent. Tenant and her partner are very conscientious about their debt to the Housing Authority and it is for this reason that they make manual payments at the post office from time to time and receipts are brought to the office which we email to the PHSO to keep her up to date with the payments the tenant/s are making. They also make extra payments on their electricity bill which is why they

are always in credit. The tenant did some training for cleaning at the minesite and her partner is part of the Newman Strong Men Cleaning Team. The team was able to assist the tenant with cleaning up the front yard and garden of her property. [See picture below] The tenant is now able to clean her home. Unfortunately there are no “before” & after pictures of the interior of the property .The interior is as good as the outside and the tenant is very proud of her achievements.



Unavailability of support from agencies who specifically deal with the health of aged and infirm tenants’ who really need to be hospitalised or put into respite for a time. For example, we are currently trying to assist a client and her partner. They are clearly unable to clean their home [which is a requirement of the Housing Authority that tenants’ keep their homes clean in order for them to maintain their tenancy] and they are also unable care for their personal hygiene. These clients’ are picked up almost daily and taken to the HACC Day Care Centre to be medicated, fed and washed, however when I visit them soon after they are returned to their home, their clothes are dirty and they do no appear to have had a shower. They are also sick and elderly. They cannot be empowered because they do not have the capacity to clean, cook or look after themselves. There was an offer from HACC Newman to clean their home, but that did not eventuate, so the cleaning team will assist the tenant by removing the large items of rubbish around the property. We are continuing to support these clients to the best of our ability.

Ettie Te Miha
Housing Support Worker - Newman



Tenant Advice and Education Service

Department of Commerce

Tenancy Advocacy is delivered from a Local Resource Unit in the East and West Pilbara. My role is to advocate and support tenants in relation to their rights and responsibilities in accordance with the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). Our Strategic and Organisational Plans provide clear expectations and outcomes for the role. We also apply due diligence to our individual key performance indicators (KPI's).

Some of the main issues I have assisted tenants with during this financial year include:

- Eviction notices for disruptive behaviour.
- Breach notices due to non-payment of rent, water consumption and/or tenant liability.
- Termination notices for non-payment of rent, water consumption and/or tenant liability.
- Applications for Public Housing
- Applications for housing transfers to alternative locations.
- Appeals Mechanisms for tenants disputing liability/maintenance charges applied by the Housing Authority
- Ending tenancy agreements
- Bond disputes
- Court attendance

Outreach services are provided to particularly vulnerable and marginal isolated community groups within the City of Karratha and the Shire of Ashburton.

One successful outcome achieved during the course of this financial year was for an Onslow outreach client. The client had received a Breach Notice from The Housing Authority for non-payment of rent. Because the client engaged with the service immediately she received the Breach Notice there was a better opportunity to resolve the issue efficiently. Firstly contact was made with the client's Aboriginal Corporation to enquire if they could in some way assist their member with payment of the debt. When the Aboriginal Corporation confirmed they would be able to

partly financially assist, the client and the other members of the household were assisted to arrange a payment plan to finalise the debt. They were advised to then maintain the payment plan and to make sure payments continued to be applied fortnightly which would provided them with the security that future arrears would not occur. This responsibility was emphasized.

Another successful outcome during the course of this financial year related to a Karratha client who had received a court notice for non-payment of rent. The client was advised that in order for the court action to be dismissed, a full payment of the arrears needed to be made to The Housing Authority. As the client was not in a position to do this, a time-payment plan was put in place to demonstrate to The Housing Authority and the Court that the client was committed to pay the debt. The matter was initially heard before the Registrar who adjourned the matter to be heard before the Magistrate.

Unfortunately at the hearing the Magistrate terminated the clients lease agreement as he could not state if the payment plan was a suitable solution. The Housing Authority was subsequently contacted to see if there was another alternative solution that could be put in place so that the client was not made homeless. The Housing Authority agreed that if the tenant paid a lump sum off the arrears they would provide her with a fixed term lease agreement.

An explanation of what a fixed term lease agreement meant was provided to the client i.e, that The Housing Authority were basically providing her with 3 months to prove to them that she was capable of maintaining payment of her rent and other tenancy costs without incurring any further arrears while also maintaining good tenancy standards. It was explained to the client that putting in place and signing a direct debit rent deduction form required her to also take on the responsibility of ensuring that all arranged

payments were being applied correctly and going in to the correct accounts.

All clients, whether they are Housing Authority property renters, or renting through the private market are urged to seek early assistance from the service if they receive any type of notice in regards to their tenancy in order to ensure the best possible outcome. Every opportunity is taken to provide members of the community with regular educational information such as this.

Pilbara Community Legal Service produces a bi-monthly newsletter which is available on the website at www.pcls.net.au. Regular tenancy educational articles are written to inform clients of their options.

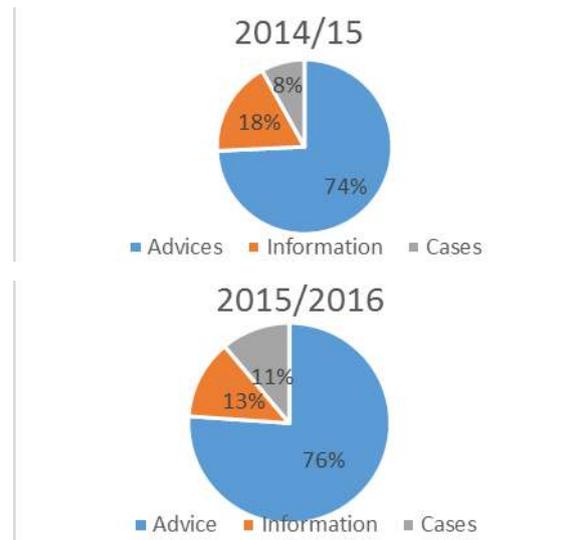


Face to Face educational opportunities are also taken up with displays being set up at various community events in Karratha and surrounding areas. Participation in events such the Teddy Bears Picnic organised by The Local Information Network Karratha (LINK), International Women’s Day coordinated by Soroptimist International of Karratha and Districts and the Pilbara Women’s Luncheon were some of the community events attended during the course of the year.

A variety of client issues presented during the course of this financial year many of which were challenging and in some instances rewarding. A Tenancy Advocate provides general tenancy information to clients and attends to both case work and client advice matters. Strict data entry is required to be maintained which enables the required quarterly reporting system to be accurate and for our annual targets to be monitored.. As I am now in to my second year with the organisation I feel more confident with the analysing this data.

During the 2015/16 financial year more assistance

was provided to clients presenting with eviction notices - “Termination for non-payment of rent and other charges”. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assist tenants who present with very large debts that have been allowed to escalate to a point where they can no longer be deemed manageable. Clients presenting with such issues have little chance of avoiding court action unless they are members of a corporation who are in a position to financially assist them.



Unfortunately, some clients present at the very last moment just a day or two before their termination or court hearing date. Every effort is made, because in some instances the debt is manageable. Payment plans are immediately put into place for these clients to try to enable an adjournment of the court matter. Sometimes we are successful, but not always. The matter is progressed as best we can and then followed up with the client.

As part of our one-to-one client information strategies and during group sessions or community events, we take the opportunity to advise public housing tenants that should they receive a letter from The Housing Authority that they possibly do not understand, to immediately come to see us. Early intervention is the key to remedying many tenancy issues.

Flordeliza Larrazabal
Tenant Advice and Education Service – West Pilbara



Tenant Advice and Education Service

Department of Commerce

My role is to advocate and support tenants seeking assistance with issues relating to either their Housing Authority or private rental tenancy. The majority, however, are tenants of Housing Authority properties. The predominant presenting issues during the 2015-16 financial year have been arrears of rent and other charges, tenancy notices, termination by the Lessor, ending a tenancy, applications for housing and tenancy appeal mechanisms against decisions.

There have been many successful outcomes during the course of the year. One such successful outcome related to a client who had received a termination notice and court order for rent arrears. The client was extremely upset about this because when she received the breach notice she had entered into a time payment arrangement. However, the client was required to attend two family funerals and in order to be in a financial position to do so; she cancelled her payment plan arrangement which then again placed her rental account in arrears.

With the client's authorisation, contact was made with The Housing Authority's Regional Recovery Officer (RRO) to try and rectify the issue. The client was directed to set up a new payment plan and re-submit the relevant documents to The Housing Authority. After many court adjournments, a change of incumbent in the RRO position, paperwork being mislaid and resubmitted, meetings with the financial counsellor to ensure the client was not in financial hardship because of the new arrangements to address the arrears, we were successfully able to negotiate with the client's Corporation for them to financially assist her with the rent arrears. Centrelink deductions were finally successfully set up to enable the client's fortnightly rental payment to be automatically deducted from her pension.

The Housing Authority withdrew their application

to terminate and commended the client on her efforts. A good outcome for the client who also benefitted from the educational aspect of the process.

Another example of a successful outcome was in regard to a couple who needed assistance with breaking their lease. Both clients had lost their jobs and although one had found new employment it was at a much lower salary. The clients were paying \$900 a week rent and as a result found themselves in financial hardship. The clients had, on numerous occasions requested the landlord to consider a rent reduction. However were unsuccessful.

The clients were advised to submit an application to the court to break the lease under financial hardship. In order to do this they needed evidence to demonstrate the change in their financial circumstances and the level of outstanding debts that were accruing as a result. When the matter was taken before the court, the Lessor requested a payment of \$10,000 to release the clients from their lease. To assist with this, the clients were referred to our financial counsellor for assistance to prepare a statement of financial position in order to establish what they may be able to offer by way of a counter offer with a payment arrangement for the outstanding arrears.

The clients subsequently made a counter offer of \$4000 which would be paid in monthly instalments of \$200 a month. This offer was agreed upon by all parties and our financial counsellor assisted them to set up a direct debit to meet the monthly payments. The clients were successfully released from their Lease Agreement and there were no further court proceedings.

As a tenant advocate it is very difficult to have successful outcomes for all clients. On occasions the client does not present until very late into the tenancy termination process which often makes it

difficult to find an amicable successful resolution. An important part of the Tenant Advocates role is to educate the community. On an ongoing basis I inform clients that as soon as they receive any kind of breach notice, termination notice or court summons they need to present at any of our offices where there is help to rectify things for them.

Due to the increase in the number of Court representation, it has been difficult to arrange formal training sessions for tenants. However, the time spent waiting at the court for client matters to be called has provided opportunities to spend time with clients informally educating them in regards to their tenancy obligations. I provide the clients with fact sheets available from Tenancy WA and The Housing Authority. I also try to keep it light and informal as some of the clients can be extremely nervous at the prospect of court. The majority of clients are middle-aged Aboriginal women and as Hedland is a small town most of them know each other so they comfortably join in the conversation.

This financial year I have attended several community networking events to inform clients that there are services available to assist them. I facilitated the Homelessness Persons Week event held in Hedland. This provided the opportunity to educate the community about our organisation as a whole and how our many services can provide assistance with a range of issues including tenancy issues.

Homelessness Persons week activities included education, information display stands at the local shopping centre, give-away bags containing a range of informative leaflets and brochures on how to sustain a tenancy. There was also a movie night finale, a free sausage sizzle, a community involvement school colouring competition asking children what homelessness means to them. The movie-night presentation focussed on homelessness with a musical interval by a local Aboriginal musician.

I attended the Tenancy Conference coordinated by Tenancy W.A. This provided a good opportunity to learn more about court representation which is an

area of the role that has increased in the Pilbara region during this financial year. The conference also provides the opportunity to network with other tenant advocates and share ideas and problem solving.

There are many obstacles that can stand in the way of having successful outcomes. Terminations and Breach Notice by The Housing Authority continue to increase. This places a heavy strain on both the Court system and on the Tenant Advocate. A majority of the Termination and Breach Notices that clients receive are due to arrears of rent, water consumption and tenant liability. A small percentage is due to disruptive behaviour. Most of the debts clients have are very high, limiting any opportunity for the tenant to pay the required 50% upfront payment. Tenants who are members of Aboriginal Corporations are sometimes able to seek assistance from them but even then they can only access the equivalent of 4 weeks rent which most of the time does not meet the required 50% payment.

The education of clients is an ongoing process, but the lack of literacy skills by many Housing Authority tenants leads to delays in them presenting with breach notices which further exacerbates early negotiation opportunities.

As a result, the high rate of court evictions in the Pilbara sees many single mothers with children, and sick, frail and elderly tenants rendered homeless. The only homeless hostel in the Pilbara was recently closed due to the loss of government funding. This has left evicted tenants with no option but to move in with other families, creating over-crowding, antisocial behaviour and on occasions, further evictions. It is an ongoing vicious circle.

I am committed to work towards the education of our clients in order to minimise some of the issues they face and to hopefully bring about more collaborative positive outcomes.

Sue Baker
Tenancy Advocate and Education Service – East Pilbara



Support and Tenant Education Program Coordinator

Housing Authority

The Support and Tenant Education Program (STEP) is an early intervention program for tenants who are having difficulties maintaining and sustaining their tenancy and for those who may be facing possible eviction.

STEP provides education and support for Housing Authority tenants to improve tenancy issues such as property standards, rent payments or behavior affecting the quiet enjoyment of people in the immediate vicinity.

The overall mission of STEP is to increase the capacity of tenants to independently manage their tenancies. STEP educates our clients to ensure they understand what their obligations and responsibilities are in accordance with their Tenancy Agreements.

My role as the STEP Coordinator is to oversee the four STEP service providers engaged under the program. The four STEP service providers are located in Karratha, Roebourne, South Hedland and Newman, however the program also provides outreach to places such as Tom Price, Onslow etc.

All the STEP referrals are received on a data system called STEPIMS (Support and Tenant Education Program Information Management System). All contact regarding our clients are logged into the data system STEPIMS.

As the STEP Coordinator I regularly monitor STEPIMS to ensure the appropriate PCLS STEP service provider picks up referrals at their respective location in the shortest timeframe possible. I also regularly check STEPIMS to ensure the service providers are updating their review dates and that they are continuously logging all contacts with our clients and the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority also regularly monitors this data system.

As the Step Coordinator I am also the main contact for The Housing Authority's Pilbara offices plus the

Department's Metropolitan based Program Managers. I maintain folders with all the STEP review minutes and any statistical reports required in relation to STEP. I attend regular STEP review meetings with the four STEP service providers and the Housing Authority to discuss tenant progress and provide updates.

As the Step Coordinator I have also created task cards and new letter templates for the service providers to use within their respective offices.

I currently have two open case files and they are clients that have been referred due to them having multiple issues and are therefore listed as high/intensive tenant support. I regularly attend these clients' homes and work with them to ensure there are no concerns from The Housing Authority.

I feel that communication with The Housing Authority Property Service Officers (HPSO's) needs to improve, as there has been regular occasions where we contact the HPSO's via email and do not get a response until a couple of days later. By then we have already called and spoken to the Authority's front counter staff who are always very helpful and will send through what we request. We do understand that the Housing Property Services Officers have been very busy but when we request account statements prior to our six weekly step review we send to all HPSO's in the same email.

Due to the freeze on Government jobs during this financial year the Housing Authority office in Karratha was very understaffed and this affected many of our mutual clients. The rent assessment forms were not processed within a timely manner. These forms are what tenants lodge to inform Housing of changes within the client's household e.g. increase/decrease in income, children leaving home or extra family members staying at the property. These forms are also required to be lodged annually by tenants to ensure they are still

eligible for the subsidy they receive on their rent.

This resulted in many of our clients ending up with high amounts of rental debts. We were able to work with some to get them back on track. We also referred the clients who were at high risk of losing their tenancies to our Tenancy Advocates and our Financial Counsellors.

During the financial year July 2015 to June 2016 we have received 77 referrals to the STEP programs. Of those 77 referrals we have closed off 32 cases



This financial year I attended the Worker Safety for Home Visits and the Ethical Decision-making workshops which were facilitated by Dr Barbara

Meddin in Karratha on the 23rd and 24th May 2015. I also attended the cultural analysis development training which was facilitated by Adrian Azure on the 23th and 24th November 2015. The workshops were very informative and increased my awareness of self-care and responsibility within the workplace.

I also attended the Pilbara Women's Luncheon in May 2015.



I thoroughly enjoy working in my position at The Pilbara community legal Service and look forward to the year ahead.

Karla Kelly
Coordinator
Support and Tenant Education Program – Pilbara



Support and Tenant Education Program *Housing Authority*

The Supported Tenant Education Program, also known as STEP is an early intervention program for tenants having difficulties sustaining their tenancy who may also be facing possible eviction. STEP provides support for clients to improve tenancy issues such as property standards, rent payments or behaviour affecting the quiet enjoyment of people in the immediate vicinity.

Participation in STEP is voluntary. Clients can ask to join the program, or the client's Housing Property Services Officer may suggest they join. To apply for the program clients need to complete a STEP Offer form available from the Housing Services Officer. Housing will send a copy of this signed form along with a referral letter to the STEP service provider who then works with the client to develop strategies to enable them to meet their tenancy obligations.

STEP clients meet with the STEP service provider and their Housing Services Officer to discuss what can be done to help sustain their tenancy. They are then assisted with an action plan which is a list of things we hope to achieve with them while they are a client of the program. Once a client is signed up to participate in the program, the STEP service provider meets with them on a regular basis in order to work closely with them to achieve the agreed outcomes of the action plan.

The type of support a STEP service provider can provide to a tenant who has agreed to become part of the program is:

- Resolving conflicts or disputes
- Managing a budget
- Maintaining a stable and functioning household.
- Learning and understanding tenant obligations and responsibilities.
- Managing external factors that impact on tenancy.

I have been a STEP service provider at Pilbara Community Legal Service since 17 September

2015. During this time I have thoroughly enjoyed my role in being able to assist people to save their tenancies as well educating my clients so they have a better understanding of how to sustain and maintain their tenancy.

One client who was referred to the program for property standards has improved dramatically since signing up to the program. We attended the property on a weekly basis to assist the client with cleaning demonstrations and education the importance of a clean and hygienic home, especially when young children are living in the home. Some of the difficulties were getting the client to be consistent with the house cleaning, not just doing it when there was an inspection etc. The end result for the client was a brand new kitchen and the confidence to know that being in a routine makes it easy to maintain the home.



Another client was referred to STEP for disruptive behaviour complaints. Unfortunately, when the client was accepted onto the program two strikes had already been issued. We supported the client at meetings with the Housing Authority to discuss complaint letters they had received in regard to the tenant. Unfortunately, the tenant had not engaged well with the program which made it very difficult to know if the tenant understood what was required as a participant of the program. Alcohol had been a main factor of the disruptive behaviour complaints. Consideration was given to assisting the client to apply for a liquor restriction for the premises. This was not possible due to the

fact that she was living in a complex. As a result of the failure to pursue a liquor restriction, people continued to visit and to drink alcohol in the common area at the premises and unfortunately, this led to a third strike being issued. After the third strike was received the Housing Authority gave the client the option to voluntarily vacate the tenancy or be subject to a court eviction application. The client felt that there was no other choice but to sign a vacate form and leave her property.

When a client receives their first letter of complaint the Disruptive Behaviour Management Unit (DBMU) provides the client with information about STEP so they can see that there are services available to assist them if they are having difficulties with their tenancy. It is very disappointing to see that a number of clients who are given the opportunity to join STEP do not take up the offer. The majority of clients who initially decline being on STEP usually find themselves attending at our office to ask to be accepted on to the program, but sometimes this is not until they are on their third strike or are at risk of eviction. By this time the Housing Authority may have already commenced court action against them and it is quite difficult then to help them at such a late stage. It may be that STEP should be a mandatory program that clients must accept if they have been issued with their first strike. STEP service providers would then be able to educate client's regarding their responsibilities as tenants of public housing. This may then go a long way to preventing further strikes against their tenancy.

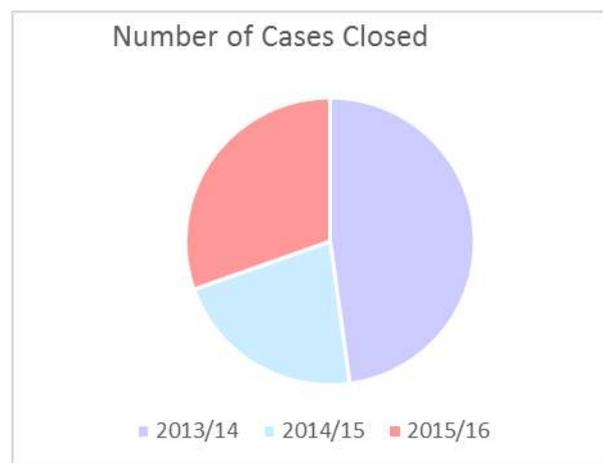
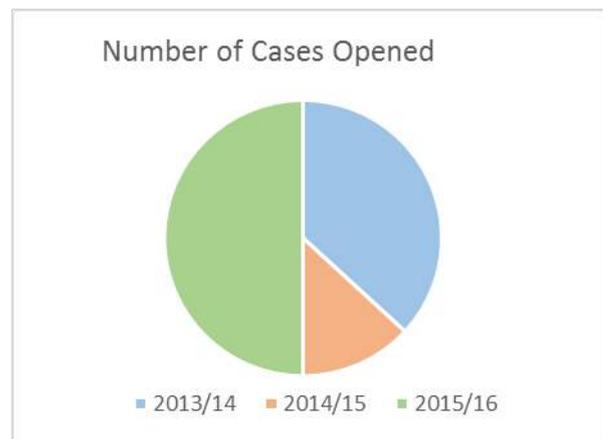
Throughout the year, the Pilbara Community Legal Service (PCLS) gives staff opportunities to attend several training workshops, network meetings and community events. These opportunities enable us to work with a variety of other agencies and organisations when we are able to outline the types of services PCLS provides to the community so that they can refer clients to us who may benefit from our services. Some of the training I have attended this year include:

Pilbara Women's Network Luncheon 10 November 2015



Cultural Analysis Workshop, 23rd & 24th November facilitated by Mr Adrian Robinson of Azure Consulting.

This financial year has been the busiest year to date with 19 cases being opened for new clients. Hopefully by working closely with Housing Authority we can find ways to encourage more people to volunteer for the program so that more tenancies can be sustained.



Jo Drummond
Support and Tenant Education Program (STEP)-
Karratha



Support and Tenant Education Program

Housing Authority

The Support and Tenant Education Program (STEP) is a service provided to tenants who are experiencing difficulties managing their tenancy and/or may be at risk of losing their home. STEP is an intervention program that may assist clients facing eviction or it can serve as a tool to provide early education to clients and empower them to maintain a good tenancy with The Housing Authority.

As a STEP Provider, it is my duty to provide STEP clients with tenancy support and advocacy for any concerns or enquiries relating to public housing. I assist clients to keep track of their payments whether it is for rent, water and/or tenant liabilities. I make sure these payments are up-to-date and I encourage them to keep any time-payment arrangement they have in place to maintain payment of all debts and/or to be ahead with payment of their tenancy accounts.

I provide education on how to maintain a good tenancy by giving tenants knowledge on how to maintain property standards, making clients aware of their responsibilities under the Residential Tenancy Act and empowering them to do it on their own.

STEP plays an integral part in assisting many families who are at risk of losing their tenancies. Building a relationship with the client is vital before approaching them about the issues which have led to them being referred to the program. Building trust and respect are of the utmost importance if we are to succeed and reach our goal of tenants maintaining sustainable tenancies. Educating the client on what needs to be achieved and how it will affect their lives is important

STEP receives different client referrals from The Housing Authority. Some are referred for educational purposes as they are newly housed tenants and some are tenant support and high intensive client referrals due to disruptive behaviour, poor property standards and arrears.

During the past financial year, there have unfortunately not been many tenants who have been successfully exited from the program. However, I believe there has been considerable improvement by clients, more so than in previous years. Almost all clients are actively participating in the program, they are reducing their debt by adhering to their time-payment arrangements and they are continuously cooperating well with the STEP Provider.

One example is a client who had rent and water arrears when they had only been in the property for a few months. There were disruptive behaviour complaints almost every week and the tenant was facing court for tenancy agreement termination. Once the client was referred to STEP, the cause of the arrears was immediately rectified with a time-payment plan arranged. The client was engaging well with the program and was happy to apply for a liquor restricted premises (LRP) application to prevent unwanted visitors. The client has maintained and followed all suggestions and recommendations aptly.

The client is currently still on the program but has cleared the arrears and is now ahead with rent and water accounts. There have been no recent disruptive behaviour complaints. The client works well with the STEP Provider and the Housing Authority's Housing and Property Service Officer (HSPO).. Property standards have improved and the tenant will soon be ready for a successful exit. The photos below show the improvements in this client's property standards improvements between January till present.



Another example is a client who was referred to STEP due to poor property standards, unpaid tenant liabilities and was struggling to maintain a good tenancy due to elder abuse. Client has greatly improved and reduced her arrears. She is still working with her HSPO and STEP provider to resolve ongoing issues due to elder abuse from extended families and unwanted visitors.

ACCOUNT POSITION SUMMARY as at 24/09/2016		ACCOUNT POSITION SUMMARY as at 25/02/2016	
Rent	\$ 113.10 IN FRONT	Rent	\$ 539.50 IN FRONT
Water Consumption	\$ 134.51 OWING	Water Consumption	\$ 338.33 IN FRONT
Tenant Liability	\$ 5,356.04 OWING	Tenant Liability	\$ 1,570.10 OWING
Vacated Debts	\$ NIL	Vacated Debts	\$ NIL
Bond Accrual	\$ 2,170.50 IN FRONT	Bond Accrual	\$ 2,170.50 IN FRONT
Other Accounts	\$ NIL	Other Accounts	\$ ML

Ongoing matters affecting success in the program is driven by many challenges, such as clients not engaging, unwillingness to follow through action plans; eviction due to unpaid arrears or disruptive behaviour and elder abuse.



During the time I have been in this position which is almost 3 years, I have had clients with success stories, some of them are still in the process of improving their housing situation, and some of them improve and then go back to their old way of

living. With STEP it may not always be success stories, but for me the important thing is to value and appreciate the improvement we see no matter how small or big it is.

Even tiny improvements demonstrate the client's ability to adapt to change and a willingness to take responsibility and do everything they can to succeed. STEP is not about having a 'Band-Aid' solution for clients where they will improve while in the program and go back when exited. I believe STEP may take some time to achieve certain goals but it has a slow but sure effect of change in clients' lives. It's not about a temporary solution but about having a permanent impact of change for our clients' benefit. It's about empowering and encouraging clients. Through STEP and by working hand in hand with the HSPOs (Housing and Property Service Officers), we are able to inspire change and see improvement. The change we expect may not be fully visible yet. However, if we continuously empower and inspire our clients change is bound to happen. If the desire for change is strong it will surely affect people generation after generation.

All service providers of the South Hedland office are presently having regular quarterly meetings with The Housing Authority. In these meetings we talk about mutual clients and their ongoing matters. We are working closely with The Housing Authority and talking about ways to improve our relationship and communication with each other for the benefit of our clients. I believe a better inter-agency relationship is being built which will enable us to achieve more success with the STEP Program. With the continuous support of all the services provided by our organisation and The Housing Authority, client success stories are growing.

I would like to thank The Pilbara Community Legal Service for giving me an opportunity to have a good impact on the lives of other people.

Micah Buenvenida
Support and Tenant Education Program – South Hedland



Support and Tenant Education Program

Housing Authority

Support and Tenant Education Program (STEP) is a program funded by The Housing Authority and delivered throughout the communities of Karratha, South Hedland, Roebourne and Newman.

STEP is a voluntary program and clients are mainly referred by The Housing Authority. However the client can self-refer to the program. The program is an early intervention program that offers support and education over a 6- week to 12month period for at risk clients to help them sustain and maintain their tenancy and avoid eviction.

A client can be referred to STEP for a number of reasons from debt management to bring their accounts up to date, property standards, too many visitors staying at the property and disruptive behaviour complaints. If it is a new tenancy, then a tenant is referred to the program for education of their obligations as per their tenancy agreement.

In the last financial year, STEP Roebourne has case managed 32 clients with their tenancies. Two of those tenancies required intense support, of those 32, eleven clients were exited and of those eleven, ten were successful. One was considered to be only partially successful because the client failed to sustain the required standards despite intensive support. No clients were evicted.

The Roebourne office is known as a 'one stop shop' for assistance, whether it be financial counselling, tenancy matters, reporting maintenance, legal advice or simply assisting someone reading their mail, or establishing rapport with the client. We also work collaboratively with The Housing Authority's local Housing Services Officer. This goes a long way to ensuring that positive outcomes are achieved for tenants to sustain their tenancy and avoid eviction. Together, we work to empower the client to avoid similar issues in the future that can lead to eviction.

The Housing Authority did not renew funding for the Aboriginal Tenancy Advocate in 2015 and therefore there is a gap in service in the Roebourne Wickham area. We do have a Tenant Advocate whose role covers the whole of the West Pilbara who is based in the Karratha office. The Tenant Advocate attends at the Roebourne office once week to assisted clients with tenancy matters.

However, over and above this, during the last twelve months 172 people have been assisted by the STEP service provider with other tenancy matters outside of STEP case management.

Over the last 12months we have had several client's referred to STEP for disruptive behaviour and tenancy arrears. Quite often the disruptive behaviour incidents that the Police have attended have not involved the actual client but visitors that have attended the house. Unfortunately this can and has resulted in a "strike" for the tenant as the tenant is responsible for the people that attend their house. Three strikes received in a 12 month period can result in a termination as per the Housing Authority's Three Strike Policy. Due to the high rate of homelessness in the Community, quite often a client has a number of people staying at their house. In Roebourne, it is not uncommon to have 10 or more people staying at a house. The number of people at the house put the tenant at risk of losing their tenancy, as water and power usage increases, home standards diminish, and the tenant is left with excessive bills that they are not able to pay on a Centrelink benefit. The majority of presenting clients in Roebourne are Centrelink benefit recipients.

Tenancy debt continues to remain at the forefront for a client's referral to STEP. Unfortunately a referral to STEP does not protect clients from receiving a Breach Notice and at present we have four clients on the program at risk of eviction. We are working with local Aboriginal Groups, Housing and other agencies to come to an agreement to

avoid possible eviction. We currently have one client who is on a fixed term tenancy as per a Court Order to prove that they can successfully manage their tenancy.

We have assisted clients on the program with applying for Liquor Restrictions to control the number of visitors attending the property and drinking. A Liquor Restriction is applied for through Liquor, Gaming and Racing and once approved the property is signed, the local Police then enforce the Liquor Restriction and in the beginning can visit a property up to several times a week. The Police have the authority to enter premises and confiscate any alcohol and the visitors are then issued with an Infringement Notice.

By example, one client referred to the program during the last financial year was at serious risk of eviction due to non-engagement with local services, poor property standards and arrears on all tenancy accounts. A new rent assessment was completed and it was discovered that one household member had had no income from Centrelink for over a year and no active bank account. We were able to successful apply for Centrelink and open a new bank account for this family member. A local service was engaged to deep clean the house. The maintenance issues were then able to be attended to because contractors in the past refused to enter the house due to the poor standards and potential health risk. The City of Karratha Rangers were contacted in regard to having the dogs at the property de-sexed as the dogs were an issue at the house. The tenant and household members were able to bring the tenancy accounts into credit after assistance from their Corporation Groups and the clients entered into a repayment plan for rent, water and repairs. All accounts are now in credit, giving the

tenant the opportunity to have repairs carried out at the property. However despite intensive support from STEP the client was exited as only partially successful because the standards at the property unfortunately, have not improved.

Some of the challenges that STEP Roebourne has encountered over the last year are long waiting lists for Social Housing due to a lack of public housing in Roebourne. Overcrowding is common and puts the main tenant at risk of losing their tenancy. There have been a number of houses demolished in the Community but not replaced. The follow up of services and support for some clients after the STEP worker has ceased involvement is of concern.

Over the last year I have attended the following training for profession development:

- Ethical Decision Making (Dr Barbara Meddin Anglicare) May 2016
- Worker Home Safety (Dr Barbara Meddin Anglicare) May 2016
- Responding to Child Protection Concerns including Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse June 2016 (Department of Child Protection)
- Bi monthly Act, Belong, Commit yarning meetings are attended.

With the commitment of a permanent Housing Services Officer in the Roebourne and Wickham area and the STEP program, we look forward to another year of empowering tenants to improve their capacity and capabilities to manage their tenancy successfully.

Angie Mitchell
Support and Tenant Education Program -
Roebourne



Support and Tenant Education Program

Housing Authority

The STEP program provides support for Housing Authority tenants' experiencing difficulties with maintaining & sustaining their tenancies. It provides support through education to improve issues such as property standards, rent, water, tenant liability arrears and disruptive behaviour. With these issues under control reduces the likelihood of homelessness and enables tenants to independently manage their tenancies with improved skill.

An important part of the program is to educate tenants about their obligations and rights under the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 [RTA] and their Tenancy Agreement [TA] which they sign with the Housing Authority. When issuing their monthly Tenancy Action Plans [TAP], tenants are directed to the appropriate excerpt/s of the RTA and/or the TA, and copies are provided to them from time to time, or I read and explain it to them directly, mainly in regard to the action required and indicated on the TAP.

The program also assists the tenant to develop self-advocacy. Participation in the STEP program is voluntary, but where new tenants are concerned they are encouraged to consent to the program of which some do take advantage. Alternatively, they are referred to the program directly from the Housing Authority.

The mission of STEP is to increase the capacity of tenants to independently manage their tenancies which goes hand in hand with the motto of The Pilbara Community Legal Service "Empowering the people of the Pilbara to manage their lives effectively."

My role includes visiting the tenants in their homes on a regular basis to assist with resolving problems that could be putting their tenancies at risk. If I am conducting the "Tenant Understanding Survey" [TUS] and "Keeping My Home" Matrix [KMHM] with tenants in their home, a Tenancy Action Plan (TAP) is developed immediately after

the session because during that visit I can see exactly what the needs are in and around the home.

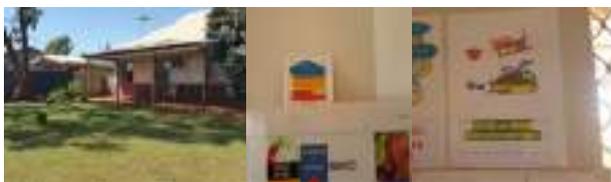
According to our latest STEP position Key Performance Indicators 2016/17, under Initiative/Project number 3, a TAP can be developed within one month from the date the case is accepted.

Another requirement of my role is to ensure that correct data is entered into the Housing Authority's data recording program "STEPIMS" and on the Community Legal Service's data recording system CLSIS. The ideal and ultimate aim of the program is for successful exits. Those exited from the program are monitored for a further 3 months to ensure they are able to keep up to the level of tenant understanding.

The Six weekly STEP reviews with The Housing Authority's Public Housing Support Officer (PHSO) is not the only time we get together to share information and discuss the tenants who are on the program. I try to make sure to communicate with the PHSO's almost every day of the week because it helps maintain a good workable relationship and ensures we are on the same page where the tenants' are concerned.

From the start of their journey on the program this tenant and her partner have been a joy to work with. They have had their ups and downs with the latest down being the tenant has not been in good health leaving all responsibility to the partner who was assisted by a Department of Family and Children's Services worker and our financial counsellor to obtain an extraordinary driver's licence so he could drive the children to school as well as attend to other commitments which required him to be able to drive a car. Previously it was the tenant who did all the driving. Their home is maintained to standard on the exterior. There are no photographs available of the rear of the property, but it too meets requirements. It has been slow going on the interior, but they are

aware of the tasks that need to be carried out. If a task is not completed in the current month it is rolled over to the next. The tenant and her partner are very conscientious and always enquiring about their payments to The Housing Authority. They are currently addressing their arrears which are coming down slowly but surely. The tenant consented and applied for the alcohol restriction sign for her home which is still pending. It was suggested at the last STEP meeting with the PHSO on 21 July 2016 that the tenant remain on the program for another 3 months although they know the obligations and responsibilities connected to their tenancy.



At times it is hard to deal with cases where the tenants' are elderly and sick and, therefore unable to maintain their tenancies and keep the unwanted visitors out of their properties. This is where close collaboration and communication between the provider, the PHSO and other agencies is vital. Police also have attended. After weeks of talking with the unwanted visitors and asking them to leave and go to the reserve, they finally left the property, which was left in a poor state of uncleanliness. We were able to request the assistance of the Strong Men and Women Cleaning Team in association with the Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation to clean the property which is being addressed room by room starting with their bedroom.

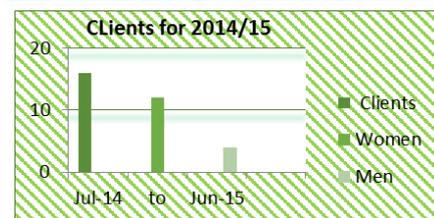


The lesson of this case is: Appreciating the importance and value of having a workable and communicative relationship with The Housing Authority and other agencies.

The most current and emerging issues I have to deal with are ensuring that the tenant is following the Tenancy Action Plan [TAP] closely. They have been advised that the TAP is so important that a copy of it with all completed/not completed tasks are recorded and sent to the Relationships and Contracts Department at Perth Housing Authority.

Other issues are unwanted visitors and standards at some properties. The question which always crosses my mind is: What to do about the homes of the sick, elderly tenants' who are too old and sick to clean their houses? These tenants are also EPIS clients' who are picked up and taken to the Day Care Centre to be bathed, medicated and fed then taken home. But who cleans their homes? We can show them how, when, what & why, but they simply cannot clean because they are old and sick. We involve the visiting family and ask for their assistance, but it comes at a slow pace until we have to say the tenancy is at risk if nothing is done about the situation. We do have the AAC cleaning teams, but they are not professional cleaners.

Funding is needed to provide for the engagement of a cleaning agency to clean the homes of these elderly tenants. There has a case in Newman whereby an elderly couple were admitted to Karlarra House Aged Care Facility due to being too sick and old to maintain their tenancy. These issues are on-going which makes it difficult to get this type of outcome for who are in a similar situation. I would like very much to see something done for these people.



Ettie Te Miha
Support and Tenant Education Program–
Newman



Settlement Services Program

Department of Social Services

I started my role of Community Migrant Service Worker in Karratha with the Pilbara Community Legal Service in April 2016.

My role is to assist recently- arrived migrants to settle into the community and to become self-reliant and participate equitably in the Australian society as soon as possible after their arrival.

Adapting to a new social environment can be daunting for migrants, in particular for new arrivals with low level of English language proficiency.

A major focus of my work is on women, who generally do not have the benefits of socialisation offered in the workplace.

During the period April 2016- June 2016, I focused on promoting the settlement services offered by Community Migrant Service (CMS) in Karratha and assisting Karratha CMS clients.

My work focused on 3 areas: casework, networking and group sessions.

Casework to individuals:

I provide information and referral services to migrant to assist their settlement in Australia.

My clients experienced various issues, such as immigration (enquiries about visas, permanent residency, **Australian** citizenship), family law, wills and estate, employment, Centrelink, driver's licence requirements, English lessons and health. All clients who presented were provided with relevant information and/or referrals.

Referrals were made to a large number of organisations, including, DIBP, migration agents, lawyers, Anglicare, EPIC, local TAFE, doctors, internal referrals within PCLS (legal, housing, domestic violence).

Social participation and networking:

I focused on building relationships with agencies which may be of some assistance for migrants. For instance, I have made positive relationships with various local agencies and organisations, in particular Pilbara Multicultural Association, local TAFE, LINK (Local Information Network Karratha), Anglicare, the Salvation Army, the Karratha Family Centre and the Karratha Community House.

I attended several community events where I promoted the Karratha CMS and met a large number of migrants living in Karratha.

For instance, I attended:

- multicultural playgroup organised by the Karratha Community House;
- Teddy Bear's Picnic organised by LINK;
- Mother's Day Morning Tea organised by LINK;
- Thai New Year's event organised by the Pilbara Multicultural Association.



In May 2016, I met the local TAFE English students at their classes on two occasions. I encouraged the students to contact our office should they need help with their settlement in Australia.

Group information and recreational sessions:

I organised recreational and information sessions for migrants. These initiatives aim to benefit migrants by increasing connectedness and awareness.

I hosted an Anzac Day Traditions cooking and information session at the Salvation Army Hall in Karratha on 21 April 2016, to share Anzac Day customs with migrants. There was a great turnout for the event with around 40 adults and children in attendance, with most attendees being women from various cultural backgrounds.



With the help from PCLS Karratha worker Courtney Coburn, two ladies from the Autumn Club and the adults and children who attended, we managed to cook around 200 Anzac biscuits, both traditional and choc chip. There were some craft activities for the children to join in on such as making poppies and colouring in.



Two representatives from The Pilbara Regiment attended. Warrant Officer Class 2 James Waller did a presentation about Anzac tradition. He

explained what Anzac means, what Anzac Day is, the various traditions of Anzac such as the Dawn Service, poppies etc. It was very informative and appreciated by both adults and children.

Tables were set up with information about the Anzac traditions, such as the history of Anzac biscuits, history of poppies, and a book about Anzac traditions which guests were eager to read and take home with them.

In June 2016 I hosted a multicultural lunch. 20 people from various nationalities came along. It was a welcoming environment for migrants to make social connections. We enjoyed a large range of delicious food that participants at the event brought with them from countries all over the world.



In my role of Community Migrant Service, I aim to assist migrants and improve their capability, resilience and wellbeing enabling them to settle in the Australian community.

Isabelle Galtier
Community Migrant Service- Karratha



Settlement Services Program

Department of Social Services

I commenced in the role in October 2015. Community Migrant Service was temporarily suspended in July last year, when my previous employer Frontier Services restructured the range of programs it delivered. However, with Pilbara Community Legal Service stepping in to reboot the service I was able to return to work.

My role is to help migrants and refugees settle in Australia by responding to their specific needs, encouraging their independence and participation in the Australian community. I provide settlement related information and advice on English language classes, employment issues, visas and citizenship, obtaining a driver's license, Medicare; provide referrals linking with other agencies and organise group information sessions. Sometimes I advocate on clients' behalf to make sure the mainstream services response appropriately to their needs.



Port Hedland is a town of an accepting, diverse society with people from many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. I had a chance to meet men and women from all around the world, many of them are very interesting and talented personalities with impressive life stories. In February, I was happy to assist the Local History Officer in securing interviewees to participate in an Oral History project. It revolves around migrants who have settled in town. The project is called "Multicultural Hedland Speaks".

The primary scope of my job is to assist women who in many cases lack the advantages of social interaction in the workplace. They can be

particularly exposed to social isolation notably those settling in country towns. Cooking up a Storm, which is a cookery class organised together with the Well Women's Centre, allows migrant women to share and take pride in their food and culture and to make friends. As an example, for Iranian-origin Hedland resident Shamy Witmer, April's Cooking up a Storm event gave her just such a chance to celebrate her Persian heritage.

The aim of the March cooking workshop was to raise awareness for Harmony Week. The week runs from 15–21 March every year and encourages everyone to experience, explore and appreciate WA's wealth of cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity. March's session was led by Brazilian Abilene Fischer, who shared stories about her Amazon roots while demonstrating how to prepare a traditional chicken salad unique to her culture. In addition, by spending time as volunteer cooks my clients may overcome the anxieties associated with learning English, establish social and community networks, and get skills that can help them find a job.



Apart from the Well Women's Centre and the Town Library, South Hedland Community Migrant Service has developed a positive relationship with local TAFE, EPIC, Relationships Australia, Pilbara Population Health Unit, the Women's Refuge, Port Hedland Filipino Association, Centrelink, and other mainstream agencies and community groups which facilitates access to services for clients. This allows migrants and refugees to grow in confidence when accessing community services independently. They can also participate in various

forums and develop their own networks in town.

Multicultural celebration, which includes traditional music, dance and costumes, is another significant aspect of my work. Every November we have a multicultural lunch as a final event of the year. I encourage guests with door prizes to come dressed up in the traditional clothing and to bring a home-cooked dish inspired by their country of origin. Henna tattoo decoration, Maori games and songs were among the entertainment this year.



While the classes often involve a Hedland home cook showing off the best food dishes from their country of origin, October and February's workshop were led by local dieticians and nutritionists. Attendees were given nutrition tips and obtained information about mindful eating based on the latest research. Another group information session held in May for local TAFE ESL students covered WA driver licensing. The informative workshops throughout the year aim to provide migrants and refugees with details about key aspects of Australian life. Knowing and understanding customs and laws can help clients adjust to life in the Australian community.

All women can be at risk of domestic violence. However, migrant women may experience more difficulties escaping abuse due to their immigration status. Such clients often feel ensnared in abusive relationships because of social isolation, immigration status, language skills, and lack of finances. Frequently they have no family support in the new country, no education and don't drive. It is common for manipulative

partners to exert control over a visa in order to force migrant spouses to stay in the relationship.

During my training on cross-cultural communication in Perth, I was happy to establish cooperation ties between PCLS and the Humanitarian Group. The Humanitarian Group provides professional migration assistance for people new to Australia who are disadvantaged in their access to legal services, including victims of abusive relations. Some women on a temporary visa are worried that if they leave their violent partner, they will be forced to return to their home country. There are considerations in the Migration Act that if the relationship breaks down due to domestic or family violence that can allow the victim to apply for permanent residency.



As a Community Migrant Support Worker I help those vulnerable people become independent and gain financial security. They need access to education and training, to information about visa status and rights in Australian society. So they can live in peace away from family violence.

Apparently, the issues migrants face as they begin their new lives in Australia are complex. There will be challenges and also rewards. In the end, our success will depend on our own efforts, as well as the assistance of those able to help us.

Victoria Malyk
Community Migrant Service - South Hedland



Settlement Services Program

Department of Social Services

Since started in the role of Community Migrant Officer in Dec 2015 I have been warmly welcomed in to the centre. I have had ongoing support and guidance from both the manager, Effie Harris, and the principal solicitor, Alex Makore. The Tenancy Advocate, John Mason has also been very helpful in including me in several of his Community Legal Education and Tenancy Advice Events and offering encouragement and advice.

My first period in the role has been a busy and productive one, gaining an understanding of the most essential priorities as Community Migrant Officer along with developing strong working relationships with many key contacts around Kalgoorlie-Boulder while also providing education about the service. I have also focused on gathering useful information, flyers and brochures which I have available at my office and has been very useful to several of my clients.



Along with flyers and posters about the Community Migrant Service, I have also designed and distributed flyers about the "Meet & Speak" group which is a group I co-ordinate on the first Monday of each month at the Kalgoorlie Library. The aim of this group is to provide a regular meeting place for recent migrants to engage, meet each other and also practice speaking English. There has been a great interest in this group from the CALD community and since a retired local TESL teacher has now joined we can offer additional support and teaching to help the attendees to build confidence in their conversational skills and

abilities.

I have worked with the Events Co-ordinator at the William Grundt Memorial Library on several projects including offering numerous information sessions to parents of young children before Story Time and Mum & Baby sessions. As the library seems to be a main point of contact for a lot of culturally and linguistically diverse families, this has been a great opportunity for meeting new people and forming useful connections within the Migrant Services role.

I have had many opportunities to engage in the community during both Kalgoorlie-Boulder events and my planned community activities this year. The highlights have been: The Multicultural Festival, The Filipino Independence Day Celebration and The Harmony Day Shared Brunch.

The Multicultural Festival held in Centennial Park in June was a very busy day with lots of people coming to get information, ask questions and get involved in Multicultural Activities. I spoke to 200+ people about the Migrant Services and groups available. I organised activities, games and a "Multicultural (Email) Pen Pal" program with the aim of promote friendship and learning about different countries and customs. Children from varying nationalities signed up to connect with a similar-aged child from another culture. This was a huge success and a great talking point for many parents and children alike.

A member of the Filipino Group of Kalgoorlie invited me to give an information session at The Filipino Independence Day Celebration in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall in June. I talked to over 150 attendees about the Community Migrant Services, Meet & Speak group and how to access mainstream services in Kalgoorlie. It was a great night with lots of Multicultural music, food and fun.

I organised the “Harmony Day Shared Brunch” in Hammond Park in March in collaboration with the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Volunteer Centre. We had over 30 people attend, with people bringing dishes to share and also sharing stories and traditions from their home countries. We had attendees from Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, Romania, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Armenia, Australia and the UK.



As well as these larger events there have been numerous other opportunities for community engagement including my involvement in the ChAts (Conversational Help and Support) programme at the WA School of Mines campus, joining the Holi Indian Festival celebrations in Centennial Park, attending the International Women’s Day events in March as well as having an information stand along with my colleague John at the monthly Boulder Market Days. For Law Week in May, my colleagues John, Alex and I held an information stand in St Barbara’s Square in Kalgoorlie with flyers and leaflets available about the centre including Tenancy Services and Migrant Services. I had the opportunity to present a

session about “Accessing mainstream services” to the Level 2 class and the Level 3 class studying English at Goldfields Institute of Technology and also to the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programme attendees in the SMYL Community Services Centre in Boulder. In June I was interviewed, along with the Art Gold Co-ordinator, on both Radiowest and ABC local radio speaking about my role as Community Migrant Officer and some of the services and groups currently available to the CALD community.

During a Department of Social Services training session I attended in April I have gained more valuable skills in using the DSS Data Exchange programme for collecting and reporting data from community events along with client’s case histories.

I am happy to report that there have been many referrals both to and from other organisations and services around Kalgoorlie & Boulder including TAFE, the Volunteer Centre, Counselling Services, Immigration Agent, The Humanitarian Group, GCLC Solicitor, The William Grundt Library, The Arts Centre, Goldfields Women’s Health Centre, 360 Health, Work link and local councillors. I look forward to continuing to develop this role and build more relationships and connections in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder community as well as within the GCLC centre. Throughout the coming year the focus will continue to be on encouraging community engagement and resilience by assisting with information and referrals for various settlement issues.

Carol Guilfoyle
Community Migrant Service Worker—Kalgoorlie



2015/16

Financial Reports





Treasurers Report Board of Management



I have pleasure in presenting the audited Financial Reports of the Pilbara Community Legal Service Inc. for the Financial Year 2015/2016.

I have extracted the following summary details from the financial reports to provide an overview of the financial position of PCLS

Cash at Bank

PCLS began the financial year with \$842,372 in the main account and \$1,099,347 in term deposits for a total of \$1,941,719. This surplus enabled us to purchase the property at 28 Balmoral Road, Karratha for \$1,323,360.

At the end of the financial there was \$327,170 in the main operating account and \$803,424 in term deposits for a total of \$1,130,594

Operating Surplus

The surplus for the financial year after allowing for the refundable grants at the 30th June 2016 of \$203,797 was \$587,088 - an increase of \$188,178 over the 2014/2015 year, or a 47.20% increase

Total Operating Revenue

Total revenue received during the financial year including surplus grant money from the previous year was \$3,776,832 - an increase over the previous year of \$497,364 or a 15.2% increase

Total Operating Expenses

Total expenses incurred during the financial year was \$2,985,947 - an increase over the previous year of \$300,835 or a 11.20% increase. There was a 7.2% increase in salary costs during the year.

Members Funds

The members' funds at the 30th June 2016 stood at \$2,761,566, up from \$2,174,478 as at 30th June 2015

Dale Purdy

Treasurer

