



ANNUAL REPORT

2023



ALA provides high quality social and legal advocacy to people in need. We are committed to servicing regional, rural and remote communities as well as metropolitan communities and we focus on empowering clients to navigate the legal and social systems to achieve fair outcomes.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of NSW, and all Aboriginal Elders, past, present and emerging.

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and waters of New South Wales, and their continuing cultural, spiritual customs and practices. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationship to Country and acknowledge the significance of their cultures in Australia.

Annual Report

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Legal Centre



ABOUT ALA

Our Vision

All people should have the right to equity and fairness.

Our Mission

To provide high quality social and legal advocacy to people in need. We are committed to servicing regional, rural and remote communities as well as metropolitan communities and we focus on empowering clients to navigate the legal and social systems to achieve fair outcomes.

Our Values



Courageous:

We have the courage to do what's right.



Caring:

We care about our people and the work we do.



Creative:

We use innovation, evidence and curiosity to continually strive to improve.



Connected:

We are better together.

Our Strategic Goals (2020-23):

1. Deliver high quality, targeted services that meet our clients' needs.
2. Maintain positive workplace culture that is flexible, safe and diverse.
3. Capitalise on funding opportunities to improve access to our services.
4. Continue to enhance our leadership and management support capabilities.
5. Utilise our influence to inform government priorities on disability and law reform.
6. Practice excellent organisational governance.

Funding

Disability Advocacy NSW:

Department of Social Services (DSS)

National Disability Advocacy Program, NDIS Appeals, Disability Advocacy Support Helpline, Disability Royal Commission and Decision Support

NSW Department of Community and Justice

Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP)

icare

Advocacy for people in the lifetime care and support scheme

Mid North Coast Legal Centre:

Commonwealth Attorney General's Department

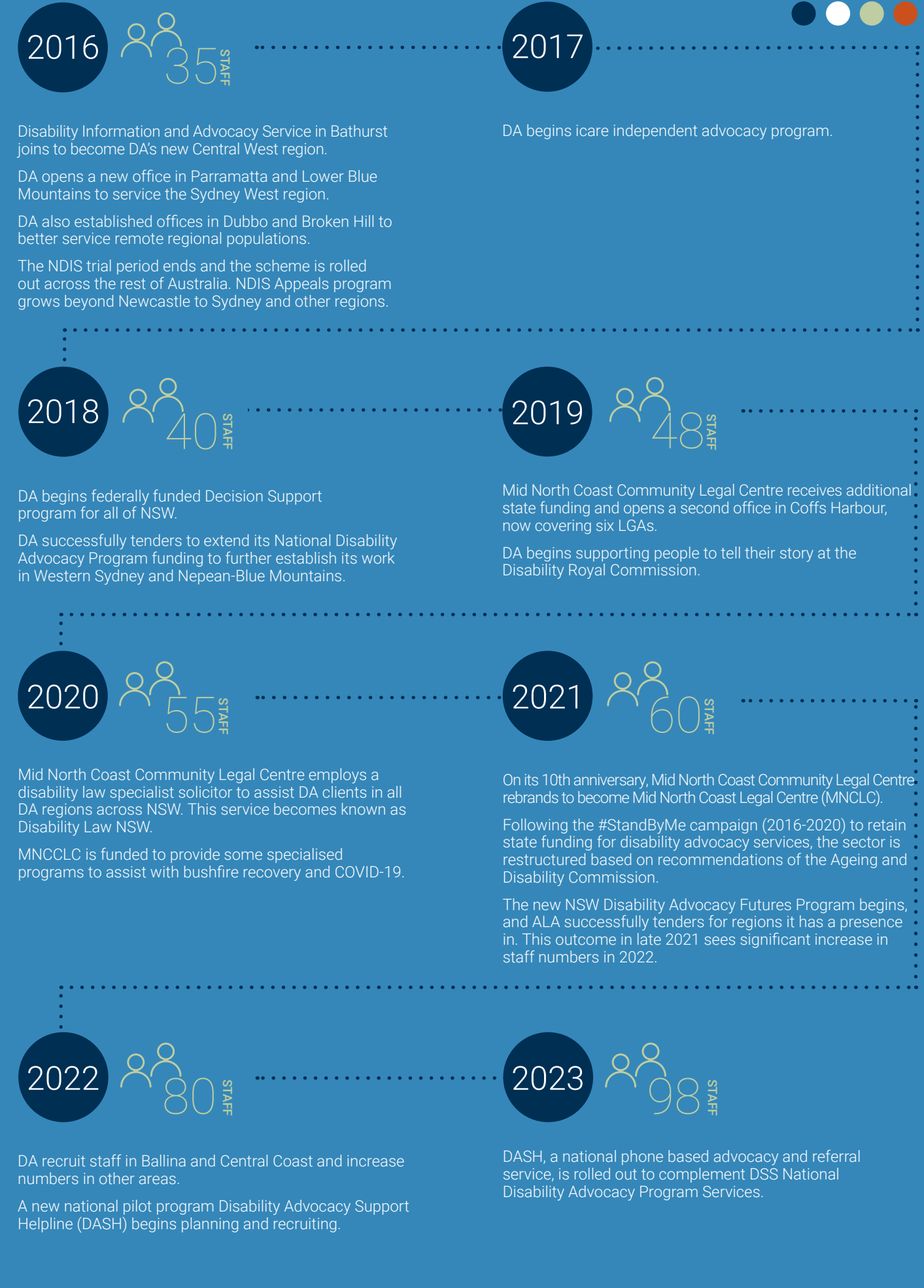
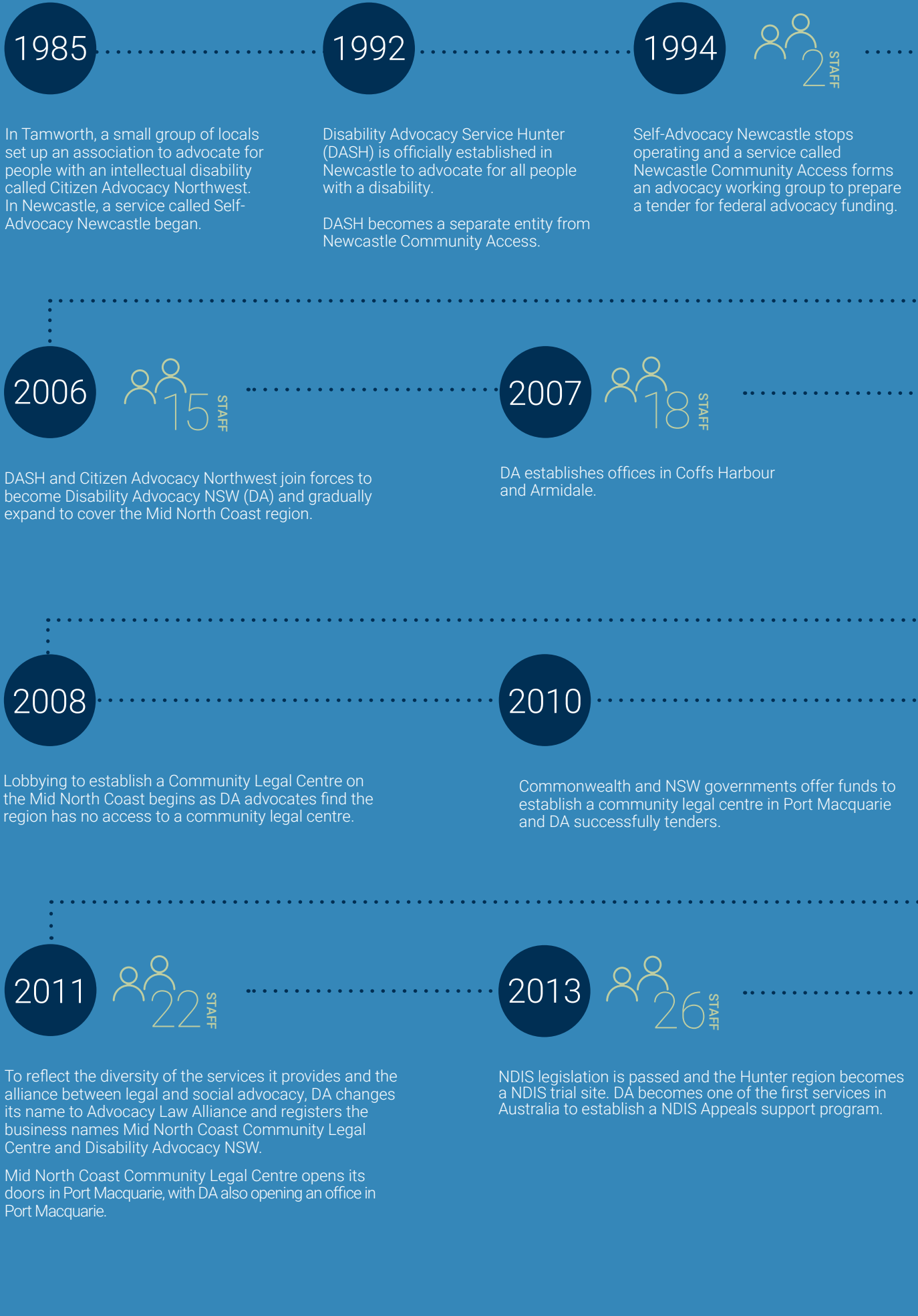
Community Legal Centres Program, Legal Aid NSW

NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Women NSW

Healthy North Coast

ALA THANK ALL OF THESE ORGANISATIONS FOR THEIR SUPPORT THIS YEAR.





ALA People

ALA Board

Our volunteer Board of Management oversee the governance of our organisation to ensure Advocacy Law Alliance is financially stable, has a clear strategic direction and has the greatest impact possible for the communities we serve.

I am a professional member of the Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand and the Australian Restructuring and Turnaround Association, and hold a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in financial and management accounting. I place great value on the work ALA does and feel privileged to be part of that work.

HAYDEN ASPER
Chairperson

I hold a Social Science Degree, a Graduate Certificate in Adult Education and a Certificate in Community Services, Advocacy. I am the Manager of a small community organisation and have worked in the field of advocacy for more than 20 years. I have experience on Boards of both large and small community organisations and so have experience on both sides of the fence. I have a commitment to social justice and a particular passion about ensuring all our community members have access to the services they need.

NICOLE GRGAS
Deputy Chairperson

I have Diplomas in Nursing and Mental Health and a Certificate 4 in Governance. Whilst I work as an Enrolled Nurse in Mental Health in Tamworth, I also have an adult son with special needs and have developed a thorough understanding of the NDIS process and the frustration people can experience. Living with a child with disability has given me insights to the issues faced by parents, carers, and the people themselves both in society and from the community. I have a strong motivation for advocacy and equal rights for those with a disability.

TODD CRANDELL
*Deputy Chairperson
(retired June 2023)*

I am a practicing Solicitor based in Newcastle, NSW. I hold a Bachelor of Laws and am an Accredited Specialist in Commercial Litigation. I am proud to be able to contribute to the important work done by ALA using my skills and experience as a Solicitor and look forward to continuing to do so.

JACK LINDGREN
Secretary

As someone born with a low vision condition called Achromatopsia, I am acutely aware of the challenges associated with living with a disability. This was my primary motivation for joining the ALA Board, and this experience has been profoundly rewarding. I have completed a Bachelor of Arts and a postgraduate Juris Doctor, both from the University of Sydney, and have been admitted as a Lawyer in the Supreme Court of NSW. I now work as an Investment Analyst at Willis Towers Watson in the Sydney office, where I provide financial advice to a range of institutional asset owners on their investments. Volunteering for the ALA Board combines two key personal passions of mine, namely, advocating for and promoting the rights of people with disabilities, and ensuring equitable access and fairness before the law. I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the broader ALA organisation and am proud of the positive impact our staff have on the communities we serve.

TOBY THOMAS
Treasurer

Board Members

JOSEPH POPOV

I have Cerebral Palsy. I have graduated from a Bachelor of Social Science and am soon to finish a Bachelor of Laws/ Diploma of Legal Practice. I have also commenced a Graduate Certificate of Workforce Diversity and Inclusion. I am the Vice President and peer mentor of Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH), a peer led disability organisation that aims to help people with disabilities achieve their goals. My newest role is as an intern for Karen Ansen Consulting, where I deal with employment law and human resource matters.

RACHEL SOWDEN

I have four children who are Aboriginal, two who have autism and three who have mental health diagnoses. I am determined that all people in NSW regardless of postcode have access to supports required to live a full life with choice and voice. Having lived the past 23 years in rural and remote locations across NSW, I am familiar with the challenges of obtaining equitable access to services and supports outside of metropolitan locations. I have long held advocacy roles in education and mental health particularly in rural settings, with a focus on young people and people with invisible disabilities.

I believe that people who are disadvantaged before the law deserve excellent representation and access to fearless advocacy. As the mother of a child with an intellectual disability and ASD who is navigating the brave new world of the NDIS, education and health systems, I know firsthand the need for strong disability advocacy services to assist people engaging with these systems. I have served on several boards in disability and health related organisations.





Chairperson's Report

It's been another exciting year for ALA with changes externally and internally that the organisation should be proud of. ALA continues to be extremely dynamic, and despite the occasional obstacle its focus is on ensuring that the wellbeing of staff and clients remain the highest priority. ALA also continues to look to the future and seize the opportunities that present themselves.

One such opportunity has been expanding services beyond NSW. The Disability Advocacy Support Helpline (the Helpline) is being delivered by ALA and was announced as part of Australia's Disability Strategy and is designed to improve access to individual advocacy. ALA is proud to support all people with a disability, their families and carers through the Helpline nation-wide.

ALA has continued to strive to be a best practice employer. As a society we are becoming more aware of the importance of mental health and wellbeing. Let's face it, we spend more time at work than with our families! This year ALA has formalised a generous work from home policy that recognises that some staff do their best work at home while others prefer to be in an office. In addition, wellbeing days have been introduced, effectively awarding greater time off to staff than required.

ALA has also been continually out in communities across NSW. Education is the first step to helping people access services and achieve outcomes that they would otherwise be unaware of. Every time I glance at social media it seems like ALA is in the community helping people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board for their ongoing work in supporting the organisation during the year.

On behalf of the Board, I thank the management team, the staff and volunteers. You are what creates an organisation, and your efforts and contributions are changing people's lives for the better.

Hayden Asper
Chairperson

Treasurer's Report

This is the Treasurer's Report for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 ("the period").

The reports referred to ("Advocacy Law Alliance – 2023 Financial Statements") are included in the Board papers circulated for the meeting of Thursday 5th October 2023.

Key Financial Information

> Income & Expenditure Statement

ALA received \$10,382,783 in grant income for the 2023 financial year, an increase of \$3,197,128 from the 2022 financial year. ALA also received some other income, primarily in the form of Interest income (\$69,156) and Gains on sale of assets (\$65,965), totalling \$135,121. The sum of \$10,510,979 was incurred in expenses, resulting in an operating surplus over the financial year of \$6,925. Similar to FY2022, the largest increase in expenditure was in the category of wages, which increased by 45% from 2022.

I note that during the financial year several unexpected funding opportunities (particularly related to DASH program) presented themselves. ALA originally forecast income of \$6,710,138 and expenses of \$7,283,559 for FY2023, which are both far less than the final income and expenses results for this financial year. Accordingly, the surplus of \$6,925 is far greater than the originally budgeted deficit of \$573,421, which is a positive result particularly considering the challenged macroeconomic (high inflation, extensive cost pressures) environment.

> Balance Sheet

ALA's Balance Sheet identifies assets of \$5,594,393, which is a significant increase of 101% compared to FY2022. Total assets are primarily comprised of Cash and Cash equivalents (\$1,671,372), and money being money held in Term Deposits (\$3,530,298). The other assets include amounts for Plant and Equipment and Vehicles (\$363,206), and Trade and Other Receivables (\$29,517). The Balance Sheet also identifies total liabilities in the amount of \$4,050,629, which is a significant increase compared to the end of FY22 (Total liabilities were \$1,242,721 on 30 June 2023). The key reason for this substantial increase in Balance Sheet liabilities is the increase of "Grants in Advance" to \$3,005,200, up from \$387,000 at the end of FY22.

ALA's net asset position as of the end of the 2023 financial year is \$1,543,764, and this is a minor increase compared to the \$1,536,839 net asset position calculated at the end of FY22. This net asset position indicates that ALA can comfortably pay all its debts as and when they fall due.

> Overview

ALA continues to operate in a financially sound manner. As of the end of June 2023, ALA has a Current Ratio of 1.33, a decrease from last year's financial year current ratio of 1.7. As previously mentioned, this change is due to the increase of the current liability labelled "Grants in Advance". I note that ALA continues to hold a significant quantum in Term Deposits and Cash & Cash Equivalents, meaning that funds are available should they be needed at short notice. Based on the financial statements, I am confident that ALA can continue to operate as a going concern.

Toby Thomas
Treasurer

CEO's Report

ALA continues to focus on staff wellbeing, culture and internal improvements. We finalised some significant service improvements this year after much preparatory work. While our main efforts will always be towards the clients we serve, having happy, high performing staff is an essential part of providing quality social and legal advocacy. We have adapted well to the recent challenges and moved to a hybrid work environment which gives staff greater flexibility and does not impact client services.

Both Disability Advocacy NSW (DA) and Mid North Coast Legal Centre (MNCLC) continue to grow and evolve after successful tenders to expand services in regional and rural NSW as well as the larger metropolitan centres. ALA successfully tendered for the Disability Advocacy Support Helpline "the Helpline" which provides phone-based short term advocacy assistance and referral for people with disability nationally. The Helpline has worked well in its first year of operation and is growing further. Again we are increasing staff numbers and have been busily recruiting in a tough job market.

Many issues our client's face are common and relate to systemic problems. In response to this we employ policy staff to coordinate with all in the organisation and like-minded advocacy services to seek to influence systemic change. Our policy approach is underpinned by factual research including the coalface experience of staff and their clients. This year we have had significant policy input in our areas of expertise.

Disability Law NSW, which links DA and MNCLC operations, continues to operate at capacity in providing legal support to DA clients and advocates in complex legal matters.

Both MNCLC and DA undertake independent quality accreditation assessments and are fully compliant with the appropriate standards.

The ALA Board continues to have a strong mix of skills with financial, legal and management expertise, combined with the knowledge and experience of people with lived experience of disability to oversee the strategic governance of ALA.

Thank you to all involved in ALA this year.

Mark Grierson
Chief Executive Officer

DCEO's Report

ALA is dedicated to supporting people experiencing disadvantage on many fronts, including financial hardship, housing insecurity, discrimination and a range of other social and legal issues. We are proud to offer a service with a committed, local presence in over two thirds of rural and regional NSW. From Broken Hill in the Far West to the Blue Mountains, and Ballina in the North Coast: our staff are there, on the ground, supporting communities, challenging injustice, and advocating for a fairer society.

2022-23 has been another eventful and purposeful year. We continue to provide high quality support through legal and social advocacy across the business for some of the most vulnerable members of our community. And through our commitment to continually review and deliver excellence, the year has seen many changes and improvements.

One of the highlights for me has been our work prioritising a workplace culture that is driven by ALA values and proactively supporting the wellbeing of our employees. Part of our wellbeing and culture strategy has been to embed Wellbeing Champions across the Service. Wellbeing Champions play a key role in creating and maintaining a workplace culture that promotes and encourages a respectful, de-stigmatising and supportive approach to the management of mental health and wellbeing. Our six Wellbeing Champions from across ALA focus on promoting general wellbeing within the organisation, facilitating the implementation of ALA's health and wellbeing policy/strategy, providing a listening ear when appropriate and sharing health and wellbeing resources and support options. We have also implemented a system of wellbeing leave days over the year to support staff mental health and resilience.

My special thanks to the dedicated, resilient and professional staff across all aspects of the ALA business. You represent our clients and ALA with professionalism in everything you do.

Thanks also to the ALA Board for their continued stewardship and professionalism. We are lucky to boast a Board with diverse professional backgrounds, great passion and commitment. They invest their valuable time and energy in ensuring that ALA has a clear vision and strategy to meet our goals.

Catherine Peek
Deputy Chief Executive Officer



ALA Conference

In November 2022 the ALA team gathered in Port Macquarie for our annual conference. The staff training opportunities were:

- Introduction to Infoxchange
- Trauma in small communities
- Good communication, better engagement
- Cracking a tough crowd - Disability Law
- Spotting and referring Civil Law issues
- Productivity Ninja Guide to Hybrid Working
- Assisting Clients to Participate in Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Launch of MNCLC First Nations design.

The ALA conference is a chance to get all staff together from across NSW to network and share their work story.



**Disability
Advocacy**
NSW

Report



DA Leaders Report

Amanda Brickwood

Executive Officer

Charlotte Rider

Manager Advocacy

It has been a busy and dynamic year at Disability Advocacy NSW (DA). As a service that values innovation and continuous improvement, we commenced this year with an ambitious list of initiatives to enhance the way we work to better serve:

- **Our clients** - through the provision of high quality advocacy support
- **Our communities** - by influencing positive change in our communities
- **Our people** - by proactively ensuring the wellbeing of our team

Reflecting on the year gone by, we are pleased to report that, through collaboration, patience and an enthusiasm for growth and adaptation, we have made significant progress towards achieving our goals. We want to express our appreciation for the commitment of every team member, your dedication and hard work have been the driving force behind our achievements.

The key initiatives undertaken this year have focused on improving our service by leveraging technology, refining our processes that guide our day to day work and investing in training and resources to support the team. We have worked on improving our communications and engagement by officially rolling out our communications strategy starting with the official launch of our new branding. We have also spent time developing an outcomes measurement framework so we can more accurately gauge whether we are achieving our intended service outcomes at the individual and systemic level.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the whole team for their dedication and exceptional efforts throughout the year. Your commitment has been the driving force behind our success, going above and beyond to contribute significantly to our shared goals. Together, we are making strides toward realising our ultimate goal, to create a more fair, equitable, and inclusive society where people with disabilities are respected, valued, and fully included. It is your hard work that paves the way for meaningful change. As we look ahead, we are confident that, with your continued support and dedication, we will continue to make a positive impact for the clients and communities we support.

Thank you for your outstanding contributions and your commitment to making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our CEO, Mark Grierson, Deputy CEO, Catherine Peek, ALA staff and all the volunteer Board members for their ongoing support and guidance throughout the 2022-23 year.



Key Highlights:

Technology

Our investment in technology systems has streamlined our advocacy service operations enabling us to serve our clients more efficiently and effectively. Improved access data through enhanced reporting and dashboards has enabled us to make more informed decisions around resource allocation which in turn has helped us to increase our service capacity.

Streamlining our processes

Refining our advocacy processes has provided us with a more robust framework to guide our advocacy work in increasingly complex social support systems. This effort has yielded tangible benefits, including increased clarity, consistency, and transparency in our advocacy work and expanded service accessibility.

Training & professional development

Training and professional development have been a cornerstone of our efforts to support the DA team this year. By investing in our staff's skills and knowledge, and encouraging a culture of ongoing learning, the team is well equipped to deliver consistently high quality, effective advocacy services and navigate challenges inherent in the complex landscape we work in.

One of our pinnacle professional development events each year is the DA conference where all the regional team comes together in person to enjoy a few days of training, collaborating, and socialising with colleagues from all across the service.

This year we had a variety of great sessions and activities at a great Hunter Valley location including:

- 1 Boundaries in the work context using a trauma informed approach
- 2 File note & recording keeping practices - legal & practical implications
- 3 Introduction to social impact measurement
- 4 NDIS appeals workshop

Resource Development

Our focus area in terms of resource development has been on NDIS appeals advocacy. Given the complexity of the appeals process and lack of advocacy specific support and resources, DA set about producing a comprehensive suite of client focused templates. The purpose of the templates is to support advocates deliver individual advocacy services to clients and act as a self-advocacy resource for clients independently navigating the NDIS Appeals system. We would like to acknowledge and thank all those involved at different stages of the project and give particular recognition to the Specialist Disability Advocates who played a lead role from start to finish.

Communications and Engagement

We took a big step forward towards achieving our key communication and engagement goals this year by launching our new brand including a new look logo and website. We are investing in this because we believe consistent messaging and clear communications will help us be a better service in several ways. It will help us build a robust, strong profile and better target the audiences we want to reach, increase awareness of disability rights and advocacy services, and promote self-advocacy. On a broader level, it will help us pursue systemic change to help shape the agenda beyond individual advocacy and become a go-to organisation that can speak about issues in disability, particularly in regional and rural areas.

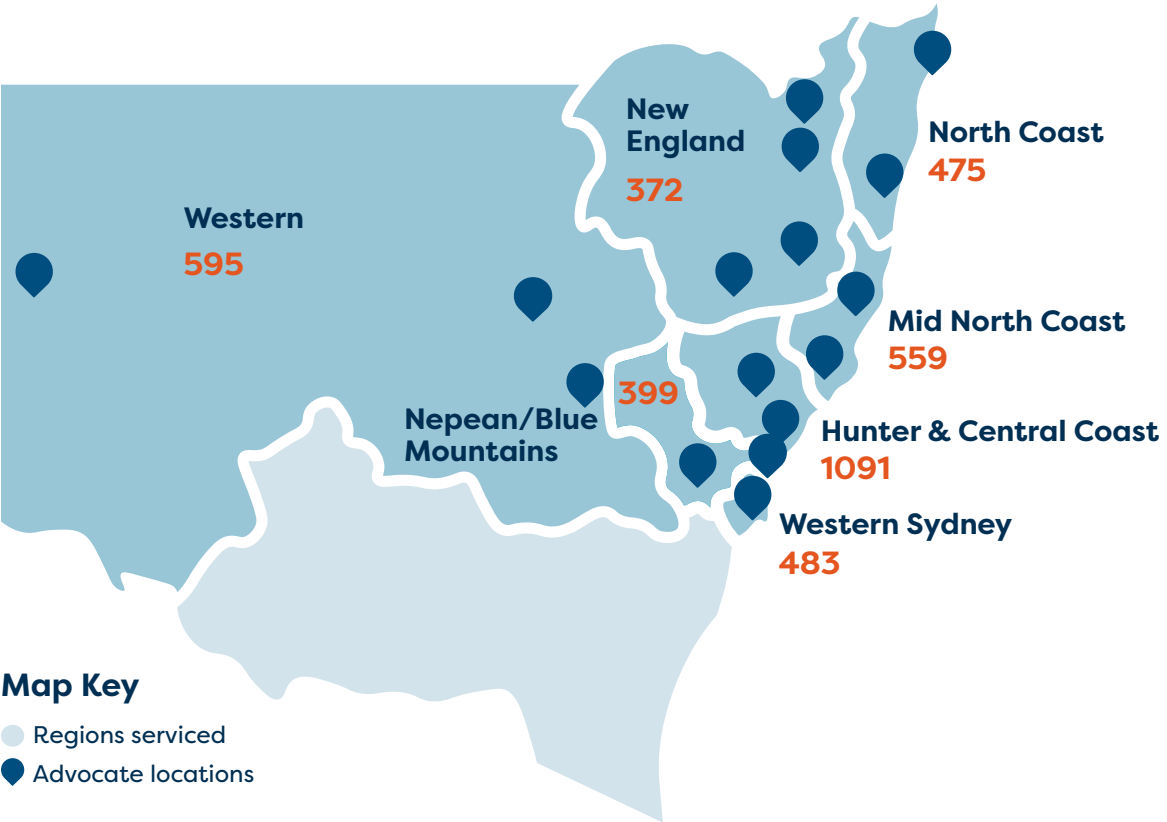
Outcomes Measurement Framework

We've undertaken a project to develop an outcomes measurement framework (OMF) specific to advocacy. Working with the social impact measurement specialists at For-Purpose Evaluations (FPE), we have developed a framework that provides DA with the tools and processes we need to collect and store outcomes data and to understand and communicate the outcomes of our social advocacy work. The OMF includes both our individual and systemic advocacy work.

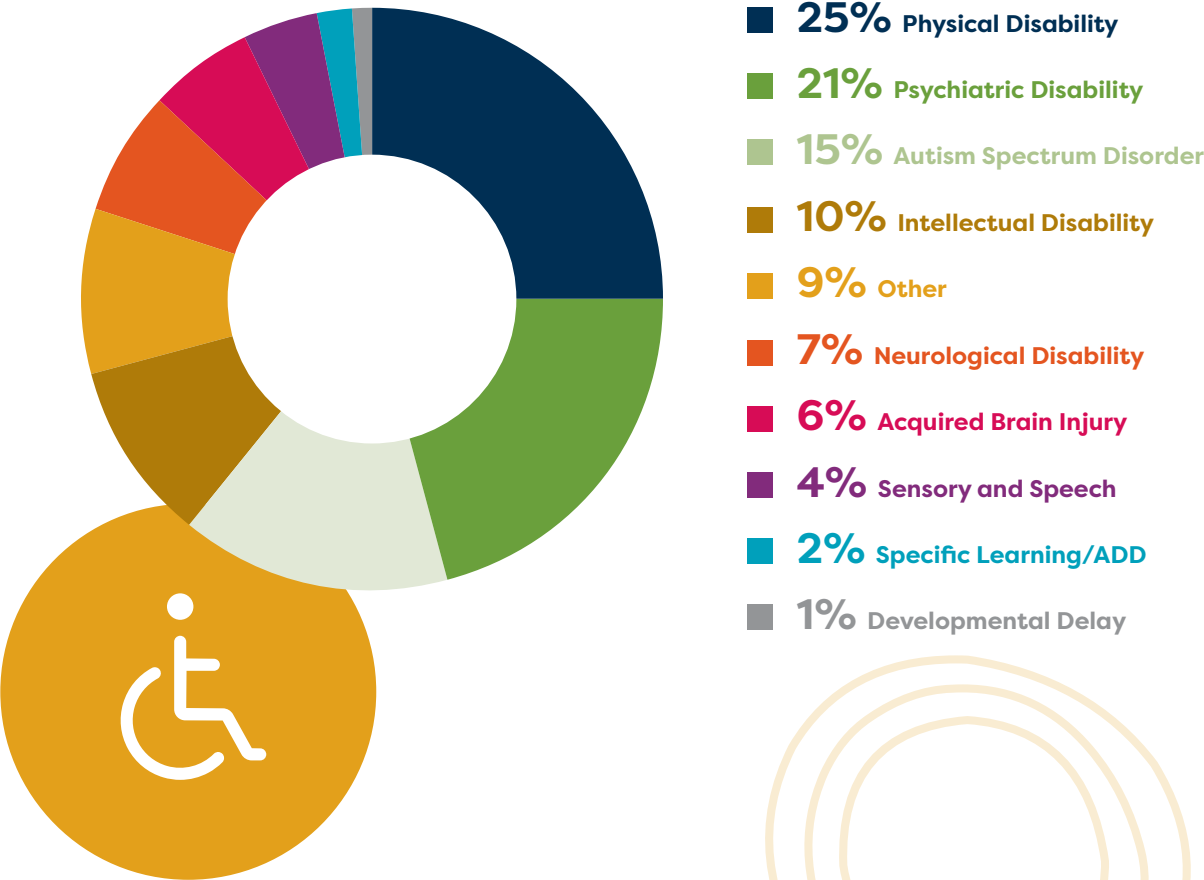
We are already seeing the efforts across all initiatives come together to enhance the way we serve our clients and communities and look after the wellbeing of our team.



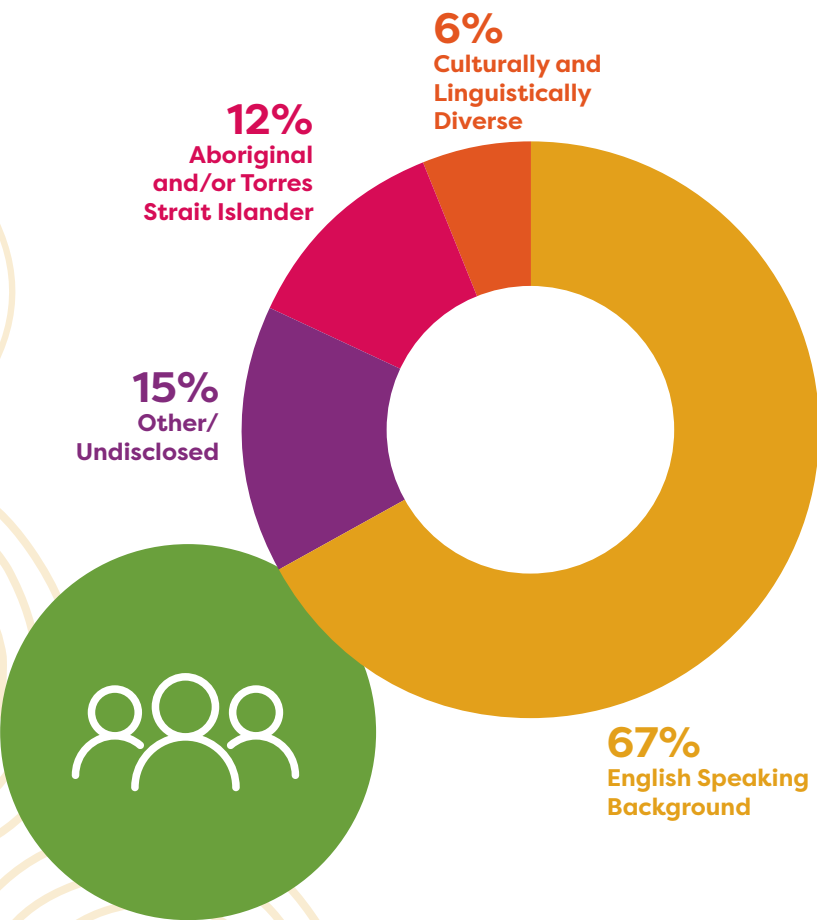
Our clients



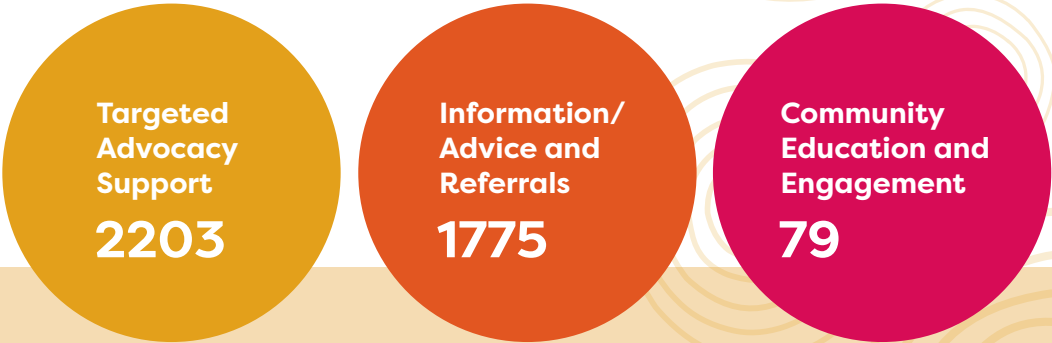
Primary Disability



Cultural Background



Our Impact



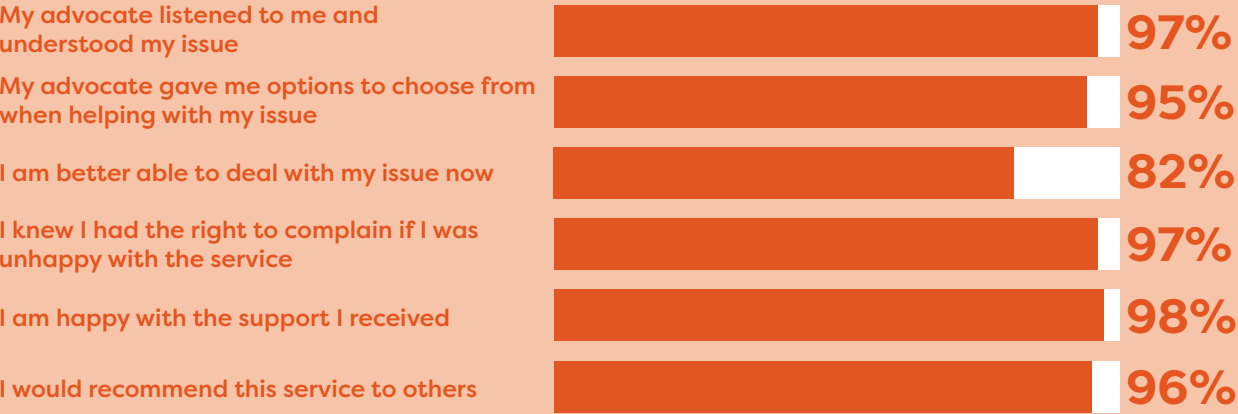
Advocacy Matter Resolution timeframes



→ For 72% of matters the advocacy outcome was achieved



Feedback



Top Advocacy Issues



We also provide advocacy support across a diverse range of other issues

- Disability services complaints
- Finances
- Discrimination/rights
- Health/Mental Health
- Abuse/Neglect/Violence
- Access to non NDIS services
- Employment
- Child Protection
- Vulnerable/isolated
- Community Inclusion - Social/Family
- Equipment/aids
- Transport
- Physical access



Compliments

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for my advocates invaluable assistance in helping me navigate the NDIS and secure the appropriate funds and support that I needed. Your dedication and advocacy have made a significant difference in my life, and I cannot thank you enough.

Our advocate was wonderful to us. He explained everything and took the time to make sure that we understood what we were discussing. We are now in a more knowledgeable position because of his help.

Very helpful and absolutely great service! I was very satisfied and extremely happy with the overall services provided by my advocate and would definitely recommend Disability Advocacy NSW to others.

I was very happy with the support and kindness and understanding I received having a neurodegenerative brain disorder they were very patient with me I would highly recommend this service to anyone who's needing an advocate.

My advocate was informative, resourceful, and skillful in pinpointing the resources I needed to implement disablement strategies and advocacy to resolve my issues moving forward. After, a long journey of pain and suffering she made me "feel safe" that other resources were available to me to live a better life than I have had before.



Case Studies



Case Study 1 – Education

Nature of case: Parent of child at school requested advocacy assistance to ensure the child could be transferred to a different School for Specific Purposes. There has been multiple incidents at school, but the Principal did not support the transfer. Parent had also been told there were no places at other SSPs and mainstream school was not an option.

Strategies Actioned:

- Met with the parent to clarify the support requested as had previously raised issues directly with teacher, Principal, Department of Education, Police and Child Protection.
- The parent indicated they were confident to self-advocate but were reaching burn out from the lengthy process.
- Parent identified advocate could assist to articulate the issues in writing as they were overwhelmed and finding it difficult to organise thoughts into clear account with timeline. Seeking to escalate the matter to Minister. Parent sent notes for advocate to organise and refine.

- Advocate drafted communication to Local Member
- Advocate supported the parent with strategies to take into a meeting with Director at Department of Education.

Outcome: A successful collaboration between advocate and parent. Outcome for the child achieved with a placement at another SSP.

Case Study 2 – NDIS

Nature of case: A client has been residing in hospital for 18 months after a Supported Independent Living (SIL) application was declined by the NDIA.

Strategies Actioned:

- The client was supported to engage their treating professionals to review and gather the evidence required to secure SIL funding
- The Advocate assisted the client to explore their options regarding their accommodation

Outcome: SIL funding was secured. The Advocate assisted the client to select a SIL provider and transfer them out of hospital in liaison with their treating team.

Case Study 3 – Financial Guardianship

Nature of case: A client requesting to review their Financial Management Order (FMO) and remove Trustee and Guardianship (TAG) involvement. The client approached DA requesting assistance to independently manage their finances, after several purchase requests had been denied. The client's treating team did not recommend the removal of the FMO was in the client's best interest.

Strategies Actioned:

- The Advocate assisted the client to communicate their needs to their health professionals to discuss the concerns.
- The Advocate assisted the client to breakdown their budget to discuss with a financial counsellor.
- A referral was made to a financial counsellor who assisted the client to develop strategies to save their money and demonstrate financial management capacity for TAG review.

Outcome: The client agreed to engage with the Financial Counseling Program for a period of 12 months to prepare for the TAG review. The client reported high satisfaction with DA in providing a plan to financial independence.

New Opportunities



This year we have had the opportunity to start work on a new 3-year pilot program called The Disability Advocacy Support Helpline (The Helpline). This new initiative was announced as part of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 with the specific objective of improving access to individual advocacy.

Top Advocacy Issues

- 1



NDIS Issues
- 2



Legal Issues
- 3



Housing Issues
- 4



Discrimination & Rights Issues
- 5



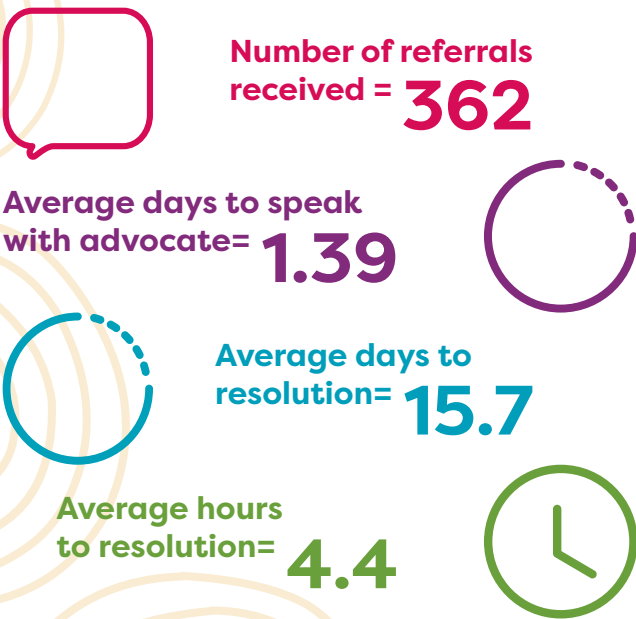
DSP

Disability Advocacy Support Helpline

The Helpline is a national phone-based individual advocacy service, focused on providing short-term advocacy support and also referral support if a local advocacy service or other specialist service is better placed to support the person. The service is for all people with disability, their families, and carers and can be accessed through the Disability Gateway.

The first half of the year was spent working with DSS and consultants from Customer Driven on the program design and setting up all the structures and systems necessary to support the new program. While the program operates separately from our other DA services, we were able to use DA's well established policy framework and technology systems as a foundation to build processes and systems for the Helpline program quickly and with confidence that they would support the program to launch successfully.

The Helpline officially launched in November 2022 starting in NSW and gradually rolling out in other states and territories to finally achieve national coverage by mid 2023. The Helpline can now be accessed from anywhere in Australia.

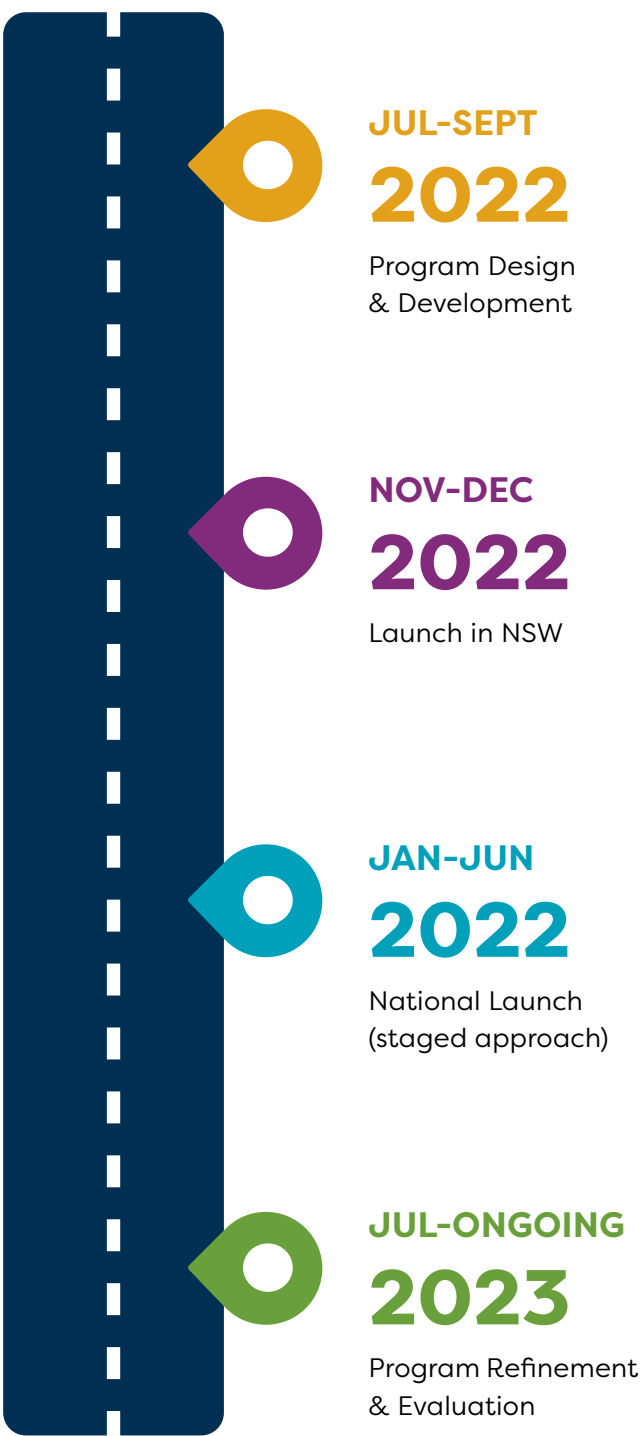


Helpline Success

Some of the initial successes of the pilot within the first twelve months include:

- The Helpline operates as a complimentary service, further supporting the advocacy sector and working in partnership with key stakeholders including other locally based individual advocacy providers.
- The Helpline model allows advocates to respond to advocacy referrals quickly. In most cases clients can be on the phone with a senior advocate within 2 business days.
- The Helpline model has the capacity to support 100+ clients each month with this capacity building with additional staff commencing in the second half of 2023.
- The Helpline has been able to support clients from all states and territories across a wide range of advocacy issues and has worked with many locally based advocacy services to facilitate warm referrals for clients requiring face to face advocacy.
- Feedback and outcomes data collected to date indicates that for the majority of clients, accessing the Helpline service has been a positive experience and has assisted them to resolve or progress their advocacy issue.
- The Helpline has quality assurance measures in place to monitor performance and continues to work with key stakeholders on improving the client experience.

The focus for 2024 is to continue to build the pilots capacity and accessibility. The Helpline team continues to focus on providing a high quality short-term advocacy and referral service.



DA Systemic Advocacy 2022-23

Cherry Baylosis

The systemic advocacy team has worked hard this year to utilise our influence as a lead agency to inform Government priorities on disability and legal advocacy. We have continued to focus on our systemic advocacy work on four key focus areas, NDIS, DSP, housing, and education, and drawing attention to the lived experiences of people with disability who live in regional, rural, and remote NSW.

The team has changed and grown with the appointment of Hayley Stone as Manager Specialist Advocacy and Suzanne Robinson as Communications and Policy Officer. This has allowed us to build our capacity to develop government relations and our external communications strategy.



Hayley Stone



Suzanne Robinson

This has occurred against the backdrop of a momentous time within the disability sector with the DRC and the NDIS releasing its final reports. Much of our systemic advocacy work has focused on this, and we will continue to push forward our key recommendations made within the DRC and NDIS reports going forward.



Our Impact

8 submissions

2 research reports published

2 Requests to participate at parliamentary inquiries as a direct result of DA's submissions.

Featured in 5 news media pieces

15 media approaches

4 staff consultations

2 Proactive approaches to DA from MPs requesting advice/assistance to be used in parliamentary debate

18 research interviews

1 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry

Minister Shorten directly referenced the DA report Thin markets thin hopes: the NDIS in regional, rural and remote areas, during an opening address at leader's advocacy forum

1 Federal Senate Inquiry

2 meetings with State MPs

of 4 Requests to meet MPs we secured 3 meetings

1 ministerial meeting

4 proactive approaches to MPs/Ministers

2 Concrete wins - rent bidding legislation shelved, and a meeting of BBH key stakeholders secured through FT

New relationship established with the NDIA Independent Advisory Council

The Aussie Battler Series: release of NDIS and DSP report

The Aussie Battlers series concluded this year. This series comprised 5 reports that addressed systemic issues within the NDIS, DSP, housing, and education affecting people with disability in RRR (regional, rural, and remote) areas. This year we released reports on the NDIS and the DSP. Overall, the series reflected one year of scoping research, followed by a one-year period of releasing each report along with a targeted media campaign.

Disability Advocacy has had numerous successes with this series, participating in several news media interviews on local and national coverage across different news formats including news articles, radio, and TV.

This means that the voices and the stories that we captured during our scoping research have been heard by key decision-makers and the wider public.

The NDIS

Our focus this year has been to draw attention to the negative impact of thin markets on service quality in RRR areas. Specifically, our work in this space has revolved around the NDIS review and working with our Disability Advocacy Advisory Committee members (DAAC, formerly known as the SAAB) to create a video submission that brought forward their firsthand experiences of unethical and questionable service providers in RRR areas.

Housing

We continue to work in the housing space to advocate for more affordable and accessible housing. We have participated in two parliamentary inquiries and gave evidence at one of these where we had a win preventing a bill that would further disadvantage people with disability on low incomes access housing in the rental market.

Building Better Homes Campaign (BBH)

We are slowly but surely getting some traction in this campaign. We've had several meetings with key stakeholders include the office of the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, the Honourable Anoulack Chanthivong, and MPs including Abigail Boyd and Jenny Leong. We've also written to the Minister for Housing and Homelessness on the issue.

We've been successful in lobbying the Government into facilitating a roundtable of key stakeholders, including representatives from the building and construction Industry and the ageing and disability sectors to discuss ways to move forward, and the Government has expressly acknowledged a need to address the housing needs of people with disability in NSW. DA (Disability Advocacy) has also taken the lead within the BBH alliance to develop a communication strategy to create pressure with getting the NCC (National Construction Code) over the line within NSW.



Education

Continuing with a focus on inclusive education, we participated in two federal parliamentary inquiries – one addressed the 'increasing disruption in Australian classrooms', and another addressed ADHD assessments and supports – while our submission addressed a wide range of systemic issues related to ADHD, it highlighted the importance of the role schools play in supporting students with ADHD.

Additionally, our local regional teams have conducted mini-systemic advocacy projects focused on relationship building with schools in their regions.

DSP and financial disadvantage

"Scraping by: Disability and financial hardship in regional, rural and remote areas" was released along with a media campaign to highlight this report in our social media communications. We also participated in one parliamentary inquiry into the extent of poverty in Australia.

Coming up in 2024

Into the 2023/24 year we will focus on the implementation of DRC and NDIS review recommendations, NSW public Guardian and Trustee scoping work and releasing a research report, and advocating for improvements to housing in NSW through the Building Better Homes Campaign. We will also continue to build connections and partnerships with key government stateholders to elevate collective advocate priorities.



Left: Hayley Stone and Cherry Baylosis at Sydney Parliament House to give evidence for Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) enquiry

Opposite, left: DA giving evidence at Federal parliamentary inquiry for ADHD to be on the NDIS. Pictured is Mel Lawrence and in background is Cherry Baylosis along with other parties giving evidence.





MID NORTH COAST LEGAL CENTRE

Report



Principal Solicitor Report

Jane Titterington

Getting back to business

It has been a busy year at the Mid North Coast Legal Centre (MNCLC). Over the last 12 months we assisted people in our community over 5000 times. This figure includes the number of times we gave people information and provided referrals to other services for assistance. This figure also includes the number of times we provided legal advice and provided legal representation in courts, tribunals and in other types of case work.

We provided a large amount of community legal education reaching out to communities across six local government areas in our catchment. Despite COVID-19 still presenting itself we have returned to our outreach locations and clinics and commenced additional outreaches under our Mental Health/Justice legal partnership project.

Our team have returned to our offices in Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour, and we continue to work with our hybrid working policy which allows a mix of working from home and in the office. This flexibility enhances the work experience for the team. Additional funding has also seen our team grow and we are excited about the opportunities this presents for the Centre.

We have had a couple of big events this year. We hosted the Advocacy Law Alliance Conference in Port Macquarie with Disability Advocacy. We also held our annual MNCLC mini conference in Bellingen in March 2023 which is an essential part of our year providing valuable professional development, training, and planning for the MNCLC team.

One of the biggest events this year saw Mid North Coast Legal Centre and Disability Advocacy move to Clarence/Short Street in Port Macquarie. We needed a bigger location to fit our growing teams. We still need to do some work to make the office perfect, but we certainly have more space. Disability Advocacy and Mid North Coast Legal Centre teams hosted an official opening of the office which was well attended and an opportunity for the community to become familiar with our new location.

Once again, I would like to express my thanks to the hardworking committed team that makes up the Mid North Coast Legal Centre. I could not ask for a better team who constantly work at supporting our community and each other. And I thank the Board, Mark Grierson (CEO), Catherine Peek (DCEO) and the ALA team in Newcastle for all their support.

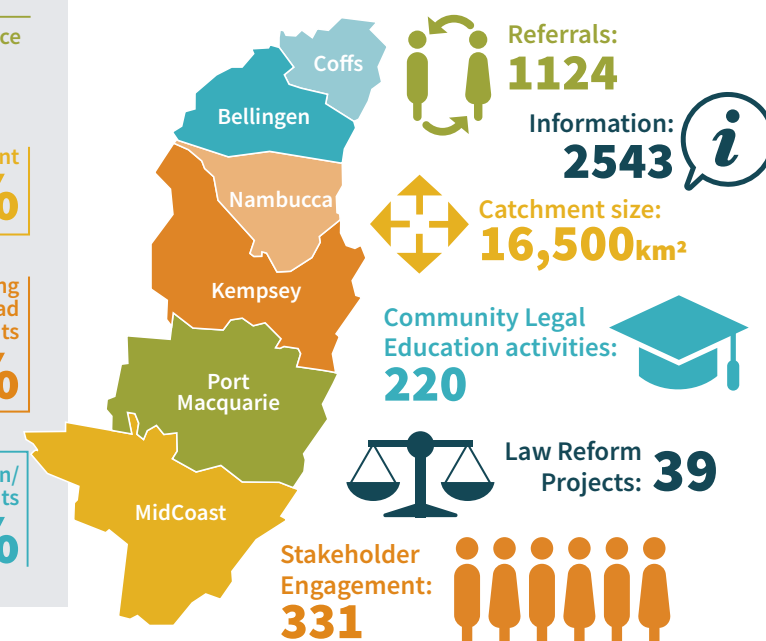
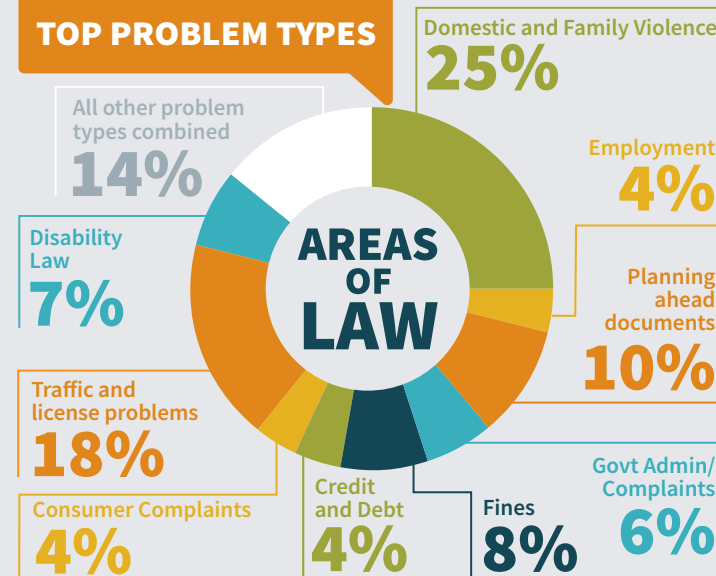


Our Impact

MID NORTH COAST LEGAL CENTRE 2022-23 FINANCIAL YEAR OVERVIEW



TOP PROBLEM TYPES



Provided **1742** legal services to **1200** clients

44% live with a disability

17% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

8% have unstable accommodation

15% live in remote/rural areas

99% of the representation services were given to people experiencing financial disadvantage

Funding

MNCLC's main funding sources are the Commonwealth and State Governments, administered through the Community Legal Services Program by Legal Aid NSW. During this financial year we had additional Family, Sexual and Domestic Violence funding through Womens NSW which enabled us to do some great work. Funding to continue our Coffs Harbour office was also confirmed. We also receive funding to run a health justice partnership called LAMP (Legal and Mental Health Partnership) where we are delivering services in partnership with health and mental health service providers across our catchment. We were also excited to receive new Federal funding for work assisting communities still reeling from the impact of natural disasters over the past few years.

Key Events and Achievements



We held another extremely successful mini-Conference in Bellingen (Gumbayngirr Country) for all MNCLC staff. The two-day conference delivered training and professional development for staff and provided an opportunity to review our strategic planning with input from everyone at MNCLC. This year's sessions included Ethics presented by the Law Society of NSW, a session on medical terminology and medical reports by one of our solicitors Cal Rigby. A senior member of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal attended and provided tips for practitioners and local barrister Paul Batley attended. We thank them for their support in providing their valuable time and expertise to the conference.



We unveiled a new First Nations artwork by talented local artist Angela Marr from Cultural Industries at the Advocacy Law Alliance conference in November 2022. 'Djuyalgu Barrayga' means 'Conversations on Country' in Gathang, the traditional language of the Birrbay, Warrimay and Guringay people. It represents the MNCLC and the communities we work with across three nations of Birrbay, Daingatti and Gumbayngirr Countries. It highlights Country from the west in the mountains and hinterlands, the river systems and east to the headlands and sea. It symbolises a gathering on Country, with the line work having a dual meaning of flowing waterways but also communication.



We held an official opening for the new office of Mid North Coast Legal Centre and Disability Advocacy in Port Macquarie which was attended by local Aboriginal Elders, our local State Member, Mrs Leslie Williams MP, past Board members, Mark Grierson and Catherine Peek, teams from our local offices on the Mid North Coast, many local services and family and friends of both Mid North Coast Legal Centre and Disability Advocacy. It was gratifying to have such a large turnout showing that both our services are well known, embedded, and respected in our local community.



Our LAMP program is growing and we now have a number of partnerships with local services. We are meeting with many vulnerable clients at our co-located outreaches and dealing with a wide range of issues. Our community engagement team has been very effective in the success of this program with stakeholders reporting that their awareness of the program as a result of the team attending local events and interagencies

Client and Stakeholder Feedback

Sarah is amazing and I am very grateful for what she has done for me so far.

This is a very heart-warming thank you to yourself for believing in our problem and taking it to the level that you had to for us. Again, thank you to you and your team.

I have cleared fines and one being reviewed. Can you please thank Holly. The Centre has always been so helpful to me – Holly this time and Patrick before.

I was impressed with, and grateful for, the content you shared during your session in the 16 days of activism series. I found your instruction and expertise highly valuable and have been able to use the knowledge you presented numerous times throughout the last few months.

Kylie, thank you so much for being accommodating and responsive to the potential referral, so appreciate it.

Let me also say that it wasn't just the legal assistance that I greatly appreciated, it was the genuine caring concern from Sarah and Cal. Thank you both.

Hi Bella, Thank you for today. We all really appreciate not only the work you do, but how you go about it – it's amazing how much can be achieved when you speak clearly and a little slower, so thank you. X appreciated it as well – it feels good to be understood!

Thank you, Elaine. You are such a lovely person. Every time I call, you listen to me. It is nice to speak with someone on the phone who listens to me and takes the time with me.

Legal Assistance – General Practice

MNCLC records statistics in the CLASS database utilised by all Community Legal Centres.

This financial year MNCLC provided information and referral on at least 3650 different occasions. This includes referrals made as part of other advice or casework services and highlights our commitment to ensuring wrap around service delivery for our clients.

CLASS allows MNCLC to record characteristics of either the kinds of people we assist or the areas of law in which we provide help. In 2022/23, MNCLC assisted 1105 clients across a range of 1595 different “services”. Of these, 847 were new clients.

Clients were distributed throughout our catchment area as represented in the figures below.

MNCLC offers regular face to face advice sessions in the Kempsey, Bellingen, Nambucca and MidCoast regions of our catchment, encouraging equal access to legal services for those who may be disadvantaged by distance.

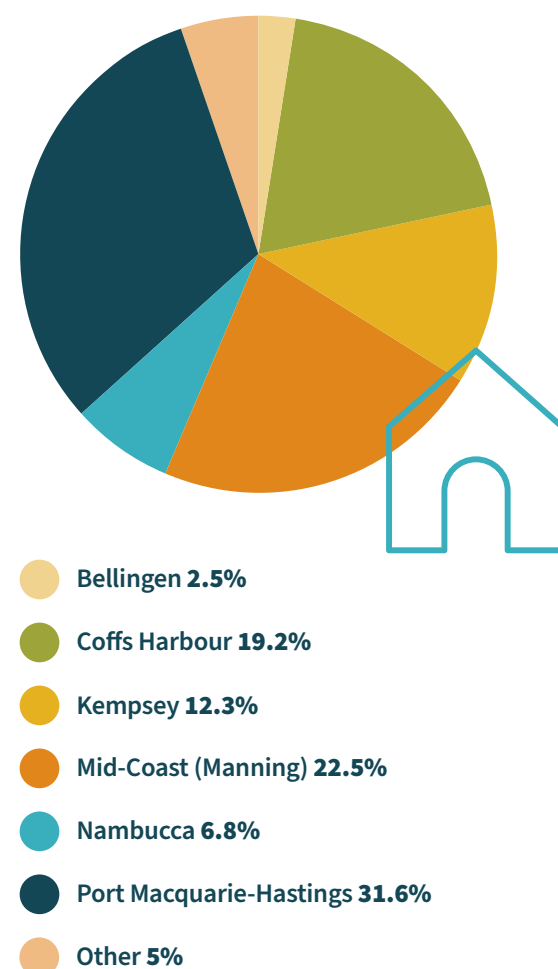
Our clients

39.2%
of clients identified as having a disability or mental illness.

17.3%
of clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

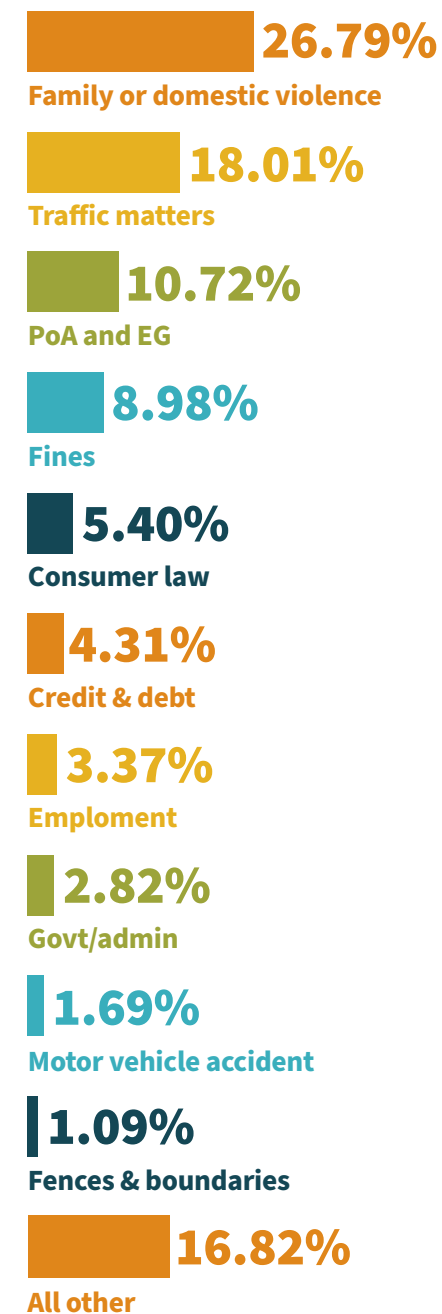
1.6%
of clients used a language other than English or required an interpreter to access our service

Where do MNCLC clients live?



Legal Advice

Legal Problem Type



A total of 998 legal advice services were given in the last financial year. Legal advice is defined in CLASS as “the provision of fact specific legal advice to a person (a client) in response to a request for assistance to resolve specific legal problems.”

Legal Task

This financial year MNCLC provided legal task assistance on 195 occasions. This is an 85% increase in the number of legal tasks as compared to last year and reflects the return to normal service delivery following interruptions caused by COVID-19 over previous financial years. Legal task work is often undertaken during outreach and is defined as “where a Centre completes a discrete, one-off piece of legal work, to assist a person in their own efforts attempting to resolve a problem or a particular stage of a problem”.

Case Studies

Victims Services

We assisted a young woman with an internal review of a Victims Services recognition payment. The domestic violence was recognised but given at a lower category of compensation. The violence was severe and we sought an internal review based on the extensive injuries to the survivor.

MNCLC drafted detailed submissions which were successful, and the client obtained the higher category of financial compensation. This was a great outcome as the client was in precarious financial circumstances and unstable housing. The payment made a big difference to the client’s immediate living circumstances.

Traffic Law

We assisted a young person with a significant speeding offence. They only had a short driving history and attended school and worked part time. The young person was relied upon by family for assistance with caring responsibilities for younger siblings. The suspension of the young person’s licence would have a significant impact on not just themselves but also the family. We successfully represented her and obtained a reduced suspension period of only one month. The client was very happy with this outcome which was the work of persuasive submissions by the MNCLC solicitor on the client’s behalf.

Insurance

We assisted a client in AFCA to obtain a great result against a large insurance company. Our client was involved in an accident where the client had difficulty negotiating with the insurance company despite CCTV footage showing that our client was not at fault. Our client was uninsured, and the other driver was insured by the large insurance company.

The company told our client that if they continued to pursue the claim, they would argue she was solely at fault and pursue damages. The client was nervous and considered withdrawing her complaint. With advice and assistance from MNCLC the insurance company conceded and paid for the damage to our client’s car.



Disability Law NSW program is a collaboration between the two arms of Advocacy Law Alliance - Mid North Coast Legal Centre and Disability Advocacy NSW (DA) - and has been in operation since July 2020.

DLNSW has a strong focus on people with disability in regional, rural and remote communities (RRR) where it is often more difficult to access legal assistance.

The referral pathway for DLNSW is through DA intake. Clients must first engage with DA as an advocacy service so that they have access to face-to-face support for their matters with one of our local advocates. It is our experience that many clients with a disability need a face-to-face contact so they can access and engage with the legal process. People with a disability are often drawn to DA due to its broad coverage, especially in regional NSW. DA has offices and local advocates in the Hunter, Central Coast, Mid North Coast, New England, Central West, Western and Far West NSW, Sydney West and Blue Mountains.

Given this broad RRR coverage, advocates can effectively link clients with disability to the legal assistance needed, while providing expertise in local services and a “face” the client can trust and built rapport with. DLNSW’s wrap-around model is designed to assist people with all types of disability, including mental illness, especially those a long way from the metropolitan area with a local advocate who can engage with the client face-to-face and assist them to interact with our solicitors.

Disability Advocates working with DA provide non-legal assistance to clients on a broad range of issues such as the NDIS, Disability Royal Commission, health, education, services, discrimination, etc. Disability Advocates develop a plan in collaboration with the client and based on the client’s preferred outcome, then work towards this goal, negotiating on the side of the client. Advocates are not caseworkers but usually have a medium-term relationship with a client and expertise working with a wide range of disabilities. Based on a firm foundation of understanding the different roles, we have found that the skills of disability advocates and lawyers can complement each other and get improved outcomes for clients.

DLNSW aims to complement existing providers in the disability law space. Part of the referral process from DA to DLNSW is first to refer to existing providers where appropriate and available. DLNSW has strong referral pathways across the sector and continues to facilitate referrals to other CLCs (both specialist and generalist) and pro bono partners.

We thank all staff that worked in the DLNSW team including Kylie Hyde, Anita Jones and Sarah Dahlenburg for the great work achieved in DLNSW over this financial year. We are excited to welcome another solicitor to the program in the 2023-24 year.

Where do DL clients live?

LGA	Number of Clients
ARMIDALE REGIONAL COUNCIL	4
BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL	1
BATHURST REGIONAL COUNCIL	5
BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL	2
BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL	1
CABONNE SHIRE COUNCIL	2
CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN COUNCIL	1
CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL	3
CESSNOCK CITY COUNCIL	3
COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL	6
DUBBO REGIONAL COUNCIL	3
GILGANDRA SHIRE COUNCIL	1
GLEN INNES SEVERN SHIRE COUNCIL	1
INVERELL SHIRE COUNCIL	1
KEMPSEY SHIRE COUNCIL	1
LACHLAN SHIRE COUNCIL	1

LGA	Number of Clients
LAKE MACQUARIE CITY COUNCIL	4
MID-COAST COUNCIL	10
MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL	2
NAMBUCCA SHIRE COUNCIL	5
NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL	4
PARKES SHIRE COUNCIL	1
PENRITH CITY COUNCIL	1
PORT MACQUARIE-HASTINGS COUNCIL	15
PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL	3
RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL	1
TAMWORTH REGIONAL COUNCIL	1
PENRITH CITY COUNCIL	4
TENTERFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL	2
THE HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL	2
UNINCORPORATED FAR WEST	2
URALLA SHIRE COUNCIL	1

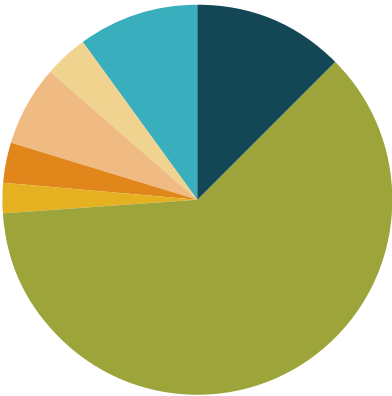


Legal Advice

NDIS Administrative Appeals Tribunal appeals provided the bulk of referrals to DLNSW. Recent changes to the DA intake process have reduced the amount of NDIS matters being referred to DLNSW. Consequently we have refocused the DLNSW program on targeted single issue advice sessions. The types of matters being referred to DL NSW has diversified over the past 6 months.

DLNSW assisted 106 clients spread across the DA catchment area, which is approximately two thirds of NSW. Those 106 clients received 113 advices, 20 tasks, 9 ongoing legal support services and opened 9 representation services over the year.

DLNSW Legal Problem Type



- Discrimination 12.50%
- Govt/admin 61.40%
- Domestic Violence and Victims Compensation 2.76%
- Employment 3.26%
- Guardianship, PoA and EG 6.52%
- Consumer 3.81%
- Other civil 9.77%

Case Studies

Disability Support Pension (DSP)

We acted for a client who was looking to qualify for the disability support pension. Disability Law and Disability Advocacy worked together with the client to assist with obtaining reports and liaising with Centrelink. The client finally reported that access had been granted. A wonderful result and the client was extremely grateful and felt that it was an outcome that would not have been achieved without the dedicated support provided by DL and DA.

NDIS Appeal

We assisted a client with access to the NDIS. The client was facing significant difficulties with access and with his engagement with services as a result of his disability. Disability Advocacy and Disability Law assisted the client with a result that he was successful on his review for access and the client was extremely grateful for the assistance he received.

Community Legal Education

We delivered 220 CLE activities and undertook 331 stakeholder engagement activities in the financial year. Through a grant with Healthy North Coast, we delivered many CLE sessions to communities across our catchment on how to spot a legal issue post disaster and where to get some assistance.

Some other examples include:

- Education sessions on the Disability Support Pension were provided in the New England area to Disability Employment Service providers, APM and JobsLink. The sessions were provided online which enabled other team members to join from across NSW.
- Delivering CLE on the Victims Support scheme online to community workers across the North Coast during November's 16 Days of Activism to combat Violence against Women.
- In person education to allied health professionals about domestic and family violence, in collaboration with local DFV providers such as the WDVCS and Liberty Services.
- Education sessions on "Planning Ahead" to support older people to minimise the risks of abuse and exploitation.



We would like to thank our outreach partners – Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre (Kempsey), Macleay Vocational College (Kempsey), Manning Uniting Church in Taree, Bellingen Youth Hub (Bellingen), Nambucca Senior Citizens Centre (Nambucca), Headspace (Taree and Kempsey) and Samaritans (Taree) and the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre.

Community Outreach and Engagement

We provide community legal outreach at Taree, Kempsey, Bellingen, Nambucca and the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. We attended our traffic program at Taree Court and Macksville Court. We continued our Embedded School Lawyer Program at Macleay Vocational College.

Outreach & Clinics	Location	When
Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre	West Kempsey	Wednesday, weekly
Manning Uniting Church	Taree	Wednesday, fortnightly
Bellingen Youth Hub	Bellingen	Tuesday, fortnightly
Nambucca School of Arts	Nambucca	Thursday, fortnightly
Mid North Coast Correctional Centre	Aldavilla	Thursday, fortnightly
Taree Traffic Program	Taree Court House	Tuesday, fortnightly
Macksville Traffic Program	Macksville Court	Thursday, fortnightly
Lawyer in School	Macleay College Kempsey	Wednesday, fortnightly during term
LAMP Health Justice Partnership	Taree Headspace	Monday, fortnightly
LAMP Health Justice Partnership	Kempsey Headspace	Monday, fortnightly
LAMP Health Justice Partnership	Taree Samaritans	Monday, fortnightly

We also contributed to the delivery of LoveBites in the Port Macquarie Hastings region, with four of our staff being trained to present to young people on topics such as domestic violence, social media, image-based harassment and sexual assault. LoveBites was delivered to Yr 8 students at the Port Macquarie Adventist School, Yr 10-11 students at Hastings Secondary College and Year 9 students at Wauchope High School.

Engagement Story

Valerie – A Legal and Mental Health Partnership Story

The LAMP engagement team connected with Valerie more than six months ago, through her attendance at a homelessness hub. Valerie has experienced recent periods of homelessness, violence, and poor physical and mental health and has issues with uncollected goods and a significant debt.

On each occasion the LAMP team tried to contact Valerie by phone or email, she would not respond, until many weeks later when she would send an email about the same issues. The LAMP engagement team persevered over many months to connect with Valerie in person to enable us to get the information required and assist her to request records to assist with her debt. Eventually, after building trust and rapport with Valerie, she attended the LAMP outreach and the LAMP solicitor was able to advise on her legal rights and progress her matter.

Valerie's matter is ongoing, and it appears she has good grounds to review the debt, which has arisen largely from the barriers she faces in communicating by phone. The stress caused by this debt is clearly exacerbating Valerie's poor mental health.

Without the LAMP team's wrap around support and persistence, Valerie would be further disengaged from services and supports.



Ralph – A Community Legal Education Story

Ralph attended a Community Legal Education presentation at a local educational facility. After the education session, Ralph approached the solicitor to discuss some legal issues he was experiencing, including a victims services claim.

The solicitor did an intake for some legal assistance with a debt and also made a warm referral to a specialist community legal centre for assistance and support through a government funded redress scheme.

Ralph was thrilled to receive news that he had been awarded \$95,000 in compensation through the redress scheme. He said it was more than he could have hoped for, but more than the money it was good to finally feel like the abuse suffered had been acknowledged and to feel validated and heard.



Law Reform



Reconciliation

We launched our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) on 4 April 2019 and it continues to provide us with a strong framework to support the national reconciliation movement. MNCLC's vision for reconciliation is a culture that embraces unity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians as well as a culture that represents equality and equity, historical acceptance of our shared history and removal of negative race relations.

As our service has changed significantly since 2019, we are beginning the process of updating our RAP and hope to launch and updated Innovate RAP in March 2024.

As part of this renewal process we were excited and honoured to launch our new First Nations artwork by talented local artist Angela Marr from Cultural Industries at the Advocacy Law Alliance conference in November 2022.

Pro Bono Partners

We would like to extend our deep appreciation for the support of our pro bono referral partners

- Gilbert & Tobin (who support us by offering regular legal advice sessions for some clients)
- Hall & Wilcox
- HBL (Port Macquarie) (who consider referrals for pro bono advice for small business owners)
- Justice Connect (who assist by linking pro bono requests with firms that may be able to assist)



Our Volunteers

MNCLC relies on the support of volunteers to deliver an effective and accessible legal service. The volunteers also bring different outlooks and experiences and we are enriched by their association with our Centre.

We would like to thank our volunteers this year for the valuable contribution they made to the Service:

- Umer Khattak
- Stacey Coombes
- Treena Henderson
- Isabella Shepherd
- Maree Ioane
- Haley Hooklyn

The MNCLC Law Reform Committee meets monthly to discuss issues and upcoming opportunities for law reform work. The Committee has been quite active and has had participation from a number of different staff within the Centre. There were a total of 39 law reform activities this year across the Centre.

- Sarah and Mel coordinated a response to the NSW Government's request for consultation on the draft Coercive Control Bill
- Madi attended the NSW Legal Assistance Forum to seek support for a proposal to reduce the number of people who choose to court-elect a fine without first seeking legal advice. This project also involved a podcast and collaboration with Legal Aid NSW, Marrickville Legal Centre and Revenue NSW.
- Shaarn produced an online Legal Toolkit to improve awareness of legal issues and remedies that arise after extreme weather events such as bushfires or flood.



Volunteers Report Stacey Coombes

During my time as a volunteer at the Mid North Coast Legal Centre, I had the privilege of working closely with a number of dedicated solicitors and support staff who guided me in my practical learning. I had the opportunity to assist in various aspects of client casework and support, legal research, and community engagement activities. These multi-faceted experiences not only increased my legal knowledge but also allowed me to witness the meaningful impact that the MNCLC has on individuals and the wider community. The invaluable learning experience of working alongside passionate professionals who advocate for social justice and positive community change has affirmed my desire to continue to develop my skills within this sector.



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Annual Financial Statements

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc
For the year ended 30 June 2023



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Income and Expenditure Statement

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
Income		
Grants Received	10,382,783	7,185,655
Total Income	10,382,783	7,185,655
Gross Surplus	10,382,783	7,185,655
Other Income		
Interest Income	69,156	2,857
Gain on Sale of Assets	65,965	(3,440)
Government Wage Subsidies	-	16,873
Total Other Income	135,121	16,289
Expenditure		
Advertising & Promotion	21,153	11,355
Audit Fees	20,594	17,000
Bank Fees	2,260	2,143
Cleaning	19,329	13,284
Client Requisites	1,087	2,433
Computer Maintenance	205,147	117,095
Computer Supplies	410,499	449,819
Depreciation	94,948	81,161
Employment Support and Supervision Costs	104,510	134,450
Equipment Hire or Lease	268	-
Filing Fees	431	-
Holiday Pay	70,841	56,612
Insurance	20,567	158,125
Long Service Leave	123,393	2,596
Merchandise	43,138	7,208
Motor Vehicle Expenses	78,708	49,660
Office Expense	45,998	10,629
Recruitment Costs	245,905	254,136
Repairs & Maintenance	25,173	3,422
Postage, Freight & Courier	5,983	8,819
Printing & Stationery	31,950	24,486
Quality Assurance	10,480	16,835
Rent	555,847	359,893
S&W Superannuation	716,588	461,035
S&W Workers Compensation	171,305	-
Salaries & Wages	6,896,479	4,746,273
Security	3,153	2,116
Staff Training & Development	389,003	237,175
Subscriptions	22,884	21,396
Telephone & Internet	86,112	61,893

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

	2023	2022
Travel Expenses	63,833	37,159
Volunteer Costs	23,414	14,561
Total Expenditure	10,510,979	7,362,766
Current Year Surplus/ (Deficit)	6,925	(160,822)

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

Assets and Liabilities Statement

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc

As at 30 June 2023

	NOTES	30 JUN 2023	30 JUN 2022
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2	1,671,372	1,962,154
Term Deposits	2	3,530,298	505,047
Trade and Other Receivables	3	29,517	21,396
Total Current Assets		5,231,187	2,488,597
Non-Current Assets			
Plant and Equipment and Vehicles	4	363,206	290,964
Total Non-Current Assets		363,206	290,964
Total Assets		5,594,393	2,779,561
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and Other Payables	5	260,957	265,284
Employee Entitlements	7	679,721	496,867
Grants in Advance		3,005,200	387,200
Total Current Liabilities		3,945,878	1,149,351
Non-Current Liabilities			
Other Non-Current Liabilities			
Employee Entitlements	7	104,751	93,371
Total Other Non-Current Liabilities		104,751	93,371
Total Non-Current Liabilities		104,751	93,371
Total Liabilities		4,050,629	1,242,722
Net Assets		1,543,764	1,536,839
Member's Funds			
Capital Reserve		1,543,764	1,536,839
Total Member's Funds		1,543,764	1,536,839

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

Statement of Cash Flows

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	NOTES	2023	2022
Operating Activities			
Receipts from funding authorities		11,412,128	7,545,728
Payments to suppliers and employees		(8,643,525)	(7,145,574)
Interest Received		69,156	2,857
Total from Operating Activities		2,837,759	403,011
Investing Activities			
Payments for Property, Plant & Equipment		(216,336)	(101,988)
Payments for Rental Bond		(2,065)	(2,660)
Proceeds from sale of Property, Plant & Equipment		115,111	-
Total from Investing Activities		(103,290)	(104,648)
Cash Balance			
Opening Cash Balance	3	2,374,469	2,168,838
Net increase or (decrease) in cash from operating and investing		2,467,201	298,363
Closing Cash Balance	3	5,201,670	2,467,201

Movements in Equity

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
Members Funds		
Opening Balance	1,536,839	1,697,661
Movements from Trading		
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Period	6,925	(160,822)
Total Movements from Trading	6,925	(160,822)
Total Members Funds	1,543,764	1,536,839

1. Basis of Preparation & Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

The financial statements cover Advocacy Law Alliance Inc. (the Association) as an individual entity. Advocacy Law Alliance Inc. is a not for profit association incorporated in NSW and registered with *Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commissions Act 2012*. The functional and presentation currency of the association is Australian dollars. Comparatives are consistent with prior years, unless otherwise stated.

The financial statements are special purpose financial statements prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commissions Act 2012*

The Board has determined that the association is not a reporting entity since there are unlikely to exist users of the financial report who are not able to command the preparation of reports tailored so as to satisfy specifically all of their information needs.

The financial report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and the following Australian Accounting Standards:

AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements
AASB 107 Statement of Cash Flows
AASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors
AASB 124 Related Party Disclosures
AASB 1048 Interpretation of Standards
AASB 1054 Australian Additional Disclosures

No other applicable Australian Accounting Standards, Interpretations or other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board have been applied.

The financial report is prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values. The following specific accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of this financial report.

Income Tax

The Association is exempt from income tax under Division 50 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*.

Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE)

Leasehold improvements, motor vehicles, plant and office equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all PPE is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.

Leasehold improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

Impairment of Assets

At the end of each reporting period, the committee reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have been impaired.

If such an indication exists, an impairment test is carried out on the asset by comparing the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use, to the asset's carrying amount. Any excess of the asset's carrying amount over its recoverable amount is recognised in the income and expenditure statement.

Employee Provisions

Provision is made for the association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee provisions have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled. Consideration is given to the probability that the employee may satisfy vesting requirements.

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period

Cash & Cash Equivalents

Cash and Cash Equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less. Cash & Cash Equivalents also includes term deposits held at call with banks, with a maturity date less than 12 months from the reporting date.

Accounts Receivable and Other Debtors

Accounts receivable and other debtors include amounts due from customers, members as well as amounts receivable from donors. Receivables expected to be collected within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets. All other receivables are classified as non-current assets.

Revenue and Other Income

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable after taking into account any trade discounts and volume rebates allowed. For this purpose, deferred consideration is not discounted to present values when recognising revenue.

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method, which for floating rate financial assets is the rate inherent in the instrument. Dividend revenue is recognised when the right to receive a dividend has been established.

Grant and donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt.

If conditions are attached to the grant that must be satisfied before the association is eligible to receive the contribution, recognition of the grant as revenue will be deferred until those conditions are satisfied.

All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office. Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the Australian Taxation Office is included with other receivables or payables in the assets and liabilities statement.

Financial Assets

Investments in financial assets are initially recognised at cost, which includes transaction costs, and are subsequently measured at fair value, which is equivalent to their market bid price at the end of the reporting period. Movements in fair value are recognised through an equity reserve.

Accounts Payable and Other Payables

Accounts payable and other payables represent the liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the association during the reporting period that remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amounts normally paid within 30 days of recognition of the liability.

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

Critical Accounting Estimates and Judgements

The Committee evaluate estimates and judgements incorporated into the financial statements based on historical knowledge and best available current information. Estimates assume a reasonable expectation of future events and are based on current trends and economic data, obtained both externally and within the Association.

	2023	2022
2. Cash & Cash Equivalents		
Cash at Bank		
Operating Account	305,621	790,144
High Interest Account	1,365,750	1,171,860
Total Cash at Bank	1,671,372	1,962,004
Cash on Hand		
Petty Cash	-	150
Total Cash on Hand	-	150
Term Deposits Maturing <12 months		
Cash at Bank - Term Deposit 9053	1,017,652	505,047
Cash at Bank - Term Deposit 9282	504,145	-
Cash at Bank - Term Deposit 2514	2,008,502	-
Total Term Deposits Maturing <12 months	3,530,298	505,047
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents	5,201,669	2,467,201

3. Trade and Other Receivables

Trade Receivables		
Accounts Receivable	6,729	390
GST	466	749
Total Trade Receivables	7,195	1,139
Bonds Paid		
Rental Bond	22,322	20,257
Total Bonds Paid	22,322	20,257
Total Trade and Other Receivables	29,517	21,396

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

	2023	2022
4. Plant and Equipment, Motor Vehicles		
Plant and Equipment		
Plant and Equipment at Cost	16,113	62,121
Accumulated Depreciation of Plant and Equipment	(13,410)	(55,435)
Total Plant and Equipment	2,704	6,686
Motor Vehicles		
Motor Vehicles at Cost	572,458	511,925
Accumulated Depreciation of Motor Vehicles	(211,955)	(227,647)
Total Motor Vehicles	360,503	284,278
Total Plant and Equipment, Motor Vehicles	363,206	290,964

5. Trade and Other Payables

Trade Payables		
Accounts Payable	230,809	247,484
Credit Cards Payable	14,277	1,902
Total Trade Payables	245,086	249,385
Other Payables		
Superannuation Payable	15,433	15,694
Total Other Payables	15,433	15,694
Total Trade and Other Payables	260,519	265,079

6. Grants in Advance

Deferred Income Government Grants	3,005,200	387,200
Total Grants in Advance	3,005,200	387,200

7. Employee Entitlements

Current		
Provision for Long Service Leave	255,145	143,132
Provision for Holiday Pay	424,576	353,735
Total Current	679,721	496,867
Non Current		
Provision for Long Service Leave	104,751	93,371
Total Non Current	104,751	93,371
Total Employee Entitlements	784,472	590,238

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

8. Auditors Remuneration

Remuneration paid for the audit of the financial report was \$17,000 (2022: \$17,000).

9. Contingencies

In the opinion of the Board, the Association has no contingent liabilities (2022: \$NIL).

10. Related Parties

Other related parties include close family members of key management personnel and entities that are controlled or significantly influenced by those key management personnel or their close family members.

There were no related party transactions in the financial year ended 30 June 2023 (2022: nil).

11. Events Occurring After The Balance Date

In the opinion of the Board, at date of authorisation of this financial report, no matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affect or may significantly affect the operations of the Association, the results of those operations or the state of affairs of the Association in future financial years

12. Association Details

The registered office of the Association is:
Advocacy Law Alliance Inc.
Suite 1, Level 2, 408 King Street
NEWCASTLE WEST NSW 2302.

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

Responsible Person's Declaration

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc

For the year ended 30 June 2023

The Committee of the Association declare that:

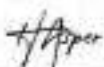
1. The financial statements and notes, as set out on pages 3 to 12 have been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and:

a. comply with Australian Accounting Standards as stated in Note 1(Basis of Preparation) ; and

b. give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of the performance for the year ended on that date of the Association.


2. In the Committee's opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with subsection 60.15 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulations 2022* and a resolution of the Committee.

Signed:  _____

Name: Hayden Asper

Dated: 11/10/2023

Signed:  _____

Name: Toby Thomas

Dated: 11/10/2023

**Advocacy Law Alliance Inc
Independent Audit Report to the members of
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023**

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the financial report of Advocacy Law Alliance Incorporated (the Association), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income and the statement of changes in equity and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the declaration by those charged with governance.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, including:

- i) giving a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year ended; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards, and Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

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

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc
Independent Audit Report to the members of
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of accounting

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist Advocacy Law Alliance Incorporated to comply with the financial reporting provisions of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 'ACNC Act'*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc
Independent Audit Report to the members of
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of Section 60.40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

KLM ACCOUNTANTS



Joshua Comyns
Partner

Charlestown, NSW
Dated 11 October 2023

Advocacy Law Alliance Incorporated

**Auditor's Independence Declaration under Section 60-40 of the
Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 to the
Committee of Advocacy Law Alliance Inc.**

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2023, there have been:

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- (ii) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.



Joshua Comyns
Partner
KLM Accountants
RCA No. 532802

11 October 2023

Charlestown, NSW

Certificate By Members of the Board

Advocacy Law Alliance Inc

For the year ended 30 June 2023

I, Mr Mark Grierson of Suite 1, Level 2, 408 King St, NEWCASTLE WEST, NSW, Australia, 2302 certify that:

1. I attended the annual general meeting of the association held on 26 October 2023.
2. The financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2023 were submitted to the members of the association at its annual general meeting.

Signed: 
Mr Mark Grierson

Dated: 26/10/2023